

study guide

ONWARD | A STUDY IN THE BOOK OF ACTS



AN ORDINARY PEOPLE EMPOWERED TO CONTINUE JESUS' MISSION

cherry hills
life together

About this Study

Dear Cherry Hills family,

This study is an attempt for us to move deeper into our vision as a church, which is: *To see people of every generation giving themselves fully to Jesus and His mission.* Our strategy for accomplishing this vision is by pursuing *life together* with Jesus, one another and our community and world. So, while this study can certainly be used individually as a way to grow in your relationship with Jesus personally, my prayer is that you might go one step further and use this tool as a way to grow with others, specifically in a life group. We truly believe that we cannot grow as disciples of Jesus without doing it *together*.

So, a word about how to use this study. Each week includes five days of studying the passage of Acts that we will be preaching on Sunday morning. Our suggestion is that you do the study *before* that Sunday and then use both the study and the message as your discussion guide in your life group. More than anything, I hope your discussions are less about filling out answers and repeating them and more about paying attention to what the Holy Spirit is highlighting for you as you study the passage that week. The two most important questions I will ask every week are: (1) What most stood out to you and why? (2) What do you sense the LORD is prompting you to do as a result of what stood out? In my opinion, learning to pay attention to those two questions *is* what it means to “walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16)

Foundationally we believe that the Bible is our source of authority in life, and in order to grow deeper with the LORD studying the Bible is a necessary discipline. So...I want to pray for you as you begin this journey with us: “May the LORD bless you and keep you; may the LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you; may the LORD turn His face toward you and give you peace” (Numbers 6:24-26).

In Christ,

Pastor Steve

Introduction to Acts

Author and Date

Acts is a sequel to the Gospel of Luke. Both were written by Luke, a physician who traveled with the apostle Paul. Acts ends with Paul under house arrest, awaiting trial before Caesar, around A.D. 62. Many scholars assume Acts was written at that time because it does not record the aftermath of Paul's arrest.

Theme

The Holy Spirit empowers believers to declare the gospel among both Jews and Gentiles. In doing so they establish the church and continue Jesus' mission in this world. The church is the fulfillment of God's promises from the beginning of time that all nations would "be blessed" (Gen 12:3) and become part of God's family. We are describing Acts this way in this series: The book of Acts shows us a picture of *an ordinary people empowered to continue Jesus' mission in this world*.

Purpose

Luke's purpose for writing his Gospel (see Luke 1:3–4) applies to Acts as well: to give an "orderly" account of the early church after Christ's resurrection as they *continue* the work of Jesus in this world. Dedicating the two-volume work to Theophilus, who many think was a prominent Greek leader, Luke wanted him to have "certainty" about what he had been taught and to continue in the faith despite opposition.

Week 1—Acts 1:1-8

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

Day 1

1. Before you begin the actual study, read the Introduction to *Acts* and consider these questions:

- a. What do you know about the book of *Acts*?
- b. Where does *Acts* fit in the grand story of the Bible? Why is it important to know that?
- c. What does this particular book add to the Bible we wouldn't have otherwise?
- d. What has confused you about *Acts* that you hope to get more clarity on?

Day 2

1. *Read Acts 1:1-2.* Luke says that *Acts* is a continuation of the book of Luke. Read Luke 1:1-4. What does Luke say these two books are intended to be? Why should that be encouraging to us today some 2,000 years after these events occurred?

2. In v. 1 Luke says his first book was “about all that Jesus *began* to do and to teach...” What does that phrase imply about the content of *Acts*?

3. How should that shape the way we view our lives today?

Day 3

1. Read Acts 1:3. What was the significance of the fact that Jesus showed Himself to the apostles and gave “many convincing proofs that He was alive?” How did these proofs impact the apostles for the rest of their lives?
2. The “kingdom of God” was at the heart of Jesus’ teaching (cf. Mt 4:17, Lk 4:43). In your own words, what is meant by this phrase?

Kingdom of God—This refers to the rule and reign of God over all of creation. It should be considered a verb more than a noun, though it is both. Jesus initiated the kingdom in His first coming and all future will culminate in His return when He finally restores all of creation as it was originally meant to be. Therefore, we are currently living in between the “now and not yet” of the Kingdom.

3. What role do Jesus’ followers (including us) play in ushering in the Kingdom of God today? How are you doing this?

Day 4

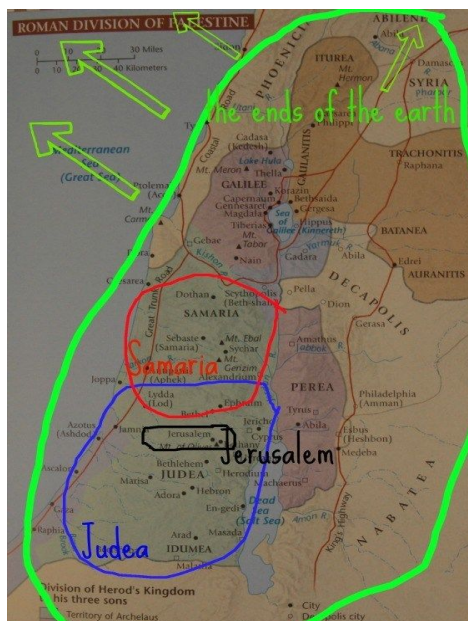
1. Read Acts 1:4-6. What is the “gift” Jesus promised His disciples? What do you know about the Holy Spirit? What questions do you have?
2. What does Jesus say about this “gift” in John 14:15-18, 26-27; 16:7-15? How can this encourage us still today?
3. What do the disciples still not understand about the Kingdom of God (v. 6)? How can we fall into this trap still today?

Day 5

1. Read Acts 1:7-8. What does v. 8 tell us about the purpose of this book? From what you know about Acts, how does this play itself out?
2. Before reading the note below, what does it mean to be a “witness?” Can we still be witnesses to Jesus today even though we didn’t see Him? If yes, why and how do we do this?

Witnesses—From the Greek word *martyrs*, this is to be the *primary task* of the people of God: to make the greatness of God known throughout all the earth. Even in the Old Testament (cf. Isaiah 49:6) God’s desire is that the invitation to join His Kingdom be made to all people. For the apostles, this witness would begin in Jerusalem but then spiral outward “to the ends of the earth.” It will only be successful, however, with the power of the Holy Spirit.

3. Notice the map below. Who might our “Jerusalem, Samaria, Judea and ends of the earth” be today? How can you be a witness in these places?



Jerusalem—

Samaria—

Judea—

Ends of the Earth—

Conclusion

1. What most stood out to you as you studied Acts 1:1-8 this week? *Why* do you think this was the case?
2. What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to *do* as a result of this? Be prepared to share with your group!

Week 2—Acts 1:9-2:13

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

Day 1

1. Read Acts 1:9-11. Before you read the box below, answer: what is the importance of Jesus' ascension? Why was it necessary?

Christ's Ascension—Justin Holcomb writes, “The ascension is Christ’s return to heaven from earth (Lk 24:50-51; John 14:2, 12, 16:5, 10; Eph 4:8-10; 1 Tim 3:16; Heb 4:14, 7:26, 9:24). The incarnation does not cease with Christ’s ascension. Jesus lives, now and forever, as true man and true God to mediate between God and man (1 Tim 2:5). He will come again as He left, fully God and fully man (Acts 1:11). Jesus ascension is a crucial event in His ministry because it explicitly shows His continual humanity and the permanence of His resurrection. The ascension guarantees that Jesus will always represent humanity before the throne of God as the mediator, intercessor, and advocate for needy humans. Because of the ascension, we can be sure that Jesus’ unique resurrection leads the way for the everlasting resurrection of the redeemed. Jesus also ascended to prepare a place for His people (John 14:2-3) and to send the Holy Spirit to fulfill His ministry of witness and empowering (John 16:7), a development which, He said would be more advantageous for the church than if He had stayed on earth (John 14:12, 17).” (Holcomb, 2014)

2. Why does Jesus' ascension not get mentioned as much as His crucifixion and resurrection? *Should* it be mentioned more? If so, why in your opinion?

3. What conviction was going to sustain Jesus' disciples as they fulfilled their mission with Jesus being physically absent (see v. 11)? How can this still encourage us today? Does it encourage you? Why or why not?

Day 2

1. Read Acts 1:12-26. Why do you think prayer seemed to be the major activity that Jesus' followers engaged in after they returned to Jerusalem? Why didn't they just get right to work (see 1:8)? What does this suggest to you?
2. What was Peter's conclusion about Judas (vv.15-20)? Why was it "necessary" for the apostles to replace Judas (v. 21)? What were the qualifications of the person who would replace Judas? Why were these qualifications important?

"It is necessary"—Most believe the reason it was "necessary" to replace Judas was because the number 12 has a rich significance and importance in Scripture. For example, the 12 patriarchs headed the 12 tribes of Israel. Most likely then, just as the patriarchs were the heads of Israel (under God's rule), so now the 12 apostles were to be the heads of the church (under Jesus' rule & direction).

3. Why did the apostles "cast lots" (cf. Ex 28:30, Num 26:53, 1 Chron 26:13-16)? Why is this the last time this method is used to discern God's will? How do we discern God's will today?

Casting Lots—Casting lots was originally appointed by God when He ordained the office of priest. Decisions that required Yahweh's guidance would be made by the high priest, who would cast the lots (known as the Urim & Thummim) that sat inside the high priest's breastplate, right over his heart.

Day 3

1. Read Acts 2:1-3. These verses describe the presence of the Spirit as a mighty wind and fire. Considering passages like Exodus 13, Ezekiel 1, and Matthew 3:11, what is the significance of the Spirit appearing and being described this way?

Pentecost—Pentecost is the fiftieth day after the Passover week. *Pentecost* is the Greek word for what the Jews refer to as the Feast of Weeks (see Leviticus 23:15-21; Deut 16:9-12), the Feast of Harvest (see Ex 23:16), or the Day of Firstfruits (see Numbers 28:26-31). On Pentecost, the Jews brought offerings of the firstfruits of the wheat harvest to the temple to thank the LORD for it. This was also the day when the Jews celebrated the giving of the covenant under the Law of Moses.

2. Read the note above. Why was it fitting that the events of Acts 2 occurred on Pentecost?

3. Do you think we should celebrate the Day of Pentecost still today as believers like we do Easter or Christmas? Why or why not?

Day 4

1. Read Acts 2:4. In your understanding, what does it mean to “be filled with the Holy Spirit?”

2. How do you know if you are filled with the Spirit (read the verses below and respond)?

Romans 8:9-10—

Ephesians 1:13-14—

3. How should being Spirit-filled affect what you do (read the verses below and respond)?

Acts 1:8—

Romans 8:5-8—

1 Corinthians 12:12-26—

2 Corinthians 3:17-4:12—

Galatians 5:16-26—

Day 5

1. Read Acts 2:4-13. What was the “sign” the disciples received when they were filled with the Holy Spirit? What “other tongues” did the Holy Spirit enable the disciples to speak? Why would this be the “sign” the Spirit gave to the disciples this day?

2. *Before* reading the note below, write what you know and any questions you have about speaking in tongues.

Tongues—There is a lot of debate within the Christian faith about what is exactly meant by “speaking in tongues.” In Acts 2 it is certainly speaking of human languages of the various nations, but in 1 Corinthians 12-14 Paul seems to be referring to a non-human language (angelic/heavenly), that is given to *some* believers as a spiritual gift (not *all* however, as 1 Corinthians 12:30 clearly shows). Regardless, discussions about speaking in tongues must not sidetrack us from the significance of what happened on the Day of Pentecost. It symbolized a new unity in the Spirit transcending racial, national and linguistic barriers.

3. Read Genesis 11:1-8. How does what happens on Pentecost take on even more meaning in light of the Tower of Babel story (see note above)? What might this mean for you personally?

4. Why were some of the Jews “utterly amazed” (vv. 7, 12)? Why did some of them think they were drunk (v. 13)? How are these two responses still similar to what a follower of Jesus might experience today? Does that encourage or discourage you?

Conclusion

1. What most stood out to you as you studied Acts 1:9-2:13 this week? *Why* do you think this was the case?

2. What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to *do* as a result of this? Be prepared to share with your group!

Week 3—Acts 2:14-41

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

Day 1

1. *Read the entirety of Acts 2:14-41.* What do you observe about Peter as he addresses the crowd? To what do you attribute this? What implications might this have for us today when we are called to “witness”?

2. How does Peter explain these amazing events that have taken place at Pentecost? Why do you think he quotes the Old Testament so much?

3. How would you summarize the message Peter speaks and how can it be a pattern for how we speak to others about the gospel (see the questions below for guidance)?

What are the truths to be believed (see 2:21-24, 31-33, 36, 39)?—

What are actions a person must do (see 2:21, 38)?—

What are the reasons why (see 2:20-21, 38, 40)?—

Day 2

1. Read Acts 2:14-21. Peter starts his gospel presentation with a citation from Joel 2:28-32. Joel says the Spirit will be poured out in the last days, the days before the final judgment (the “Day of the LORD”). It is clear that Peter is saying these “last days” have begun. What does Peter’s quote from Joel 2 say will happen?

2. What do the following verses say about the “Day of the LORD?”

Isaiah 2:1-5—

Jeremiah 31:31-34—

Ezekiel 36:26-27—

Mark 13:32-37—

2 Corinthians 5:10—

Revelation 20:11-15—

3. How do we continue to live in anticipation of this Day as Jesus’ followers today? Are you? Why or why not?

Day 3

1. Read Acts 2:22-28. In these verses Peter recounts the key facts of Jesus’ life.

a. How could the Jews have known that Jesus was the Messiah (v. 22, 25-28)? Why did they miss this?

b. How did they respond to Jesus (v. 23)?

c. What was the crucial event of Jesus' life and what did it prove (v. 24)?

Messiah—To the Jews, this word was a title: the Anointed One, the Christ, the king and descendant of David promised in Scriptures. For the Jews of Jesus' time, the Messiah would be a conquering king who would establish Israel as a world power once again.

2. What is the message of 2:23? What does it say about God's sovereignty and human responsibility? How do Genesis 50:20 and Romans 8:28 speak into this?

Day 4

1. Read Acts 2:29-36. On what basis does Peter announce that "God has made this Jesus both Lord and Christ" (vv. 29-36)?

2. What Old Testament verse does Peter quote in 2:34-35? What does this verse say about where Jesus currently is? What do you know about "the right hand of God?"

3. What do the following verses say about the "right hand" of God?

Psalm 16:11—

Psalm 17:7—

Psalm 98:1—

Psalm 139:9-10—

Luke 22:66-71—

Romans 8:34—

4. Considering these passages what does it mean for Jesus to be at the “right hand” of God? How does this impact you personally?

Day 5

1. Read Acts 2:37-41. How did people respond to Peter’s clear proclamation of the truth about Jesus and the truth about themselves (vv. 37-41)? What does it mean to “repent”? How is this related to baptism?

Repent—Repentance was central to Jesus’ message and not only indicates a feeling of remorse or a change of thinking but indicates a change of *direction* in a person’s life. Like salvation, repentance is a gift of God’s grace and is an essential part of conversion.

2. Would all 3,000 of those who accepted the message remain in Jerusalem? Why is this important in light of Jesus’ purposes for the church (cf. Acts 1:8)?

3. When have you seen or experienced the work and power of the Holy Spirit as you see in their response? What do you need to do in order to more effectively proclaim the truth about Jesus to those who may not know Him as the Lord and Christ?

Conclusion

1. What most stood out to you as you studied Acts 2:14-41 this week? *Why* do you think this was the case?
2. What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to *do* as a result of this? Be prepared to share with your group!

Week 4—Acts 2:42-47

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

Day 1

1. Read Acts 2:42-47. What happens when the Holy Spirit works in these first believers individually and collectively? What happens externally in their community (v. 47)?

2. What surprises you about their response? How is this similar and different from the church today?

3. Why might v. 42 be especially important for both the theology and practice of the church still today?

Day 2

1. Read Acts 2:42. Starting today we are going to break down the four elements of worship mentioned in v. 42. Before looking at the note below, what is your understanding of what is meant by “the apostles’ teaching”?

Apostle’s Teaching—Refers to everything the apostles learned from Jesus (see Matt 28:20) as well as the facts and meaning of His death, burial, resurrection and ascension (or the “gospel”). As the apostles’ lived out their commission, they explained the implications of the gospel for individuals and churches and these teachings/letters were later collected and became what we now know as the New Testament.

2. Why is it important to devote ourselves to this *together* according to the following verses?

Romans 12:3-8—

Ephesians 4:1-16—

2 Timothy 3:16-17—

3. Are you devoted to the apostles' teaching both as an individual and as part of a local church? Why or why not?

Day 3

1. Read Acts 2:42. What is your understanding of the word *fellowship*? Read the box below and answer how that may be different than how we tend to think of it today.

Fellowship—From the Greek word *koinonia*, fellowship had a rich meaning: sharing, participation, communion, partnership. It implied a degree of community, intimacy, and *interdependence*. It always centered around the calling every believer has to *partner* with other believers in the commission of being Christ's "witnesses" in this world

2. Why is it so crucial for us to nurture *fellowship* according to the following verses?

1 Corinthians 12:12-26—

Philippians 2:1-11—

Hebrews 10:23-25—

3. Why is it harder for us today to practice true fellowship in the American church? What are some specific ways you can begin to *partner* with other Christians and devote yourself to fellowship?

Temple Courts—It's important to remember that the earliest believers were still devout Jews, not starters of a new religion. The temple was the place where Jews gathered for worship, prayer, and teaching, so the early believers met there as well. No doubt they hoped and prayed that others would be added to their number and receive Jesus as Messiah as the apostle's taught and they met.

4. What does the early church's pattern of meeting in the "temple courts" and "homes" (v. 46) teach us about fellowship? Are you practicing this? Why or why not?

Day 4

1. Read Acts 2:42. What is meant by "the breaking of bread?" Is what's being described in v. 46 different than what is being described in v. 42? Why or why not in your opinion?

2. Why is the Lord's Supper important according to the following verses?

Luke 22:14-23—

1 Corinthians 10:16-17—

1 Corinthians 11:23-26—

3. How can you keep Communion/The Lord's Supper from becoming an empty ritual? Why is it important we celebrate it *together*?

Day 5

1. Read Acts 2:42. This is the second time *prayer* is mentioned as a practice of the early believers (see also 1:14). Why did they consider prayer so important? Is this the same for us today? Why or why not?

2. What do the following verses say about the purpose and practice of prayer?

Matthew 6:5-14—

Matthew 26:41—

Mark 11:25—

Romans 8:26-27—

Philippians 4:6-7

3. Why should we devote ourselves to prayer with *other* believers and not just individually? Is this easy or hard for you?

Conclusion

1. What most stood out to you as you studied Acts 2:42-47 this week? *Why* do you think this was the case?

2. What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to *do* as a result of this? Be prepared to share with your group!

Week 5—Acts 3:1-26

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

Day 1

1. Read Acts 3:1-26. Jot down some of the things that most stood out to you in this chapter and why it stood out to you.

2. How does this story of “showing and telling” the gospel model Jesus’ entire ministry strategy as seen in verses like Matthew 4:23-24, 9:35-38 and Luke 9:1-2?

3. What might this mean for us today in our strategy as God’s people to advance the gospel?

4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of attracting people to Jesus by means of miracles/healing/good works?

Day 2

1. Read Acts 3:1-10. Describe, as if you were there looking on, what happened between Peter and John and the man who was crippled from birth.

2. How did the crippled man respond to his healing? Have you experienced any kind of healing by Jesus' power? Explain. What does Luke 17:11-19 say about how we should respond when this happens?

3. How did all the people respond to his healing (vv. 9-10)? Have you ever had an experience like this where people were "amazed" by Jesus? When and where?

4. How does Acts 3:1-10 reflect Jesus' words in John 14:12-14? Do you still believe Jesus' words hold true for us today? Why or why not?

Day 3

1. Read Acts 3:11-26. According to Peter, how was this healing possible (v. 16)?

2. Why is it important for us to understand that the apostles did not use their own power or exceptional godliness to heal the beggar (v. 12)? What does this mean for you today as a follower of Jesus?

3. In your own words, write out Peter's message to the crowd. How is it similar and different than 2:14-41?

Day 4

1. Read Acts 3:11-26. This sermon has some of the most important and richest descriptions/titles of Jesus in the entire Bible. Write down every title you find *and* what you think it means *and* how it speaks to His uniqueness. After you are finished, spend time worshipping Jesus for who He is and what He has done.

Day 5

1. Read Acts 3:17-26. How does Peter use the Old Testament to prove that Jesus was the fulfillment of God's entire plan of redemption (vv. 17-18)? What particular promises does he refer to in these verses (note especially vv. 18-24)? How does this give you an even bigger picture of God's story?

2. What does it mean that Jesus is God's "servant" (vv. 13, 26) who would "suffer" (v. 18)? Why didn't this make sense to many of the Jews? How does Isaiah 52:13-53:12 fit into this title for Jesus?

3. What is the promise for those who do look to Jesus in repentance? What about those who don't?

Conclusion

1. What most stood out to you as you studied Acts 3:1-26 this week? *Why* do you think this was the case?
2. What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to *do* as a result of this? Be prepared to share with your group!

Week 6—Acts 4:1-22

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

Day 1

1. Read Acts 4:1-22. What happens in these verses and how is it connected to 3:1-26?
2. What did Jesus promise His disciples in situations like this in Luke 12:11-12 and 21:12-19? How might these promises still apply to us today? Have you ever had an experience like this? If so, when?
3. Read Mark 14:43-72. What changes do you notice in Peter and John (John is believed to be the one being described in vv. 51-52) in Acts 4 from those verses in Mark? What do you attribute this to? How might this inspire you?

Day 2

1. Read Acts 4:1-7. Why do you think the religious leaders are so disturbed in this passage? What are the similarities and differences that cause people to be disturbed by the claims of Christianity today in our culture?

The rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law...—These three groups composed the *Sanhedrin*, which was the high council that governed Jewish affairs, including the interpretation of Jewish Scriptures and oral laws. While they were at odds over many things, including the possibility of a bodily resurrection, they were in agreement that Jesus and His followers had to be stopped. It was this group that ultimately condemned Jesus to death (cf. Matthew 26:57-67).

2. What does John 11:45-53 reveal about this group's motivations? What could be some other motivations a person might have for denying Christ?

3. What does v. 4 suggest to you about how the gospel is spread (hint: this is a *major* theme in the book of Acts)? What might this mean for you personally? How do you feel about that?

Day 3

1. Read Acts 4:7-17. In this passage, do the Jewish leaders "believe" the man was healed? What is the difference between *believing* in Jesus and *receiving* Him as Lord (see James 2:19!)?

2. What can keep a person from accepting Jesus today even when they can't refute the evidence? How can these barriers be overcome?

3. What question do they ask Peter and John in v. 7? Why would they ask about the name? What do you know about the importance of names in the Bible? Tomorrow we will spend more time on this.

Day 4

1. Read Acts 4:8-17. What *name* does Peter proclaim healed this man? What does the name *Jesus* mean? What does Peter claim about this Jesus (vv. 8-12)?

Name—Names in the Bible are extremely important as they speak to a person’s nature or character. The name Jesus means “the LORD saves.” However, for the Jews, the only name by which a person could be saved (v. 12) was YHWH, the name God gives Moses in Exodus 3:15. This identification of Jesus as YHWH (cf. John 8:58, 10:30) and as the only One who could save (cf. John 14:6) was ultimately what condemned Him to death by the Sanhedrin.

Cornerstone—Psalm 118:22 might have originally meant that the nations would reject Israel as the key nation in the world that would “be a light unto the Gentiles” and the fulfillment of God’s plan for redemption, but here Peter applies this saying about Israel (or Israel’s king) to Jesus.

2. Read the verses below and describe what these “names” of Jesus tell us about His nature and character:

Isaiah 7:14—

Isaiah 9:6—

John 1:1-4—

John 1:29—

John 10:7—

John 6:32—

John 8:58—

John 10:11—

John 11:25—

John 15:1—

1 Corinthians 10:4—

1 John 2:1—

1 Timothy 2:5—

1 Timothy 6:15—

Revelation 1:8—

Revelation 5:5—

3. Highlight the names/titles that most stood out to you and spend the rest of your time praising Jesus' character and nature!

Day 5

1. Read Acts 4:18-22. According to the verses below, *when* and *why* should believers submit to human authorities?

Luke 20:20-26—

Romans 13:1-6—

1 Peter 2:11-17—

2. According to v. 19, under what circumstances must followers of Jesus disobey human authorities? Name a situation today when this might happen in your life.

3. Even in their unwillingness to compromise their obedience to Christ, what do you notice about Peter and John's behavior and attitude before the authorities in this passage? How could this be an example for us in this divided country?

Conclusion

1. What most stood out to you as you studied Acts 4:1-22 this week? *Why* do you think this was the case?

2. What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to *do* as a result of this? Be prepared to share with your group!

Week 7—Acts 4:23-31

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

Day 1

1. Read Acts 4:23-31. How do the believers respond to the Sanhedrin's threats?
2. How would your response be similar or different? Why?
3. Our situation as followers of Jesus in the United States is different than what these early believers faced, but what are some of the "threats" we might face today? How do we usually respond to them? What can these believers teach us about this?

Day 2

1. Read Acts 4:24-28. What do the believers confess about God? Write down as many observations as you can.
2. Why aren't the believers surprised by the threats of the Sanhedrin according to these verses? What can this teach us when we face anger and threats for standing firm in our convictions today?

3. Notice how the believers start their prayer by acknowledging God and praising Him before they ever make a request. Is this similar to your prayer life? What could their example teach us about prayer (cf. Matthew 6:5-15)?

Day 3

1. Read Acts 4:29-30. What three things do the believers ask God to do (vv. 29-30)? Why are these requests significant?

2. How is their prayer different than what you might expect after what just happened to Peter and John? Why do you think the believers didn't make any requests for protection? What might this mean for us?

3. Compare 4:29-30 to 5:12-16. Was their prayer answered? In your judgment, would such a prayer be answered today? Why or why not?

Day 4

1. Read Acts 4:31. What happened as the believers prayed in this way? Have you ever experienced something like this? If so, when? If not, why do you think that might be?

2. It says that “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit...” Since most of them had already been filled with the Spirit (Acts 2:4), what do you think this means (see also Acts 4:8)? What does this tell you about being filled with the Spirit today?

Filled with the Spirit—The phrase “filled with the Spirit” is used throughout the Old Testament and New Testament to describe both the initial filling of the Holy Spirit as the seal of salvation (cf. Eph 1:13) *and* a special filling of the Spirit to enable someone to proclaim a special word or action. As Ben Witherington describes it, it is “a fresh filling” for a specific purpose.

3. What is something you know the Lord is calling you to do that you need to be “freshly filled” by the Spirit in order to do? Spend time asking the Lord to do that for you in expectation He will provide.

Day 5

1. Reread Acts 4:1-31. How do these verses equip you to face resistance to the gospel?

2. Who is suffering persecution for the gospel that you could pray for today?

3. Along with praying for those you listed in #2, spend the remaining time today praying for the courage that these early believers had in the face of persecution as you seek to step out more in faith in a culture that isn't as receptive to Jesus' claims anymore. As you do this, jot down what the Holy Spirit is saying to you about this.

Conclusion

1. What most stood out to you as you studied Acts 4:23-31 this week? *Why* do you think this was the case?
2. What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to *do* as a result of this? Be prepared to share with your group!

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