

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?

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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.

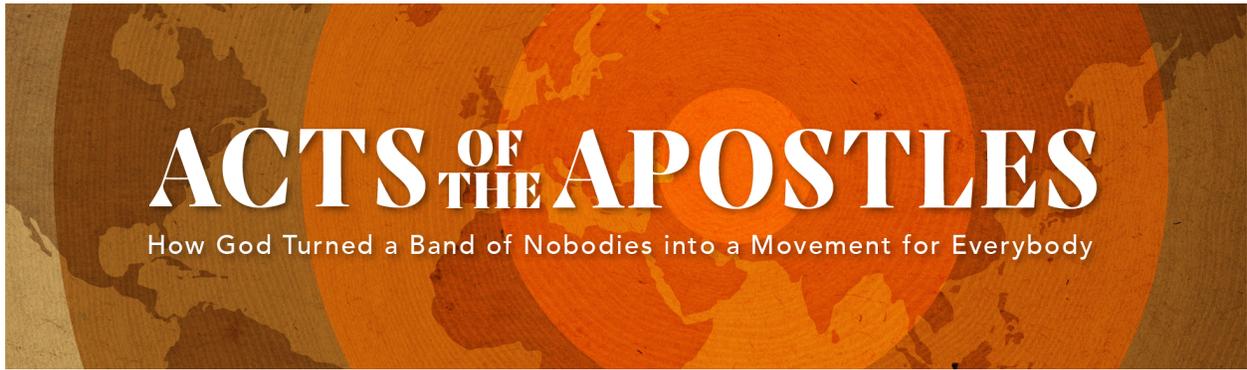
1. Jesus taught about The Kingdom of God.

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?

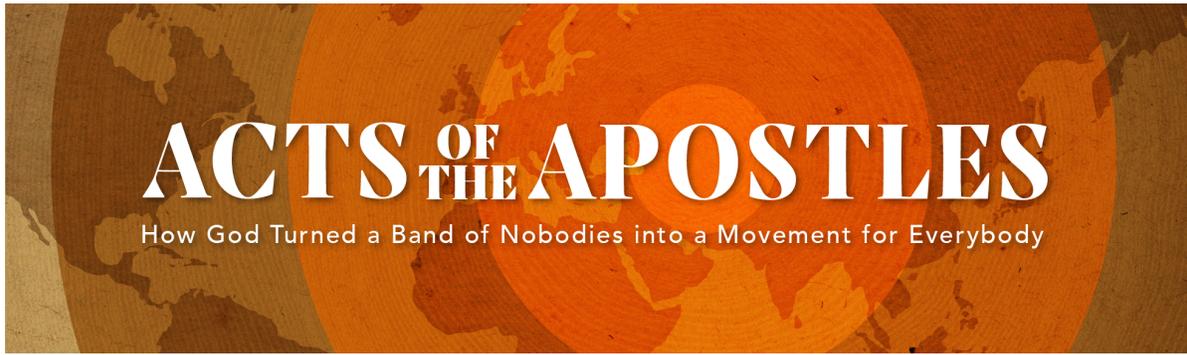
How can we join the disciples in becoming witnesses in Houston, Texas, and beyond?

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?



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Discussion Guide: Week 2

Acts 2:1-13

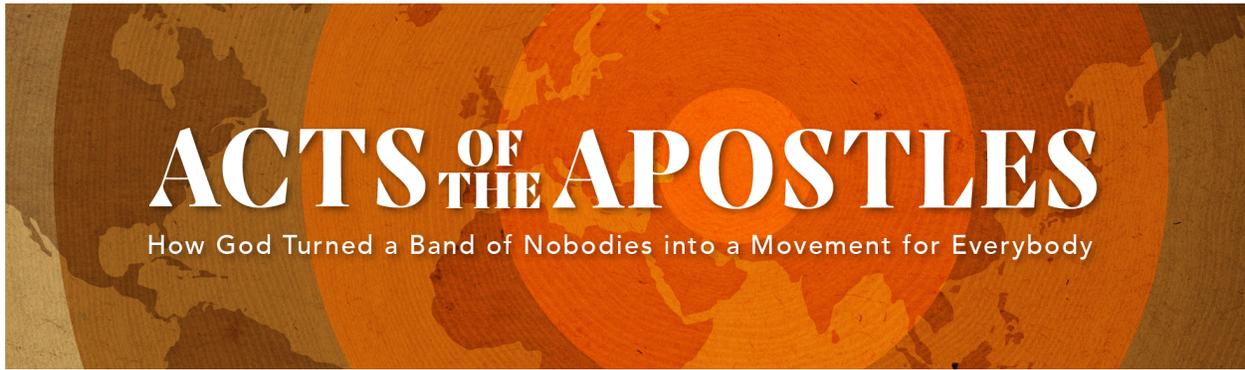
What is your experience with the Holy Spirit? Would you consider yourself charismatic, closed off, or unsure?

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?

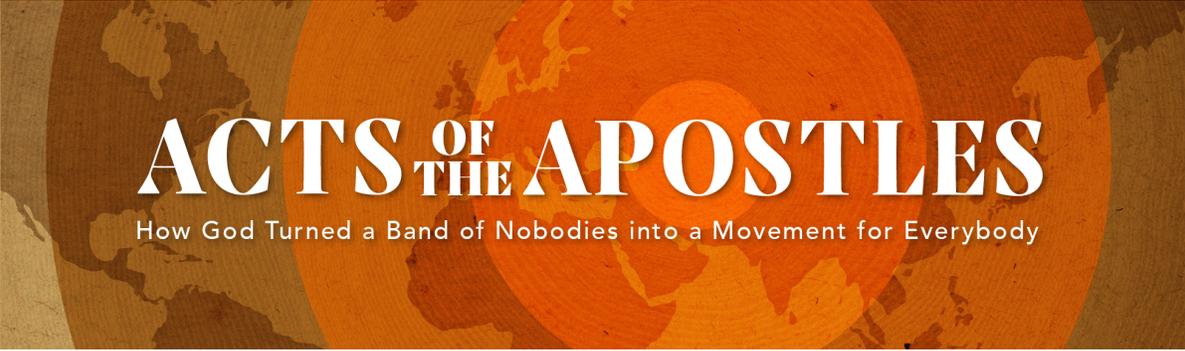
The Holy Spirit Produces Joyful Fearlessness

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?



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Discussion Guide: Week 3

Acts 2:22-41

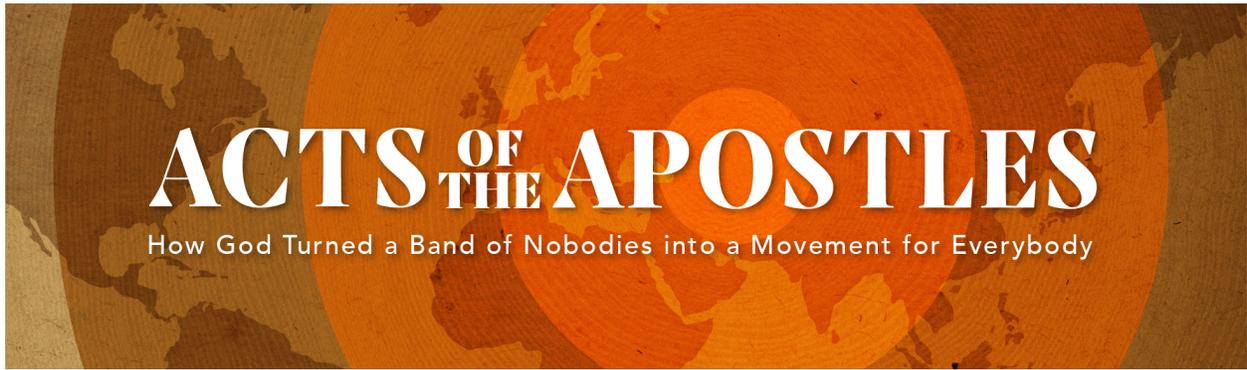
Reflection Question: What makes Jesus so special? How can we say that he's any better or any different from all the other well-spoken, charismatic religious leaders that have come and gone?

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

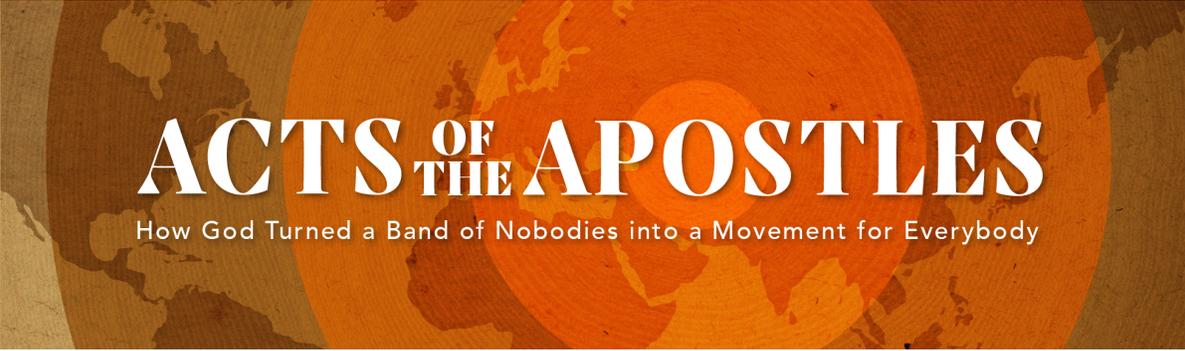
Peter warns the people to “save themselves from this corrupt generation”. What do you think Peter was referring to in his context, and how would this warning apply to us today?

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?



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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?

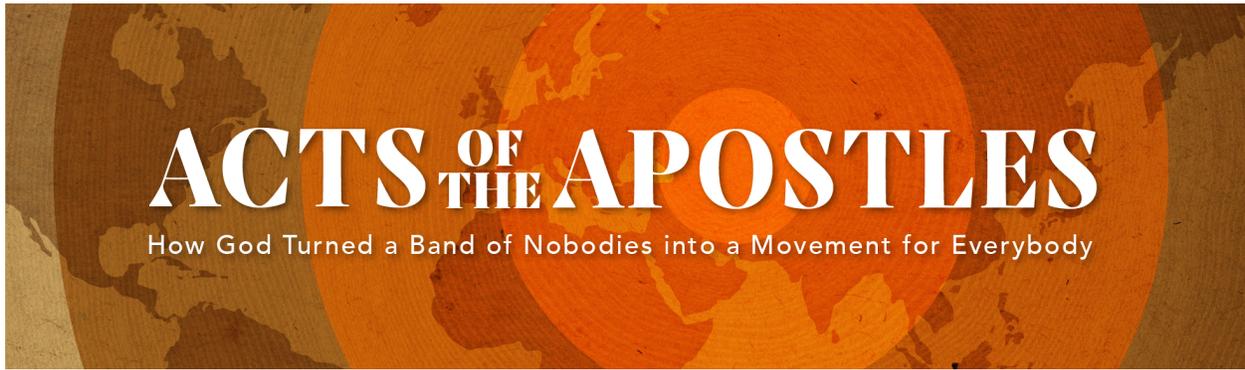
“...and to fellowship...”

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?

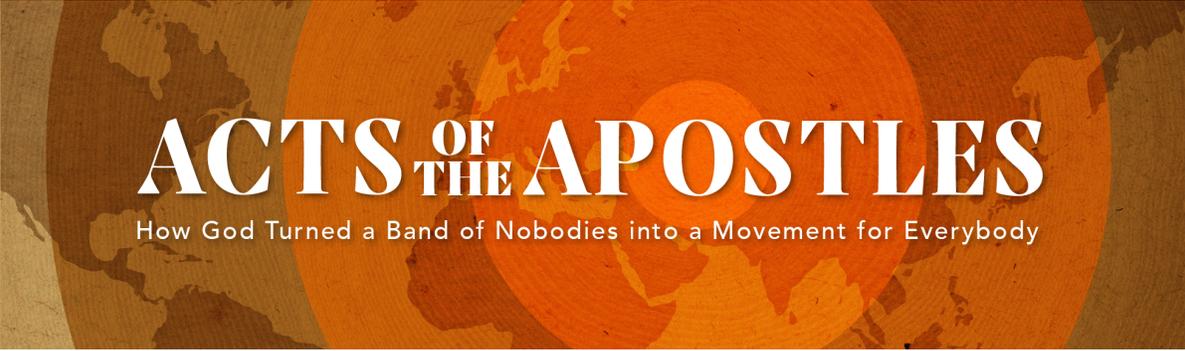
The Result

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.



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Discussion Guide: Week 5

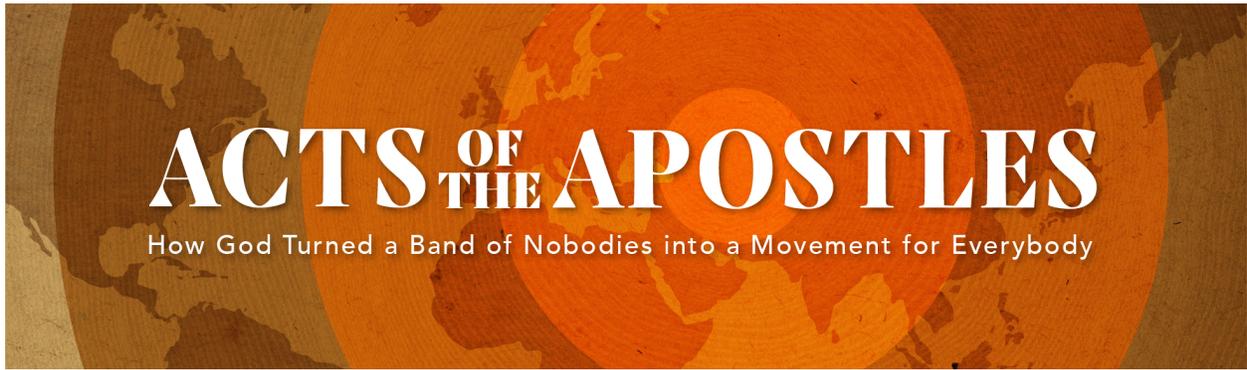
Acts 3:1-19

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?

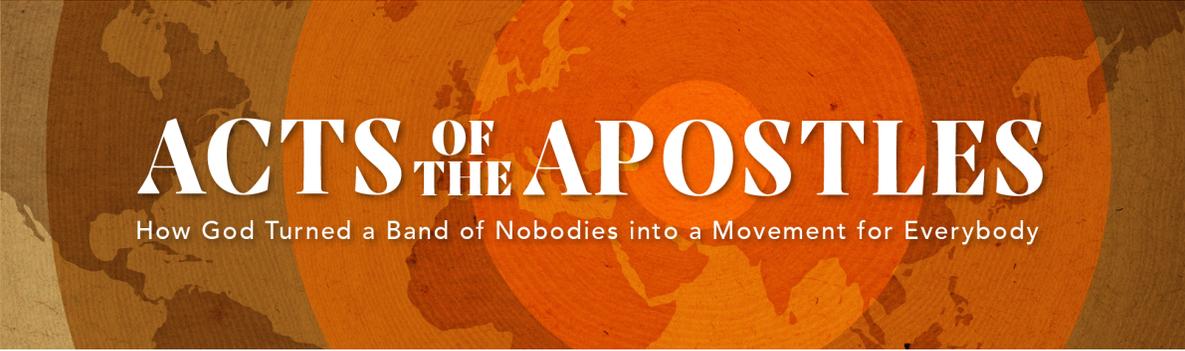
How does repentance allow us to participate in the power of Jesus' name? What is the connection between repentance and refreshing?

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?



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Discussion Guide: Week 6

Acts 4:1-12

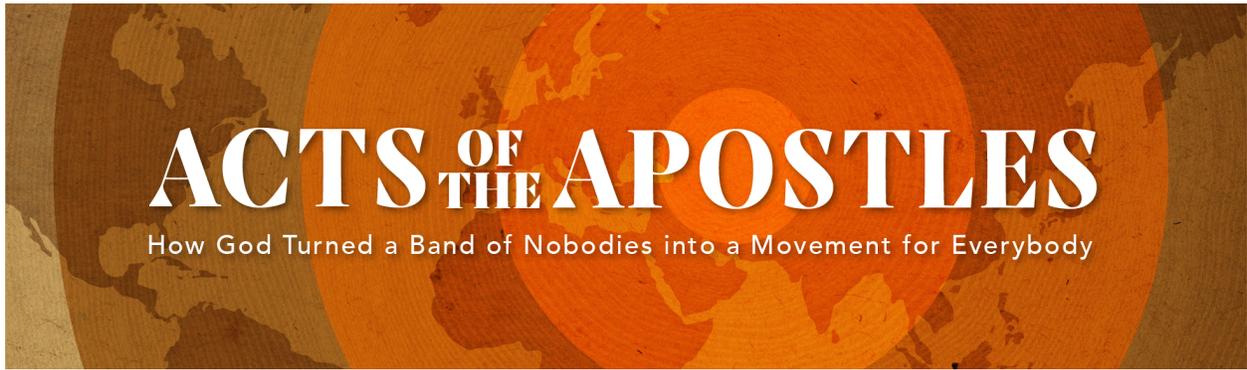
How does the statement "Jesus is the only way to salvation sit with you? Why?

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 worshipping 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?

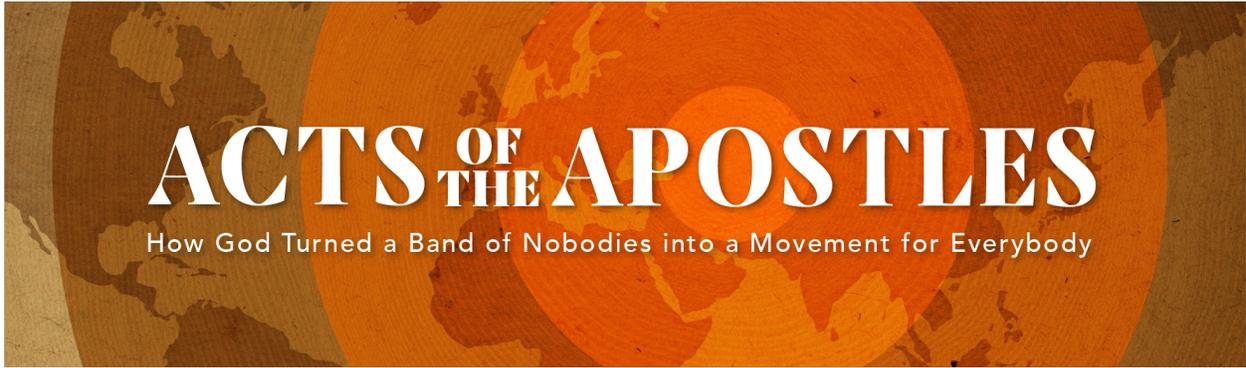
In Luke 19:10 Jesus says, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." You cannot be saved unless you first realize you are lost. Why is an understanding of our own inadequacy essential to accepting God's free gift of grace?

Reflection questions

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

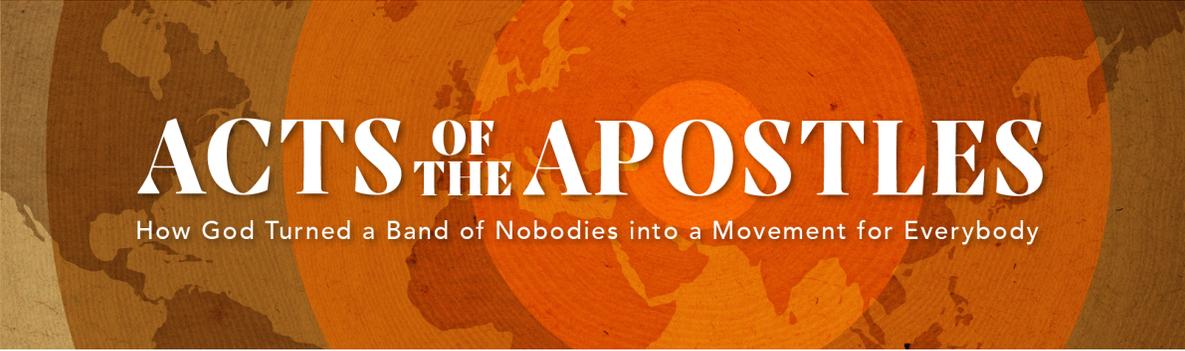
If you would still consider yourself lost. What or who do you need to be saved from?

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?



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Discussion Guide: Week 7

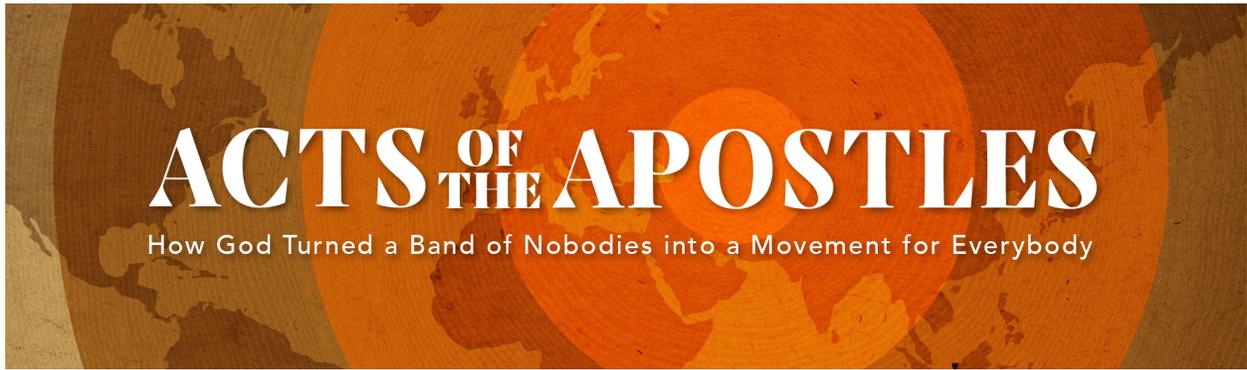
Opening Question

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?

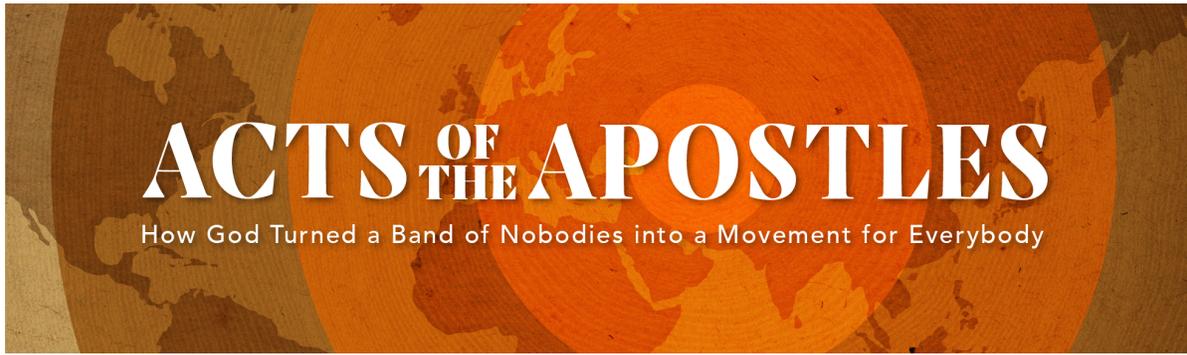
In Verse 19 the Apostles replied, "*Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges!*" What point are they making about the allegiances and priorities of disciples of Jesus?

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?



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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

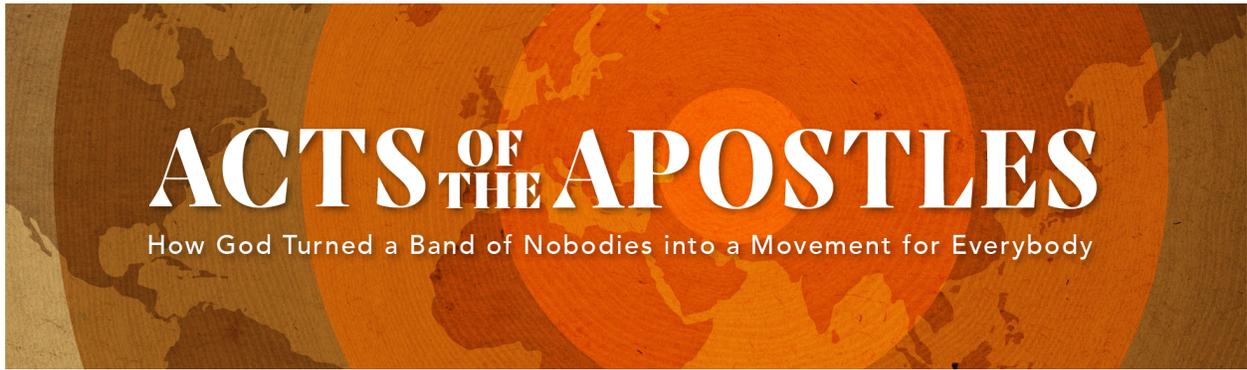
When Peter and John found the others what's the first thing they did?

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 these 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?

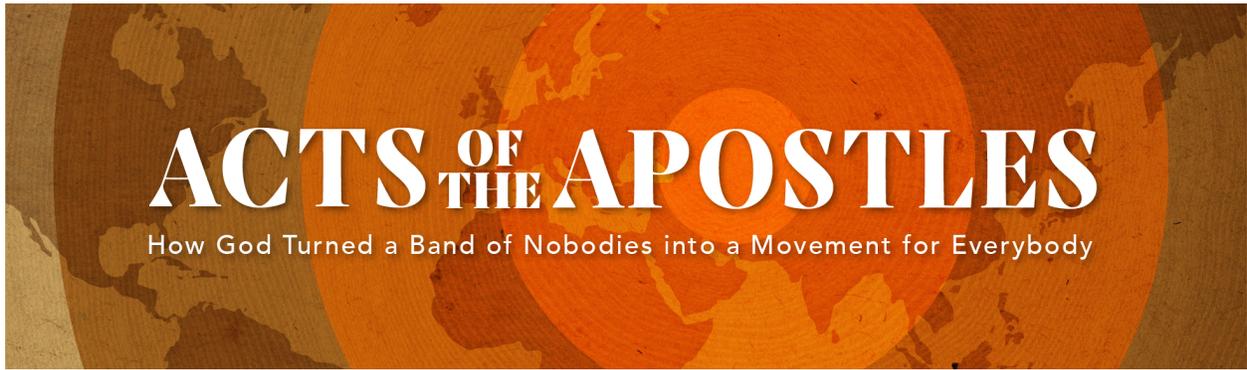
3. What is the difference between being bold and being a bully?

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?

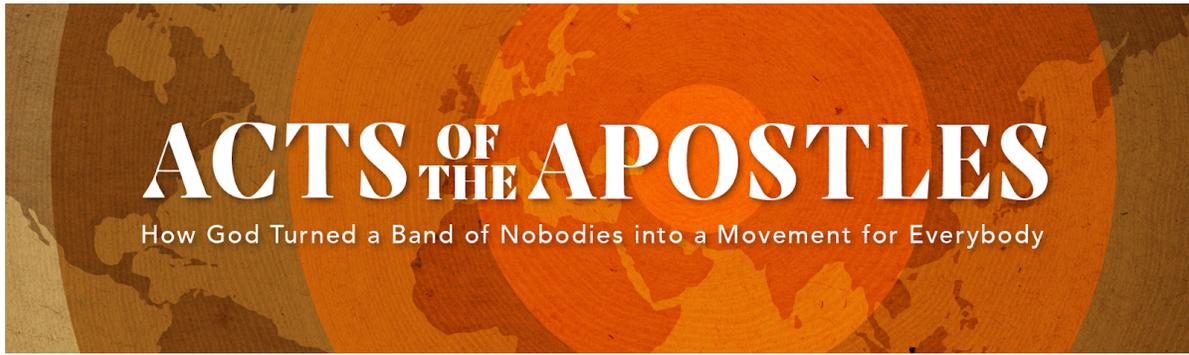
How is boldness different from arrogance?

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?



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Discussion Guide: Week 9

Opening Question

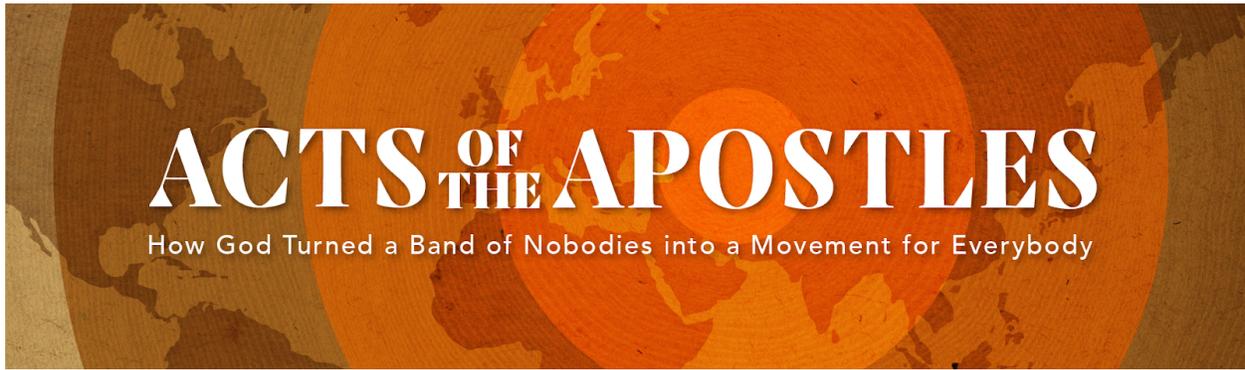
What's the closest thing to heaven you have ever experienced? What about this experience (the location, people, the event) made it so significant for you?

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?

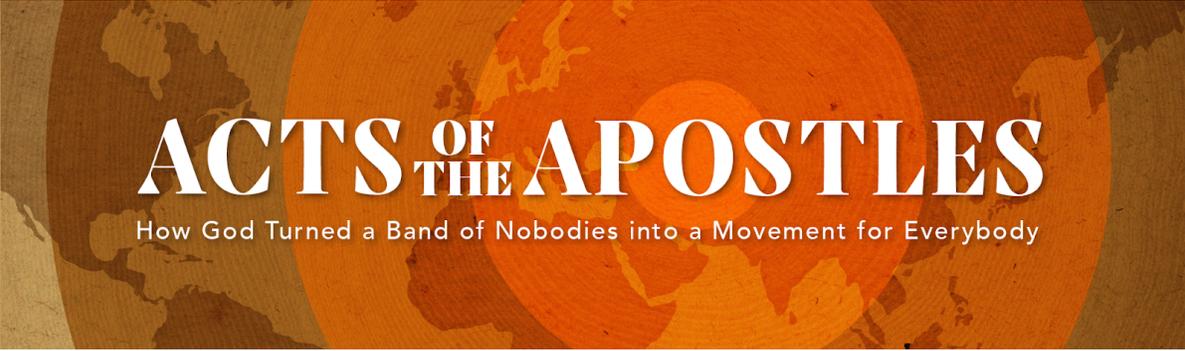
Why did Ananias and Sapphira die? Was it just because they didn't give all of their money, or something deeper? Is that fair?

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?



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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?

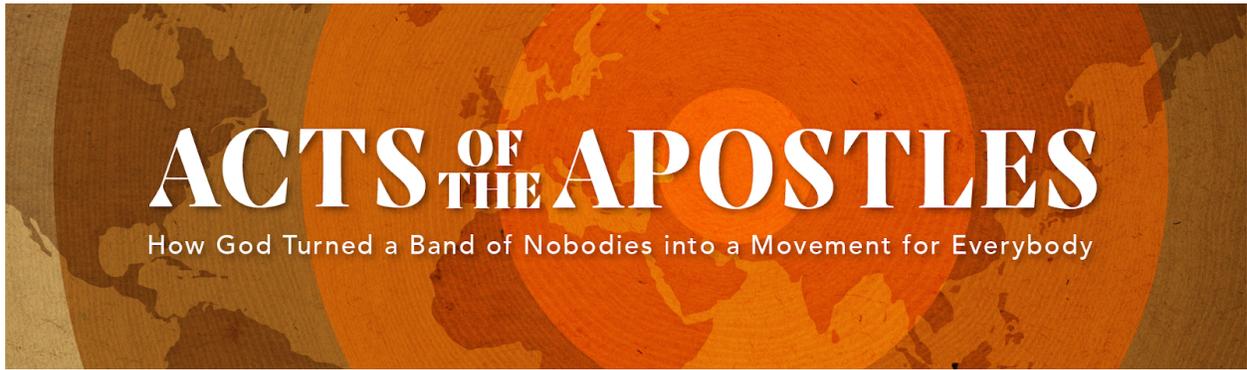
Acts 5:17

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?

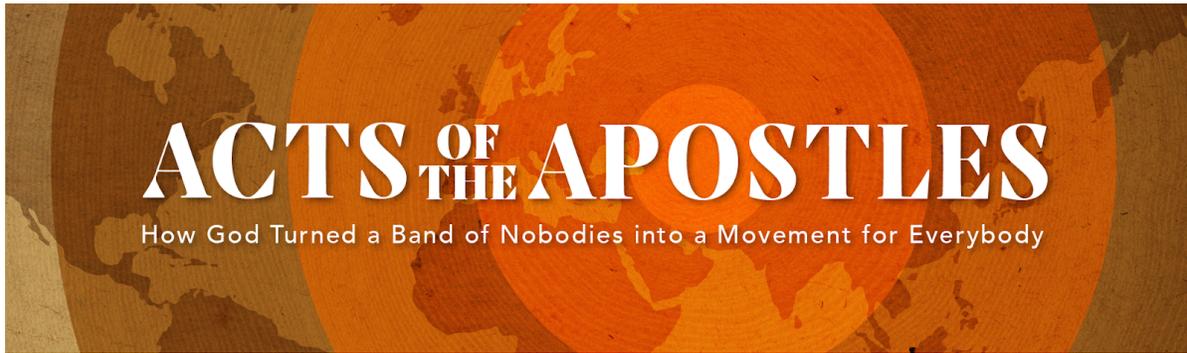
Who was Gamaliel? What did he say that was right? What did he say that was wrong?

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?



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Discussion Guide: Week 11

Acts 6:1-8:1

Opening Question

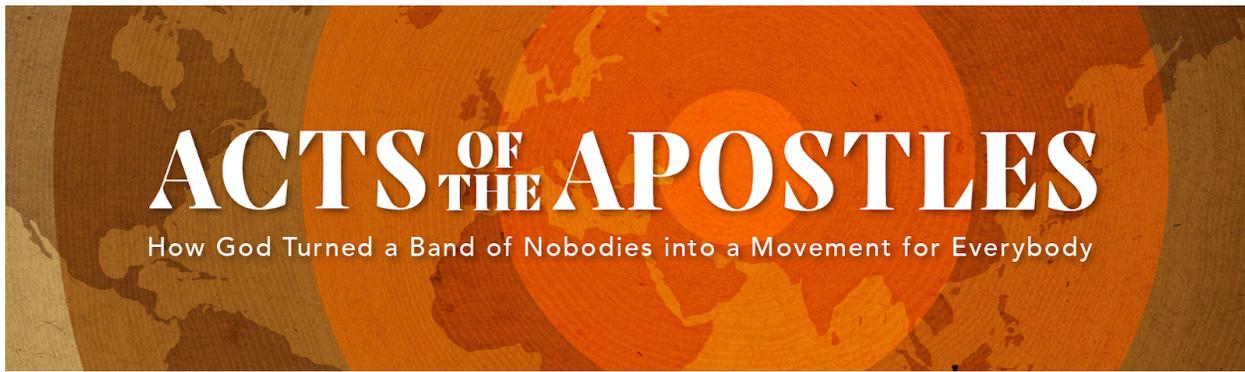
What is the boldest decision you have ever made? It could be a faith decision or a situation from your career or family. Why did you choose to make it?

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

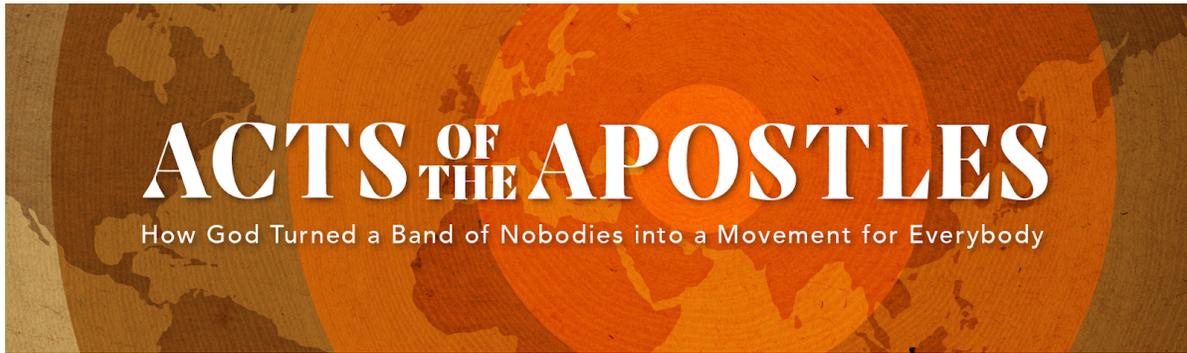
Why does the accusation of being stiff-necked and uncircumcised rile up the Jews?

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?



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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?

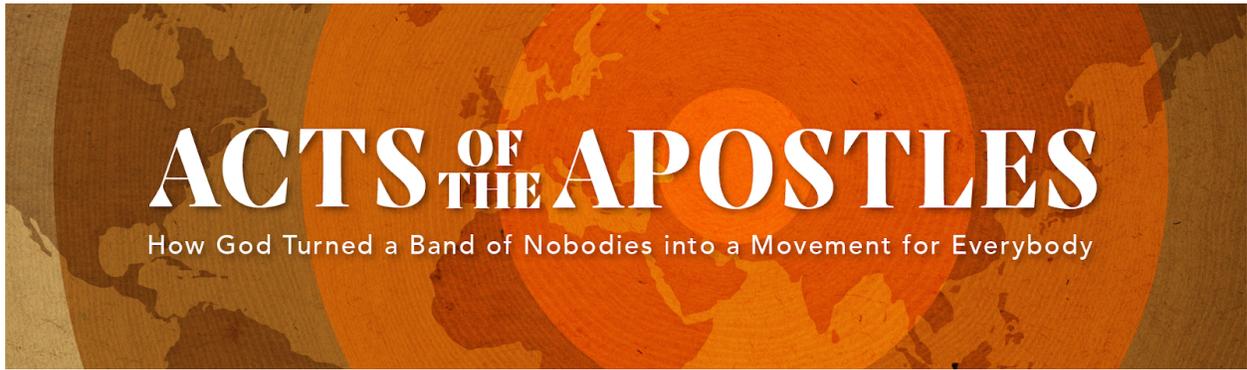
Acts 8:26-40

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?

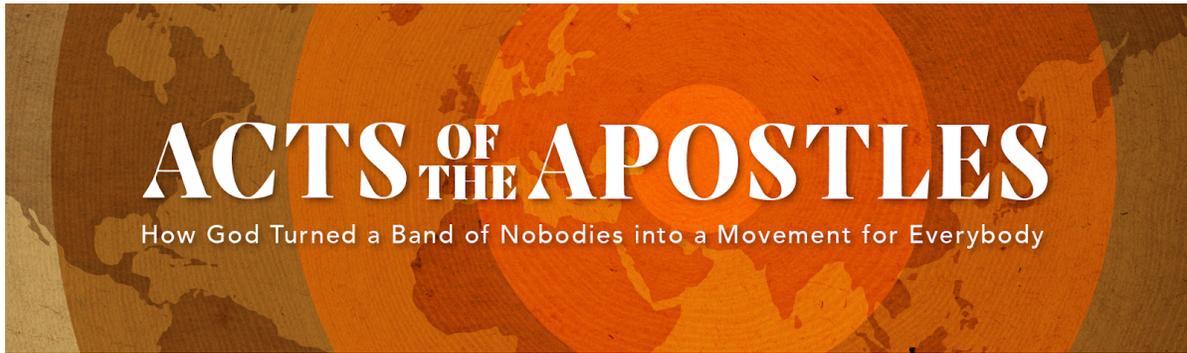
What was Philip's response? What made his quick response so extraordinary?

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?



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Group Discussion Guide: Week 17

Conversation Starter

Think of a time in your life when you were courageous. What happened? How did you show courage? Where did your courage come from?

Courage to Stir Up Trouble

First, read Acts 16:16-18. Who was the slave girl, and what did she do to make her owners rich? Where do we see this kind of evil today?

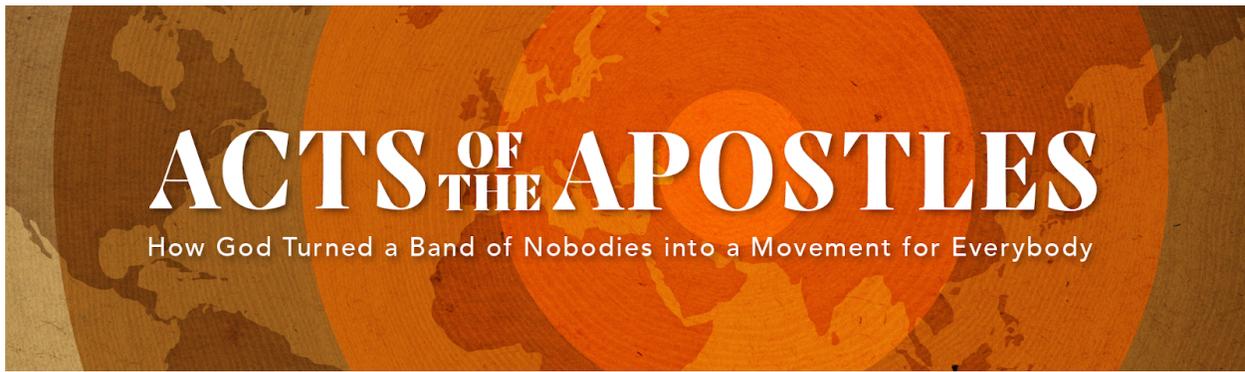
Why did Paul find it necessary to silence her (even though she was telling the truth)?

What keeps you from having the courage to stir up trouble when it's called for?

Courage to Suffer

Read Acts 16:19-24. How did Paul and Silas disrupt the peace? What happened next?

Paul and Silas were courageous enough to suffer for Christ. Have you ever suffered for Christ? If so, how?



Courage to Sing

Read Acts 16:25. What were Paul and Silas doing in their prison cell, and why was that so extraordinary?

What were the other prisoners doing, and why does our posture while suffering for Jesus matter?

Courage to Stay

Read Acts 16:26-39. Two times, Paul and Silas stayed when they could have left. In the first instance, they stayed in jail when they could have escaped. Why did they stay?

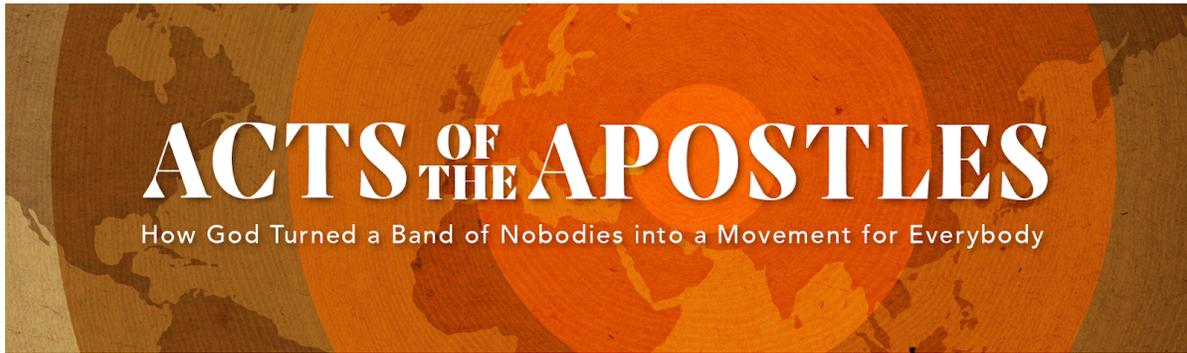
In what areas of your life is God calling you to have “the courage to stay” right now?

Courage to Strengthen Others

Read Acts 16:40. What did Paul and Silas do after the magistrates escorted them out of prison? Why was that an act of courage under the circumstances?

This first house church in Philippi could have consisted of the jailor’s family, a formerly possessed girl, and a wealthy merchant named Lydia (Acts 16:11-15). What does this ragamuffin crew tell us about the nature of the Gospel and the Church?

Read *Isaiah* 43:2-3. In a world that feels like it’s on fire and changing by the day, what reason do we have for being courageous? Where does our courage come from?



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? Acts of the Apostles tells the story of how Christianity spread like wildfire across the Roman Empire and beyond. We will journey through Acts in pursuit of the truth behind history's most consequential movement.

Group Discussion Guide: Week 18

Conversation Starter

According to recent surveys, 47% of all American adults belong to a Christian church (down from 70% in 1999). What factors do you think have contributed to this decline?

Paul's Concern

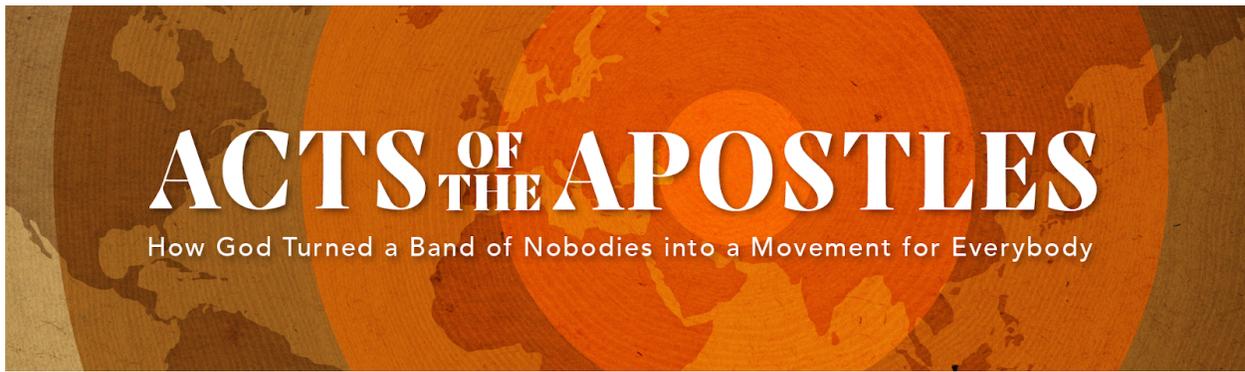
Read Acts 17:16-18. What did the Apostle Paul find so troubling about the predominant Athenian worldview? Why was it so discouraging to him?

Once Paul saw the pervasive idolatry of Athens, he couldn't unsee it. When you look around the world today, what do you see that you can't unsee? What are the idols and false gods people are chasing these days?

Paul's Response

Read Acts 17:19-23. What was the Areopagus, and what went on there every day?

How did Paul begin his address to the Athenians? Why is it important for Christians to first carefully observe the context we're in *before* speaking out?



Read Acts 17:24-28. Why do you think Paul began his presentation with the universe, the earth, the creation of all things, and the origin of life - rather than opening with a more religious or biblical worldview?

In this brief talk, Paul referenced popular Greek poets (v. 28). Why would Paul quote non-Christian poets while attempting to explain the Christian gospel?

Read 17:29-31. Having paid homage to Athenian religiosity and values, Paul made a more aggressive appeal here. What might his audience have found challenging or offensive about the claims Paul made in these verses?

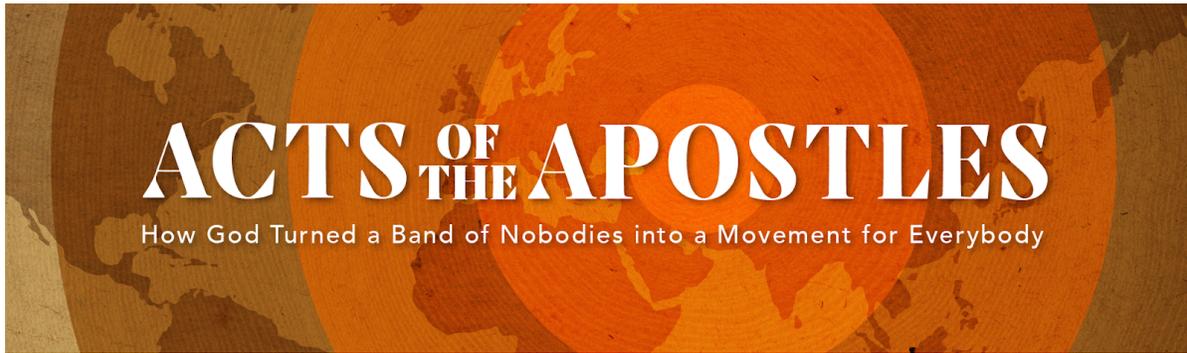
Read 17:32-34. Paul's Athenian audience responded to his appeal in three distinct ways. What were the three different responses found in this passage?

Reflection Questions

When you observe the world around you today, as fallen as it may be, where do you see signs of God's Truth in modern, secular culture?

Why is it important for Christians to be both gracious (in our assessment of secular contexts and worldviews) **and** truthful (about the gospel of Jesus Christ) - and not just one or the other?

If you've ever tried to tell unbelievers about Jesus, you've probably seen people react in each of these three ways discussed above. Spend a few moments reflecting and sharing about a time when you shared the gospel (even if it was only inviting someone to church). How was your message received? How did their response affect or change your enthusiasm for sharing the gospel with others?



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? Acts of the Apostles tells the story of how Christianity spread like wildfire across the Roman Empire and beyond. We will journey through Acts in pursuit of the truth behind history's most consequential movement.

Group Discussion Guide: Week 19

Conversation Starter

How would you describe the City of Houston? What are the things we live for, and what are some of the sins we harbor? How could we relate to Corinth in the 1st century?

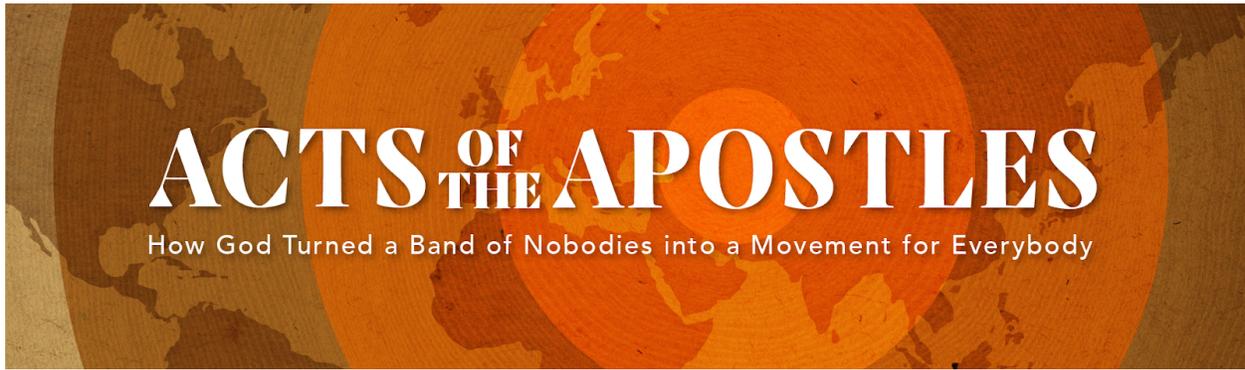
Rejection and Revival

Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. How does Paul describe the kinds of people who joined the church in Corinth, and more broadly, what does it say about the purpose of the Church of Jesus Christ?

Read Acts 18:1-4. Who were Priscilla and Aquila? What do we learn about them from this passage and other passages in the New Testament (see Romans 16:3-5 and 1 Corinthians 16:19)? How did they partner with Paul?

Read Acts 18:5. What did Silas and Timothy bring Paul, and what did that allow Paul to do? (See also 2 Corinthians 11:8-9 and Philippians 4:14-15.)

Read Acts 18:6-8. What happened after Paul began preaching the Gospel full-time, and how did the apostle respond? What does this show us about the CONNECTIONAL nature of the Church?



Rejection and Revival... and more Rejection

What typically happens whenever revival breaks out in a city (see Acts 16:19-24, 17:5-8, 17:13-14, 18:12-13, 19:23-29)?

Read Acts 18:9-11. Given Paul's recent successes in ministry and the apparent revival unfolding in Corinth, why do you think Paul would have been afraid and reluctant to continue? How did the LORD respond to Paul v. 9?

Reflection Questions

Using the Lord's words to Paul in Acts 18:9-11 as a template, how can we prepare ourselves not only for the revival, but also for the resistance?

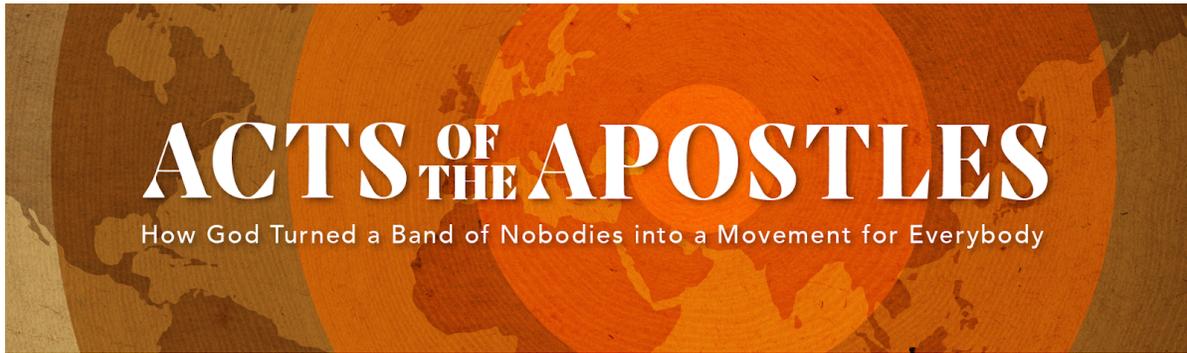
GOD'S PRESENCE - How has the Lord been with you?

GOD'S PROTECTION - How has the Lord protected you from evil?

GOD'S PROVISION - How has He provided for you?

Despite what many believe about the supposed decline of Christianity in America, many churches and cities (including ours) are witnessing a revival. What should we expect as this revival unfolds?

Earlier we discussed the sorts of unsavory people who made up the Corinthian congregation according to 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. But in the very next verse, we find that their sins no longer defined them (read 6:12). How is this encouragement to us today? What sins do we need to be cleansed of?



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Group Discussion Guide: Week 19.5

Conversation Starter

If you were there Sunday morning what did you think of John Burke's Sermon on Near Death Experiences (NDE's) and the character of God? What was most surprising to you from his talk?

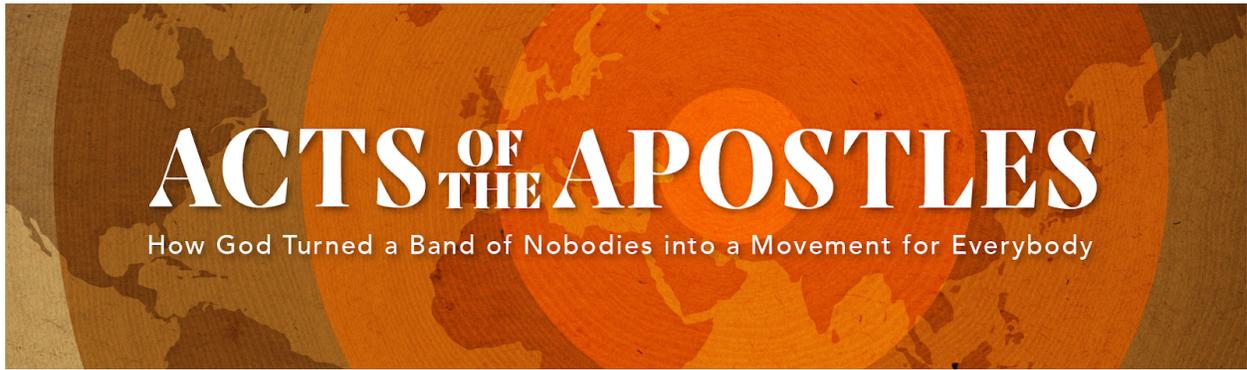
We all subconsciously put boxes around who God is and how we experience Him. What part of God's character do you struggle with or where are you still growing in your understanding of him?

Moving by the Will of God

Read Acts 18:18-23. Paul's Missionary journeys moved him all across the mediterranean. What served as Paul's rudder and sails during his travels, and how did he decide how long to stay and when to go? What was his goal wherever he visited?

Read James 4:13-17. James, the half-brother of Jesus, in his pastoral letter wrote something very similar to Paul about moving as God leads. How does James describe our lives and what it means to follow God?

Why is it so difficult for us to surrender to the will of God?



Kingdom work is Communal

Read Acts 18:24-26. Apollos was a smart guy who knew the Old Testament Scriptures, but needed some extra teaching from Priscilla and Aquila. What was he lacking?

Read Acts 18:27-28. After he gained much needed teaching and discipleship Apollos hit the road and began powerfully preaching. How does this entire passage show us the importance of teaching, mentoring, and the passing down of truth?

The other place we read about Apollos in the Bible is in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. *Read 1 Corinthians 3:4-9.* Paul, Priscilla, Aquila, and Apollos were all faithful co-workers in God's service. What do they teach us about the communal nature of Kingdom work?

Reflection Questions

Has God ever challenged YOUR plans for YOUR life? How did you respond? What does it look like to hold on to our plans loosely, and follow God's will for us?

Priscilla and Aquila were able to meet with Apollos and fill in his gaps. Has there ever been a time when your understanding of God was incomplete and someone had to help explain the ways of God more adequately? Who was it, what did they show you, and how did you respond?

We are all called to mentor and disciple other believers. Who is God leading you to mentor?

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Group Discussion Guide: Week 20

Conversation Starter

How (if at all) has following Jesus disrupted the way you used to live?

Paul's Ministry in Ephesus

It's important to see that, before the events in today's reading, things were going well for Paul and the Christians of Ephesus. *Read Acts 19:17-22*. What do you notice?

Just three verses later, we find that there was already an angry uprising in response to the Gospel's influence in Ephesus. *Read Acts 19:23-27*. Who was Artemis (a.k.a. "Diana") of the Ephesians? What do we know about her and her temple in Ephesus?

What is the relationship between modern-day idols and economic prosperity today? What typically happens to people who reject and speak against these idols?

Read Acts 19:28-41. What do you notice about the mob and the chaos that ensued? What unique role did the city clerk play in this passage?

Despite the mob, Paul and the other Christians established a Church in Ephesus and we can see Paul's special affection for this community in his letter to the Ephesians (Ephesians 1:15-23). Paul prayed a very specific prayer for them found in *Ephesians 3:16-19*. Take a moment to read this prayer and then copy it on a note where you will see it this week. Use this as your prayer this week, even memorize it if you can.

Reflection Questions

Under what types of circumstances do you think Christianity should reject the values and disrupt the economy of a society? Can you think of any examples in your lifetime or in recent history when Christians have been righteously disruptive?

As Christians who are living in a riotous world in which the mob mentality is a daily reality, how can we follow Jesus faithfully, by not only persevering through the pushback, but also joyfully clinging to “the love we had at first”?

Have you ever witnessed (or personally known) a reasonable unbeliever who rejected the mob mentality and chose to make peace? How does God use such people? (See Gamaliel in Acts 5:33-39, Nicodemus in John 2:13-3:2, and Jesus' words in Luke 10:5-7).

Upcoming Events:



Ash Wednesday Worship Service

Save the date to join us on Wednesday, February 14 at 7pm as we mark the beginning of the season of Lent with a special time of worship and teaching. Childcare available for ages 6 months up to 4.



Special Serve Day for Loaves & Fishes

Join us for a special serve day with our partner organization, Loaves & Fishes Soup Kitchen! On Monday, February 19, a team of 20 volunteers is needed to help deep clean their kitchen area. Sign up: thestory.church/serveday



Summer Trip with GO Ministries

We have limited spots available for this year's trip to the Dominican Republic with our partner GO Ministries, June 4-11. Visit thestory.church/gomin to learn more about the trip and submit your deposit to secure your spot.

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Group Discussion Guide: Week 21

Conversation Starter

If your life was a sport, what sport would it be and why?

Paul's Race

Read Acts 20:7-11. What does this passage tell us about Paul's character and commitment level? Given what we know about Paul's life and background, why do you think he was so intensely focused on sharing the gospel?

Read Acts 20:17-25 and Acts 20:36-38. What was Paul's reason for speaking to the Ephesian church leaders in this way? What did he hope to accomplish?

This isn't the only time that Paul analogized the Christian life to a footrace (*see 1 Cor. 9:24, Gal. 2:2, and Phil. 3:13-14. See also Hebrews 12:1-2, which most likely wasn't written by Paul*). What do you think it is about running in particular that makes it such a good analogy for Christians who are trying to follow Jesus?

When did the "race" begin for Paul? Approximately how old was he, and for how many years did he live *before* he began the race of following Jesus?

Your Race

When does the race begin for believers, and when will it end? Why is this so important to understand?

Who are we running against?

Some Christians - especially new believers - often falsely assume they are “running” against other Christians. What’s wrong with that assumption?

Other Christians run the race as though they’re in competition with the world, or with our spiritual enemy, Satan. What’s wrong with this assumption?

So, against whom *ARE* you running your race? (see Ephesians 4:20-22)

What is the Goal?

Some believers assume that the goal we’re chasing is some kind of success and comfort in this life. Is this the goal? (See James 1:2-4 and Romans 5:3-5) If it’s not, what is our endgame in the race we’re running?

Just before he died, Paul wrote one last time about the race he was running (see 2 Timothy 4:6-7). What was Paul’s ultimate goal in the race? How did he know that he’d achieved it?

Upcoming Events:



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Group Discussion Guide: Week 22

Conversation Starter

Think about a time when you felt *judged*, whether someone judged you fairly or you faced unfair judgment. Who judged you, why did they, and how did it affect you?

Paul's Trial is Caesarea

Read all of *Acts 24*. What stands out to you about these events? Who were Ananias, Tertullus, and Felix? What were the charges against Paul?

How was Paul's approach before Felix different from Tertullus'? How did Paul respond to the charges? What, precisely, did Paul say was the issue? (see v. 21)?

As the Roman-appointed governor (or procurator) of Judea, Felix held the same position as Pontius Pilate, who famously asked Jesus, "What is truth?" (John 18:38) What did you notice about Felix in this chapter? What kind of man or leader was he?

Christianity and cowardice are mutually exclusive terms:

1. Cowards _____ to fear. Christ _____ it.
2. Cowards _____ the truth. Christ _____ it.
3. Cowards _____ the judgment to come. Christians _____ it.

The Judgment to Come

Read *Matthew 12:36*. Who did Jesus say will be judged on the coming "Day of Judgment" - just the unbelievers, or believers as well? Does that surprise you?

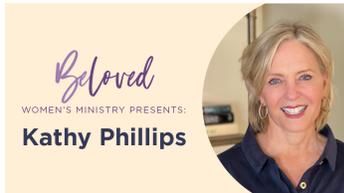
Why is the concept of God's righteous *judgment* so unpopular these days?

The Bible is clear that both believers and unbelievers will face the Lord on Judgment Day, but not before the same throne. *Read Revelation 20:11-15*. What kind of throne, and by what books, will unbelievers face judgment?

According to that same passage (*as well as Romans 14:10-12*) believers will also be judged. Before what throne will we stand, and by what book will we be judged?

Based on the state of your life and your faith today, how prepared would you say you are for the judgment to come? If you have hesitations or anxieties about it, what do you plan to do this week to address or assuage them?

News & Events:



"Stories from the Heart" with Kathy Phillips

Join Beloved Women's Ministry on Wednesday, April 17 at noon for a special time of teaching with author and Bible teacher, Kathy Phillips! Through her powerful storytelling, Kathy will encourage us in our walks with Jesus, connecting a handful of key moments from her own life back to the truth found in Scripture. Learn more & register: thestory.church/beloved



Prayer & Silent Retreat

Hosted at the beautiful and historic Villa De Matel Convent, this pristine and reflective space is conveniently located locally in Southeast Houston, just off of 45 South. We will be there on Saturday, April 13 from 9am to 3pm for a day devoted to silence, prayer, and meditation on God's word. thestory.church/retreat



Registration OPEN for Vacation Bible School!

Ages 3 through 5th grade - join us June 24-28 for an energetic week of songs, Bible stories, crafts, games, snacks, and more! VBS is a place where your kids will learn about Jesus, make new friends, and have a BLAST! Register today: thestory.church/vbs

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Group Discussion Guide: Week 23

Conversation Starter

Share about the worst storm you have ever witnessed. What happened, were you able to prepare, how did you survive, and what was the aftermath?

How can we survive - and even thrive - through the storms of life?

1. _____ the storms that are coming.

Read Acts 27:3-12. How did Paul know that sailing the Mediterranean Sea during mid-to-late autumn would be dangerous?

Read Acts 27:13-17. How did Paul (and Luke, apparently) know that the particular type of storm they were in was a "Northeaster"?

How can we learn to forecast the coming storms before they arrive?

2. _____ the storm you're in.

Why is it critical to identify, define, and determine the source of the particular storm you're in?

How can we learn to identify the type of storm we're in?

3. _____ through the storm.

What signs of leadership do you see in Paul's words and actions? How does Paul's ability to lead *even while in chains* tell you about the power of God?

Have you ever personally witnessed someone leading courageously through a particular storm in their life? What was special about their leadership? How did others benefit from their leadership?

How can you prepare yourself now to lead through the next storm you're in?

What storms are you currently navigating in your life, and how can your group come alongside you and support you?

News & Events:



Serve on Sunday Teams

Stop by the courtyard after service to learn how you can start serving on one of our awesome Sunday Teams! Leaders will be available to answer your questions. You can also sign up for teams online: thestory.church/teams



Save the Dates: Easter Weekend at The Story Church

Good Friday: March 29 @ 7pm (Stations of the Cross opens at 6pm)
Egg Hunt: March 30 @ 10am
Easter Worship: 7 & 8am outdoor sunrise; 8:30, 10 & 11:30am
Learn more about these events, sign up to volunteer, or pre-register for childcare: thestory.church/easter



Registration OPEN for Summer Camps

Parents - save the dates for our summer camps for kids and students! VBS (Ages 3 - Grade 5): June 24-28
Apologetics Camp (Middle & High School):
July 8-11 Lake Retreat (Middle School): Friday, July 12.
Register today: thestory.church/events

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Group Discussion Guide: Week 24

Conversation Starter

Share about a time when you thought you completed a task or season of life, but right after you finished you soon found out that you were just getting started.

“AND SO WE CAME TO ROME”

Thinking back through our series, what perils and persecutions did Paul have to overcome in order to finally arrive in Rome?

What made Rome such a consequential destination for Paul to reach?

Read Acts 28:30-31. How does the ending of Acts of the Apostles sit with you? Why do you think Luke chose to end such a powerful book in this way?

SPIRIT LED WITNESS

1. A _____ WITNESS

Read Acts 28:14-16. Who welcomed Paul, and how did they go out of their way?

Who did Paul share with and how does this influence who we witness to today?

What could Radically Ordinary Hospitality look like in your home or office?

2. A _____ WITNESS

Read Acts 28:23-27. Paul faced a lot of rejection in his ministry. How did Paul respond to people rejecting the Truth? How does this compare to your response?

What could boldness in your identity in Christ look like? What would it cost you?

3. A _____ WITNESS

How did Paul use his circumstances as an opportunity to witness?

What circumstances are you facing in your life that feel like chains? How could you break free and transform them into opportunities to witness?

How do all three of these principles work together to present a well rounded witness? Which one do you feel like you are most lacking in?

News & Events:



Serve on Sunday Teams

Swing by the Community Room after service to learn how you can start serving on one of our awesome Sunday Teams! Leaders will be available to answer your questions. You can also sign up for teams online: thestory.church/teams



High School Ministry Survey

As The Story Church continues to grow in our new home, we believe it is important to develop a High School specific ministry for our students. If you're the parent of a high schooler, we'd love your input on this survey: thestory.church/hs

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Group Discussion Guide: Week 25

As we wrap up this 25-part series on the *Acts of the Apostles*, let's look back on our journey together: Reflecting on *Acts*, what have you learned about God and the Church through this series? How has this series changed you personally?

To finish this series on *Acts*, we return to the beginning of the story. **Read Acts 1:3-8.** What is the “thesis statement” of the entire book (see v. 8), and how have we seen it unfold throughout the rest of *Acts*?

So it all began in *Jerusalem*, which is often called “the city of God” in the Bible. But how and when did Jesus get to Jerusalem before issuing his marching orders in Acts 1? That story is found in the “Palm Sunday” story from Luke 19.

Read Luke 19:28-36. How did Jesus' march into Jerusalem set the stage for the events that unfolded in *Acts*?

The optics of riding on “horseback” into Jerusalem were meant to convey a point that Jesus and his followers believed he was a king. With that in mind, and considering the unexpected way in which Jesus arrived (ie, on a *donkey* instead of a warhorse), let's spend some time thinking about what sort of king that Jesus is.

What kind of king is Jesus?

1. He is a _____ king.

What was it about his arrival in Jerusalem that demonstrated Jesus' humility? What is so shocking or unexpected about a king who is as humble as Christ?

Read 1 Cor. 1:25-27. How was Jesus' entry into Jerusalem a good example of the “foolishness” and “weakness” of God being wiser and stronger than human wisdom and strength?

2. He is a _____ king.

Read Luke 19:37-40. How do these verses show that Jesus is a king who is holy and worthy of worship?

Check out Zechariah 9:9-10. What does this Old Testament prophecy say about the Messiah to come, and how does it corroborate both Jesus' identity *and* the mission of the church in Acts 1:8?

Would you say that you merely *appreciate, respect, and/or admire Jesus*, or that you *worship* him? What is the difference, and why does it matter?

3. He is a _____ king.

Read Luke 19:41-42. Where do you see an example of Christ the King's mercy in this passage?

Why is it so important for an almighty king to be merciful toward his subjects?

4. He is a _____ king.

Read Luke 19:43-44. He is merciful, of course, but without truthfulness, his mercy would be empty. What is the truth that Jesus shared with the people of Jerusalem in this passage?

What is an example of the kind of hard truth that you and/or people you know tend to explain away or avoid altogether? Why is it loving to be truthful with ourselves and others - even if it means acknowledging hard realities?

What would change if Jesus became more than just your friend, your guide, or your savior - what if he became your king?

News & Events:



Good Friday Worship

Join us this Friday, 3/29 at 7pm for Good Friday worship. This service will feature a special time of communion as we remember the last supper, as well as Stations of the Cross that you can walk through before or after the service. Learn more and pre-register for childcare: thestory.church/easter



Egg Hunt This Saturday!

Families with children of all ages are invited to our annual Egg Hunt this Saturday at 10am! We'll have tons of games and activities for all ages, separate egg hunts, and more. Help our team prepare by filling out an RSVP: thestory.church/easter



Easter Sunday Services

Outdoor Sunrise: 7 & 8am

Sanctuary Worship: 8:30, 10 & 11:30am

We still have volunteer roles to fill, so sign up to serve if you haven't already: thestory.church/easter