



ACTS

FROM CONFLICT TO COURAGE

This Study Belongs To

ACTS



The Author

Luke, a Gentile physician and traveling companion of the apostle Paul.



Date

Debated, A.D. 62–63 or around A.D. 70



Place of Writing

Likely; Rome, while Paul was under house arrest.



Purpose

To show how the good news about Jesus continued to spread after the resurrection through the power of the Holy Spirit, from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).



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Series Content

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

We are so excited to study Scripture with you this summer! This study is designed to guide you through Scripture in community, personal reflection and Spirit-led discovery.

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS

Day 1: Begin With Community

Start each week by watching the teaching video and then discussing the provided questions with your small group, family or friends. This will help you begin the conversation, give insight and encourage each other.

Days 2-5: Daily Scripture Engagement

Each day, write out the verse of the day, read the assigned passage, and answer the reflection question. Writing the verse helps you slow down and absorb the passage more deeply as you spend time in the Bible each day.

Day 6: Read the Commentary

At the end of the week, read the commentary to help bring all the daily passages together. This will give greater context and help you see the larger message of the chapter as a whole.

Day 7: Complete Your SOAR Page

Read through the full chapter one more time, then fill out the SOAR page. This final step ties everything together and creates space for the Holy Spirit to illuminate something personal and fresh.

Repeat for 4 More Weeks

After Week 5: Continue the Journey

At the end of the first five weeks, your study will continue with one chapter a day as you finish the book of Acts. Each day will include a short SOAR devotional written by our pastors, staff, GLA students, and volunteers, bringing meaningful stories, applications and reflection from leaders and members in our church community.

INTRODUCTION

by Pastor Amy Hafner

Imagine walking with Jesus for three years. You watched Him perform miracles, heal the sick, welcome the forgotten, and teach with authority that challenged everything you thought you knew about God. Then, everything seemed to collapse as you saw Him beaten, rejected, and crucified. In that moment, it feels like all hope is gone. But three days later, the impossible happened. Jesus walked out of the grave. For the next forty days, he appeared to you, teaching and preparing you for what would come next. Then, before your eyes, he ascended into Heaven and left you with this final word: “Wait “Wait for the Holy Spirit. Then, go carry the good news to the ends of the earth, and I will be with you.”

To our highly logical, twenty-first-century Western minds, this story can sound unbelievable. Yet, this is exactly where the book of Acts begins. Acts records the history of the early church, describing miracles, conflict, teaching, persecution, and remarkable growth during roughly the first thirty-one years after Jesus’ resurrection. Across its twenty-eight chapters, the book traces the spread of the gospel from a small group of disciples in Jerusalem to the very center of the Roman Empire.

WHO WROTE ACTS?

It is believed that Luke wrote both the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, which build on each other, like a series of books, and are addressed to the same individual, Theophilus. Luke is described in the New Testament as “our dear friend Luke, the doctor” (Colossians 4:14). His writing reflects careful observation and education. Luke also shows particular concern for women, the poor and social outcasts, and how the message of Jesus reaches across social and cultural boundaries.

WHEN WAS ACTS WRITTEN?

Scholars debate when Acts was written. The book ends with Paul under house arrest in Rome and does not mention his death. Because of that, many believe Acts was written before A.D. 64, when Paul was likely executed. Some scholars believe it was written after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. We can't be completely sure, but we do see a timeline of events for approximately the first 31 years of the church.

ACTS TIMELINE

30 A.D. The Ascension Acts 1	31 A.D. Philip in Samaria Acts 8:3	48 A.D. Paul and Barnabas in Iconium Acts 14	57 A.D. Paul in Macedonia and Greece Acts 20
30 A.D. Matthias Chosen by Lot Acts 1:12	31 A.D. Simon the Sorcerer Acts 8:9	48 A.D. Paul and Barnabas in Lysitra and Derbe Acts 14:8	59 A.D. Paul Returns to Jerusalem Acts 21 - 23
30 A.D. The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost Acts 2	31 A.D. Philip and the Ethiopian Acts 8:26	48 A.D. Paul and Barnabas Return to Syrian Antioch Acts 14:21	60 A.D. Paul Imprisoned in Caesarea Acts 24
30 A.D. Peter Heals and Preaches Acts 3	34 A.D. Saul's Conversion Acts 9	48 A.D. Return to Syrian Antioch Acts 14:24	62 A.D. Paul Before Festus Acts 25
30 A.D. Peter and John Arrested and Released; Acts 4	37 A.D. Peter Preaches to the Gentiles Acts 10, 11	48 A.D. The Council at Jerusalem Acts 15	62 A.D. Paul Before Agrippa Acts 26
30 A.D. Believers Share All Acts 4:32	42 A.D. Barnabas Sent to Antioch Acts 11:22	49 A.D. Paul's Second Missionary Journey Acts 15:36	62 A.D. Paul Sails for Rome Acts 27
30 A.D. Deaths of Ananias and Sapphira Acts 5	42 A.D. Peter Led from Prison by the Angel Acts 12	49 A.D. Paul in Philippi Acts 16	62 A.D. The Shipwreck Acts 27:13
30 A.D. Apostles Preach and Heal Acts 5:11	44 A.D. Herod Agrippa Dies Acts 12:20	49 A.D. Paul in Thessalonica, Berea, Athens Acts 17	62 A.D. Paul Ashore at Malta Acts 28
31 A.D. Stephen's Speech, Stoning and Death Acts 6, 7	48 A.D. Paul's First Missionary Journey Acts 13	51 A.D. Paul in Corinth Acts 18	62 A.D. Paul Preaches at Rome Acts 28:11
31 A.D. Saul Persecutes the Church Acts 8	48 A.D. Paul Preaches in Pisidian Antioch Acts 13:14	54 A.D. Paul in Ephesus Acts 19	

WHY DID LUKE WRITE ACTS?

Legal Reasons: Throughout Acts, Christians seem to have legal favor in the eyes of the Roman government. Time after time, the courts find no basis to charge them (Acts 18:12-17; 23:29; 25:25; 26:31-32). Some scholars have even suggested that Acts reads almost like a legal defense for Paul. While it was probably not written as a formal court document, it does show that Christianity was not a threat to Rome. Like the Jewish historian Josephus, Luke may have been demonstrating that this faith deserved legal protection within the empire.

Apologetic Reasons: That simply means Luke was defending and explaining Christianity. In the ancient world, older religions were respected because of their age. Christians needed to show that their faith was not something new, but the fulfillment of Israel's Scriptures. Luke consistently connects the message of Jesus to the Old Testament, showing that God had fulfilled His promise from centuries before.

THE MESSAGE OF ACTS

The central message is clear: The mission of Jesus did not end when He ascended; it expanded. The gospel crossed cultural boundaries and geographic borders, stretching beyond the Roman world at a rapid pace. The power behind this mission was not human strategy, careful planning, leadership skill or personal ability. It expanded by the power of the Holy Spirit, the same power that raised Christ from the grave; and that power still lives in us today. The mission remains the same: to tell everyone about Jesus and invite them to follow Him with us.

SOAR INSTRUCTIONS

At the end of each week, you will review what you have learned, reread the chapter, and fill out the page to tie it all together. Below are the directions for SOAR.

SCRIPTURE

S In this section, fill in the verse or passage that grabbed your attention. Before you begin, pray and ask God for His guidance as you read through His Word.

OBSERVATION

O What does God seem to be revealing through the Scripture? Answer the who, what, where and why questions. If you would like to go deeper, look up the Hebrew or Greek meaning and cross-reference different Scriptures with a familiar topic.

APPLICATION

A How can you begin to apply this Scripture to your life today? How can you live differently in light of what God has spoken to you?

REFLECTION

R Take a moment to be still and let God show you how to walk out this Scripture. Write a general thought or prayer asking God for wisdom and guidance.



WEEK 1

Verse of the Week

But you will receive power
when the Holy Spirit
comes on you; and you
will be my witnesses in
Jerusalem, and in all Judea
and Samaria, and to the
ends of the earth.

ACTS 1:8

DAY 1

Speaker Notes

Access Teaching Here



Discussion Questions



- 1. Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Holy Spirit.** Why do you think waiting was an important part of God's plan before they began their mission?

- 2. Waiting on God can sometimes feel difficult or uncertain.** What are some situations in life where people commonly find themselves waiting on God?

- 3. The disciples responded to waiting by obeying Jesus and returning to Jerusalem.** What does their obedience teach us about how we should respond when God asks us to wait?

- 4. Acts 1:14 says the believers devoted themselves to prayer together.** Why do you think prayer and community are especially important during seasons of waiting?

- 5. While they waited, the disciples also prepared.** What is one practical way you can stay faithful and prepared while waiting on God in your own life?

Write the Verse of the Week

- 1. According to verses 4-5, what is the “promise of the Father” that Jesus says the disciples will receive? (See John 14:26.)**
- 2. In verse 8, what word is used to describe what the Apostles would become when receiving the Holy Spirit?**
- 3. What does it mean to be a witness?
(see Isaiah 43:10; 1 John 1:1-3.)**
- 4. What might it look like in everyday terms to obey Jesus’ command to be His witnesses where we live, work, and interact with others?
(See John 13:34-35.)**

Write the Verse of the Week

- 1. In verse 11, what do the “two men dressed in white” (NIV) ask the disciples? What is the promise they leave with the disciples?**

- 2. Just like the Apostles, we can get stuck standing, staring and waiting for Jesus to act. Sometimes waiting is part of faith, but other times Jesus has already given us direction. Is there an area in your life where you feel stuck, but God may be inviting you to take the next step?**

- 3. In verse 14, what did the disciples do while they waited?**

- 4. Read Matthew 28:18-20. What do these verses tell us to do while we wait for Jesus to return?**

Write the Verse of the Week

**1. Who stood up and addressed the group of believers?
(See verse 15.)**

**2. Knowing Peter's character in the Gospels, does it surprise you that he stands up and leads the group here? Why or why not?
(Fill out the chart below to help you answer this question.)**

Verse Reference	What do you see in this Scripture?	What characteristics of Peter do you notice?
Matthew 14:28-31		
Matthew 16:22-23		
Luke 22:33-34		
Luke 22:54-62		
Luke 21:15-17		
Acts 1:15		

3. In verses 21-22, Peter gives two requirements for the man who would replace Judas as one of Jesus' original disciples. What are they?

DAY 6

COMMENTARY

by Pastor Ralph Johnson

The Purpose of the Book

The author of Acts, Luke, wrote this book to a friend named Theophilus. Luke's first book (the Gospel of Luke) told what Jesus did and taught before He died. The Book of Acts tells what Jesus' followers, the Apostles, did next.

Jesus' Final Instructions

Following His resurrection, Jesus spent 40 days offering "many infallible proofs" of His life and teaching His disciples about the kingdom of God. When the disciples asked if He would restore the kingdom to Israel, Jesus said the timing was a secret only the Father knew. Instead, He gave them a mission: They would receive power from the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the "ends of the earth." Acts 1:8 gives the plan for the rest of the book and the rest of our lives: "The good news will spread from Jerusalem to the entire world.

Jesus Goes to Heaven

After giving His mission, Jesus was lifted up into a cloud and went into Heaven. This is called the Ascension. As the disciples stood staring, two angels in white appeared. They told the disciples, “This same Jesus, which is taken from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into Heaven.” This means Jesus will return one day.

Praying and Preparing to Take the Gospel to the World

The disciples went back to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives (a walk of about a mile). About 120 believers were gathered in an upper room, including Mary (Jesus’ mother) and His brothers. They spent their time praying constantly “with one accord,” meaning they were all united (Acts 1:14). Peter stood up and led the group in choosing a new twelfth apostle to replace Judas, who had betrayed Jesus. The new apostle had to have been with Jesus the whole time, from when John the Baptist was baptizing until Jesus rose from the dead. This was so he could be a witness to the resurrection. They chose two men, and after praying for God’s guidance, they cast lots (like drawing names). The lot fell on Matthias, and he was added to the eleven Apostles. Acts 1 is a bridge between the Gospel of Luke and the church. It is extremely important due to its thorough explanation of the disciples’ “next steps.” Those steps have been and continue to be the foundation of Jesus’ disciples to this very day.

As you finish this week, go back and read through Acts 1 one more time.

You've heard the teaching, read the commentary and worked through the questions.

What stood out to you?

What surprised you?

What challenged you?

Complete the SOAR page (directions on page 9) as a way to review what God has been showing you this week.

Doing SOAR is like writing your own short devotional for this chapter. Put into words what you have learned and how God is speaking to you.

WEEK 1 – SOAR

Month -
Day -
Year -

Read Acts 1 again and complete this page.

S Scripture

O Observation

A Application

R Reflection



WEEK 2

Verse of the Week

And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord
will be saved.

ACTS 2:21

DAY 8

Speaker Notes

Access Teaching Here



Discussion Questions



- 1. The Holy Spirit came at Pentecost and filled the believers with power and boldness.** How did the coming of the Holy Spirit impact the lives of the disciples and those gathered together?

- 2. Peter explained that the coming of the Holy Spirit was the fulfillment of God's promise spoken through the prophet Joel (Acts 2:16-18).** What is the significance of the Spirit being poured out on all people, not just a few leaders or prophets?

- 3. Jesus taught that the Holy Spirit would bring conviction to the world (John 16:7-11).** Who is responsible for conviction, and how have you personally experienced the Holy Spirit leading you to a change in direction?

- 4. Acts 2:42-47 shows us what the early church looked like in everyday life.** What are some practical ways to live in relationship with other believers, and could become a result of living this way?

- 5. The early disciples lived with a daily awareness of the Holy Spirit's presence and guidance.** In what ways can you allow the Holy Spirit to lead you in your everyday life?

Write the Verse of the Week

- 1. In verses 2-4, something remarkable happens. Explain it in your own words.**

- 2. How is the crowd of Jewish people described in verses 6, 7 and 12?**

- 3. Reread Acts 1:8. Why did the Holy Spirit fill and equip Jesus' followers to speak in different languages?**

- 4. Miracles and unusual experiences are still reported today. Can you share a time you heard a story or witnessed an event that seemed hard to believe?**

Write the Verse of the Week

- 1. In verses 23-24 (NIV), Peter explains that Jesus' death happened according to God's "deliberate plan and foreknowledge." What do the words "deliberate plan" and "foreknowledge" mean, and what do these words reveal about God's purposes behind Jesus' death?**

- 2. Read Genesis 50:20. How does this verse connect to what Peter says in Acts?**

- 3. What is the promise given in verse 21? How does this promise bring comfort to you today?**

Write the Verse of the Week

- 1. In verse 37, what was the crowd's reaction after hearing Peter's sermon?**

- 2. In verse 38, Peter explains how people can receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. What does Peter tell them to do, and why do you think it matters?**

- 3. Verses 42-47 show us what the early church looked like. What stands out to you the most about how they lived and cared for one another?**

- 4. Looking at their example, what specific practices do you currently do or could do to help build a strong community that reflects Christ?**

DAY 13

COMMENTARY

by Amy Garcia

Acts 2 opens in Jerusalem during the Jewish holiday Shavuot (also called Pentecost), one of the three major Jewish festivals that required Jewish men to make an annual pilgrimage to the city. Shavuot celebrates the giving of the Torah (the first five books of the Bible) to Moses on Mount Sinai. As a result, worshipers from many countries and cultures filled Jerusalem. People who spoke different languages gathered in one place at the same time.

The disciples were together in the city when the Holy Spirit fell upon them. Luke describes dramatic signs accompanying this moment, including the disciples beginning to speak in different languages. These were real, recognizable languages spoken by the people present, which allowed listeners to hear the message clearly in their own native tongue. This moment represents a major turning point in the life of the Church.

First, it enabled the fulfillment of Jesus' command in Matthew 28:19–20, in which He instructed His followers to go and make disciples of all nations. The gospel was no longer limited by geography, culture, or language. Second, the coming of the Holy Spirit marked a shift: now, God's Spirit dwelled within believers, not just among them.

As a result, all people, regardless of background or ethnicity, can access the gospel message and the presence of the Holy Spirit. In this way, God

makes it clear that He offers salvation to everyone who responds in faith. The crowd's reaction, accusing the disciples of being drunk, sets the stage for one of the most significant sermons in Scripture. Peter, who denied knowing Jesus three times in Matthew 26:69-75, steps forward to boldly proclaim the gospel of Jesus. His transformation is unmistakable and points directly to the work of the Holy Spirit upon him. Peter addresses the misunderstanding by explaining that the crowd witnesses not drunk, but were instead the fulfillment of God's promise spoken through the prophet Joel (2:28-32). God pours out His Spirit on all people—men and women, young and old. As a result, this moment signals a new era in God's redemptive plan, in which His presence is available to all who believe.

From there, Peter centers his message on Jesus. He boldly proclaims Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah and reminds the crowd of His miracles and mighty works. Peter states clearly that God handed Him over according to His deliberate plan for salvation.

The heart of Peter's sermon is the resurrection. He declares that God raised Jesus from the dead and broke the power of death once and for all. Quoting from the Psalms, Peter shows that King David spoke about the Messiah, making it clear that Jesus was the promised Savior (Psalm 16:8-11).

Peter proclaims that God exalted Jesus to His right hand and poured out the Holy Spirit, an event the crowd now witnesses. Peter's message moves the crowd, who ask, "What shall we do?" Peter then calls them to repent, be baptized, and believe in Jesus, promising forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In Acts, repentance, faith, baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit are closely connected, but do not always happen in that exact order (Acts 8:14-17; 10:44-48; 19:1-6; Ephesians 1:13). However, the constant is that when someone turns to Jesus in faith, the Holy Spirit comes to live in them.

Acts 2 shows that the Spirit empowers believers to speak truth boldly, centers the gospel on the risen Christ and calls for a response. The same Spirit who transformed Peter now invites every listener and every reader to respond to Jesus in faith.

WEEK 2 – SOAR

Month -
Day -
Year -

Read Acts 2 again and complete this page.

S Scripture

O Observation

A Application

R Reflection



WEEK 3

Verse of the Week

Repent, then, and turn to
God, so that your sins may
be wiped out, that times of
refreshing may come from
the Lord.

ACTS 3:19

DAY 15

Speaker Notes

Access Teaching Here



Discussion Questions

- 1. Peter and John encounter a man, who has been unable to walk his entire life, sitting at the temple gate and asking for help.** When you look at the man sitting at the gate in Acts 3, what stands out to you most about his situation?

- 2. Instead of giving money, Peter offers something greater through the name of Jesus.** Peter says, “What I have, I give you” (Acts 3:6). What does this challenge you to consider in your own life?

- 3. The healing happens through faith in the name of Jesus, not through human ability (Acts 3:16).** What does this story teach you about the true source of healing and change in our lives?

- 4. After the miracle, Peter explains what happened by pointing people back to Scripture and to Jesus.** When you look back on meaningful moments in your life, how has God’s Word influenced those moments?

- 5. Peter calls the crowd to respond by turning to God (Acts 3:19).** What is one area of your life where you can take a step toward God this week?

Write the Verse of the Week

- 1. In this section, the lame man asks for money. What does Peter give him instead? (Read Acts 3:6.)**

- 2. In Acts 3:6, Peter tells the man to walk “in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.” What is the significance of this phrase, and why was it important for Peter to say it? (See Matthew 28:18 and John 14:12-13.)**

- 3. Peter noticed the man and stopped to help him. Can you think of a time when someone noticed your need and helped you?**

Write the Verse of the Week

- 1. In verses 13-16, what words does Peter use to describe Jesus?**
- 2. After the healing, Peter tells the people to repent. Why does he say they should repent, and what does he say will happen if they do? (Read Acts 3:17-23.)**
- 3. In verse 26, Peter speaks to a specific group, but the message still applies today. What is something in your life God may be nudging you to turn away from?**

DAY 20

COMMENTARY

by Pastor Chris Stephen

Acts 3 is frequently interpreted as a miracle narrative, and this is understandable.

A man disabled from birth is healed instantly through the name of Jesus. However, Luke's purpose extends beyond documenting supernatural events. He seeks to shape the church's imagination. Acts does not present a neutral historical account. It is a theological narrative, history written with formative intent. Luke carefully arranges events so that readers learn not only what occurred, but also how to interpret God's actions and understand how His people are called to live. Acts shapes both identity and mission.

In Acts 3, the central question extends beyond whether the risen Jesus continues to act powerfully. It asks, "What kind of people does the risen Jesus form to continue His work?" The narrative emphasizes not the miracle in isolation, but the formation that enables participation. Luke's answer is notably grounded in ordinary practices. The narrative centers on individuals shaped by prayer, attentiveness, obedience, and deep familiarity with Scripture. Their authority derives not from status or charisma, but from lives formed in God's presence. Read this way, Acts 3

becomes an invitation. It welcomes readers into the kind of life with God through which Christ continues His restoring work.

A Man at the Threshold (Acts 3:1-3)

Peter and John proceed to the Temple at the designated hour of prayer. Luke situates the miracle within the ordinary rhythms of devotion. In Acts, prayer consistently precedes proclamation, and worship precedes witness. Divine action emerges from established spiritual practices rather than spontaneous acts. In contrast, the life of the lame man is characterized by daily dependency. Carried each day to the Temple gate called Beautiful, he exists at a threshold: close to worship, yet not fully participating.

In the Second Temple period, physical disability often resulted in restricted access to communal worship. Although the Torah does not equate disability with sin, prevailing social assumptions frequently blur this distinction. The man occupies a painful in-between space: close enough to observe faith, yet excluded from full belonging. Before the miracle, Luke introduces a subtle theological question: Who remains at the thresholds of religious life, and have we become accustomed to their marginalization?

Formation That Learns to See (Acts 3:4-5)

Luke slows the narrative: “Peter looked straight at him, as did John.” Before power comes attention. They are not seeking a ministry opportunity; they are simply walking to prayer. Their attentiveness is not calculated but cultivated. Prayer has shaped their perception. Throughout Acts, prayer reorients vision. Individuals shaped by communion with God move at a different pace, noticing what hurried religious practice often overlooks. Recognition precedes healing. Before the man stands, he is fully seen.

When brokenness is overlooked, the issue is seldom God’s absence. More often, it reflects an underdeveloped attentiveness among God’s people. Formation begins not with authority, but with the capacity to perceive truly and compassionately, allowing God’s work to unfold.

“What I Have I Give You” (Acts 3:6–10)

The man requests money because his imagination has been shaped by the necessities of survival. Alms are what he expects the gates to provide. Peter responds, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do

have I give you.” He shows no embarrassment about what he lacks. His confidence rests in what he possesses: participation in Jesus’ authority. He acts “in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.” In biblical thought, a name signifies authority and delegated agency. Peter is not drawing from personal power but representing the risen Christ. He takes the man by the hand. Theological conviction is expressed through embodied obedience. The healing is immediate. The man walks, leaps, praises God — and enters the Temple. That entrance is the climax. The one who lived at the threshold now participates fully in worship. Restoration in this context is not limited to physical healing. It encompasses a sense of regained dignity, belonging, and being welcomed back into the community. Luke demonstrates that salvation extends beyond helping someone who is hurting to restoring membership among God’s people.

Scripture Interprets the Moment (Acts 3:11–26)

Although the crowd is astonished, Peter does not allow wonder to define the meaning of the event. Instead, he turns to Scripture. Quoting Deuteronomy 18, he identifies Jesus as the promised prophet like Moses. The miracle is not self-interpreting; it is located within God’s redemptive story. In Acts, Scripture provides the framework for interpreting power. Without such interpretation, awe can mislead; with Scripture, power becomes formative. In Acts 4:13, Peter and John are called “unschooled.” They lacked elite credentials but had a deep formation in Jesus. Their authority flowed from time spent with Him. Peter’s theology propels the mission. He calls for repentance, not as condemnation, but as reorientation. Repentance realigns allegiance and creates space for “times of refreshing” from the Lord’s presence. Salvation in Acts 3 is holistic, encompassing forgiveness of sin, restoration of dignity, and reintegration into worship. It is both personal and communal. The healed man does not merely walk again; He becomes part of the worshiping community. Forgiveness leads to belonging. Healing leads to participation.

Conclusion

Acts 3 is meant to be lived out. Acts shows Peter and John as ordinary people who had spent time with Jesus and were shaped by Him. A life shaped by Jesus notices people in the margins, steps forward with confidence, understands what is happening through Scripture, and points people toward restoration. God is still working. The real question is whether we are willing to be the people He works through. When

Jesus shapes our lives, barriers begin to fall, and Scripture helps us see what God is doing together. Restoration is not something rare or dramatic; it becomes something that happens through everyday people who have been with Jesus.

WEEK 3 – SOAR

Month -
Day -
Year -

Read Acts 3 again and complete this page.

S Scripture

O Observation

A Application

R Reflection



WEEK 4

Verse of the Week

Salvation is found in no one
else, for there is no other
name under heaven given
to mankind by which we
must be saved.

ACTS 4:12

DAY 22

Speaker Notes

Access Teaching Here



Discussion Questions



- 1. Peter's message about Jesus challenged the voices people were already listening to.** When you slow down and get honest, what voices or pressures are shaping your decisions right now?

- 2. Read Acts 4:24-30. Instead of asking God to take away the pressure, they asked for courage in the middle of it.** Where in your life are you asking for a way out, when God might be inviting you to stand strong?

- 3. The leaders were surprised, not by what the disciples knew, but by how clear it was they had been with Jesus.** If someone watched your life this week, what would stand out most?

- 4. By the end of Acts 4, their lives were so changed that they held everything with open hands.** Pastor Jeanne referred to this as a costly generosity. Is there a "costly generosity" the Spirit is nudging you toward today, perhaps involving your time, your forgiveness or your resources?

Write the Verse of the Week

- 1. Why were Peter and John arrested and placed in jail (Acts 4:2-3)? What message were they proclaiming that caused such opposition? (See Mark 12:8, Acts 23:8.)**

- 2. Read Luke 12:11-12. How is Jesus' promise fulfilled in Acts 4:8?**

- 3. How confident are you that the Holy Spirit will help you know what to say when sharing the gospel? How do these passages encourage you?**

Write the Verse of the Week

- 1. What do the leaders notice about Peter and John in verses 13-14?**

- 2. At first glance, Peter and John seemed completely unqualified. What qualified them, and how does this encourage you?**

- 3. What do verses 15-16 reveal about what the council was thinking?**

- 4. What did the council resolve to be the best solution in dealing with Peter and John? (Read verses 17-18.) What is their response? (Read verses 19-20.)**

Write the Verse of the Week

- 1. When the disciples are released, they pray. What did they pray for?**
- 2. The work of the Holy Spirit is highlighted in the section (See verses 25-31). Why do you think the writer draws attention to this?**
- 3. Where might God be inviting you to step out in boldness? Who is one person you could share your faith with this week?**

Write the Verse of the Week

- 1. In this section, what stands out to you about how the believers lived and shared with one another in this section?**

- 2. Reread verses 34-35. Why was it important for the early church to care for one another? How do you see that happening in the church today?**

- 3. How can you help build that kind of unity in your church community?**

DAY 27

COMMENTARY

by Pastor Jeanne Johnston

Acts chapter 4 shows us what happens when ordinary people are changed by an extraordinary Jesus. The chapter begins with trouble and ends with generosity, reminding us that the church doesn't grow because life is easy, but because God is faithful.

Standing Up for Jesus When It's Hard

After Peter and John heal a man who couldn't walk, they start telling people that this healing came through Jesus, who rose from the dead. This message makes the religious leaders, especially the Sadducees, angry, not because a man was healed, but because resurrection is being preached in Jesus' name. Proclaiming the resurrection was a declaration that God had overturned the leaders' verdict and vindicated Jesus. If Jesus is risen, then the cross was defeated, and Rome did not have the final word.

Resurrection confronts every rival claim to authority and presses the question, “Who truly rules?”

Peter and John are brought before the Sanhedrin, the same council that had examined Jesus. They are challenged with this question: “By what power or what name do you do this?” Instead of being scared, Peter speaks boldly. Luke presents this boldness not as a personality trait, but as a result of being filled with the Spirit. When Peter declares that salvation is found in no one else, it is not arrogance. It is rooted in who Peter knew Jesus to be: The risen Savior. There’s no other name, no other path, no substitute. This wasn’t said to shut people out, but to point them to the hope God has given the world.

The leaders notice something surprising: Peter and John aren’t trained scholars or polished speakers, but they speak with confidence and courage. The leaders realize they’ve been with Jesus, and that’s what makes the difference. Luke shows that real authority flows not from position or rank, but from a relationship with Jesus. Time with Jesus reshapes fear into courage.

Choosing God Over Fear

The leaders tell Peter and John to stop talking about Jesus. But the Apostles respond honestly: *We can’t stop talking about what we’ve seen and heard.* They choose obedience to God over obedience to fear.

WEEK 4 – SOAR

Month -
Day -
Year -

Read Acts 4 again and complete this page.

S Scripture

O Observation

A Application

R Reflection



WEEK 5

Verse of the Week

Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.

ACTS 5:42

Access Teaching Here



Discussion Questions



- 1. Acts 5 shows the danger of appearing faithful on the outside while hiding what is true on the inside.** Where are you most tempted to focus on your image instead of living with integrity?

- 2. In this chapter, actions revealed what was truly in the heart.** If someone watched your life for a week, what would your actions reveal about what matters most to you?

- 3. Peter calls out what Ananias and Sapphira tried to hide, reminding us that nothing is hidden from God.** What is one thing you already know God is asking you to do, but you have been putting off?

- 4. The early church was marked by honesty and unity, not image management.** How might your relationships change if you chose truth over trying to manage how you are perceived?

Write the Verse of the Week

- 1. What was the real problem with what Ananias and Sapphira did? Reread Acts 4:34-35 for context.**

- 2. Who does Peter tell Ananias he was actually lying to? (See Acts 5:4.)**

- 3. Ananias and Sapphira wanted to look more generous and spiritual than they really were. When have you been tempted to look more spiritual on the outside than you really are in your heart?**

Write the Verse of the Week

- 1. In verse 15, people were laying out mats in the street for the sick. What were they hoping for?**

- 2. Reread Acts 3:16 and Read Matthew 9:20-22. What is the true source of healing in these stories?**

Write the Verse of the Week

- 1. What was the council's reaction when they heard the apostles' message?**
- 2. What do you think Gamaliel advised: caution, or immediate reaction?**
- 3. Why would the Apostles rejoice after suffering instead of becoming discouraged? (Read Acts 5:41. See also Matthew 5:11-12; James 1:2-4.)**
- 4. When have you faced pressure to stay silent about Jesus? What did you do?**

DAY 34

COMMENTARY

by Jason Raitz

Acts 5 is a sobering chapter in the early church story. Luke shows us that the church was not only growing in numbers but also being formed in holiness. The chapter unfolds in two movements: God confronts sin inside the church (Acts 5:1-11) and God strengthens courage outside the church (Acts 5:12-42). Together, they reveal that God cares deeply about both the purity of His people and the boldness of their witness.

Ananias and Sapphira sell a piece of property and present money to the church while pretending they gave the entire amount (Acts 5:1-2). Their sin was not withholding some of the money; the land and the proceeds were theirs to manage, but the sin was deception. They wanted the appearance of full surrender without the reality of it. Peter confronts Ananias with a striking statement: "You have not lied just to human beings but to God" (Acts 5:4). The lie was ultimately directed at the Holy Spirit, reminding us that the Spirit is not an impersonal force but a divine person who can be grieved and dishonored. Both Ananias and Sapphira die, and Luke records that "great fear seized the whole church" (Acts 5:11). This fear reflects reverence and awe. God was establishing from the very

beginning that hypocrisy has no place in the life of His church, and that internal corruption can damage the community of faith more deeply than external persecution.

Following this moment of purification, Luke describes the growing influence of the Apostles (Acts 5:12). Signs and wonders occur among the people, and crowds gather with the sick and oppressed seeking healing (Acts 5:12-16). Some place the sick in the streets, hoping Peter's shadow might fall on them. The text does not say the shadow healed anyone, but it reveals how strongly people believed God was working through the Apostles. Luke concludes that "they were all healed" (Acts 5:16), highlighting the remarkable movement of God among the early believers. The sequence is important: First God confronts sin, then He releases power. A church marked by integrity becomes a church marked by spiritual authority.

The high priest and the Sadducees arrest the Apostles out of jealousy over their growing influence (Acts 5:17). During the night, an angel of the Lord opens the prison doors and instructs them to return to the temple courts and continue proclaiming "this new life" (Acts 5:20). Rather than escaping danger, the Apostles immediately obey and resume teaching at daybreak (Acts 5:21). When the authorities discover the empty prison, Luke underscores an important truth: The gospel cannot be contained by human power. When questioned again by the Sanhedrin, Peter responds with one of the defining statements of Christian obedience: "We must obey God rather than human beings" (Acts 5:29). The Apostles acknowledge earthly authority but recognize that God's authority is ultimate. Peter then summarizes the gospel simply and clearly: Jesus was killed, God raised Him, God exalted Him as Savior and repentance and forgiveness are now offered (Acts 5:30-31). The Apostles testify to these truths, and the Holy Spirit confirms them (Acts 5:32).

The council reacts with fury and considers executing the Apostles (Acts 5:33). Gamaliel, a respected Pharisee, advises caution, reminding the leaders that previous movements have collapsed on their own (Acts 5:34-38). His warning is memorable: "If it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men" (Acts 5:39). Though his reasoning is pragmatic rather than theological, his counsel proves wise. What God begins cannot ultimately be stopped. The Apostles are flogged and warned again not to speak in Jesus' name (Acts 5:40). Yet they leave rejoicing that they were considered worthy to suffer for Christ (Acts 5:41). Luke closes the chapter with a summary of their unwavering mission: "Day after day ...

they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah” (Acts 5:42). Despite threats, imprisonment and suffering, the message of Jesus continues to spread.

WEEK 5 – SOAR

Month -
Day -
Year -

Read Acts 5 again and complete this page.

S Scripture

O Observation

A Application

R Reflection

Clear Calling

by Pastor Mike Ash (South Tampa)

S - *So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them."* Acts 6:2-3

O - The Apostles had a clear understanding of who they were and who they weren't. They understood that they had two things: a calling from God and gifts from God, all of which were given to them to focus on certain aspects of ministry.

They also seemed to understand that if they tried to do it all and go outside of their calling and gifting, then it would slow down the move of God that was happening—and not only would it slow it down, but it would most likely cause frustration among the other Christians with them, because the need was greater than their ability.

This moment in time gave the church the ability to not just grow by addition, but multiply. When we identify where we're gifted and where we're not, and we engage others in their gifts, the move of God multiplies.

A - Where am I currently functioning outside of the calling and gifting that God has given me? Where am I frustrating others and myself because I am trying to do too much, or I'm trying to do things that, honestly, I'm just not good at?

These are great questions for me as I continue to serve Jesus in my work, at home, and in my church. I will be God's best version of myself when I focus on what God has given me, and I delegate the rest while developing the people that I delegate to.

R - Father, illuminate areas in my life where I need to stop doing some things in order to focus more on the calling and gifting that you've given me. Send people my way to help me delegate the things that I shouldn't be doing so that balls don't drop, but are picked up by others with different giftings than mine. Amen.

Higher Perspective

by Pastor Jerry Batista (Temple Terrace)

S - *But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."*
Acts 7:55–56

O - Stephen is facing rejection and death after boldly proclaiming Jesus. Yet instead of fear or panic, Scripture says he was full of the Holy Spirit and looked toward Heaven. He sees:

- the glory of God
- Heaven opened
- Jesus standing at God's right hand

Jesus is usually described as sitting, but here He stands, showing approval, welcome and advocacy for His faithful servant.

Stephen's outward circumstances were painful, but his inward reality was filled with God's presence.

A - What fills me determines what I see.

When I focus only on pressure, problems feel overwhelming. But when I am filled with the Holy Spirit, my perspective changes: I remember God is present and working even in difficult moments.

This passage challenges me to:

- Lift my eyes above temporary struggles.
- Seek Spirit-filled perspective daily.
- Remain faithful even when obedience is costly.
- Live for Heaven's approval more than people's approval.

As a believer and leader, I'm reminded that faithfulness matters more than comfort.

R - When I lift my eyes to heaven, my circumstances lose their power over my perspective. Lord, fill me with Your Holy Spirit so I can see life from Heaven's perspective. When I face pressure or discouragement, help me lift my eyes toward You. Give me the courage to stand for You, knowing that You stand with me. Help me live for Your approval above all else. Amen.

Which One Are You?

by Devin Alvarez (Carrollwood)

S - *"How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So, he invited Phillip to come up and sit with him. Acts 8:31*

O - This chapter focuses on Phillip, a disciple of the early church after Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension. He had just preached the gospel in Samaria to crowds, healing and rebuking demons, and it says there was much joy in the city. Phillip is then called by an Angel of the Lord to a desert road to meet with a single Ethiopian eunuch traveling by carriage from Jerusalem. The man is reading from the book of Isaiah, a book full of prophecies of a coming Messiah, later fulfilled by Jesus. When Phillip explains the Scriptures to him, his immediate response is for Phillip to baptize him in some water on the side of the road. And when they separate, he went on his way rejoicing. The Holy Spirit used Phillip to become a guide to a single traveler on a desert road. The eunuch was personally practicing the disciplines of reading scripture, but it was in side-by-side Bible study and relationship that he went from informed to transformed.

A - Though I grew up in church, I wasn't taught how to read the Bible and really struggled to understand and want to read it. This passage shows me that it took the humility of the eunuch to admit he needed a teacher, and Phillip's obedience to be willing to share what he knew.

Consider your relationship with the Bible. Are you the eunuch or Phillip in this story? Or maybe we should consider ourselves both? As we saw, Scripture is meant to be read and studied together. As the eunuch, do you have a person or community that you can bring your questions? As Phillip, who in your life is the Holy Spirit prompting you to disciple through the Word?

R - Jesus, thank You for the gift of Your Word. Please give me your wisdom and understanding as I read. Reveal Your character through the pages so that I can fall more in love with You. Lead me to people and places that can help me go deeper, and to those with whom I can share my understanding. Amen.

Response and Action

by Pastor Kristin Bonham (Lutz)

S - *Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized. Acts 9:18*

O - Saul has been a fierce persecutor of Christians, arresting them and endorsing their deaths. On his way to Damascus, suddenly a light flashes around him, and he falls to the ground and has an encounter with Jesus. His traveling companions are stunned because he's been struck blind.

At the same time, God speaks in a vision to a man named Ananias, instructing him to go to Saul and pray to restore his sight. Ananias is hesitant because he's heard of Saul's reputation, but he obeys God and goes to Saul, praying for his sight to be restored and to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Paul's immediate response to this encounter is action: he responds to the Spirit by getting baptized.

A - Paul's experience reminds me that God is constantly at work through us to accomplish His will, and He will do what is necessary to get our attention. Importantly, He also requires our participation and response. I can relate to Ananias in feeling hesitant, but just as He encouraged him, God encourages me when I have questions. How is God speaking to you today? What is your necessary response and action? If you have doubts or questions, remember that He is with you and encouraging you as you step out in faith. The more you listen and respond to the Spirit in your life, the more clearly you will recognize His voice leading you.

R - Jesus, I get excited when I sense you speaking to me and leading me. I want my first response to be yes. When I question or doubt, help me take the step and act on what you're saying, confident that you are with me. Amen.

Relationship With God is for Every Person

by Pastor Chris Bonham (Lutz)

S - *I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.*

Acts 10:34–35

O - Peter is not merely speaking; he is awakening. Standing in the home of Cornelius, a Gentile, he realizes his understanding of God was too small. For generations, many believed access to God primarily belonged to one people. Yet Peter declares God is not an “accepter of faces,” meaning He shows no partiality based on background, culture, or history. He looks at the heart.

This moment shifts the entire direction of the church. The relationship with God was never meant to stay inside a familiar circle. The gospel moves from a national identity to a personal faith. God’s invitation extends to every person willing to trust Him. The same grace that reached Peter and has reached us was always intended for the world.

A - Jesus’ command to go into all nations does not only mean crossing oceans; often it means crossing the room. The people you meet today are not accidents. They may be God-appointed moments. The coworker, neighbor, cashier or parent beside you is someone God already loves and is already pursuing.

So live intentionally. Pray before ordinary interactions. Listen carefully. Show sincere kindness. When the door opens, gently share what Christ has done in your life. Your faith is not private property; your life is meant to become a doorway. God changed you not only for your sake, but so someone else could move one step closer to Him. Step beyond comfort and trust the Spirit to work through simple obedience.

R- Heavenly Father, You are the God of all people, and You formed each life with purpose and love. Thank You for drawing me to Yourself. Open my eyes today to the people You place in front of me. Give me courage to move beyond comfort, compassion to truly care, and words that gently point to Jesus. Let my life become a pathway that helps someone take a step closer to You. Amen.

Obedience Over Tradition

by Alexis Patterson (Lutz)

S - *So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God's way? Acts 11:17*

O - Peter had just come back to Jerusalem, where he was confronted by the Jews about the fellowship dinner and his extension of salvation to the Gentiles. Peter had no doubt that he was to baptize the Gentiles with the Holy Spirit because he had previously had a vision in which the Holy Spirit revealed to him what he was to do.

Peter's argument to his Jewish brothers was that the gift given to them by believing in Jesus was the same gift that had been given to the Gentiles. Who was anyone, Jew or Gentile, to stand in the way of what God was doing in the lives of those who have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?

A - At times, it can be easy to attach ourselves to customs and traditions, forgetting to leave room for the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God living in, around and through us; and when He gives us an assignment, it is for us to obey without question. Peter knew that the Holy Spirit led him to lead the Gentiles to salvation. It didn't matter what they ate or didn't eat or how different their customs were from the Jews; God had a bigger plan: salvation to all who believed. Like Peter asked, "Who was I to stand in God's way?" Who are we to stand in the way of what God is doing?

R - Lord, thank You that You choose when and how You decide to pour Your Spirit out. Please forgive me for the times when I have fallen into the pattern of customs and traditions over Your Spirit's promptings. Open my eyes to see the people and places where You are moving so that I can join You in spreading the gospel. Amen.

Held by Sovereignty, Strengthened in Prayer

by Pastor Hal Mayer (Lutz)

S - *Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything, "The Jewish people were hoping would happen." When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying.*

Acts 12:11-12

O - King Herod Agrippa rules Judea and the surrounding regions and feels threatened by the growth of Christianity and the unrest it stirs among his people. He has James, the brother of John, executed, and when he sees that this pleases the Jewish leaders, he arrests Peter as well. While Peter is in prison, God sends an angel to free him, and Peter goes straight to the gathered believers, who are actively praying in the midst of the crisis. Together, they recognize that Peter's escape is a clear work of God. Herod, consumed by pride and accepting glory that belongs to God, is then struck down in judgment. Even though God's choices in this chapter can be hard to understand—James dies while Peter is rescued—Acts 12 shows both the reality of ongoing evil and the certainty that it will not finally prevail, and highlights the vital role of the church gathering in communal prayer.

A - Two themes stand out: God's sovereignty, and the power of communal prayer. Do I truly trust God's sovereignty, and do I intentionally gather with others to pray when life is beyond my control? I need to keep rehearsing God's character so I can rest in Him even when I don't understand what He is doing—for example, by writing out His attributes and thanking Him for them. I also want to pray with others more often—because there is real power when believers seek God together—in my home as a family, with believing neighbors for our neighborhood and with my church for our city.

R - God, You are at work even when I cannot see what You are doing. You always hold the bigger picture in view. Evil can seem close, but steadiness, clarity, and fresh strength are found not just in the community of believers that surround me, but always in You. Amen.

Set Apart and Sent Out

by Michele Laccabue (Carrollwood)

S - *While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Acts 13:2*

O - Saul (soon to be called his Greek name Paul; Acts 13:9) is about to embark on the first of his three missionary journeys. DURING a time of worship and fasting, they experience the move of the Holy Spirit. Paul is empowered to pursue his God-given calling to spread the gospel and grow the church in cities far and wide. Interestingly, those who gathered (Acts 13:1) to worship, fast, and pray (Acts 13:3) were a socially, racially, and geographically diverse group. Greek, African, Roman, and Jewish men with a common faith in Jesus came together in unity. I believe this foreshadows the diversity of people groups Paul will be ministering to, notably the Gentiles (non-Jewish). Paul and Barnabas are prayed over and "sent off" (Acts 13:3) to proclaim God's Word and testify of the risen Savior (Jesus!). Many believed, but they met opposition too (they "shook the dust off their feet" Acts 13:51). They kept on moving...

A - Lean into the move of the Holy Spirit through dedicated times of worship, fasting, and Prayer. Empty myself of my own agenda and allow the Holy Spirit's presence to fill and lead my Life. Listen to the prompt of the Holy Spirit and accept the calling He has set me apart for. What mission am I being "sent out" to do? In my family, church, community, city, nation, world? Eyes open to the diversity of God's Kingdom. Do not exclude anyone who looks different from me. Who can I pray for and encourage today to keep moving?

R - Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Holy Spirit! You call, you empower, you move me. Thank you for daily opportunities to spread the Good News of Jesus and proclaim your Word. Please alert my mind and guide my steps to put your will into action today. Help me see the "mission" you have set me apart and keep me moving towards it. Amen.

Get Back Up

by Travis Hafner (South Tampa)

S - *But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe. Acts 14:20*

O - Paul had gone to Lystra to preach the Gospel. When Paul healed a blind man, the people thought he and Barnabas were gods. Paul corrected the people and gave glory to God, but the people quickly turned on Paul and stoned him, leaving him for dead. Paul was then healed, and he got up and went about 30 miles to Derbe on foot, where he preached the Gospel once again, and many people came to know the Lord. Later, Paul went back to Lystra, where he was stoned, to strengthen the believers.

A - I am amazed at Paul's commitment to serving the Lord, even when there is extreme persecution. Paul did not care about comfort, which is something I can struggle with. We need to be bold and get out of our comfort zone, whether it is sharing our faith with a co-worker, leading a bible study, or serving others to show them Jesus. Following Jesus is not easy; there will be trials and struggles, but Paul's perseverance is a great encouragement to me.

R - Jesus thank you that we can have a relationship with you. Help me to follow you with perseverance, knowing that going through trials is a powerful way to grow our faith. Help me to be bold and share my faith with others. Amen.

Salvation by Grace Through Faith

by Pastor Matt Perry (Suncoast)

S - *No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are. Acts 15:11*

O - Have you ever heard believers debating over church doctrine? This has been going on since the church was established in the book of Acts. Church historians note seven ecumenical councils in early church history. These councils gathered church leaders from all over the world to settle these important issues. None was more vital than the first council documented in Acts 15. This chapter focuses on the Jerusalem Council. The Jerusalem Council was so significant because it answered the question, "What must a person do to be saved?" Many of the early Jewish believers were arguing that a person must keep the law of Moses and be circumcised in order to be saved. Today, we call this "legalism." Legalism says you must follow the law in order to be saved. In other words, it holds to the belief that it's our works and self-righteousness that save us. In verses 7-11, Peter stands up and gives a powerful and truthful argument: it is only through hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ and believing that anyone can be saved. This is where we come to verse 11, where Peter summarizes his argument and brings the truth home: It is only by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ that a person can be saved.

A - I remember how hard I used to try to clean my life up before I felt worthy enough to give my life to Christ. I would fall into these cycles of conviction, changing my behavior and trying to use willpower to walk the straight and narrow. Every time I would fail and fall away from God. This cycle would repeat itself for years as I tried to work my way into salvation. The pattern finally stopped once I actually believed the gospel, surrendered my efforts, and fully gave my heart to Christ. I had to realize that my works were nothing, and it is only by believing in the finished work of Jesus Christ that I can be saved.

Is there an area of your life that you haven't fully given over to Christ? Is there any area that you are still trying to clean up by willpower and your own efforts? Our salvation in Jesus Christ is just the beginning. We must rely on the power of the Holy Spirit inside of us to truly change our desires and change our behaviors to be more like Christ. Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart and reveal the thoughts, feelings and behaviors that you need to give over to Him.

R - Lord, thank You that it is only by grace through faith that we are saved. Help us to see that salvation is a lifelong journey of yielding to the Holy Spirit to become more like Jesus. I pray that we would know what it truly means to be saved by grace, and walk in the power of Your Holy Spirit and bear fruit for Your Kingdom. In Jesus name. Amen.

Concluding Faith

by Pastor Kevin Miller (South Tampa)

S - *After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. Acts 16:10*

O - Have you ever felt so sure that you were doing the right thing, but it's just not working anymore? That's what Paul ran into in Acts 16. In Acts 9, God called Paul to preach the gospel (Acts 9:15). In Acts 13, the church leaders commissioned Paul and Barnabas and sent them to do missionary work (see Acts 13:3). Then in Acts 16, after some wildly successful ministry, they get shut down, but not in the way we'd expect. The devil didn't shut their ministry down—God did (see Acts 16:6-7)!

Shortly after God shut Paul down twice in Asia, Paul had a dream about a man in Macedonia asking for help. Two “no’s” and a dream were enough for Paul to conclude that God was completely redirecting their entire ministry...to a different continent! No booming voice from Heaven. No angelic messengers. Just two “no’s” and a dream, and they set sail across the Aegean Sea for Macedonia! That is faith!

A - If we sense the Lord redirecting our plans, we tend to respond in a couple of ways:

- 1) We resist His new plan and fight to keep going in what was working or what we prefer.
 - 2) We delay obedience, waiting for all the pieces to fall perfectly into place.
- Acts 16 gives us an alternative: “concluding faith.” Concluding faith doesn't fight a new thing God is doing, and it doesn't delay obedience, waiting for the stars to align. Concluding faith acts. It doesn't have all the facts and still has plenty of questions, but has enough clarity to do the next right thing. Concluding faith allows us not to stress over the details because we trust in the God who works out all the details.

R - God, help me to develop a “concluding faith” – a faith that doesn't wait for the details, but a faith that trusts You with the details. I want to hear Your still, small voice, then be quick to act in big, bold faith. Thank You for sorting out the details. Help me trust you when all that I can see is the next step right in front of me. I trust You, help me trust You more! Amen.

Don't Just Listen. Examine.

by Willie Hallmon (Land O' Lakes)

S - *Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.* Acts 17:11

O - After being forced out of Thessalonica by a mob stirred up by the Jews, Paul and Silas arrived in Berea and once again began sharing the gospel in the Jewish temple. But this time, the response is strikingly different. Instead of hostility, they encountered Jews who displayed openness and genuine curiosity.

The writer of Acts highlights something remarkable about the Berean Jews: He calls them “noble” in character. This nobility wasn't just about social status; it was about their posture of heart and mind. The Berean Jews did not immediately react defensively or dismissively to Paul's message. Instead, they leaned in.

They also did not blindly accept Paul's message. Rather, they engaged it thoughtfully. Day after day, they turned to the Scriptures, which would have been the Old Testament during that time, to confirm the truth of Paul's words. The result? Many became believers of Jesus Christ.

A - The Berean Jews challenge me to take a closer look at how I engage with God's Word. It's easy to sit through a sermon, listen to a podcast, or watch Christian content and assume that what I'm hearing is enough or safe to accept. But the Bereans remind me that spiritual growth doesn't come from passive listening; it comes from active and intentional pursuit of truth through reading my Bible.

We all have voices we trust—pastors, authors, Christian influencers—but even the best of them should never replace our own time with our Bibles. So, it's worth asking whose voice is shaping you more: others', or God's Word itself? This week, take a step toward being more like the Berean Jews. Slow down and reflect on what you hear. When you hear a sermon or podcast, don't just nod along. Write things down, ask questions, and then study your Bible to confirm if it's true. Pause and ask, “What does the Bible say about this?”

R - Lord, help me to be discerning when I hear others speak on Your Word. Let me not just take information in, but be transformed. Amen.

Speak Up!

by Pastor Dwayne Cardenas (Ybor)

S - *One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent." Acts 18:9*

O - At this moment, God speaks directly to Paul in a vision while he is in Corinth, a city known for its opposition and spiritual resistance. Paul had already faced rejection, conflict and pressure in previous cities, and the tension in Corinth was no different. However, God gives a clear and simple command: Do not be afraid, keep speaking, and do not be silent.

This instruction reveals both the reality of fear and the expectation of perseverance. Fear was present, but it was not meant to dictate Paul's actions. Instead of removing the challenge, God calls Paul to remain faithful within it. The emphasis is not on changing the environment, but on sustaining the mission. Speaking the truth of the gospel was not dependent on comfort or safety, but on obedience to God's voice and God's presence.

A - This verse challenges the tendency to withdraw when facing fear or resistance. There are moments when speaking up about faith, truth or conviction feels uncomfortable or even risky.

Where has fear led to silence in your faith journey? Where is there hesitation to speak truth, encourage someone or stand firm in faith? Obedience often looks like consistency: not boldness in a single moment but faithfulness over time.

R - Jesus, give us the courage to speak when fear says stay silent. Strengthen our faith to trust You in every moment of uncertainty. Amen.

Destiny Delayed

by Pastor Chris Rinklin (Land O' Lakes)

S -After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. "After I have been there," he said, "I must visit Rome also." Acts 19:21

O -Paul said, "He *must* visit Rome!" He didn't use that strong language about many other parts of his mission. To me, this represented a bullseye, his definition of success in his mission! There was a sense of *destiny* in Paul preaching the gospel in *Rome*, to Caesar in the epicenter of the known world. The interesting part is that it took Paul years from that moment to get there and lots of "in-between" stuff. As an 18-or-19-year-old young man in Bible college, I had a sense of destiny about ministry that represented my *Rome*. Although there were a few years of ministry after Bible college, my path shifted to a corporate career for 17 years! In all of those years, the call of God to full-time ministry burned in my heart. Maybe *corporate* represented the "in-between" parts of my journey to Rome that, if I wasn't careful, I would discount as "less than" and not as important in my journey.

A -What is the sense of destiny that you have in your heart but feel stuck in Achaia, Macedonia, bound in Jerusalem, in prison in Caesarea, shipwrecked in Malta? Yeah, that's the "in-between" on Paul's road to his *destiny*, but those moments were filled with connection, miracles, people getting saved, angels appearing, favor, etc.!

R - Jesus, sometimes I feel like my "Rome" is elusive and unachievable. But I know that you are committed to fulfilling Your purpose in me. Help me to remember that what seems delayed may very well be right on time, and that you can do more in 5 minutes that I can in 50 years. Let me stay faithful in all the "in-between," trusting that You have led me there as well as to my calling. Amen.

The Life That Gives

by Pastor Mike Moore (Land O' Lakes)

S - *In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Acts 20:35*

O - Paul is speaking to the Ephesian elders in what is essentially a farewell moment. He knows this may be the last time he sees them, so he doesn't just give instructions; he gives them his life as an example. He reminds them that his ministry wasn't built on comfort or personal gain. He worked hard, not just to provide for himself, but to care for others, especially the weak. His life modeled something deeper than leadership...it modeled sacrifice. What stands out is that Paul ties this way of living back to Jesus. Interestingly, this specific quote from Jesus isn't recorded in the Gospels, but it was clearly known among the early church: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Paul is reinforcing a kingdom principle: The life that looks like loss to the world...serving, giving, pouring out, is actually the life that carries the greatest blessing. This flips our natural instinct. Most of us are wired to accumulate, protect, and preserve. But the kingdom of God operates differently: Blessing flows outward, not inward.

A - This verse challenges how I define blessing. It's easy for me to associate blessing with what I receive, provision, favor and opportunity. But here, Paul reminds me that true blessing is often found in what I give away... my time, my energy, my resources, my attention. Where in my life am I holding back instead of pouring out? Who around me is "the weak" that God is asking me to notice and support?

For you:

- Is there someone in your circle who needs encouragement, support, or practical help?
- Are you living in a way that models generosity, or just talking about it?
- Are you waiting until you "have more" before you give, or are you giving out of what you have now? Giving isn't just financial; it is relational, emotional and spiritual. Sometimes the greatest gift you can offer is presence, consistency or simply showing up. The kingdom mindset says, "I don't give once I'm blessed...I give because I am blessed."

R - Jesus, help me to remember that the life that gives is the life that gains what actually matters. Amen.

When Is Courage > Conflict?

by Pastor Amy Hafner (South Tampa)

S - *Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." Acts 21:13*

O - Paul was in Caesarea surrounded by people who loved him. These people also loved God and were not against His plan, but they were trying to protect Paul. They knew what Paul was about to walk into: suffering, arrest, hardship and death. Their response is natural as they plead with him not to go. But Paul is not driven by fear or even by the voices of people he loves. His response is both tender and firm: "You are breaking my heart." At the same time, he reminds them, "I am ready."

A - Have you ever felt pulled more toward safety and security rather than toward what God is asking you to do? I know I have. Sometimes the hardest part of obedience is not opposition; it is love. It is the voices of people who care about you. A question I struggle with is: Am I more committed to being comfortable, or committed to Christ and his call? What would it look like for you to say, "I am ready"?
Ready to obey God, even when it's uncomfortable.
Ready to trust the Holy Spirit, even if it is unclear.
Ready to follow Jesus, even if it costs something.

R - Ask: Is this wisdom or fear? Does it align with God's will? Am I hesitating because it is wrong or because it is hard? Have I been still long enough to know the difference?

Jesus, help me not to be led by comfort or fear of conflict, but give me courage to do what you have called me to do. Amen.

Get Up and Go!

by Pastor Cheryl Anderson (Lutz)

S - *“What shall I do, Lord?” I asked. “Get up,’ the Lord said, ‘and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.”*
Acts 22:10

O - Paul is in Jerusalem speaking to an angry mob of Jewish leaders who are in an uproar because Paul was preaching salvation to the Gentiles. They were planning to beat him to death. Then the Roman soldiers came and tied his hands in chains. Paul asked permission to speak to the crowd in his defense. He begins by telling them that he is also a Jew trained in the Law by one of the most respected rabbis of that time. He then recalls his Damascus road encounter and how Jesus called him to preach to the Gentiles. What stands out is that Paul asked Jesus for direction, but Jesus did not tell him the whole plan. He just gave him the next step: “Get up and go!” Paul had to take a step of faith and obedience, or he might have missed the plan. Once Paul arrived in Damascus, he received his assignment to preach to the Gentiles, and this changed the world.

A - This verse reminds me of “Mission Impossible.” God has a holy assignment for me if I choose to accept it. I don’t have to see how everything is going to unfold before I take a step of faith. Jesus is inviting us to partner with Him in reaching the world. Where have you felt God calling you to take a step? What is holding you back? We can trust the heart of the Father to place us very intentionally where He wants to use us. It is an exciting adventure with eternal rewards if we choose to accept the mission.

R - Jesus, I don’t want to miss the adventure of a lifetime because I am afraid to step out. I surrender control and I break up with fear today. Help me to be obedient when You ask me to get up and go. I trust You to lead me intentionally where You want to use me to reach my family, my community and a hurting world.

Take Courage

by Pastor Doug Otto (Lutz)

S - *The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome." Acts 23:11*

O - The Apostle Paul is surrounded by chaos and conflict in and leading up to and into chapter 23. He's being falsely accused, and he's brought before the council, and a fight breaks out between the Sadducees and Pharisees that was so violent that Paul was almost "torn to pieces." There's even a plot to kill him! You can imagine the strain and weight that Paul felt. It's in the middle of all this going on that verse 11 tells us "... the Lord stood near Paul." Can you imagine that alone?! It's powerful for Paul to know that he's not left alone, but then the Lord said, "Take courage!" What a breath of fresh air it must have been for Paul to hear the Lord Himself encourage him! Even in the chaos, God is in control and using it to position Paul to testify in Rome. God had a plan, and what was happening was part of His plan, even if it doesn't feel like it. Wow! I love that God knows just what we need and when we need it.

A - This verse reminds me that even when I face times of opposition in my life, God's plan for me isn't derailed. Even in times of chaos, God is working to position us for His purposes. It doesn't have to make sense to me; I can trust God. It also reveals to us that God knows we are flesh and need encouragement, and He will provide it. If he'll tell Paul to take courage, He'll do the same for us! What we might see as a setback may actually be a divine setup for God's plans to be lived out in our lives. *Take courage!*

R - Lord, help me to not confuse resistance with rejection. Sometimes resistance is the confirmation that I'm right where You want me. Help me to take courage. Amen.

The Ultimate Advocate

by Ryan Lagasse (South Tampa)

S - *However, I admit that I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets Acts 24:14*

O - Antonius Felix was appointed Governor of Judea by the emperor Claudius Lysias. Felix was to oversee the trial Paul faced as a result of being falsely accused of being a “troublemaker” by causing riots and defiling the Temple in Jerusalem. Now, this trial was unfair from the beginning. Paul was forced to defend himself in this court of law while the Sanhedrin (the Supreme Court of the Jewish people) brought in a professional “hired gun” attorney named Tertullus. As the trial commenced, Tertullus brought the Sanhedrin’s case against Paul by outlining the evidence. However, the evidence presented was entirely false. Paul was then afforded his right and opportunity to represent himself in a court of law. Paul countered each accusation with truths, dispelling each piece of evidence used against him. As Paul continued to dispute the false charges, he remained steadfast in his belief in the Way, the Law, the resurrection and the Scriptures, according to the prophets. Lastly, Paul did what he always did and loved those who opposed and persecuted him.

A - As Paul stood trial, representing himself without an attorney, he had the ultimate advocate standing by his side. Paul’s words and responses to Tertullus were not his own, but in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, in which there is no better defense attorney one could ever ask for. In today’s culture, those who take a stand for Christ will always face opposition and at times, false accusations and unfair judgment. In those moments, we must remember that we have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb and are never alone; the Spirit is always with us. When we encounter resistance, we should strive to respond as Paul did: with faithfulness and unwavering commitment to the Truth.

R - Father, help us be like Paul in the face of opposition by loving those who oppose us while having an uncompromising faith.

When Life Isn't Fair

by Rori Braum (Lutz)

S - *If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!* Acts 25:11

O - Festus (the governor) has taken over the province of Judea from Felix, the religious leaders in Jerusalem see this as an opportunity to accuse Paul again, and this time, murder him. Festus, being a fair ruler, calls them all to Caesarea instead of Jerusalem (the religious rulers had plotted to kill Paul by ambush while he was journeying to Jerusalem) to hear Paul's case. Paul defends himself easily as the religious leaders accuse Paul of serious crimes, but have no real evidence against Paul. The only argument is over the religious beliefs of Jesus. Festus offers Paul the option to go to Jerusalem to be tried, but Paul knows that would surely lead to his death. Paul, being a Roman citizen, has the right to appeal to Caesar himself. Paul, needing protection from the false accusations of the religious leaders, claims his protection under Roman law as his right to appeal to Caesar. Festus cannot deny him. Agrippa comes to visit Festus, as Festus wants a second opinion on Paul's case, because he needs more information before he can send Paul to Caesar.

A - Life isn't fair. This is a statement we hear from an early age. I know we all have experienced the disappointment of something not going our way; not receiving something we have worked hard for, only to learn it was given to someone else; or being falsely accused of something you didn't do. It is frustrating, especially when you can defend every point against you, only to fall on deaf ears.

Even though life isn't fair, God provides us peace through His protection. Paul was provided with so many protections by God in this chapter: being jailed in Caesarea instead of Jerusalem, Festus being appointed as governor, and Paul claiming his right as a Roman citizen to be tried by Caesar. Paul was allowed to go to Rome, where he could continue to spread the gospel. We can rest in God's goodness for us, too. He will provide peace through His protection in difficult times and situations.

R - Lord, I thank You for the trials that come my way. I am reminded that You are in control of all situations, even the ones that seem hopeless. Even through disappointment, I can rest in Your plan, knowing You protect me, keep me sheltered, and want so much more for me than what I can only see for now. I ask that during these times, You open my eyes to see where You are in the midst of my heartache, and walk me toward the call and plan You have waiting for me. Amen.

Stand. Sent. Speak.

by Pastor Pam Otto (Lutz)

S - *Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me.* Acts 26:16

O - In this verse, Paul explains to King Agrippa how Jesus appeared to him, transformed his life, and spoke these words of challenge and instruction. Jesus commanded Paul to stand, be a witness to others and share about the vision he saw and all he would see in the days ahead.

A - This verse inspires and instructs each of us to get up and get after it, to become diligent about sharing with others how Jesus has changed everything about our lives, and to expect that He will continue to do more! This verse refers to being a witness: one who provides testimony about what they have experienced!

I am reminded to be bold, to be ready, and to be obedient to share with others all the ways that God has shown up in my life—to trust that He will take my story and use it as an invitation to others.

R - Lord Jesus, thank You for revealing Yourself to me, for calling me to something bigger, for inviting me into Your plan. Thank You for choosing me to serve You and share You with others. Help me to be a bold, obedient and clear witness to others! Amen

Don't Jump Ship

by Pastor Ricky Garcia (Lutz)

S - *Then Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay with the ship, you cannot be saved. Acts 27:31*

O - Anchoring to Plan A. It seems insane to trust someone who says, "Don't jump ship!" when the ship is clearly sinking. Our instinct is to run, but Paul was anchoring the crew to the same thing he was anchored to: God's promise. Earlier, God sent an angel to tell Paul, "I've got this" (Acts 27:23-24). Yet, even with a divine guarantee, safety required their obedience. Paul made it clear that the miracle was tied to their willingness to stay on board. God's protection was found inside the storm, not in a runaway lifeboat. The turning point comes in verse 32 when the soldiers finally heeded Paul's word and cut the ropes to their Plan B. By letting the lifeboats drift away, they abandoned their human safety nets and anchored themselves completely to Plan A—God's word. The ship eventually smashed into pieces, forcing everyone to swim or grab wreckage to reach the beach. It wasn't a pretty landing, but just as God promised, every single person made it to shore because they chose not to jump ship.

A - Cutting the Ropes. This passage reminds us that God's promises are almost always accompanied by a process—one that often includes more lows than highs. In those low moments, we struggle to trust the "messy" place and look for a shortcut. We often trade God's plan for self-reliance, but a sinking ship covered by a divine promise is infinitely safer than a sturdy lifeboat tethered to our own strength. To fully anchor ourselves to God's will, we must cut the ropes to our Plan B. Are there backup plans you are holding on to just in case God doesn't come through? When we stop trying to rescue ourselves, we create space to hear His voice over the storm, saying, "Don't jump ship." Trust today that even if the boat breaks, His promise will carry you to the shore.

R - Lord, Your promises are stronger than these waves. I confess I've held onto "lifeboats" out of fear. Today, I cut the ropes to my Plan B. Give me the courage to stay in the ship and the peace to know You will bring me safely to shore. Amen.

Right Where You Are

by Gabbi Vicinanza (Lutz)

S - *He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance! Acts 28:31*

O - Throughout Acts, we hear of Paul's incredible journey that was filled with many obstacles. He is preaching the gospel boldly, on a mission from God (Acts 23:11) to get to Rome, and then he gets thrown into jail. From there, he continues his journey and mission to appear before many different government officials and trials, encountering many obstacles to the point where he ends up shipwrecked in Malta. But finally, comes the time when Paul arrives in Rome, he made it.

The journey wasn't immediate, and it was not easy; however, he made it. The only problem was that he was still in chains. We learn that for two whole years, he was on house arrest. It may seem that the mission failed. How was he supposed to share the gospel? Paul's circumstances only increased his fervor as he preached daily, testifying of the kingdom of God.

A - This verse encourages me because it says that Paul proclaimed the kingdom of God with all boldness and without hindrance. What could have seemed like setbacks, failures, and unfulfilled promises was actually the very thing God used for Paul to reach people. He may have been hindered by chains, but that did not stop his words from being hindered.

Many times, we think our external circumstances determine our ability to share our faith. But Paul taught us that in any circumstance we can share the gospel of Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

Where in your life do you feel stuck or hesitant to share your testimony or the gospel? What circumstances might be holding you back? God has given us His Spirit and power, so that in any circumstance we find ourselves, we can freely tell people about the good news.

R - Jesus, help me to remember that, right where I am, I have everything I need to tell others about You. Amen.

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