



In the months of June and July, we will be reading the book of Acts together as a church body. We will have eight Sunday morning messages all on the book of Acts, but from Monday to Friday we'll be studying the book from start to finish together, as individuals and as families, to grow deeper in our understanding of this important book and to grow together along the way.

Acts, as you may know, is one of the largest books of the New Testament. Because of Acts' length, we encourage you to make your best effort to stay on top of the reading plan, to avoid falling behind and feeling overwhelmed in catching up. Each day will look different in what you read. Most days consist of reading a whole chapter or less than a chapter.

Here are some details regarding how we want to accomplish this. Starting on **Wednesday, June 1**, we'll begin the Reading Plan together. *We will e-mail out the plan to you in a PDF file, so we encourage you to download it or print it off to keep up with it. We will also have the weekly readings available in print on Sundays for you to pick up if you'd like.*

WEEKDAY DEVOTIONALS

On Mondays-Thursdays, we will be reading through the Acts passages individually, answering some questions to reflect on the material each day.

WEEK IN REVIEW

On Friday, in your own individual Bible study time, we will provide a brief review of this past week's reading, with some helpful commentary and suggestions for application, prayer, etc.

FAMILY DEVOTIONALS

This section is primarily geared toward helping parents connect with and study Scripture with their children. We will have a family devotional prepared for you and your family to walk through together at some point before Sunday morning.

Our material on Sunday will typically be addressing what we've read the week prior, so this is even more incentive to stay ahead of the Reading Plan. We are slated to finish the plan together on **Friday, July 29th**, with Out of the Box Sunday following after.

We encourage you to run with this Acts study as much as you see fit. There are a lot of great opportunities to use this study as a means of disciple-making, certainly in the home, but also out of it as well, such as in a small group, with a co-worker or neighbor you're discipling, or even creatively in a hobby you enjoy. Again, we believe this study will not only help us grow ourselves, but also help us connect in our homes, and hopefully out of them as well.

Thank you all for your commitment to reading with us!



Weekday Devotionals

Wednesday, June 1: Acts 1

- In verse 4, Jesus tells the apostles “not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father.” What is the benefit of making the apostles wait?
- Jesus encourages the apostles by telling them that the Holy Spirit will come to them (v. 8). Who is the Holy Spirit, and what is His role? (see Jn. 14:15-17; Rom. 8:16; 2 Tim. 1:14)
- Luke provides a lot of detail in verses 13-14, describing who was in the Upper Room. Why do you think these details are here? What does this passage have to say about the importance of sharing and praying together as groups?

Thursday, June 2: Acts 2:1-13

- The Holy Spirit comes to the people and moves in a noticeable way. In what ways have you noticed the Spirit’s moving in your life or in the lives of others? Does the Holy Spirit always make a grand display like this?
- In verse 5 we see there are “devout men from every nation under heaven.” What does this mean about God’s mission for the world?

Week in Review

Acts 1 – 2:13: The Holy Spirit Promised and Received

Who is the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is often referred to as “the forgotten person of the Trinity,” and for multiple reasons. There is a certain emphasis the Church tends to place on God the Father and God the Son, without spending much time talking through God the Holy Spirit. Not only this, but we tend to have a fairly ambiguous understanding of the Holy Spirit in general. What is the Holy Spirit’s role, exactly? How long has it been around? Such questions can be taxing and can cause confusion, which may lead to our diminished understanding of the Holy Spirit.

In this passage, we see the Holy Spirit playing a crucial role in helping Jesus’s disciples prepare for their mission and witness. While the Holy Spirit has already been an active person in the Trinity prior to Jesus’s ascension (1:2b), Jesus’s most significant promise to the disciples is that He is sending this Spirit to “come upon” them, giving them power to be proper witnesses of Christ wherever they go (1:8). Their mission field extends from Jerusalem (think “city”), to Judea (think “country”), to Samaria (think “enemy country”) to the ends of the earth (the unknown)! The disciples were soon after “filled with the Holy Spirit” (2:4). The Holy Spirit has been promised and, as we see, will be eventually received.

One of the main tasks of the disciples was to prepare for the Holy Spirit’s coming. Jesus calls them to “wait for the promise” (1:4). How did the disciples obey this particular command? They gathered together (1:12-13, 2:1), prayed together (1:14), and consulted the Scriptures (1:16, 20). This is significant, because this is the model for what we desire to be as a church on Sunday morning — a gathering of believers who devote themselves to prayer and the Word of God, anticipating His promises. And it should be an encouragement to us, in light of this chapter, that the Holy Spirit is among us, and with us, when we gather together on Sunday mornings and beyond.

As you reflect on this week’s reading, ask yourself a couple of questions:

When I walk into church Sundays, do I feel that I’m stepping into God’s presence?

What prevents me from seeing God as present in the church, and in my own life?

In preparation for this Sunday, take some time this weekend to devote yourself to prayer, to thinking on God’s Word, and to gather together in fellowship with other believers. This is what it means to wait in anticipation of God’s promised Helper, and what it means to prepare for the mission Christ has called us to.

Family Devotionals

Read Acts 1:3-11 together as a family. You can use the questions below to guide discussion:

Talk about a time when you felt lonely. How did you feel?

How do you think Jesus' disciples felt when he told them he was leaving?

What did Jesus promise them?

Do you feel like God is with you?

What does this passage teach us about Jesus?



Weekday Devotionals

Monday, June 6: Acts 2:14–47

- What role does Old Testament Scripture play in Peter’s sermon? What does this say about our approach to evangelism, mission, and disciple-making?
- At no point does Peter mention his personal testimony. Do you think this hurts or helps his sermon, and why? Is there a danger in relying too heavily on our testimonies rather than the truths about Christ?
- When you read verses 42–47, do you feel these actions of the apostles should apply in some fashion to our lives today? Talk about what a community of disciples, in your view, looks like with these verses in mind.

Tuesday, June 7: Acts 3

- Why is salvation often connected to physical healing in the ministry of Jesus and His apostles (Luke 5:12-26; 6:6-11; 8:42-48; 17:11-19; 18:35-43)?
- Looking at Peter’s address to the crowds in verses 11-26, what parts of this story of salvation and God’s plan do you feel “cut to the heart” by? What parts of the story do you feel encouraged by?

Wednesday, June 8: Acts 4:1-22

- Why do you think the Sadducees were so hostile and annoyed by Peter and John, and their message?
- What was the main theme of Peter's message in verses 8–12?
- What is significant about verses 13–22? What does this indicate about when we speak the truth of God into a culture of doubt?

Thursday, June 9: Acts 4:23–5:16

- Do you feel that you have boldness when it comes to your witness for Christ? Why or why not?
- Ananias and Sapphira make a sinful decision that bears grave consequences. Are there things in our own lives that we try to hold back for ourselves instead of turning over to God? Do we feel like those actions have serious consequences?

Week in Review

Acts 2:14–5:16: The Church Grows Through Fellowship, Preaching, and Miracle

This week we begin with Peter’s powerful sermon at Pentecost, truly a “miracle” in and of itself. Peter was always known for his brash, big-headed, even clamorous attitude throughout the Gospels. On numerous occasions, we see Peter boldly attempt something, but losing his footing along the way. A unassuming reader of Scripture might have gotten to this passage and thought, “Here comes trouble!” However, the Holy Spirit has empowered Peter to deliver arguably one of the most powerful and convicting sermons ever preached, silencing the mockers, using words that “cut to the heart” and being instrumental in the salvation of about three thousand souls. This is a clear illustration of how the Holy Spirit has been sent to help us, despite our flaws and weaknesses, to do mighty things through us. We also see this theme expressed in 3:11-16 and 4:13. It is in these passages where we see preaching ministry really begin to take shape. In Jesus’s day, his teaching was primarily about prophetic fulfillment and ultimately Himself. Here in Acts, we have a preaching style that we identify much better with, in which we see Peter laying out the message of the gospel, the call for repentance, and the exaltation and glorifying of Christ. Preaching is a critical component of the *ekklesia*.

Another highlight of these passages is the model of fellowship the disciples exhibited in the early formation of the church. We see an emphasis on learning from teaching and “the breaking of bread and the prayers” (2:42), on gathering “together” (2:44, 47), and on generous giving (2:45-46). In this short excerpt, we see a defense for gathering, growing, and serving together as a body of Christ. This idea becomes even more “radical” as the passage continues into the end of Acts 4. We see that these believers were “of one heart and soul” (4:32). “There was not a needy person among them” (2:34). This is where the Holy Spirit really began to manifest its power in the disciples. Achieving these things seems nearly impossible today in our culture and context, but it is a reality we can indeed find as we continue to lean on the Holy Spirit and strive toward a lifestyle of fellowship with one another.

As you reflect on this week’s reading, ask yourself a couple of questions:

How does the preaching of the Word, on Sundays or throughout the week, transform or shape your heart? If it doesn’t, why?

When you think about gathering together with other believers, would you say that you are one that has to be gathered, or are you a gatherer? Explain your answer.

As this passage illustrates, there are lots of needy people around us. Some have deep physical needs, like the lame beggar. Others have deep spiritual needs, like the Sadducees. Who is someone I know that has these kinds of needs that I can help?

In preparation for this Sunday, take time to pray for those you can minister to, in teaching them the gospel and helping meet their needs. Pray to be cut to the heart by God’s Word Sunday.

Family Devotionals

Read Acts 3:1–16 together as a family. You can use the questions below to guide discussion:

What would it be like to be unable to walk from birth?

Who ultimately heals the beggar?

The beggar had a need and Jesus healed him. In what ways does God meet your needs?

What are some of the names Jesus has in this passage? What do they mean?

What does this passage teach us about Jesus?



Weekday Devotionals

Monday, June 13: Acts 5:17–42

- Imagine being one of the apostles during these moments. Would you struggle to be as bold as Peter and the apostles seemed to be? If so, why?
- Why were the apostles able to stand up for God’s truth with this kind of confidence?
- Discuss a time you were dishonored for defending God’s name and honor. Did you feel “counted worthy” as the apostles did in verse 41?

Tuesday, June 14: Acts 6

- Look at verse 2 specifically. Does the passage seem to suggest that preaching is a higher calling than “serving tables?” Explain your answer.
- in verses 13-14, what charge do the witnesses bring against Stephen? To what might they be referring, and what’s the significance of what Stephen was saying to them?

Wednesday, June 15: Acts 7–8:3

- Think about listening to Stephen’s speech before the high priest. Are you impressed with his knowledge of the Scriptures? Do you feel you could tell the Biblical story with this clarity?
- How does Stephen highlight the importance that the Old Testament plays in our understanding of the Bible and of God?
- Describe Stephen’s demeanor in verses 51-53 compared to verses 55-56. Does Stephen’s rebuke of the people mirror being “full of the Spirit?”

Thursday, June 16: Acts 8:4–40

- What did Simon the magician misunderstand about how the Holy Spirit works?
- In reading verses 26–40, what can we learn from this account about the nature and practice of discipling another?

Week in Review

Acts 5:17–8:40: The Church Prevails in the Midst of Persecution

Too often, in our culture, we feel dissatisfied with where our countries, our governments, our cultural trends seem to be heading. We assert that we are drifting from God, that the Christian faith is being marginalized and that the Church is suffering. There is partial truth to this, in that the Christian faith is definitely more and more subjected to persecution. Sometimes that looks like violence, as we've seen most recently and explicitly in the genocide of the Islamic State. But persecution, especially in America, takes a much wider lens. We can be persecuted through political movements, loss of reputation, ostracism, and so forth. For the most part, however, the idea that the Church at large is on a downward spiral is a misnomer. This section of the book of Acts is a great proof and comfort for us that despite the reality of intensifying persecution, whatever form it may take, that the Church not only will prevail, but *is prevailing* in the present.

We see in last week's passages that "more than ever believers were added to the Lord" (5:14). This week, the opposition to the gospel intensifies, and the apostles are thrown in jail (5:18), and shortly after reprimanded by the council (5:28), "enraged" by their actions (5:33). Even upon Gamaliel's appeal for them to "let them alone" (5:38), the council still elected to beat the apostles before releasing them (5:40). Despite their attempt to stop their message, this only motivated the apostles to press on (5:41-42). Of course, we see the notable martyrdom of Stephen in these passages as well. Stephen boldly went before his disputers and the high priest with his most powerful, and last, sermon ever preached, a concise retelling of the Old Testament, a rebuke of the current irreligious practices, and a call for repentance. But even in the face of scoffers and zealots, the Church continues to grow. In fact, the scattering we see happen in Acts 8:1-3, something their enemies devise to hush the gospel message, actually serves to *spread* the gospel throughout these new regions, fulfilling the words of Acts 1:8 as they move into Samaria (8:4-5). The Church continues to grow and increase, and so will we.

As you reflect on this week's reading, ask yourself a couple of questions:

Do I feel like the Church is growing or declining? Why do I feel this way oftentimes?

What kinds of persecutions am I facing right now? Have I trusted God with these circumstances? How can I let the gospel shine through these circumstances?

In preparation for this Sunday, take time to pray for those around you face persecution for the gospel, whether overseas or a few houses down. Take time to reach out to these people and be a support for them. Find ways you can rejoice in hardship and trust in God to build His Church.

Family Devotionals

Read Acts 5:17–29 together as a family. You can use the questions below to guide discussion:

Why were the men jealous of the apostles? (see v. 12–16)

Are there people in the world today who try to silence the gospel? How do they try?

How did God protect His people in prison? How does He protect us from enemies?

Can you think of a time when your friends asked you to do something that went against what you knew God wanted you to do?

What does this passage teach us about Jesus?



Weekday Devotionals

Monday, June 20: Acts 9

- Put yourself in the shoes of Ananias for a moment. How would you feel if God called you to go and minister to a man like Saul?
- In verse 16, the Lord says to Ananias that Saul “must suffer for the sake of my name.” Is this the Lord’s justice on Saul, or simply a normal calling of all Christians?
- Think of one person you know who is very far off from God, whether or not you have a relationship with them personally. Take some time to pray for them, that they will be miraculously converted like Saul someday.

Tuesday, June 21: Acts 10

- Describe, in your own words, what you think Peter’s vision means.
- Why are verses 34-35 good news for the Gentiles?

Wednesday, June 22: Acts 11

- Describe the scene you imagine in light of verse 18. What do you think the atmosphere was like after Peter's declaration that the Gentiles were able to obtain saving faith?

- How are you seeing Acts 1:8's prophecy fulfilled throughout this chapter?

Thursday, June 23: Acts 12

- What saved Peter from being executed along with James, as a sign of God's providence?

- How do we see the Spirit moving in this passage on behalf of the disciples?

- What was the ultimate cause of Herod's death?

Week in Review

Acts 9–12: The Faith of the Gentiles Begins to Increase

In these four chapters, we gain a lot of ground in seeing how God is using the Spirit's power through the apostles to fulfill the Acts 1:8 commission, that they will be his "witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." These particular passages highlight the gospel's movement "to the ends of the earth" to the Gentiles. The typical Jewish understanding of salvation and God's grace was ethnocentric and exclusive in nature; Jews felt that the gospel message only applied and affected Jews, and that Gentiles were strangers, even aliens, to God. As we see in Acts 9-12, however, the aforementioned "to the ends of the earth" was ultimately pointing toward Christ making a way for even Gentiles to enter into the covenant community of the Church (Acts 10:45).

This week we also got to witness the miraculous transformation of Saul, who will go on to be called by his more famous name of "Paul" (13:9). Saul, as we saw last week, was one of the most prolific and notorious figures against the Church at the time. His zeal against the witness of the gospel manifested itself through "ravaging the church," imprisoning individuals tied to Jesus and approving of the death of martyrs like Stephen (8:1-3). However, his "breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord" (9:1) would not continue forever. The Lord appeared to Saul and transformed his heart, striking him blind until the "scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight" (9:18). It is a comfort to know that no matter what we have done, the Lord's purposes for his glory will stand, and that as we do the work of evangelism and missions, no one should in our estimation be beyond the reach of salvation, even men like Saul. As we will see in the remainder of the book, Saul's conversion becomes a hallmark moment for the Gentile people receiving and being transformed by the word and power of God.

As you reflect on this week's reading, ask yourself a couple of questions:

As we see the gospel being spread to the ends of the earth in chapters 9-12, what should I learn from these passages about our mission as Christians today?

What makes my conversion just as miraculous as Saul's?

In preparation for this Sunday, take time to pray for "the ends of the earth." Pray for countries, cities, people that are close to your heart that need the gospel around the world. Pray for folks you know who are serving as international missionaries. Pray for God to use you to reach others of every tribe, tongue, and nation here in the 21st century.

Family Devotionals

Read Acts 9:1-19 together as a family. You can use the questions below to guide discussion:

What does God do in this story to Saul's heart?

What makes this story so interesting to you?

If there are no big miracles involved in saving us, does that make us less important than people like Saul?

Does God think I am more special, less special, or just as special as Saul?

What does this passage teach us about Jesus?



Weekday Devotionals

Monday, June 27: Acts 13:1–12

- In verses 1–3 we see the disciples coming around the men about to be sent on their missionary journey in various ways. Do you think they continued these practices once they were gone?
- When missionaries are sent to the corners of the earth internationally, how can we better partner with them?
- Take a moment to pray for some of the international missionaries you know or that we support as a church (i.e. the Caldwells in England, Nicaragua missions team)

Tuesday, June 28: Acts 13:13–52

- The journey from Perga to Antioch was grueling (see Week in Review). How are you stretching yourself for your mission?
- Describe, in your own words, what's happening in verses 44–52.

Wednesday, June 29: Acts 14

- What is Paul's point in verses 15–17?
- Look at verse 28. What is Paul and Barnabas' hurry? Do you possess this kind of urgency?

Thursday, June 30: Acts 15

- Why did the Pharisees want to require Gentile circumcision?
- What is the solution James proposes to the disagreement?
- At the end of the chapter, Paul and Barnabas separate over “a sharp disagreement” (v. 39). Is this a hindrance or a help to the gospel's advancement?

Week in Review

Acts 13–15: The Missionary Journeys Begin

These three chapters place a lot of emphasis on the missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas. We see in the beginning of chapter 13 these men and others sent out into Cyprus (13:4), then from Paphos to Perga to Antioch (13:13-14), then Iconium (13:51). In chapter 14, then men arrive in Lystra and Derbe (14:6), then back to Iconium and Antioch (14:21), and back to Perga (14:25). In chapter 15 some of the men go to Jerusalem (15:2), then the missionaries head back to Antioch a third time (15:30), and finally Paul and Barnabas split their mission in 15:39. Needless to say, this trip was in every way *exhausting*. Physically, emotionally, spiritually. Many paths were along mountain ranges, thousands of feet above sea level, in the midst of bandits, and of course facing the various persecutions of those who did not receive the gospel too kindly.

There are also a few notable disagreements that arise among Jews found in chapter 15. The Jerusalem council meets to discuss matters of Gentile circumcision, as some of the Pharisees said this was necessary to uphold the Mosaic law (15:5). Much debate followed (15:7) until a solution was reached. Then to close the passage, Paul and Barnabas have “a sharp disagreement” over who should accompany them on their trip (15:39), causing the two to split up.

The truth is, all of these matters may seem like the Church is on its last leg — hot tempers, confusion surrounding the law, persecution, exhaustion. But even so, the Lord is using all of these matters to build His Church. Even in the midst of tough circumstances surrounding the missionary journey, God is faithful to His promise, that the “gates of Hell shall not prevail against [the Church]” (Mt. 16:18). We see the Church growing and being strengthened in multiple passages (13:12, 42-44, 48-52; 14:1, 22; 15:3, 32-34, 40-41). God is powerful enough to make it continue to grow and flourish, even when the odds seem against us.

As you reflect on this week’s reading, ask yourself a couple of questions:

What does my mission field look like right now? Is it comfortable and easy, or difficult and trying?

How can I encourage or strengthen my brothers and sisters who are abroad on mission?

In preparation for this Sunday, take time to pray for your mission field, and for international missionaries you know and support. Pray for their environments, needs, rest, and strength.

Family Devotionals

Read Acts 13:44-52 together as a family. You can use the questions below to guide discussion:

Why are the Jews angry toward the Gentiles?

Why are the Gentiles so happy in verse 48?

Why were Paul and Barnabas and the disciples happy in verse 51-52 after being hurt and told to leave the city?

What do we learn from this passage about God's plan for saving people?

What does this passage teach us about Jesus?



Weekday Devotionals

Monday, July 4: Acts 16:1–12

- How would you have responded to being “forbidden” by the Holy Spirit to fulfill your mission?
- How do you think Paul responded?
- Take a moment to look up some information about Philippi from commentaries or other resources. What kind of city was this? What made it such a great place for Paul’s mission?

Tuesday, July 5: Acts 16:13–40

- Which of the three conversion stories here stick out to you the most? Why?
- What makes the beginning of this church community so remarkable?

Wednesday, July 6: Acts 17:1-15

- Summarize Paul and Silas' message to the Thessalonians in verses 1–9.
- How do the Bereans respond in contrast to the Thessalonians?

Thursday, July 7: Acts 17:16–34

- What sort of ways do you see Paul being *prepared* in this passage?
- Paul is mocked by some after he is finished debating and speaking. Why does he respond the way he does?
- Do you feel prepared to share your faith with unbelievers? What steps do you need to take to become better prepared?

Week in Review

Acts 16–17: The Truth of the Gospel Prevails

As the Church continues to grow and be strengthened by the Holy Spirit, we see the prevailing theme of the truth of the gospel in these two chapters. In chapter 16, Paul and his team make their way into Philippi and witness the powerful truth of the gospel ultimately transforming the lives of three particular individuals — a woman whose heart was closed, another woman possessed by deception, and a jailer whose identity was wrapped up in his ability. In chapter 17, we see their reasoning in the synagogues with the Thessalonians and Bereans through the truth of Scripture. Then, Paul addresses the Areopagus, by presenting an apologetic defense for God among the Athenians, using Scriptural and external sources to validate his truth claims.

Truth, as we've seen in these two chapters, is *necessary* to share with lost people. This means two things: One, we must become grounded in truth. We have to steep ourselves in the truth of God's Word, and rest in its truth. If, indeed, Scripture is true, we have nothing to fear! This should give us the confidence to walk boldly, confidently, yet graciously, into opportunities to share our faith with others. Paul was able to share the gospel with ease and gladness, because he knew the truth was inside them. Further, if the gospel is true, it is going to progress to God's good, and no argument can destroy such truth. We must treat the Word of God as truth if we want any Christian assurance for our lives or any confidence in evangelism.

As you reflect on this week's reading, ask yourself a couple of questions:

Do I trust the whole of God's Word as true? Why is it so important I view God's Word as without error and completely true?

Do I feel confident in sharing my faith to others with different worldviews?

In preparation for this Sunday, take time to thank God for being gracious enough to reveal these truths to you for your growth and joy. Pray for opportunities to share this truth with others in a gracious and confident way.

Family Devotionals

Read Acts 16:25–34 together as a family. You can use the questions below to guide discussion:

How would you feel if you were thrown in jail because of your beliefs?

Why did the jailer want to die?

What are some of the miracles we see God perform?

Who made the jailer's heart change?

What does this passage teach us about Jesus?



Weekday Devotionals

Monday, July 11: Acts 18

- After all the difficulties Paul went through, why would God tell him to not be afraid? How would you have responded if you were in Paul's shoes?
- Describe the encounter Apollos had with Priscilla and Aquila (v. 24–28). What are the implications for this passage? What does it have to teach us?
- God already knows those who are His. How does this truth give you courage and confidence in sharing your faith?

Tuesday, July 12: Acts 19:1-22

- Verse 18 says the “believers came, confessing and divulging their practices.” How was confession instrumental in your conversion?
- Do you find it easier or more difficult to confess your sins now? What is the benefit of confession in a community context?

Wednesday, July 13: Acts 19:23–41

- What was the great problem with the city of Ephesus? Do we find ourselves in a similar place?
- John Calvin called the human heart “a factory of idols.” What idols do you create in your life?

Thursday, July 14: Acts 20

- Drawing from this passage, what are some of your observations about how Paul does ministry that motivate or inspire you?
- Is Paul being dramatic or serious in verse 24? How can we make steps to live with this kind of mission?
- How much of Paul’s ministry revolves around community? What does this indicate for us?

Week in Review

Acts 18–20: Paul’s Third Mission Builds The Church

In these three chapters we see Paul’s second mission coming to a close and his third one getting underway. Paul travels at great lengths, going most notably to Ephesus and Macedonia during this trip. The focus of these three chapters, for the most part, is through the eyes and actions of Paul. Bear in mind, we are talking about a former Christian *killer*, a man who bred contempt and breathed hatred on men of the faith. Now, he is the Church’s most illustrious and celebrated preacher and evangelist. The miracle story of the apostle Paul is riveting.

We learn much about the life of Paul throughout his epistles to various churches, which we find later in the New Testament. Particularly in these chapters, we see not only *what* Paul does in ministry, but we see *how*. Paul is a man set on “strengthening the disciples” (18:23). His message is “reasoning and persuading” (19:8). He leans dependently on the Spirit for his calling (19:21). He is an encourager (20:1-2), and a wonderful picture of humility and compassion (20:19, 36). All of these works, of course, are only by the transforming and empowering guiding of God’s work through Paul (19:11).

Paul was a special man – an apostle, a bold servant and martyr for the gospel, stretched to his capacity yet unwavering. But Paul is not so special that he is on a different level than we Christians. Our context, our sufferings, our mission may look different, but through Paul’s example, we can join in imitating him, as he recommended us do (1 Cor. 11:1).

As you reflect on this week’s reading, ask yourself a couple of questions:

In what way can I learn from Paul’s example and “imitate him” better?

What have these chapters, and the book of Acts, taught me so far about trusting Christ in the Christian life?

In preparation for this Sunday, take time to thank God for saving you just like he saved Paul, out of your condemning sin, and has imparted his righteousness to you just like he did for Paul. Pray that you can use Paul’s example to help you in your personal faith journey, in community, in your discipleship relationships, and in your mission and evangelism opportunities.

Family Devotionals

Read Acts 20:18–25 together as a family. You can use the questions below to guide discussion:

Why does Paul think hard times are coming for him?

Does Paul seem afraid? Why or why not?

How does Paul show his love for God in these verses?

What does verse 24 mean?

What does this passage teach us about Jesus?



Weekday Devotionals

Monday, July 18: Acts 21:1–26

- In verses 4–14, there are multiple references to the disciples pleading with Paul not to go to Jerusalem. Paul commands such prophecies be tested. Why should they be tested?
- This passage highlights some of the issues with mistaking our own inclinations for God's speaking to us. What are some ways we can discern what God truly is saying to us?

Tuesday, July 19: Acts 21:27–22:21

- Talk about Paul's addressing the crowd. What made his speech so powerful?
- It's easy to forget that there are other Christians around the world being persecuted the way Paul is here. Take a moment to pray for international missionaries, and other Christians around the world being persecuted for their faith.

Wednesday, July 20: Acts 22:22–23:11

- What mistake did the centurion make with Paul?
- Acts 23:11 is a powerful verse. Where do you need courage in your life? Why can you trust Christ to give it to you?

Thursday, July 21: Acts 23:12–35

- How do you think Paul emotionally dealt with the hostility he was facing? How would you?
- How has God's providence protected Paul thus far? (see v. 27)

Week in Review

Acts 21–23: Paul is Tested in Jerusalem

Many of us are familiar with the vast amount of persecutions that Paul faced throughout his ministry. We have seen death threats aimed at Paul before (cf. 9:26), but this season in chapters 21–23 is one of the more intense ones in Paul’s ministry. He’s attacked by a Jewish mob, facing more death threats after, and then sent to the governor in Caesarea, Felix. Yet through it all, we are witnessing one of the greatest heroes of the faith holding fast to his message. In fact, in chapter 22, we see Paul’s recounting his conversion before a large Jewish crowd, giving his testimony and showing the transformation of Christ in his life.

But Paul did not merely give in to being marginalized and mistreated. The Romans were committing acts against the law, and Paul let them know it. He stood for his rights before the government and the people condemning him. Paul was able to find a balance of fully standing up for himself while also being willing to be persecuted for his message, all while showing an attitude of grace. As the plot thickens to kill Paul in the middle of chapter 23, God continues to preserve Paul, and ultimately works to get Paul a proper hearing (23:35).

Paul is a great example of a saint we should strive to “imitate,” as we discussed last week. But sometimes, it’s hard to want to imitate someone that faced so much injustice, so much persecution, not to mention the loss of status and reputation altogether. The Christian message, in our 21st-century context, continues to become more offensive to unbelievers, and is often portrayed as unloving, intolerant, and hostile. Ironically, we are oftentimes met with little love, little tolerance, and much hostility! Paul’s dealings with those who want him (and primarily his message) dead are a great model for how we can live in the world. We should stand for our rights. We should even fight for them instead of caving. But we have to have an attitude of humility, and a trust in a sovereign God to set things right one day.

As you reflect on this week’s reading, ask yourself a couple of questions:

What are some of the ways you feel like your faith has been tested and tried by others?

What do you think your above answer tells you about your relationship with Christ?

In preparation for this Sunday, take time to thank God for His sovereignty over your circumstances, even when they look grim. Pray for strength in the midst of trials.

Family Devotionals

Read Acts 22:3–16 together as a family. You can use the questions below to guide discussion:

How did Paul act before he met Jesus?

How did Jesus reveal Himself to Paul?

How did Paul act after he met Jesus?

What made Ananias a friend to Paul in this time?

What does this passage teach us about Jesus?



Weekday Devotionals

Monday, July 25: Acts 24–25:12

- How did Felix seem to respond to Paul's story and his presentation of the gospel?
- How does Paul win himself the chance to stand before the emperor?

Tuesday, July 26: Acts 25:13–26:32

- Describe Paul's defense before Agrippa.
- How does Paul weave the gospel into his story of conversion?

Wednesday, July 27: Acts 27

- Look at verses 13–20. Describe Luke’s feelings in these moments.
- Paul demonstrated courageous leadership to save the passengers in this story. Talk about some of the leadership moves he made.

Thursday, July 28: Acts 28

- How does God provide for the missionaries in this chapter?
- What does Paul mean by his quoting Isaiah (v. 25–27)? What does this say about God’s Word?
- Talk about the ending of Acts. Is this how you expected the book to end?

Week in Review

Acts 24–28: Trials, Shipwreck, Mission

Our reading of the book of Acts has finally come to a close. The last five chapters of the book are very informative in nature and descriptive. They seem a little difficult to “apply” to our own lives and contexts, but there is still much here that we can learn from.

We continue to witness Paul’s long-suffering, continuing to defend himself and sharing his message with all who will listen. Paul’s consistency in presenting the gospel clearly through every encounter he has, no matter the occasion, is encouraging. The king pronounces Paul innocent and sends him on his way. But the suffering doesn’t stop here! A wild trip at sea leads Paul and his crew somehow safely to Malta. They are all received with “unusual kindness” (28:2), and after some time there Paul arrives and splits off from the others in Rome.

The book of Acts, as a whole, is filled with numerous lessons for us to glean from. This book is one of the most intimate and detailed looks of church history we have. We get to firsthand watch its growth from a few men staring into the sky in Acts 1:8 to a multi-cultural, international phenomenon. We’ve watched men like Peter and Paul and James do mighty things for the Lord during their ministry. We certainly see churches established, but it’s the growth of Christian community that makes the *ekklesia* so remarkable. We watch the gospel become offered to the Gentiles, creating the worldwide spread of God’s salvation for everyone who believes, with no barrier for Jew or Greek, slave or free. Overall, we see Jesus being true to His promise, that he will build his unshakable church, and that no power or principality will prevail against it.

As you reflect on this week’s reading, ask yourself a couple of questions:

What have I learned about God’s story from the book of Acts?

What have I learned about my story from the book of Acts?

In preparation for this Sunday, in which we will be participating in Out of the Box, take time to thank God for His Word. Thank Him for allowing us to receive His actual words and learn from them. Pray that you would be compelled to be on mission, to leave your story and mission open-ended as Acts seems to do. Pray for opportunities to apply these truths to your life.

Family Devotionals

Read Acts 1:6-11 and Acts 28:28-31 together as a family. You can use the questions below to guide discussion:

Did Jesus's promise to the apostles come true?

How did God help the apostles along the way?

Why is it important that the Gentiles receive the gospel?

What does this passage teach us about Jesus?

What have we learned from the book of Acts?