

How did a handful of ordinary people become ten thousand followers of Jesus in the year following his public execution? How did his movement gain so much momentum, especially as ten of the eleven charter members were crucified, burned, or stoned to death? How did ten thousand Christians become one million by the second century, and 3.3 billion today?

Written in the middle of the first century, The Acts of the Apostles tells the story of how Christianity spread like wildfire across the Roman Empire and beyond. For 25 weeks we will journey through Acts in pursuit of the truth behind history's most consequential movement.

Group Discussion Guide: Week 1

Acts 1:1-8

Who is Luke, and how does his upbringing, career, and relationships with the apostles influence his work in Luke and Acts of the Apostles?

After the ascension, Jesus spent 40 days with his disciples teaching and pouring into them. Jesus mentored his disciples, who has mentored, or poured into you?

In Acts 1 we see Jesus teach on three things before he ascended into heaven.

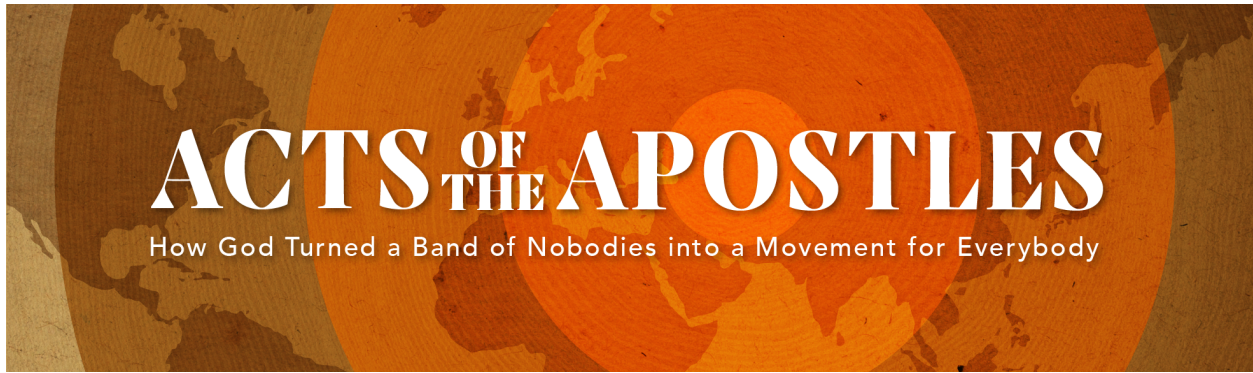
1. Jesus taught about The Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God is _____ (Mark 1:15)

The Kingdom of God is our _____ (Matthew 6:10)

The Kingdom of God is our _____ (Matthew 6:33)

Why were the disciples confused about the Kingdom Jesus was inaugurating?



2. Jesus taught them to wait for the Holy Spirit

Jesus told his disciples to go to Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Spirit before they got to work spreading the good news. Why do you think Jesus gave the command to wait when there was so much to be done?

Why was and is the Holy Spirit essential in the expansion of Jesus' Church?

3. Jesus taught them that they will be his witnesses “to the ends of the earth.”

From the first pages of the Bible there has always been an emphasis on God reaching the entire world. Where do we see this in the Old and New Testament?

How can we join the disciples in becoming witnesses in Houston, Texas, and beyond?

We are citizens of God's Kingdom, empowered by God's Spirit, to do God's work in the world.

Whose Kingdom do you call home?

Whose power moves you?

Whose work are you doing?



ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

How God Turned a Band of Nobodies into a Movement for Everybody

How did a handful of ordinary people become ten thousand followers of Jesus in the year following his public execution? How did his movement gain so much momentum, especially as ten of the eleven charter members were crucified, burned, or stoned to death? How did ten thousand Christians become one million by the second century, and 3.3 billion today?

Written in the middle of the first century, The Acts of the Apostles tells the story of how Christianity spread like wildfire across the Roman Empire and beyond. For 25 weeks we will journey through Acts in pursuit of the truth behind history's most consequential movement.

Discussion Guide: Week 2

Acts 2:1-13

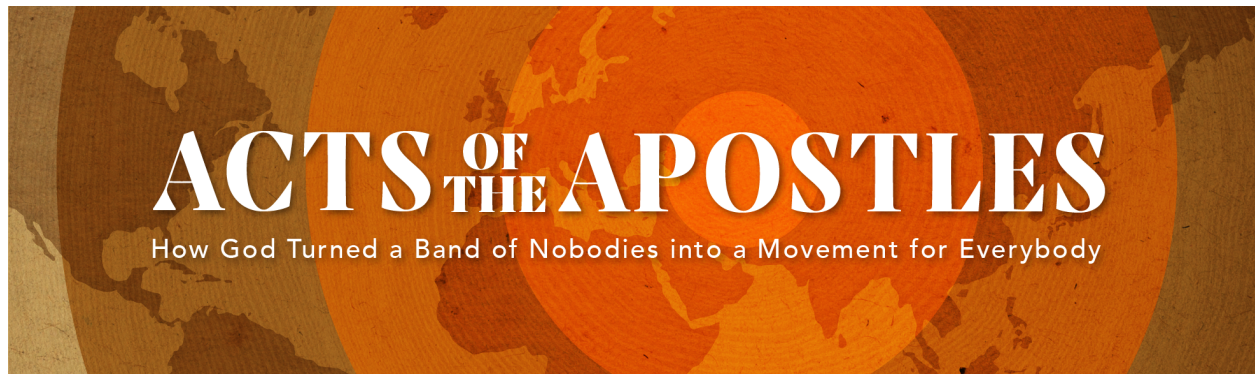
What is your experience with the Holy Spirit? Would you consider yourself charismatic, closed off, or unsure?

For the Jews, what is the day of Pentecost and what does it celebrate?

Acts 2:1 says they were “all together in one place” who is all and why is this important?”

The Holy Spirit Comes in Power

What words are used to describe the Holy Spirit indwelling the disciples? What does this teach us about the Spirit's movements and presence in our lives?



The Holy Spirit Unites People

In Acts 2:5-11 Luke says every nation under heaven was present in the crowd and then lists the people groups and regions they came from. This passage parallels the Table of Nations in Genesis 10 that precedes the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1-9. How can Pentacost be read as a reversal of Babel?

The Gospel does not seek manufactured uniformity, but unity. What is the difference between the two? How does the Holy Spirit produce unity among believers?

The Holy Spirit Produces Joyful Fearlessness

Many in the crowd in Jerusalem thought the Spirit filled believers were drunk. Why would the crowds think this? How does the Holy Spirit transform our lives in such a way that makes us look strange to the rest of the world?

Reflection Questions

There is a difference between knowing about something and experiencing it? Is your faith primarily fact based or experiential?

To receive the Holy Spirit Jesus' followers didn't conjure Him up or follow a specific formula; they simply gathered together in prayer and waited. Have you waited and made yourself available to the Holy Spirit?



ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

How God Turned a Band of Nobodies into a Movement for Everybody

How did a handful of ordinary people become ten thousand followers of Jesus in the year following his public execution? How did his movement gain so much momentum, especially as ten of the eleven charter members were crucified, burned, or stoned to death? How did ten thousand Christians become one million by the second century, and 3.3 billion today?

Written in the middle of the first century, The Acts of the Apostles tells the story of how Christianity spread like wildfire across the Roman Empire and beyond. For 25 weeks we will journey through Acts in pursuit of the truth behind history's most consequential movement.

Discussion Guide: Week 4

Acts 2:22-41

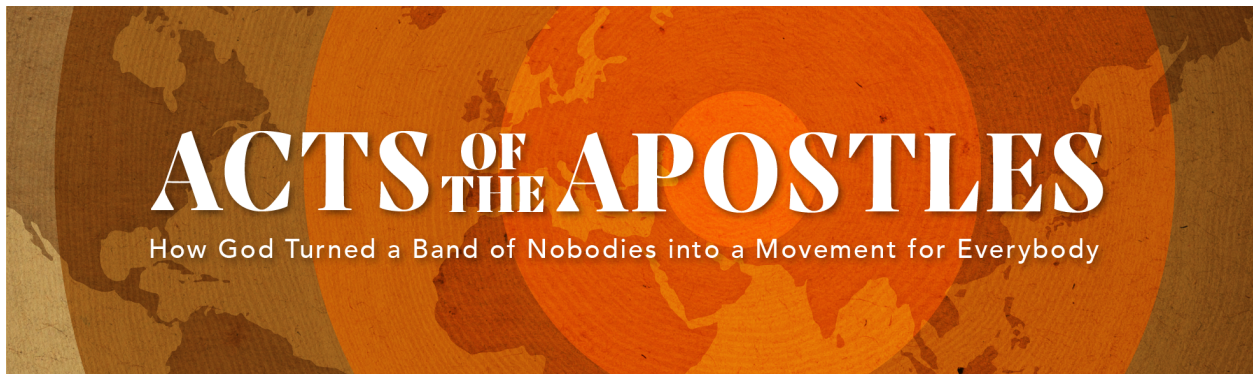
Reflection Question: What makes Jesus so special? How can we say that he's any better or any different from all the other well-spoken, charismatic religious leaders that have come and gone?

David's Prediction

What does Psalm 16 say about the coming messiah? How do we know this song was not about David himself?

How does Psalm 110 point to Jesus? What does Jesus say about this passage in Matthew 22:43-46?

How do the cross and resurrection play a central role in Peter's Sermon? How do you think the crowds in Jerusalem would have reacted to Peter's claims?



God's Promise

Peter says “The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” How is the Gospel both inclusive and exclusive?

Why is the belief in the bodily resurrection of Jesus a non-negotiable in the Christian faith?

Peter's Warning

Peter warns the people to “save themselves from this corrupt generation”. What do you think Peter was referring to in his context, and how would this warning apply to us today?

The fascinating truth of the Gospel is the only way to save yourself is to stop trying to save yourself. What does this mean?

Further Reflection

Read 1 Corinthians 15, what is the significance of the cross?

Where do you see corruption in your own heart? How can you cleanse it?



ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

How God Turned a Band of Nobodies into a Movement for Everybody

How did a handful of ordinary people become ten thousand followers of Jesus in the year following his public execution? Written in the middle of the first century, The Acts of the Apostles tells the story of how Christianity spread like wildfire across the Roman Empire and beyond. For 25 weeks we will journey through Acts in pursuit of the truth behind history's most consequential movement.

Discussion Guide: Week 4

Acts 2:42-47

The Foundation

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching...”

Based on what we know about Peter’s first sermon (2:14-41), what were the apostles teaching the first Christians and where did they receive this information from?

What does it actually look like for believers to “devote themselves” to sound doctrine?

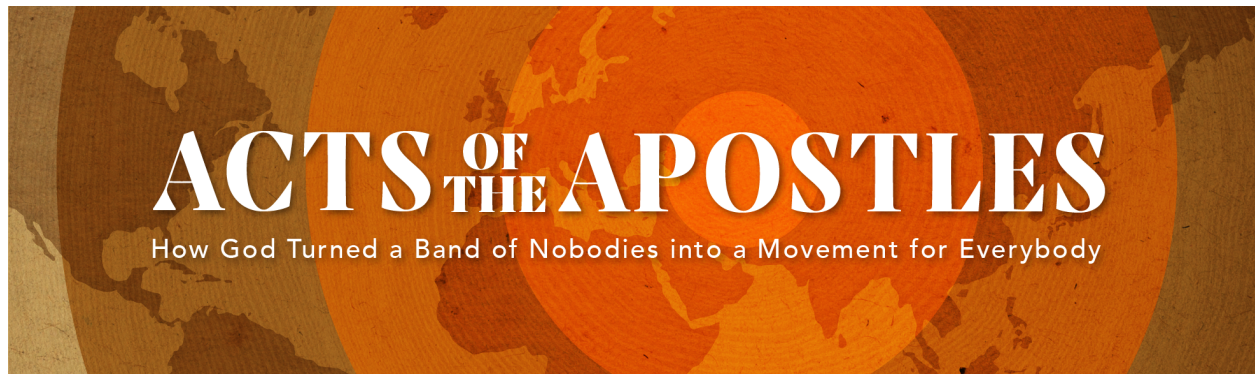
“...and to fellowship...”

What is fellowship, and what did that word (*koinonia*) mean in its first-century context?

What’s the difference between fellowship and just casually hanging out? How can you take your fellowship to the next level so that it becomes a spiritual discipline?

“...to the breaking of bread...”

What was the deeper significance of breaking bread together in the first-generation Church?



“...and to prayer.”

How would you rate your current prayer life on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being non-existent and 10 being constant? Why did you give yourself that score?

How can you double down on prayer in your personal life as well as your family and the groups you are a part of?

The Result

In verses 43-45, we read about the results of this foundation built on sound doctrine, fellowship, worship, and prayer. What were the results? How did these disciplines contribute to the way the believers viewed personal property?

Verses 46 and 47 describe Christians who were happy, sincere, joyful, and beloved by “all the people” - including unbelievers. What was it that made first-generation Christians so appealing to the world around them?

In what ways have you witnessed churches failing to mirror the Church’s heart as described in Acts 2? What may be some of the underlying reasons why some congregations look nothing like the Acts 2 Church?

Think of one or two church practices described in Acts 2:42-47 that are lacking in your own life or our community. As you write them down, think about how you can introduce them to your personal faith and our church.



ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

How God Turned a Band of Nobodies into a Movement for Everybody

How did a handful of ordinary people become ten thousand followers of Jesus in the year following his public execution? Written in the middle of the first century, The Acts of the Apostles tells the story of how Christianity spread like wildfire across the Roman Empire and beyond. For 25 weeks we will journey through Acts in pursuit of the truth behind history's most consequential movement.

Discussion Guide: Week 5

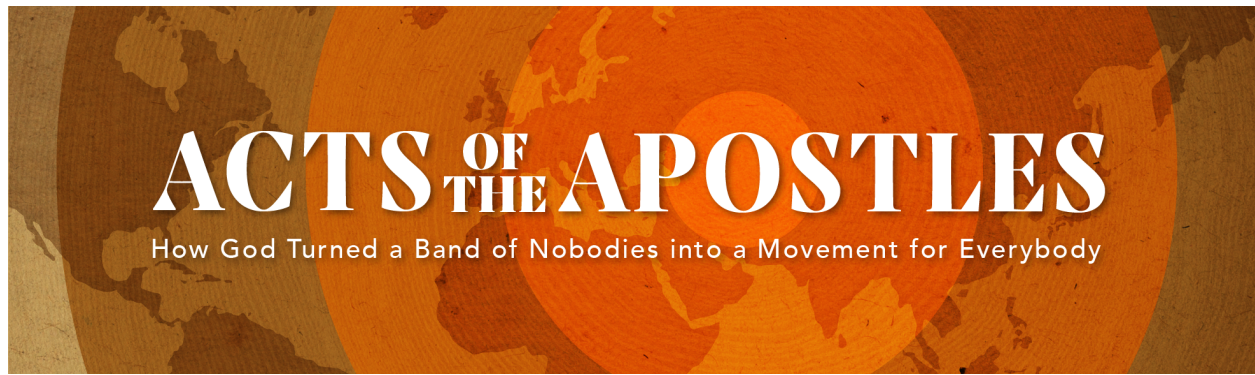
Acts 3:1-19

Do you believe there is power in the *name* of Jesus? If so, what kind of power is it?

In what ways do you think people misuse or trivialize the name of Jesus today? In doing so how do we violate the third commandment?

Names served as expressions of identity and authority in the ancient world. What can we learn about the identity and authority of God through His name (Yahweh) and the name of Jesus?

The Jewish people treated the name of God with deep reverence, a practice they still follow to this day. What can we learn from the way they treat the name of God?



What does Philippians 2:9-11 teach us about the Authority in the name of Jesus?

How does Jesus grant us access to and intimacy with the Father?

How does repentance allow us to participate in the power of Jesus' name? What is the connection between repentance and refreshing?

Reflection Questions

How do you use the name of Jesus? How can you use it more carefully and meaningfully?

Is the Church we read about in Acts just an ideal, or do you believe the Church can still be that force for the Kingdom today?

In what areas of your life do you need to repent and be refreshed?



ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

How God Turned a Band of Nobodies into a Movement for Everybody

How did a handful of ordinary people become ten thousand followers of Jesus in the year following his public execution? How did his movement gain so much momentum, especially as ten of the eleven charter members were crucified, burned, or stoned to death? How did ten thousand Christians become one million by the second century, and 3.3 billion today?

Written in the middle of the first century, The Acts of the Apostles tells the story of how Christianity spread like wildfire across the Roman Empire and beyond. For 25 weeks we will journey through Acts in pursuit of the truth behind history's most consequential movement.

Discussion Guide: Week 6

Acts 4:1-12

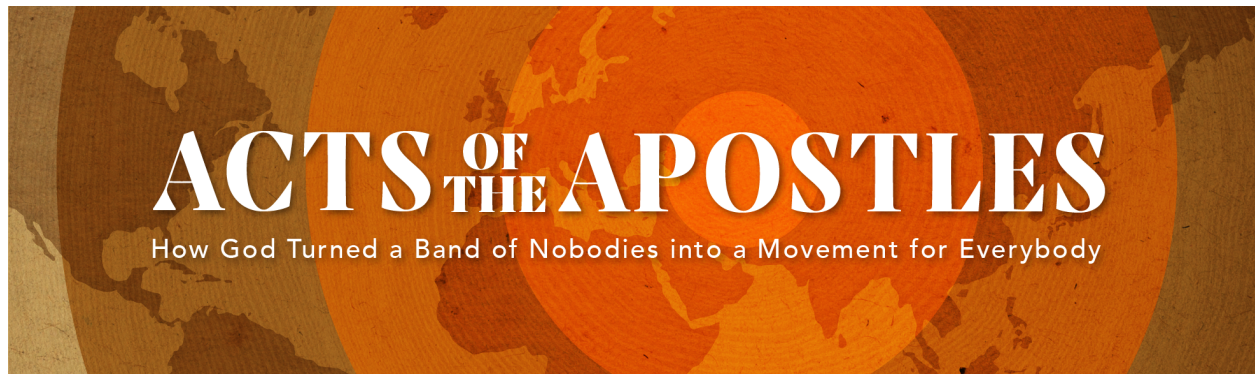
How does the statement "Jesus is the only way to salvation sit with you? Why?

Do you, or your friends, have trouble accepting the exclusivity of Christianity? Can christianity coexist with other faith claims and worldviews? Why or why not?

Read 1 Corinthians 1:23

How is not just Jesus, but Christ Crucified, a stumbling block? Why do some, especially the religious, struggle with worshiping a savior who was sacrificed on a cross?

How is it not just Jesus, but Christ Crucified, foolishness? Why do some, especially in our wider culture, struggle accepting Jesus is the name above every name?



How is Jesus' statement "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" offensive?

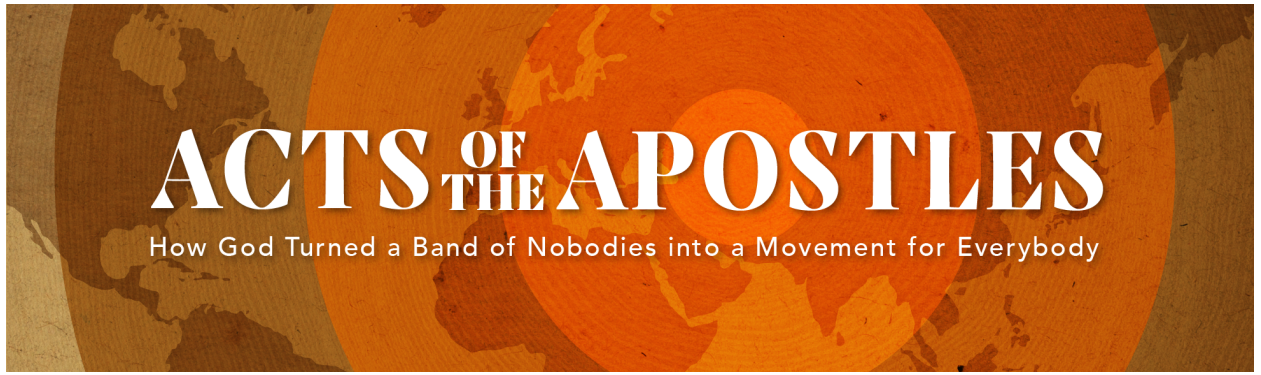
In Luke 19:10 Jesus says, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." You cannot be saved unless you first realize you are lost. Why is an understanding of our own inadequacy essential to accepting God's free gift of grace?

Reflection questions

If you have been saved, how were you lost before Christ? What did Jesus save you from?

If you would still consider yourself lost. What or who do you need to be saved from?

John Wesley once said "You have one business on earth - to save souls" If you have already been found by Jesus, who do you need to share this good news with this week?



ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

How God Turned a Band of Nobodies into a Movement for Everybody



ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

How God Turned a Band of Nobodies into a Movement for Everybody

How did a handful of ordinary people become ten thousand followers of Jesus in the year following his public execution? How did his movement gain so much momentum, especially as ten of the eleven charter members were crucified, burned, or stoned to death? How did ten thousand Christians become one million by the second century, and 3.3 billion today?

Written in the middle of the first century, The Acts of the Apostles tells the story of how Christianity spread like wildfire across the Roman Empire and beyond. For 25 weeks we will journey through Acts in pursuit of the truth behind history's most consequential movement.

Discussion Guide: Week 7

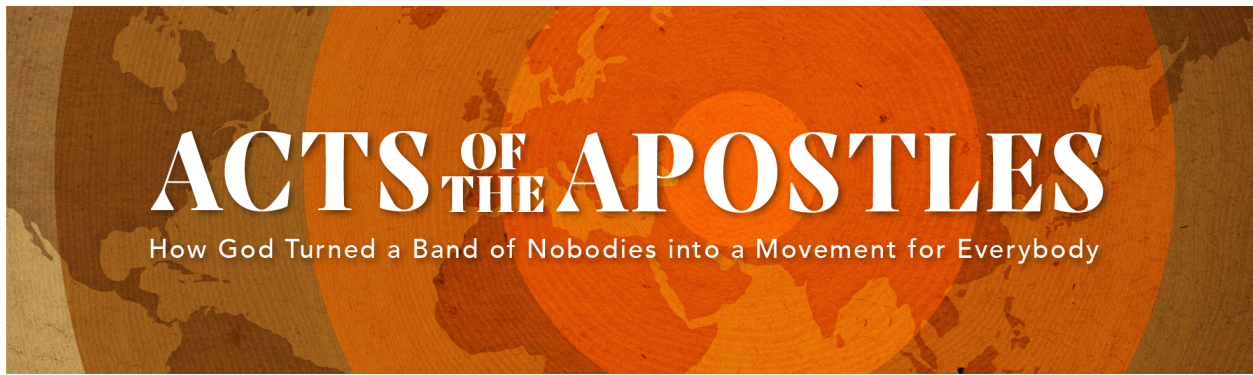
Opening Question

Can you remember a time when your convictions got you into trouble or made your life complicated? If so, what happened?

Acts 4:13-21

Read verse 13. Why do you think the authorities were so astonished by Peter and John and their educational background? What made them significant?

Why would Jesus choose such “Ordinary” men as his followers, and then to be the ones who would spread the good news to the ends of the earth?



Read verse 14-17. What dilemma did the Sanhedrin face? Why were they so adamant about stopping the apostles from speaking the name of Jesus?

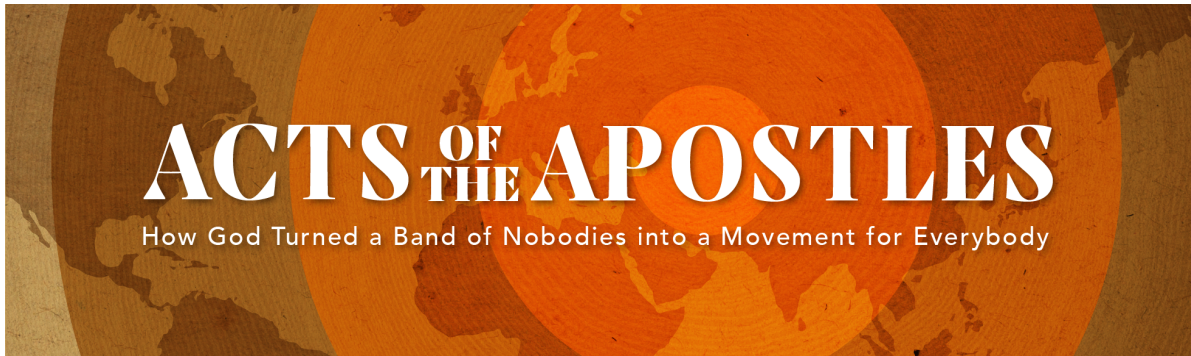
In Verse 19 the Apostles replied, *"Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges!"* What point are they making about the allegiances and priorities of disciples of Jesus?

Peter and John said they could not help but speak about what they had seen and heard. What had these two witnessed over the past few years, and even the past few days? What does this passage tell us about the power of testimony?

Reflection questions

Have you ever felt so inspired by something you couldn't help speaking about it? What was it? (It could be anything, does not have to be faith related)

Have you ever experienced God in such a real and transformative way that you just had to tell someone about it? If so, how did you feel when you told them? How did they respond?



How did a handful of ordinary people become ten thousand followers of Jesus in the year following his public execution? How did his movement gain so much momentum, especially as ten of the eleven charter members were crucified, burned, or stoned to death? How did ten thousand Christians become one million by the second century, and 3.3 billion today?

Written in the middle of the first century, The Acts of the Apostles tells the story of how Christianity spread like wildfire across the Roman Empire and beyond. For 25 weeks we will journey through Acts in pursuit of the truth behind history's most consequential movement.

Discussion Guide: Week 8

Opening Question

When Peter and John were released from their detainment they immediately went to their people, the church. Where do you go when you are in trouble or have been hurt?

Acts 4:23-31

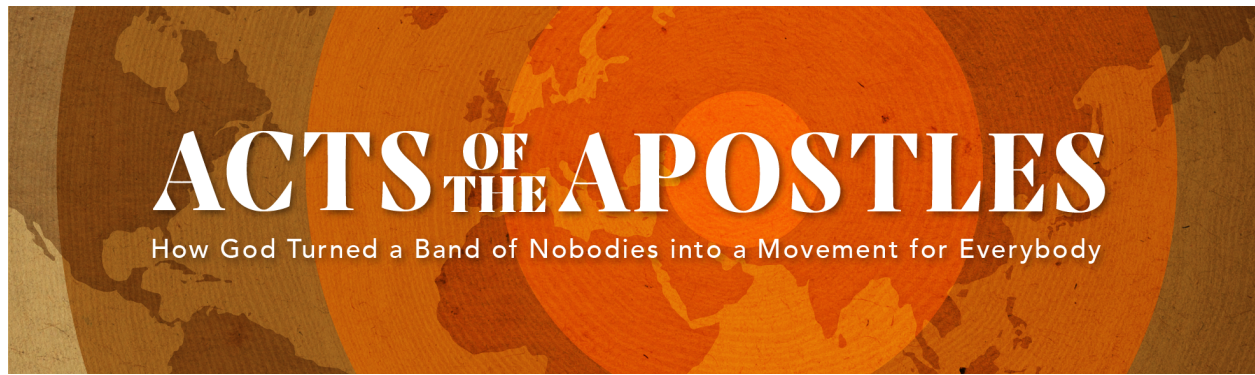
When Peter and John found the others what's the first thing they did?

In verses 29 & 30 the believers ask for boldness and for God to continue to perform signs and wonders. In light of the events earlier in Chapter 3&4, why is this request remarkable?

This passage raises three questions

1. Are Christians still being persecuted today?

Do you think Christians are pressured to hide their faith here in America today?



2. What's the purpose of prayer?

Reread the disciples' prayer in verses 24-30, they don't ask God for anything till the very end. How did the believers structure their prayer, and how could their example influence our prayer lives today?

How does praying together with other believers help us tell a better story about ourselves and God?

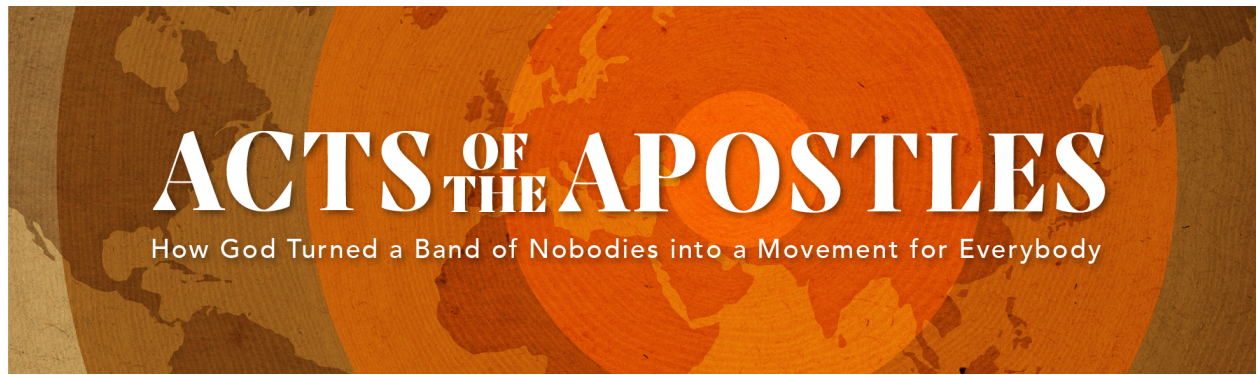
3. What is the difference between being bold and being a bully?

In 2 Corinthians 3:12 Paul says, "Therefore, since we have such a hope we are very bold". What does Boldness in faith look like?

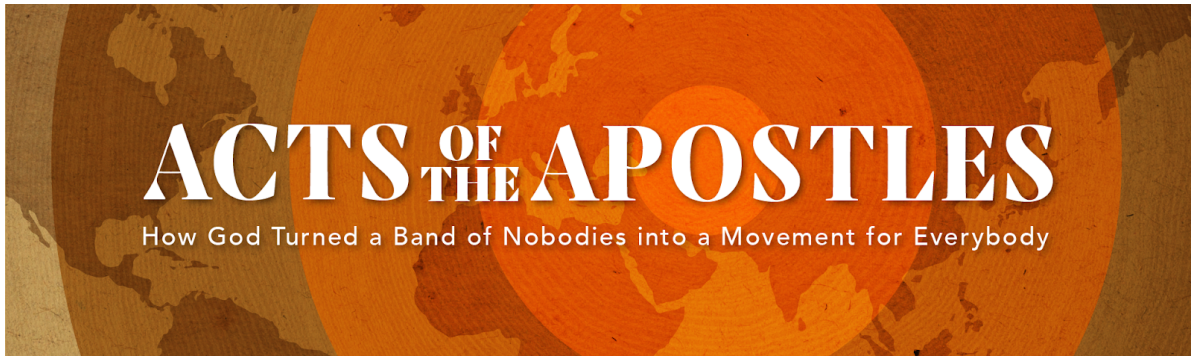
How is boldness different from arrogance?

Reflection Questions

1. If you are not facing any sort of persecution or pressure in your life, do you think it is because of a lack of boldness in your convictions?



2. How can prayer reset the narrative and correct some of the lies you believe?
How does it remind us who the main character really is?



How did a handful of ordinary people become ten thousand followers of Jesus in the year following his public execution? How did his movement gain so much momentum, especially as ten of the eleven charter members were crucified, burned, or stoned to death? How did ten thousand Christians become one million by the second century, and 3.3 billion today?

Written in the middle of the first century, The Acts of the Apostles tells the story of how Christianity spread like wildfire across the Roman Empire and beyond. For 25 weeks we will journey through Acts in pursuit of the truth behind history's most consequential movement.

Discussion Guide: Week 9

Opening Question

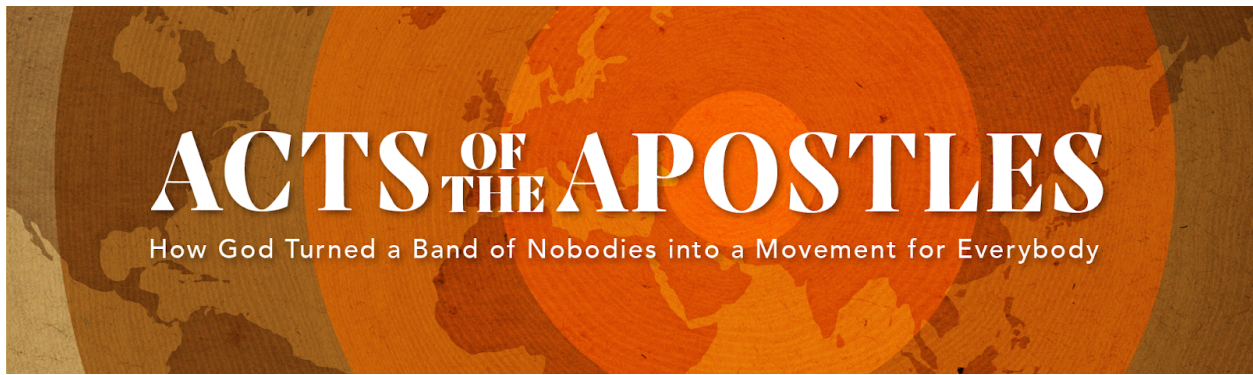
What's the closest thing to heaven you have ever experienced? What about this experience (the location, people, the event) made it so significant for you?

Acts 4:32-37

What words would you use to describe the Church in this passage? Why?

Acts 5:1-11

What is so challenging about this passage? When you read it does it sound more like a passage from the Gospels or the Old Testament?



What is the difference between Barnabas' actions and what Ananias and Sapphira did? What motivations drove their actions?

What does Peter accuse Ananias of? Why do you think that this is such a grievous sin?

Why did Ananias and Sapphira die? Was it just because they didn't give all of their money, or something deeper? Is that fair?

How do we try to look "Christian" today on the outside without being transformed by Christ on the inside?

Reflection Questions

What does this message teach us about the importance of purity within the Church?

When Peter was confronted with sin he acted boldly. How and where can you confront the sin among the believers within our community with the same boldness?



ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

How God Turned a Band of Nobodies into a Movement for Everybody

How did a handful of ordinary people become ten thousand followers of Jesus in the year following his public execution? How did his movement gain so much momentum, especially as ten of the eleven charter members were crucified, burned, or stoned to death? How did ten thousand Christians become one million by the second century, and 3.3 billion today? Written in the middle of the first century, The Acts of the Apostles tells the story of how Christianity spread like wildfire across the Roman Empire and beyond. For 25 weeks we will journey through Acts in pursuit of the truth behind history's most consequential movement.

Discussion Guide: Week 10

Acts 5:17-42

Opening Question

In Acts 4-7 the believers go from being inconvenienced, to pressured, to persecuted, and eventually killed. How are each of these stages different, and why do you think the heat was turned up so quickly?

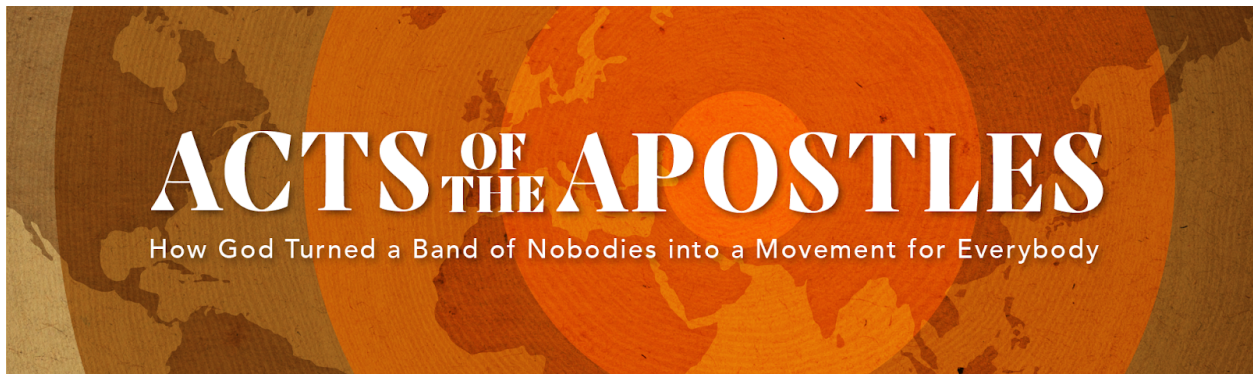
Acts 5:17

Who were the Sadducees, and why were they filled with jealousy?

What or who are you jealous of? Why do you think jealousy is such a uniquely toxic force in our lives?

Acts 5:18-21

The Angel commands the people to share this “New Life” with others. What was particularly new about the life that the apostles were living?



Have you ever considered that your life in Christ is an all-new life that is different and distinct from your old one? What has changed since you experienced new life in the Spirit?

Acts 5:22-42

Why were the temple authorities so furious about what Peter said in Acts 5:29-32? What makes the Gospel so offensive to some people?

Who was Gamaliel? What did he say that was right? What did he say that was wrong?

Re-read verses 41-42. What stands out to you about the apostles' reaction to the Sadducees' persecution?

Reflection Questions

Have you ever had to choose between obeying God and obeying human beings? What choice did you make, and what was the result?

What is one way in which you are going to share Jesus with others this week - even if it puts you at risk of suffering disgrace?



ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

How God Turned a Band of Nobodies into a Movement for Everybody

How did a handful of ordinary people become ten thousand followers of Jesus in the year following his public execution? How did his movement gain so much momentum, especially as ten of the eleven charter members were crucified, burned, or stoned to death? How did ten thousand Christians become one million by the second century, and 3.3 billion today? Written in the middle of the first century, The Acts of the Apostles tells the story of how Christianity spread like wildfire across the Roman Empire and beyond. For 25 weeks we will journey through Acts in pursuit of the truth behind history's most consequential movement.

Discussion Guide: Week 11

Acts 6:1-8:1

Opening Question

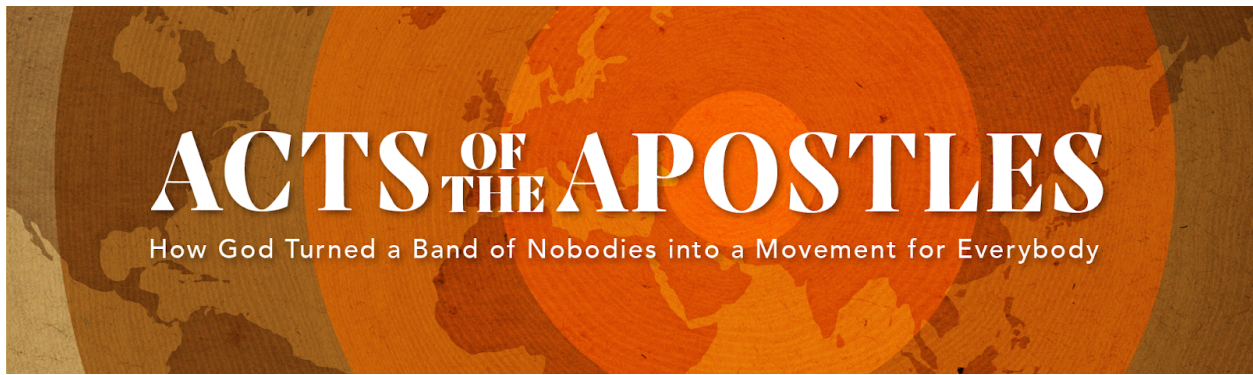
What is the boldest decision you have ever made? It could be a faith decision or a situation from your career or family. Why did you choose to make it?

Acts 6

What issue was Stephen initially selected to address? Why do you think this was becoming a problem in the early church?

Have you ever received a role at Church or work that you felt was beneath you? How did that make you feel, and how did you respond?

What was Stephen charged with? How does his trial echo Jesus'?



Acts 7:1-50

Why does Stephen go through Israel's history and why does he specifically highlight Abraham, Joseph, and Moses?

How does Stephen specifically respond to the accusations of speaking against the law and temple?

Acts 7:51-8:1

Why does the accusation of being stiff-necked and uncircumcised rile up the Jews?

What is the significance of Jesus standing to greet Stephen?

Reflection Questions

Stephen's boldness and power doesn't come from himself, but instead the Holy Spirit. Have you ever experienced boldness or power from the Spirit? If not, what do you think is holding you back?

The Jews were stiff-necked because they refused to change their minds about the Temple and the law. In what ways is the modern church being stiff-necked or holding our hands over our eyes so we cannot hear the truth?



ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

How God Turned a Band of Nobodies into a Movement for Everybody

How did a handful of ordinary people become ten thousand followers of Jesus in the year following his public execution? How did his movement gain so much momentum, especially as ten of the eleven charter members were crucified, burned, or stoned to death? How did ten thousand Christians become one million by the second century, and 3.3 billion today? Written in the middle of the first century, The Acts of the Apostles tells the story of how Christianity spread like wildfire across the Roman Empire and beyond. For 25 weeks we will journey through Acts in pursuit of the truth behind history's most consequential movement.

Discussion Guide: Week 12

Opening Question

Name one group, club, or organization you are a part of. What does it mean to belong? What steps did you have to go through to become a member, and what would you have to do to be removed?

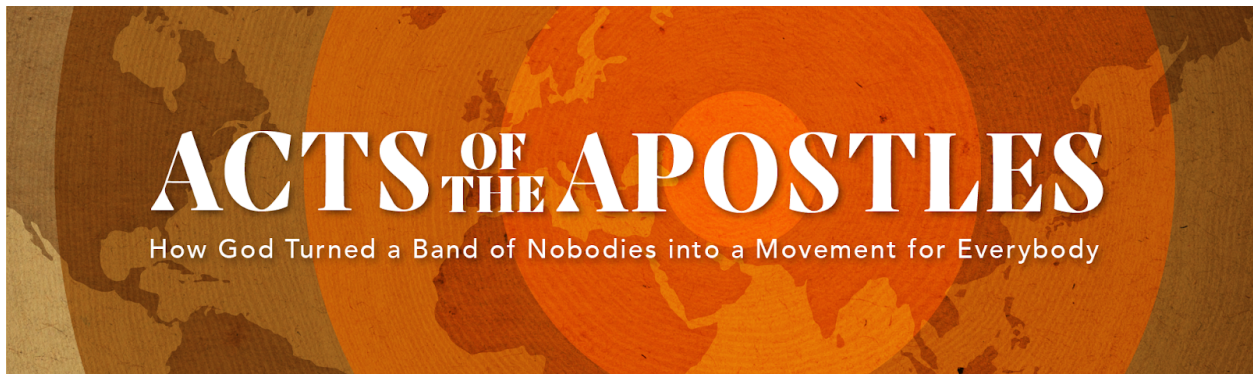
Acts 8:26-40

Who belonged to the first church in Jerusalem that we have read about in Acts 1-7?

Who was Philip? (See Acts 6:5 and Acts 8:4-25)

What can we assume about the Ethiopian man in this story?

Why might the idea of spending time with the Ethiopian eunuch have been complicated for Philip?



What was the Ethiopian reading? Why was it especially significant to him?

What did the Ethiopian man ask Philip? What made his request so extraordinary?

What was Philip's response? What made his quick response so extraordinary?

How many non-Jewish, African Christians were there before this Ethiopian man was baptized by Philip? How many African Christians are there today? What does that say to you about this man's legacy?

Reflection Questions

The difference that Jesus made in the Ethiopian man's life was unmistakable. How would you describe the difference that Jesus has made in your life to this point?

The Ethiopian man demanded they stop the chariot and asked "what is to prevent me from being baptized?" What is preventing you from taking that next step of faith? How can you stop the chariot and do it today?