

# **Acts: The Holy Spirit at Work in Believers**

**An Independent-Study Textbook  
by George O. Wood**

**Third Edition**

**Berean School of the Bible,  
a Global University School**

1211 South Glenstone Avenue  
Springfield, MO 65804 USA

1-800-443-1083

Fax: (417) 862-0863

E-mail: [berean@globaluniversity.edu](mailto:berean@globaluniversity.edu)

Web: [www.globaluniversity.edu](http://www.globaluniversity.edu)



Dr. George O. Wood currently serves as the General Superintendent of the General Council of the Assemblies of God. The son of missionary parents, he pastored Newport-Mesa Christian Center in Costa Mesa, California, from 1971 until 1993. In addition to his pastoral responsibilities there, he conducted two daily radio and television programs and served as part-time professor at Vanguard University and as Adjunct Professor of Preaching at Fuller Theological Seminary. During this time he served as the assistant superintendent of the Southern California District of the Assemblies of God from 1988 until 1993. Prior to being elected as the chief executive officer of the Assemblies of God, Dr. Wood served the Fellowship as its general secretary for fourteen years. He has authored five books and numerous articles in Christian periodicals.

After receiving his bachelor of arts degree from Evangel University in Springfield, Missouri, he earned a juris doctorate from Western State University College of Law in Fullerton, California. He also holds the Doctor of Pastoral Theology degree from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. Dr. Wood is an attorney and a member of the California State Bar.

Global University  
Springfield, Missouri, USA

© 2005, 2006, 2010 Global University  
All rights reserved. First edition 2005  
Third edition 2010

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture is taken from the Holy Bible, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. All rights reserved throughout the world. Used by permission of International Bible Society.

PN 03.15.02

ISBN: 978-0-7617-1456-9

Printed in the United States of America by Gospel Publishing House, Springfield Missouri

---

# Table of Contents

Enrollment Information for Berean Courses.....	5
How to Use Berean Courses .....	6
Course Introduction: Studying the Birth of the Church.....	10

## **UNIT 1**      *THE PRE-WITNESS DAYS OF THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM*

<b>Chapter 1</b> <b>Understanding Acts</b> .....	14
Lesson 1.1    Approaching Acts	
Lesson 1.2    Appreciating Acts	
Lesson 1.3    Analyzing Acts	
<b>Chapter 2</b> <b>From the Resurrection to Pentecost</b> .....	32
Lesson 2.1    The Gift Our Father Promised	
Lesson 2.2    The Work of the Church	
Lesson 2.3    Steps to the Baptism in the Holy Spirit	

## **UNIT 2**      *THE WITNESS OF THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM*

<b>Chapter 3</b> <b>The Holy Spirit Is Poured Out</b> .....	48
Lesson 3.1    Pentecost Fulfilled	
Lesson 3.2    Signs of Spirit Baptism	
Lesson 3.3    Purposes of Speaking in Tongues	
<b>Chapter 4</b> <b>The Birth of the Church</b> .....	68
Lesson 4.1    Responses to Pentecost	
Lesson 4.2    The Pattern of Peter’s Preaching	
Lesson 4.3    The Biblical Pattern of a Dynamic Church	
<b>Chapter 5</b> <b>Peter and John Heal a Lame Man</b> .....	88
Lesson 5.1    Embracing the Needs around Us	
Lesson 5.2    Explaining the Gospel	
Lesson 5.3    Enduring Hardship and Testing	
<b>Chapter 6</b> <b>The Growth of the Church</b> .....	102
Lesson 6.1    The Purifying of the Church	
Lesson 6.2    The Powerful Church	
Lesson 6.3    The Persistent Church	
<b>Chapter 7</b> <b>Stephen: What Good Can Come of Trouble?</b> .....	122
Lesson 7.1    Conflict in the Church	
Lesson 7.2    Stephen’s Arrest and Trial	
Lesson 7.3    The First Martyr	

**UNIT 3**     *THE WITNESS OF  
THE CHURCH IN JUDEA AND SAMARIA*

<b>Chapter 8</b>	<b>Scattered Seed: The Church Expands</b> .....	140
Lesson 8.1	Mass Evangelism	
Lesson 8.2	Personal Evangelism	
Lesson 8.3	Seed for Future Harvests	
<b>Chapter 9</b>	<b>The Acts of the Apostles</b> .....	156
Lesson 9.1	Peter’s Expanding Ministry	
Lesson 9.2	Antioch: The Changing Shape of the Church	
Lesson 9.3	Jerusalem: The Difficult Will of God	

**UNIT 4**     *THE WITNESS OF  
THE CHURCH TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH*

<b>Chapter 10</b>	<b>The First Missionary Journey</b> .....	174
Lesson 10.1	To Galatia: On the Cutting Edge of Spiritual Growth	
Lesson 10.2	The Galatian Ministry: How to Minister Successfully	
Lesson 10.3	The Jerusalem Council: A Biblical Pattern of Conflict Resolution	
<b>Chapter 11</b>	<b>The Second Missionary Journey</b> .....	190
Lesson 11.1	The Second Missionary Journey Begins	
Lesson 11.2	A Tale of Three Cities	
Lesson 11.3	Corinth: The Final Leg of the Journey	
<b>Chapter 12</b>	<b>Paul’s Third Missionary Journey</b> .....	206
Lesson 12.1	Ephesus: Battle for a City	
Lesson 12.2	From Ephesus to Jerusalem: The Rest of the Journey	
<b>Chapter 13</b>	<b>Paul’s Journey to Rome</b> .....	220
Lesson 13.1	Paul’s Imprisonment in Jerusalem	
Lesson 13.2	Paul’s Imprisonment in Caesarea	
Lesson 13.3	Paul’s Imprisonment in Rome	

Glossary .....	235
Reference List .....	239

<b>Essential Course Materials</b> .....	241
Service Learning Requirement Assignment and Report Form .....	243
Unit Progress Evaluation Instructions .....	247
Unit Progress Evaluations.....	249
Answer Keys.....	259
Test Yourself Quizzes.....	261
Unit Progress Evaluations.....	262
Forms .....	263
Round-Tripper.....	265
Request for Printed Final Examination.....	267

# Digital Course Options

This printed independent-study textbook (IST) represents only one of the ways you can study through Global University's Berean School of the Bible (BSB). Global University offers electronic delivery formats that allow you to complete courses without using printed material.

**You may choose one or more of these course delivery options with or without the printed IST.**

## Digital Courses

- Online Courses. Complete your entire ministry training program online with fully interactive learning options.

You can complete your chapter reviews, unit progress evaluations, and final exam online and receive instant results, even if you use print or other digital study versions.

- Logos Bible Software. Purchase an entire digital library of Bibles and Bible reference titles and the Berean courses specifically created to function inside these digital library environments.
- Electronic courses. Check Global University's website for additional electronic course versions (for e-readers and other devices) and their availability.

## Enrollment Policies and Procedures

Enrollment policies and procedures are provided in the most current Berean School of the Bible Academic Catalog. An electronic version of the catalog is available at the Global University website.

## Contact Global University for Enrollment Information

**Phone: 1-800-443-1083 (9 a.m. to 6 p.m., CST, Monday–Friday)**

**Spanish language representatives are available to discuss enrollment in Spanish courses.**

**E-mail: [berean@globaluniversity.edu](mailto:berean@globaluniversity.edu)**

**Web: [www.globaluniversity.edu](http://www.globaluniversity.edu)**

**Fax: 417-862-0863**

**Mail: 1211 S. Glenstone Ave., Springfield, MO 65804**

# How to Use Berean Courses

Independent study is one of the most dynamic and rapidly growing educational methods. Although different from traditional classroom study, the goal is the same—to guide you, the student, through a systematic program of study and help you gain new knowledge and skills. Berean courses are independent-study courses. Some students may participate in a Berean study group, where a facilitator enhances the learning experience for a group of Berean students. Other options include studying the courses online and/or purchasing digital study tools made possible through Berean’s partnership with Logos Bible Software.

All Berean courses are printed in a comprehensive independent-study textbook (IST). The IST is your teacher, textbook, and study guide in one package. Once you have familiarized yourself with the course components, explained below, you are ready to begin studying. Whether you are studying for personal growth or working toward a diploma, the Berean faculty, advisers, and

student service representatives are available to help you get the most out of your Berean program.

## General Course Design

- Each course is based on course objectives.
- Each course is composed of several units.
- Each unit is composed of several chapters.
- Each chapter is composed of two or more lessons.
- Each lesson contains one or more lesson objectives.
- Each lesson objective corresponds to specific lesson content.

## Course Objectives

Course objectives represent the concepts—and knowledge areas—and perspectives the course will teach you. Review these objectives before you begin studying to have an idea of what to focus on as you study. The course objectives are listed on the course introduction page.

## Unit Overview

A unit overview previews each unit’s content and outlines the unit development.

## Chapter, Lesson Content, Lesson Objectives, and Numbering System

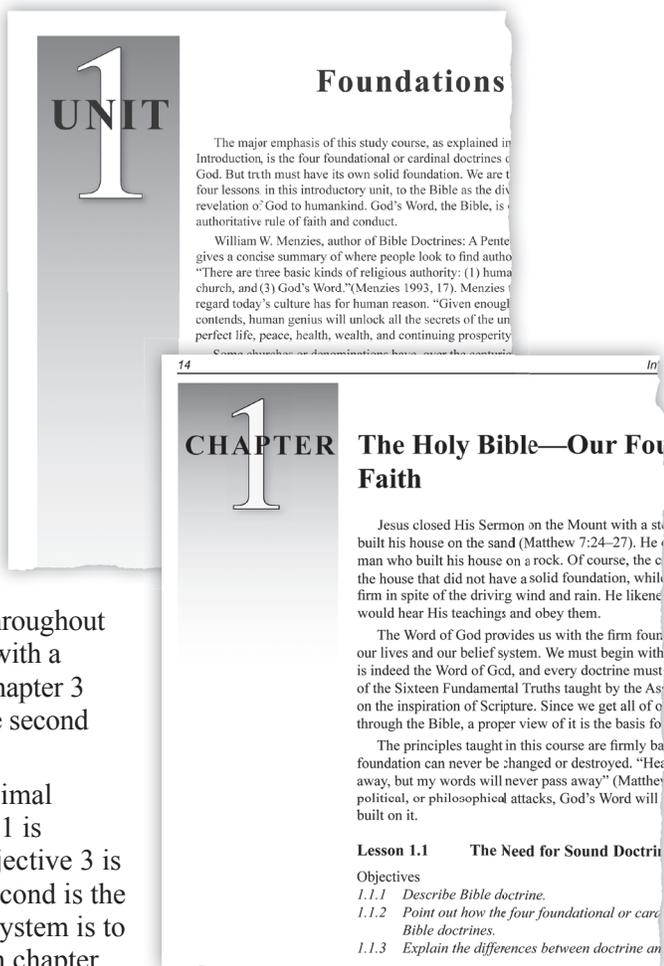
Each *chapter* begins with an introduction and outline. The outline presents the chapter’s lesson titles and objectives. Chapters consist of short lessons to allow you to complete one lesson at a time (at one sitting), instead of the entire chapter at one time.

The *lesson content* is based on lesson objectives.

*Lesson objectives* present the important concepts and perspectives to be studied in the course.

Each chapter, lesson, and objective is uniquely numbered. This numbering system is designed to help you relate the lesson objective to its corresponding lesson content. Chapters are numbered consecutively throughout the course. Lessons are numbered within each chapter with a two-digit decimal number. For example, Lesson 2 in Chapter 3 is numbered 3.2. The first number is the chapter (3), the second number is the lesson (2) within the chapter.

Lesson objectives are tagged with a three-digit decimal number. For example, Chapter 1, Lesson 1, Objective 1 is identified as Objective 1.1.1. Chapter 1, Lesson 2, Objective 3 is Objective 1.2.3. The first number is the chapter, the second is the lesson, and the third is the objective. The numbering system is to assist you in identifying, locating, and organizing each chapter, lesson, and objective.



The King's Background, Birth, and Early Years

**1**  
LESSON

**1.1.1**  
OBJECTIVE

Relate specific ways that God historically and politically prepared the earth for Christ's coming.

**The Background of**  
Take time to study this first section. Like a picture in the Gospels, consider some important events God or

**Political History Between**  
In the Bible, the New Testament is just a page in the book in the Old Testament had been written, for the events in the book of Matthew and vast changes took the place of Hebrew as the language of Palestine. **Pharisees, Sadducees, and Scribes**—guided religious leaders (small places of worship, study, and socialization) Jews were ruled by the powerful and hated Roman Empire years under the cultural influence of the Near East completely. What had happened?

**The Greek Period**  
The Persian Empire was in power at the end of the Old Testament and Nehemiah rebuilt Jerusalem's wall and the events in the book of Matthew?

1. About how many years passed between the end of the Old Testament and the events in the book of Matthew?

took the place of Hebrew as the language of Palestine. **Pharisees, Sadducees, and Scribes**—guided religious leaders (small places of worship, study, and socialization) Jews were ruled by the powerful and hated Roman Empire years under the cultural influence of the Near East completely (Scroggins 2003, 328).

#### The Greek Period

The Persian Empire was in power at the end of the Old Testament and Nehemiah rebuilt Jerusalem's wall and the events in the book of Matthew?

 **Test Yourself**

Circle the letter of the *best* answer.

- Why are only two chapters of the entire Bible devoted to the never-ending eternity?
  - Eternity will be a constant repeat of regular activity, so no more space is needed.
  - The eternal fate of the wicked should not be given any more attention
  - Greater details of New Jerusalem would be meaningless.
  - The purpose of Scripture is to encourage hope for living now
- What happens to the present heaven and earth to make way for new heaven and earth?
  - They are gradually cleansed and changed in

### Essential Course Materials in the back of this IST contain the following:

- Service Learning Requirement (SLR) Assignment and SLR Report Form
- Unit Progress Evaluation (UPE) Instructions and UPEs
- Answer Keys for Test Yourself quizzes and UPEs
- Forms: Round-Tripper (as needed) and Request for a Printed Final Examination (if needed)

### What to Look for in the Margins

Left margins contain numbers for units, chapters, and lessons. In addition, margins contain two learning tools—*lesson objectives with their respective numbers* and *interactive questions* that focus on key principles. Read, understand, and use these two learning tools to study the lesson text.

Interactive questions relate to specific lesson content and specific lesson objectives. Interactive questions, along with lesson objectives, will help you learn the concepts and perspectives that are tested in exam questions. Interactive questions are numbered consecutively within each chapter. Once you understand what the interactive question is asking, search for the answer as you study the lesson's related content section. You can compare your responses to our suggested ones at the back of each chapter.

Lesson objectives present the key concepts. These tips on using lesson objectives will help you master the course content and be prepared for exams:

- Identify the key concept(s) and concept perspectives in the objective.
- Identify and understand what the objective is asking you to do with the key concept(s).
- Think of the objective as an essay test question.
- Read and study the lesson content related to the objective and search for the answer to the “essay test question”—the objective.

### Lesson Titles and Subheads

Lesson titles and subheads identify and organize specific lesson content.

### Key Words

Key words are presented in **boldface** print and defined in the glossary of this IST; they are words that are used with a specific meaning in the lesson.

### Reference Citations

Outside sources are documented using in-text citations in parentheses. These sources are compiled in more detail in the Reference List at the end of the IST.

### Test Yourself

The Test Yourself section concludes the chapter with multiple-choice questions based on the lesson objectives, interactive questions, and their supporting lesson content. Test Yourself answer keys are in the Essential Course Materials at the back of this IST.

### Glossary and Reference List

A *glossary* (which defines key words) and *reference list* (works cited in each chapter) follow the last chapter of the IST.

### Recommended Reading Textbook

An optional textbook is recommended for use with each course. The textbook recommended to accompany this course is listed on the course introduction page. Some courses may provide additional suggested reading lists following the *reference list*.

### Two Requirements to Receive a Course Grade:

To receive a grade for this course, you must:

1. Submit your SLR Report Form. The instructions for the SLR assignment are in the Essential Course Materials at the back of this IST. The report is required, but not graded.
2. You must also take a closed-book final examination. Your course grade is based on the final exam. The Berean School of the Bible grading scale is 90–100 percent, A; 80–89 percent, B; 70–79 percent, C; and 0–69 percent, F.



# Student Planner and Record

This chart is for you to record your personal progress in this course. Be sure to keep it **up to date** for quick reference.

In the boxes below, record the unit number, the date you expect to complete each chapter, the date you do complete the chapter, and the date of review.

Unit Number	Chapter Number	Expected Completion Date	Actual Completion Date	Date Reviewed
	1			
	2			
	3			
	4			
	5			
	6			
	7			
	8			
	9			
	10			
	11			
	12			
	13			
	14			
	15			
	16			
	17			
	18			

UNIT EVALUATIONS	Date Completed
Unit Evaluation 1	
Unit Evaluation 2	
Unit Evaluation 3	
Unit Evaluation 4	
Unit Evaluation 5	
Unit Evaluation 6	

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS & FINAL EXAM	Date Completed
Service Learning Requirement (SLR) Report	
Final Examination	
<b>SLR report &amp; closed-book final exam materials submitted (The SLR report does not apply to the internship courses.)</b>	

# Studying the Birth of the Church

It has been said that the sequel to a great event is often as significant as the event itself. The opening statement in Acts—“In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach” (Acts 1:1)—notifies readers at the outset that Acts is the sequel to the Gospels. The story of the church is a marvelous continuation of the unique and glorious story of Jesus’ earthly life. Moreover, Acts provides the key for a more complete understanding of the epistles that follow Acts and interpret the gospel that Jesus lived and preached.

The book of Acts is one of the most important books in the Bible. Without it there would be a tremendous gap between the ministry of Jesus and the church as it emerged in history. How did it happen that the followers of Jesus, who were unknown Galileans and Judeans, became so well known? What transformed the shyness that moved these men to denial and flight at the Crucifixion into a boldness that made them staunch defenders of the new faith? How did ordinary men who had not been formally trained as rabbis make such an impact on the world? What was the origin of theological truths contained in the New Testament and preached by the early missionaries? How did it happen that a movement that began among Jews, was centered in a Jewish Messiah, and was founded on Jewish Scriptures became a religion adopted largely by Gentiles? These questions and many others are answered by the book of Acts, which is the only existing link between the ministry of Jesus and the well-developed Christianity that appeared in the epistles of Paul and other New Testament authors.

As you prepare to launch into the study of Acts, be like the members of Paul’s Berean audience who “received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day” (Acts 17:11). Your progress in studying Acts will depend, to a large extent, on your own personal desire, zeal, and initiative to know what God has said in this marvelous book.

## Course Description      **BIB115 Acts: The Holy Spirit at Work in Believers (5 CEUs)**

A thorough study of the content, purposes, principles, and applications of Acts. The course emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in the early church and today. Attention is given to the geographical, numerical, cultural, and theological growth of the church from Jerusalem to Rome. The journeys of Paul are examined as the background for his epistles.

In addition to using your Bible with this IST, we recommend that you also use *The Book of Acts: Logion Commentary on the New Testament* by Stanley M. Horton to enhance your learning experience.

## Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, you should be able to

1. Comment on the author, date, setting, structure, and purposes of Acts. Analyze the extent to which Luke’s purposes have been fulfilled in your life and church.
2. Relate the sequence, content, and theology of Acts to the rest of the New Testament. Compare the theology of Acts with your theology.
3. Analyze five places in Acts where believers were first filled with the Holy Spirit.
4. Identify the church’s problems and solutions in growing from one language and culture to many.
5. Identify the main people, cities, and regions in Acts.
6. Explain how Acts gives the background and setting of several New Testament letters.
7. Trace the steps by which the gospel spread from Jerusalem to Rome.
8. Identify and apply the main reasons for church growth in Acts.
9. Apply the principles of guidance in Acts to making decisions today.
10. Illustrate from Acts that God uses hard times for His purposes. Apply this principle to believers today.
11. Identify and apply some of the missionary principles in Acts.
12. Trace Paul’s travels from Antioch to Rome.

### **BEFORE YOU BEGIN**

Successfully completing this course requires that you apply content you study in a ministry activity. The instructions for this Service Learning Requirement (SLR) are found in the Essential Course Materials in the back of this IST. Please take time now to become familiar with these instructions so that you can be planning your SLR activity throughout your study of this course.



# 1 UNIT

## The Pre-Witness Days of the Church in Jerusalem

The finished work of Christ opened the door for the abiding presence of God among humans. In the pages of Acts, God reveals His plans and methods through the lives of the apostles. By establishing His supernatural presence first with the sound of wind and the sight of fire, God prepared the disciples to receive His Spirit. Thus, the events of Pentecost demonstrate an amazing change in the relationship humans have with God. The stage was now set for the Holy Spirit to remain active in the daily lives of humans.

Chapter 1 lays the foundation for this study, examining Acts' historical and literary contexts. In Chapter 2, the core group of believers received the long-anticipated gift of God's Holy Spirit. This empowering prepared the believers for their participation in the early church.

### **Chapter 1      Understanding Acts**

Lessons

- 1.1    Approaching Acts
- 1.2    Appreciating Acts
- 1.3    Analyzing Acts

### **Chapter 2      From the Resurrection to Pentecost**

Lessons

- 2.1    The Gift Our Father Promised
- 2.2    The Work of the Church
- 2.3    Steps to the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

# CHAPTER 1

## Understanding Acts

The visitor wandered down the corridor trying to select the Sunday school class that interested her most. The sign on the first door said “History of the Church.” The sign on the second door said “The Holy Spirit.” The third said “Fundamentals of Preaching,” and the fourth said “Standing Strong in Persecution.” The sign on the final door said “How to Be a Witness.” She wavered indecisively for a moment, then opened the last door and stepped inside.

She was surprised to see that all five doors led into the same large classroom. The study subject was written on the chalkboard: The book of Acts. She smiled as she realized that studying the book of Acts would include all these subjects—and more!

Acts is a book of action. It contains all of these things:

- Drama, suspense, conflict, and triumph;
- Miracles, revivals, conversions, and resurrections;
- Martyrs, escapes from prison, angry mobs, and trials before kings;
- Shipwrecks, prophecies, beatings, and demonic conflicts.

Acts is about people. Its seventy-five characters include the following:

- Apostles, evangelists, and laypeople;
- Chief priests, kings, and governors;
- Slaves, jailers, and prisoners.

Acts is about the growth of the church.

- Acts begins with a church so small it could fit in one room.
- It ends with a church that had spread to the heart of the Roman Empire.
- It begins with a local Jewish church of one language and culture.
- It ends with an international church of many tribes, languages, and cultures.

Above all, Acts is about the Holy Spirit.

- He continues to do through the church what Jesus began.
- He enables apostles and laypeople to minister supernaturally.
- He seeks to fill every believer with power to witness for Jesus.

### Lesson 1.1 Approaching Acts

Objective

*1.1.1 Analyze the title, author, and date of Acts.*

### Lesson 1.2 Appreciating Acts

Objectives

*1.2.1 Explain how Acts bridges the Gospels and Pauline Letters.*

*1.2.2 Identify how Acts traces the growth of the church.*

*1.2.3 Discuss how Acts serves as a guide for faith and apologetics.*

*1.2.4 Indicate how the Holy Spirit is key to witnessing.*

### Lesson 1.3 Analyzing Acts

Objective

*1.3.1 Explain two ways to outline Acts.*

# 1 LESSON

## 1.1.1 OBJECTIVE

Analyze the title, author,  
and date of Acts.

1 Whose acts does the  
book of Acts record?

2 Who wrote Acts?

3 Summarize three of the  
five reasons scholars believe  
Luke wrote Acts.

## Approaching Acts

When Luke wrote this book, he did not call it *Acts*. About AD 150 believers began to call Luke's book *The Acts of the Apostles*. Most of Acts tells of the ministries of the apostles Peter and Paul. (Acts chapters 1–12 focus on Peter's ministry, and chapters 13–28 feature Paul's.) Although Acts 1:13 lists all the apostles' names, most are never mentioned again. After the first chapter, only Peter, James, John, and Paul are called by name. In truth, the Holy Spirit is emphasized more than any of the apostles. Luke refers to the Spirit more than fifty times in Acts.

Luke introduces the Holy Spirit in the second verse of Acts: "In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen" (Acts 1:1–2). Luke shows that even Jesus depended on the Holy Spirit. Then he reminds us that the apostles continued Jesus' ministry in the Spirit's power. Before Jesus returned to heaven, He commanded the believers to stay in Jerusalem. They were to wait for the Holy Spirit to fill and empower them (Acts 1:4–5). This focus on the Holy Spirit leads many to believe the best title for this book is *The Acts of the Holy Spirit*.

## The Author of Acts

Though Luke chose not to place his name at the beginning of his Gospel or of Acts, most Bible teachers agree that he was the writer of Acts. He was not identified as an **apostle**, yet he wrote more words in the New Testament than Paul did. As far as we know, Luke never preached a sermon or performed a miracle. Luke often traveled with Paul, and he was diligent to record accurately the apostles' ministry.

There are at least five reasons to believe Luke wrote Acts.

- The writer of Acts was one of those who traveled with Paul on some missionary trips. Acts 16:10 says, "After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia." The word *we* proves the writer was with Paul. (See also Acts 20:5; 21:18; 27:1; 28:1–2, 10–16.) Furthermore, Paul wrote that one person who traveled with him was Luke, a Gentile doctor (Colossians 4:14). The "we" passages are not enough to prove authorship but are one reason experts believe Luke wrote Acts.
- Whoever wrote Acts also wrote another book about Jesus. Acts 1:1 says, "In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach." Theophilus was a common name in New Testament times. It is a combination of two Greek words. *Theo* means "God," and *philo* means "love." *Theophilus* means "one who loves God." Since Acts is written to one who loves God, each believer can feel included.

Both Luke and Acts are written to the same person, Theophilus. In Luke 1:3 the word *excellent* describes Theophilus. This suggests that he was an official or wealthy person of high position. The church has always believed that the former book mentioned in Acts 1:1 is Luke's Gospel. Luke and Acts work together as a historical set. They are best understood together, because of the following reasons.

- An apostle is a person sent to accomplish a mission through the authority of the one sending him. In the Bible, the word *apostle* is used specially to refer to the twelve Jesus commissioned to follow Him. After his special commissioning on the road to Damascus, Paul was also counted as an apostle. The thirteen apostles wrote many books of the New Testament.

- The writer of the Gospel of Luke was not an apostle. We know this from Luke 1:1–3. Here we learn that Luke was not an eyewitness to Christ’s ministry on earth. Likewise, nothing in Acts suggests its writer can claim authority as an apostle. Luke fits this description, while Peter, Paul, and other writers do not.
- Believers from the early church to the present have accepted Luke as the author of both the third Gospel and Acts.
- Luke and Acts are organized alike. Study the chart, and notice the similar arrangement of Luke and Acts. Luke paralleled the ministry of Christ in Luke with the ministry of the body of Christ, the church in Acts.

<b>A comparison of the organization of Luke and Acts</b>			
<b>Luke</b>		<b>Acts</b>	
Greeting to Theophilus	1:1–4	Greeting to Theophilus	1:1–2
Early life of Jesus	1:5–3:20	Early life of the church	1–8
Anointing of Jesus	3:22	Anointing of the church	2:4
First sermon at Nazareth	4:14–30	First sermon at Pentecost	2
Confirming miracles and healings	4:31–41	Confirming miracles and healings	3–5
Success and popularity	5–18	Success and popularity	2–5
Growing opposition from the Pharisees and Jewish leaders	19–21	Growing opposition from the Pharisees and Jewish leaders	4–8
Travel through Galilee, Judea, and Perea	3–8	Travel on missionary trips	8–21
Arrest and threefold trial before the Sanhedrin, Pilate, and Herod	22–23	Arrest and threefold trial before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa	24–26
Climax of ministry and Christ’s resurrection	23–24	Climax of ministry in Rome	28

### **The Date of Acts**

4 What three historical dates help determine when Luke wrote Acts?

Most Bible teachers believe Luke wrote Acts around AD 63. Three historical dates help us set this timetable. First, Acts tells of Paul’s first time in prison at Rome. This took place around AD 60–63, so Acts must have been written afterward. Second, Rome burned in AD 64. **Caesar** Nero blamed Christians and began persecuting them. The good relationship Paul had with the Roman leaders suggests that Acts was written before this key event. Finally, there is no mention in Acts of Jerusalem’s destruction in AD 70. It seems certain Acts was written before that time.

Various dates related to Acts			
Approximate Date	Event	Acts	Letters Paul Wrote
AD 30	The ascension of Christ	1:9	
31–32	The conversion of Paul	9:1–19	
35	Paul's first visit to Jerusalem	9:26	
44	Paul's second visit to Jerusalem	11:30	
46–47	Paul's first missionary trip	13:4–14:27	Galatians (after first trip)
49	The first great church council	15:1–29	
49–53	Paul's second missionary trip	15:36–18:22	1 and 2 Thessalonians
53–57	Paul's third missionary trip	18:23–21:17	1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans
58	Paul's arrest in Jerusalem	21:17–23:35	
58–60	Paul's prison term in Caesarea	24–26	
60	Paul's trip to Rome	27:1–28:15	
60–63	Paul's first prison term in Rome	28:16–31	Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon
63	The writing of Acts by Luke		
63–65	Paul's ministry between prison terms in Rome	(After Acts)	1 Timothy, Titus
65–67	Paul's second prison term and death in Rome	(After Acts)	2 Timothy

# 1 LESSON 2

5 How does Acts serve as a bridge between the Gospels and the Epistles?

## Appreciating Acts

Acts is so full of action that we can miss the big picture. However, Luke chose a few stories for specific reasons. These stories work together to give us a picture of the Holy Spirit's work.

Acts gives us a history of the first thirty years of the church. Luke painted the big picture but not every detail. For example, in Acts 20:7 he wrote that Paul taught until midnight at Troas. But Luke said nothing of what Paul taught there. A book that recorded all of Paul's teachings at Troas that night would likely be longer than all of Acts. Imagine how many books it would take to tell all that happened in the church during the first thirty years. Acts contains just a fraction of everything that happened in the early church. (See John 20:30–31; 21:25.) Why did Luke include the stories and events he chose for Acts? Why did the Holy Spirit guide Luke to write about certain things? We can identify at least five things Luke achieved in Acts.

## 1.2.1

OBJECTIVE

*Explain how Acts bridges the Gospels and Pauline Letters.*

## Acts Bridges the Gospels and Paul's Letters

In the New Testament, Acts is a bridge between the Gospels and Paul's letters. At first the New Testament had only two parts. It included the four Gospels and the letters (**epistles**) Paul wrote to various churches and believers. This left a gap in the written history of the church.

Review the chart, "Various dates related to Acts," at the end of Lesson 1.1. Luke wrote Acts after Paul wrote 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Acts chapters 13–28 tell us about Paul's travels and fill in many missing details. In Acts we see how Paul started the churches in Galatia, Thessalonica, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, and Colosse. Acts also introduces us to Timothy and Titus, pastors to whom Paul penned three more epistles. Acts gives us important background for Paul's letters.

## 1.2.2

OBJECTIVE

*Identify how Acts traces the growth of the church.*

## Acts Traces the Growth of the Church

Luke reveals that the church grew in at least four ways.

1. The church grew in numbers.

On the Day of Pentecost, the church fit in one room. Then thousands of Jews were saved in Jerusalem (Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4). A short time later there was another growth spurt for the church. "The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7). Throughout Acts the number of believers increased.

2. The church spread geographically.

Acts tells how the church grew from Jerusalem to Rome, the heart of the Roman Empire. Acts 8:1 shows how persecution scattered believers from Jerusalem to new places. What some intended to silence Christ's message served rather to speed the gospel throughout the Roman Empire. It's likely that is why the church reached Rome even before Paul, the church's greatest missionary, arrived there (Acts 28:14–15). Acts also shows Paul's journeys expanding the church's reach. That Acts 1 begins with Jerusalem and Acts 28 ends in Rome is no accident. Luke arranged his stories to show the geographical growth of the church.

3. The church expanded its mission.

The early church (Acts 1:1–7:60) was strictly Jewish. How did the church open up to other cultural and ethnic groups? Notice the progression in Acts.

In Acts 2, travelers from fifteen locations heard the gospel. But these were primarily Jews and Jewish converts who had come to Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost. By Acts 6:1 the church included two distinct Jewish groups: one Hebrew, the other Greek. By Acts 8 we find Philip reaching beyond the Jews, preaching to **Samaritans** and later to an Ethiopian. Still, the Samaritans shared a common ethnic and religious background with the Jews, and the Ethiopian was studying the Jewish Scriptures. Acts 10 brings a notable shift in this pattern. Here God specifically instructs Peter to share the gospel with Cornelius, an important officer in Rome's hated military. This led to a change of attitude toward non-Jews. Anyone could be saved, not just Jewish people (Acts 11:18). God had said it and had even given these Romans the Holy Spirit. This was amazing to Jewish believers.

The walls of prejudice were beginning to fall. In Acts 11:19–21, while most scattered Christians spread the gospel only to Jews, a few began to witness to Greeks. Acts 13 signals a further shift. We see Paul turning deliberately to the Gentiles after the Jews in Pisidian Antioch rejected the good news (Acts 13:43–47). This was a fulfillment of God's original plan that "all peoples on earth will be blessed

6 In what city does the book of Acts begin? In what city does Acts end? What is the significance of this progression?

7 Based on what Acts shows about the church's growing outreach to people of all races and cultures, how do you think God feels about some people's prejudice or unwillingness to fellowship with people who are different from them?

8 In what four ways did the early church grow in Acts?

9 How has your church grown in the four areas demonstrated in Acts? Explain.

### 1.2.3 OBJECTIVE

*Discuss how Acts serves as a guide for faith and apologetics.*

through [the Jews]” (Genesis 12:3) and God’s direction for Paul, as the chosen instrument to carry God’s name before the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). Steadily the church grew to include people of every tribe, nation, language, and culture.

4. The church grew in theology.

In the early days Jewish believers followed the strict laws of Moses. It took time for them to understand the proper relationship between law and grace: “It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works” (Ephesians 2:8–9). Acts 15 documents the church wrestling with an important question. Do Gentiles need to be circumcised and follow the law of Moses (Acts 15:5)? Peter’s answer was *no*, for salvation comes not from becoming Jewish but through the grace of Jesus Christ (Acts 15:11).

## Acts Guides Faith and Apologetics

Acts gives us guidance in what the church should believe and do. Some argue that Acts is an historical work, so we should not use it as a guide. But remember that Luke wrote a selective history of the church, not a complete history. Luke used history to teach certain themes (Stronstad 1995, 47). One of his purposes was to emphasize what the early church believed. Why is it helpful to know what they believed? Because the first believers were under the same covenant believers today are under. Acts teaches us to believe in these things:

- the Scriptures, prayer, sharing, and fellowship
- the work of the Holy Spirit in glorifying Christ
- knowing and worshipping God
- witnessing, signs and wonders, and being filled with the Spirit
- speaking in tongues, prophesying, and other spiritual gifts
- solving church growth problems, evangelizing, and teaching new believers
- God’s power at work during persecution
- God’s love for people of all nations

Such understanding of faith serves as a critical precursor to **apologetics**. Luke probably wrote Acts while Paul was imprisoned in Rome. Perhaps when Paul went to trial, Acts supported his defense. Acts would also help defend believers in other places.

- Read Acts 4:8–12. Notice how it defends Christianity to Jews. Now read Acts 25:8–11. It presents a defense to Gentiles. The Spirit guided Luke to include in Acts responses to conflicts involving both Jews and Gentiles.
- Acts also answers questions government leaders would ask about Christianity. Luke showed that the church is peaceful and that believers respect government leaders. In Acts, riots and civil problems were caused by enemies of the church, not Christians.

Luke had no idea how long the church would remain on earth, but one of his purposes was to teach future believers. The power and principles of Acts are true for the church until Christ returns.

### 1.2.4 OBJECTIVE

*Indicate how the Holy Spirit is key to witnessing.*

## Acts Emphasizes the Holy Spirit for Witnessing

Acts shows the Spirit using apostles, leaders, and laypeople (Acts 2:17–18). For every apostle in the Upper Room, there were nine laypeople. Luke organized Acts around the ministry of two apostles, Peter and Paul. He also included the ministries of many ordinary believers.

10 Read each passage in Acts listed in the chart. In the right column, describe the ministry of each layperson.

<b>Laypersons' Spirit-empowered ministry recorded in Acts</b>		
<b>Acts</b>	<b>Person(s)</b>	<b>Ministry</b>
1:12–15; 2:1–4	108 of the 120	Prayed and witnessed for Christ
4:34–37; 9:26–27; 11:25–26; 13:2–3	Barnabas	Was generous; became a friend to Paul; ministered to and with Paul
6:1–7	The seven deacons	Distributed food to widows
6–7	Stephen	
8:4–8; 21:7–9	Philip	
9:10–19	Ananias	
9:36–39	Tabitha	
10:5–6	Simon the tanner	
10:2	Cornelius	
11:19–21	Scattered believers	
12:12	Mary, Mark's mother	
12:12	Unnamed believers	
15:40–18:5	Silas	
12:25; 15:39	John Mark	
13:1	Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, and Manaen	
16:13–15	Lydia	
16:33–34	Philippian jailer	
16:1–5	Timothy	
17:5–9	Jason	
17:13–15	Unnamed believers	
18:1–3	Priscilla and Aquila	
18:24–28	Apollos	
18:27	Unnamed brothers	
20:4–5	Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Timothy, Tychicus, Trophimus	
21:3–4	Unnamed disciples	
21:8–9	Philip's four daughters	
21:10–11	Agabus	
21:16	Mnason	
23:12–22	Paul's nephew	
27:1–2	Aristarchus	
1, 20, 21, 27, 28	Luke	
28:14	Some brothers	
28:15	The brothers	

Perhaps Luke's greatest purpose in Acts was to emphasize the ministry of the Holy Spirit through believers. In his Gospel, Luke stated that Jesus depended on the Spirit (Luke 4:1,14,18). He also recorded Jesus' promise that the Spirit would come to all believers (Luke 11:13; 24:49). But in Acts, Luke emphasized the Spirit fifty-five times! Take a few minutes to study references listed in the chart at the end of this section ("References to the Holy Spirit in Acts"). It emphasizes that the Holy Spirit must be the source of all we do for Christ. Read this list often, and ask the Holy Spirit to work through you.

The fastest growing churches today emphasize the ministry of laypeople. Some of these growing churches have over one hundred ministries that laypeople perform. They visit the sick, feed the poor, and teach people to read. They teach students who have problems with their studies. Laypeople help widows, adopt orphans, and counsel troubled youths. They paint schools in the community. They build buildings for young churches. They sew and cook to raise funds for the church. Laypeople tell Bible stories to children in their neighborhoods. They have Bible studies in their homes. They talk with those who are searching for answers. They fix people's broken bicycles or cars. Some doctors set up clinics in local churches to offer free dental or medical work. Others pray with those in need. These are only a few of the things laypeople can do. As we are filled with the Spirit, He can lead us into many ministries. Every member of the body of Christ should have a ministry. Each believer should answer the question, "What am I doing to serve God and others?"

The Holy Spirit wants to work through all believers today. His fullness gives us the boldness to serve and witness for Jesus. The early church had few of the things we value today. But the church spread like a fire across the world. Again, read through the list recording lay ministries mentioned in Acts. Note the events and stories that would be missing from Acts without the ministry of the Spirit. The Spirit is the key to helping each believer be a worker.

Acts serves at least four primary functions in the New Testament. First, Acts serves as a bridge between the Gospels and Paul's letters. Second, Acts tells how the church grew in numbers, geographically, in the cultural scope of its mission, and in theology. Third, Acts serves as a guide for faith and apology. Fourth, Luke emphasizes the power of the Holy Spirit. If we miss Luke's emphasis on the Holy Spirit, we miss his greatest purpose in writing.

Luke wove four themes into one strong story. Acts tells how the Holy Spirit empowered the church to witness for Jesus from Jerusalem to Rome.

Acts	<b>Reference to the Holy Spirit</b> Note: The words Holy Spirit are set off in Roman type throughout this chart.
1:2	<i>He [Jesus] was taken up into heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.</i>
1:5	<i>“John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”</i>
1:8	<i>“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”</i>
1:16	<i>“Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus.”</i>
2:4	<i>All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.</i>
2:17	<i>“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.”</i>
2:18	<i>“Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.”</i>
2:33	<i>“Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.”</i>
2:38	<i>Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”</i>
4:8	<i>Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: “Rulers and elders of the people!”</i>
4:25	<i>“You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David.”</i>
4:31	<i>After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.</i>
5:3	<i>Then Peter said, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?”</i>
5:9	<i>Peter said to her, “How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord?”</i>
5:32	<i>“We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”</i>
6:3	<i>“Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom.”</i>
6:5	<i>They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit.</i>
6:10	<i>They could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke.</i>
7:51	<i>“You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!”</i>
7:55	<i>Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.</i>
8:15–16	<i>When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.</i>
8:17	<i>Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.</i>

Acts	<b>Reference to the Holy Spirit (continued)</b> Note: The words Holy Spirit are set off in Roman type throughout this chart.
8:18	<i>When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money.</i>
8:19	"Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."
8:29	<i>The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it."</i>
8:39	<i>When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away.</i>
9:17	"Jesus...has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."
9:31	<i>It [the church] was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers.</i>
10:19	<i>While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you."</i>
10:38	"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power."
10:44	<i>While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message.</i>
10:45	<i>The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles.</i>
10:47	"Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have."
11:12	"The Spirit told me to have no hesitation about going with them."
11:15	"As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning."
11:16	"Then I remembered what the Lord had said: "John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."
11:24	<i>He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.</i>
11:28	<i>One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world.</i>
13:2	<i>While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."</i>
13:4	<i>The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia.</i>
13:9–10	<i>Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, "You are a child of the devil."</i>
13:52	<i>The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.</i>
15:8	"God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us."
15:28	<i>It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements.</i>
16:6	<i>Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia.</i>
16:7	<i>When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to.</i>

Acts	Reference to the Holy Spirit (continued) Note: The words Holy Spirit are set off in Roman type throughout this chart.
19:2	<i>“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” They answered, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”</i>
19:6	<i>When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.</i>
20:22	<i>“Compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there.”</i>
20:23	<i>“I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.”</i>
20:28	<i>“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.”</i>
21:4	<i>Through the Spirit they urged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.</i>
21:11	<i>[Agabus] took Paul’s belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, “The Holy Spirit says, ‘In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt.’”</i>
28:25	<i>“The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers.”</i>

# 1.3

## LESSON

### 1.3.1

OBJECTIVE

*Explain two ways to outline Acts.*

## Analyzing Acts

There are many ways to study and outline Acts; it may be helpful to look at three common ways.

### Outlining Geographically

In Acts 1:8, Jesus told His followers what to do once they received the Holy Spirit: “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

This chart shows how Acts can be divided into three parts that match Christ’s instruction in Acts 1:8.

Part	Place to Witness	Chapters in Acts
1	Jerusalem	1–7
2	Judea and Samaria	8–12
3	The whole earth	13–28

11 On which location does the first part of Acts focus? Where does Acts next focus? By the end of Acts, where is the geographic focus?

In Acts 1–7, the church was centralized in Jerusalem. At Pentecost, three thousand people believed, were baptized, and became believers. By the power of the Spirit, the apostles did miracles and healed the sick. They cast out demons in the name of Jesus. Many Jews received Jesus as their Savior and Lord (Acts 2:47). The good news spread rapidly.

Acts 8–12 focuses on Judea and Samaria. God allowed persecution to scatter the church. The religious leaders stoned Stephen in Jerusalem. But burying his body was like planting a seed. A great harvest followed. Believers fled from Jerusalem throughout Judea and Samaria. Wherever they went, they witnessed about Jesus.

Acts 13–28 is the ministry of Paul as he takes the gospel “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

12 What is your “Jerusalem,”—the place God wants you to start witnessing? Explain.

The geographical outline is the simplest way to outline Acts. Jesus’ command to be witnesses “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8) is more than a pattern for the book of Acts. It is instruction for all evangelization. A logical and effective model starts right where we are—our own personal Jerusalem. Our homes, neighborhoods, schools, and communities are the natural starting point for witnessing. People closest to us should be able to see the love of Christ in us as we live our daily lives.

Witnessing then expands to Samaria. Samaria was a land close to Jerusalem geographically, politically, and culturally. Samaritans even shared a religious heritage that included Abraham’s covenant and the law of Moses. When we take the gospel to “Samaria” today, we commit to becoming witnesses to people nearby but not quite in our usual world. Perhaps this involves moving out of our comfort zone or crossing racial, cultural, or economic lines. Maybe it means ministering to immigrants, refugees, visiting foreigners, or the disadvantaged. What is the “Samaria” God wants you to reach?

Finally, the disciples were to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. Our mission as believers is the same today. God calls all of us to missions, whether we go physically to another country or support the work of others through prayer and giving. Technology has made it possible to take God’s Word to the ends of the earth in more ways than ever before. Travel and communication become faster and more effective every year.

### Outlining Based on Peter and Paul

A second way to organize the book of Acts is by comparing the ministries of its two central human figures, Peter and Paul. Peter’s ministry, showcased in Acts 1–12, was mostly to Jews. Paul, featured in Acts 13–28, traveled the world as a missionary. The chart divides Acts into two parts based on the ministries of Peter and Paul and emphasizes some similar ways in which the Holy Spirit worked through these apostles.

Ministry of Peter (Acts 1–12)	Acts	Ministry of Paul (Acts 13–28)	Acts
Preached Jesus to the Jews	2–5	Preached Jesus to the Gentiles	13–28
	3:1–10	Healed a man lame from birth	14:8–10
Healed with a touch of his shadow	5:15–16		19:11–12
	8:9–24	Dealt with Bar-Jesus, a sorcerer	13:6–11
With the apostles, healed all tormented by evil spirits, resulting in persecution and miraculous delivery	5:16		16:16–18
	9:36–41	Raised Eutychus from the dead	20:9–12
With the apostles, healed all brought to them	5:16		28:1–9

13 Read the references given in the chart and write what ministry of Peter or Paul each reference describes.

## Outlining According to Messages

A third way of outlining the book of Acts is by studying its great messages. Acts contains some of the most effective gospel messages of all time. Luke recorded at least twenty-four messages in Acts. (See the following table.) He quoted Peter, Stephen, James, Paul, and others. Believers spoke as the Holy Spirit filled and inspired them. (Compare Matthew 10:20 and Luke 12:11–12.) These twenty-four messages can be a tool to help organize Acts.

14 Study the table. Read each message. In the column on the right, write the name of each speaker (or speakers). Become familiar with the important teaching each passage contains and the circumstances surrounding it to better understand another way to outline Acts.

15 What are three ways to organize the book of Acts?

16 Which way of organizing Acts is most helpful to you? Why?

<b>Acts can be outlined according to the messages recorded in the book.</b>			
<b>Message</b>	<b>Acts</b>	<b>Reason or Theme</b>	<b>Speaker</b>
1	1:15–22	Choosing an apostle to replace Judas	
2	2:14–36	Tongues on the Day of Pentecost	
3	3:12–26	Healing of lame man in the temple	
4	4:8–12	Defense before the Sanhedrin for preaching	
5	5:35–39	Counseling the Sanhedrin about Peter and John	
6	7:2–53	Arrested by the Sanhedrin	
7	10:34–43	Called to Cornelius's house	
8	11:4–17	Defense to circumcised believers	
9	13:16–41	Sabbath message to Jews	
10	14:14–17	Crowd's desire to worship them	
11	15:7–11	Meeting of church leaders	
12	15:13–21	Meeting of church leaders	
13	17:22–31	The unknown God	
14	18:14–15	Rejecting the Jews' case on Paul	
15	19:25–27	Inciting followers of Diana to riot	
16	19:35–40	Calming the riot at Ephesus	
17	20:18–35	Good-bye to Ephesian elders	
18	22:1–21	Mob trying to kill Paul	
19	23:1–6	Defense to the Sanhedrin	
20	24:10–21	Defense before Governor Felix	
21	25:8–11	Defense before Governor Festus	
22	26:1–27	Defense before King Agrippa	
23	27:21–26	Storm on Mediterranean Sea	
24	28:17–28	Testimony to Jewish leaders	



## Test Yourself



Circle the letter of the *best* answer.

1. The book of Acts had no title until
  - a) AD 50.
  - b) AD 150.
  - c) AD 250.
  - d) AD 500.
2. The book of Acts was written around
  - a) AD 63.
  - b) AD 70.
  - c) AD 75.
  - d) AD 83.
3. The book of Acts serves as a bridge between the
  - a) Old and New Testaments.
  - b) Pauline epistles and the book of Revelation.
  - c) Gospels and Paul's letters.
  - d) Gospels and the pastoral epistles.
4. The church grew from
  - a) Antioch to Rome.
  - b) Jerusalem to Samaria.
  - c) Samaria to Antioch.
  - d) Jerusalem to Rome.
5. The church grew in its mission by
  - a) Philip preaching to the Samaritans.
  - b) Philip preaching to the Ethiopian eunuch.
  - c) Peter preaching to Cornelius and his household.
  - d) doing all of the above.
6. Luke's greatest purpose of the book of Acts was perhaps to
  - a) defend Paul and his ministry.
  - b) show the spread of the gospel.
  - c) emphasize the ministry of the Holy Spirit through believers.
  - d) do all the above.
7. Luke emphasized the Holy Spirit
  - a) 30 times.
  - b) 55 times.
  - c) 63 times.
  - d) 75 times.
8. The book of Acts can be divided into three parts based on Acts
  - a) 1:4.
  - b) 1:8.
  - c) 2:4.
  - d) 2:38.
9. Acts can be considered in two divisions based upon the ministries of
  - a) Peter and Paul.
  - b) the apostles and Paul.
  - c) Peter and the apostles.
  - d) the early church and Peter.
10. Acts can be organized according to its great messages, including those from
  - a) Peter, James, and Luke.
  - b) Paul, Stephen, and Peter.
  - c) Peter, Paul, and King Agrippa.
  - d) Stephen, Paul, and Luke.

# Responses to Interactive Questions

## Chapter 1

Some of these responses may include information that is supplemental to the IST. These questions are intended to produce reflective thinking beyond the course content and your responses may vary from these examples.

**1** Whose acts does the book of Acts record?

The book of Acts records the acts of the apostles and also the acts of the Holy Spirit.

**2** Who wrote Acts?

Luke

**3** Summarize three of the five reasons scholars believe Luke wrote Acts.

Answers will vary. The reasons are given in Lesson 1.1.

**4** What three historical dates help determine when Luke wrote Acts?

(1) Paul's imprisonment in Rome (AD 60–63) was included in Acts, so Luke must have written after Paul's imprisonment. (2) The burning of Rome in AD 64 is not mentioned, indicating Luke wrote before AD 64. (3) Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70 is not mentioned, so Acts was written before that time. Luke wrote Acts around AD 63.

**5** How does Acts serve as a bridge between the Gospels and the Epistles?

Acts fills a gap in the written history of the church. Acts introduces us to key figures and churches mentioned in the Epistles.

**6** In what city does the book of Acts begin? In what city does Acts end? What is the significance of this progression?

Acts begins in Jerusalem. Acts ends in Rome. This progression shows the geographic growth of the church. The church grew in an ever-widening circle.

**7** Based on what Acts shows about the church's growing outreach to people of all races and cultures, how do you think God feels about some people's prejudice or unwillingness to fellowship with people who are different from them?

Answers will vary.

**8** In what four ways did the early church grow in Acts?

The church grew (1) numerically, (2) geographically, it (3) expanded its mission, and it grew in (4) theology.

**9** How has your church grown in the four areas demonstrated in Acts? Explain.

Answers will vary.

10 Read each passage in Acts in the chart. In the right column, describe the ministry of each layperson.

<b>Laypersons' Spirit-empowered ministry recorded in Acts</b>		
<b>Acts</b>	<b>Person(s)</b>	<b>Ministry</b>
1:12–15; 2:1–4	108 of the 120	Prayed and witnessed for Christ
4:34–37; 9:26–27; 11:25–26; 13:2–3	Barnabas	Was generous; became a friend to Paul; ministered to and with Paul
6:1–7	The seven deacons	Distributed food to widows
6–7	Stephen	Served as a deacon; did great wonders and miraculous signs; witnessed and died for Jesus
8:4–8; 21:7–9	Philip	Served as a deacon; took the gospel to Samaria
9:10–19	Ananias	Placed his hands on Paul and baptized him
9:36–39	Tabitha	Sewed clothes for the poor
10:5–6	Simon the tanner	Provided housing for Peter
10:2	Cornelius	Gave to those in need
11:19–21	Scattered believers	Told the gospel to Jews and Greeks
12:12	Mary, Mark's mother	Had a prayer meeting in her home
12:12	Unnamed believers	Prayed for Peter's release from prison
15:40–18:5	Silas	Traveled and ministered with Paul
12:25; 15:39	John Mark	Traveled with and helped Paul and Barnabas
13:1	Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen	Prophesied and taught
16:13–15	Lydia	Provided housing for God's servants
16:33–34	Philippian jailer	Fed apostles and washed their wounds
16:1–5	Timothy	Traveled with Paul and helped him
17:5–9	Jason	Provided housing for Christian workers
17:13–15	Unnamed believers	Escorted Paul to Athens
18:1–3	Priscilla and Aquila	Gave housing and support to Paul
18:24–28	Apollos	Spoke boldly for Jesus
18:27	Unnamed brothers	Encouraged and recommended Apollos
20:4–5	Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Timothy, Tychicus, Trophimus	Traveled with Paul
21:3–4	Unnamed disciples	Gave seven days' lodging to missionaries
21:8–9	Philip's four daughters	Prophesied
21:10–11	Agabus	Prophesied of trouble in Jerusalem
21:16	Mnason	Provided housing for missionaries
23:12–22	Paul's nephew	Warned Paul of a plot to kill him
27:1–2	Aristarchus	Sailed with Paul from Caesarea toward Rome
1, 20, 21, 27, 28	Luke	Wrote Acts and traveled with Paul
28:14	Some brothers	Invited Paul and others to stay a week
28:15	The brothers	Walked out to meet Paul near Rome

**11** On which location does the first part of Acts focus? Where does Acts next focus? By the end of Acts, where is the geographic focus?

Jerusalem; Judea and Samaria; and the whole earth.

**12** What is your “Jerusalem,” the place God wants you to start witnessing? Explain.

Answers will vary.

**13** Read the references given in the chart, and write what ministry of Peter or Paul each reference describes.

<b>Ministry of Peter (Acts 1–12)</b>	<b>Acts</b>	<b>Ministry of Paul (Acts 13–28)</b>	<b>Acts</b>
Preached Jesus to the Jews	2–5	Preached Jesus to the Gentiles	13–28
Healed a man lame from birth	3:1–10	Healed a man lame from birth	14:8–10
Healed with a touch of his shadow	5:15–16	Healed through his handkerchiefs and aprons	19:11–12
Dealt with Simon, a sorcerer	8:9–24	Dealt with Bar-Jesus, a sorcerer	13:6–11
With the apostles, healed all tormented by evil spirits	5:16	Cast a demon out of a girl	16:16–18
Raised Dorcas from the dead	9:36–41	Raised Eutychus from the dead	20:9–12
With the apostles, healed all brought to them	5:16	Healed many on the island of Malta	28:1–9

**14** Study the table. Read each message. In the column on the right, write the name of each speaker (or speakers). Become familiar with the important teaching each contains and the circumstances surrounding it to better understand another way to outline Acts.

<b>Acts can be outlined according to the messages recorded in the book.</b>			
<b>Message</b>	<b>Acts</b>	<b>Reason or Theme</b>	<b>Speaker</b>
1	1:15–22	Choosing an apostle to replace Judas	Peter
2	2:14–36	Tongues on the Day of Pentecost	Peter
3	3:12–26	Healing of lame man in the temple	Peter
4	4:8–12	Defense before the Sanhedrin for preaching	Peter
5	5:35–39	Counseling the Sanhedrin about Peter and John	Gamaliel
6	7:2–53	Arrested by the Sanhedrin	Stephen
7	10:34–43	Called to Cornelius’s house	Peter
8	11:4–17	Defense to circumcised believers	Peter
9	13:16–41	Sabbath message to Jews	Paul
10	14:14–17	Crowd’s desire to worship them	Paul and Barnabas
11	15:7–11	Meeting of church leaders	Peter
12	15:13–21	Meeting of church leaders	James
13	17:22–31	The unknown God	Paul
14	18:14–15	Rejecting the Jews’ case on Paul	Gallio
15	19:25–27	Inciting followers of Diana to riot	Demetrius

16	19:35–40	Calming the riot at Ephesus	Town clerk
17	20:18–35	Good-bye to Ephesian elders	Paul
18	22:1–21	Mob trying to kill Paul	Paul
19	23:1–6	Defense to the Sanhedrin	Paul
20	24:10–21	Defense before Governor Felix	Paul
21	25:8–11	Defense before Governor Festus	Paul
22	26:1–27	Defense before King Agrippa	Paul
23	27:21–26	Storm on Mediterranean Sea	Paul
24	28:17–28	Testimony to Jewish leaders	Paul

**15** What are three ways to organize the book of Acts?

(1) Geographically, (2) by the ministries of Peter and Paul, and (3) by the messages and their speakers.

**16** Which way of organizing Acts is most helpful to you? Why?

Answers will vary.

# CHAPTER 2

## From the Resurrection to Pentecost

A person's last words have always called for special attention. Last words often reveal what is most important in the heart of the speaker. Do you remember Jacob's last words found in Genesis 49? He gathered all of his sons around his bed. Each one leaned forward so he would not miss anything. Jacob's last words lived on in their hearts for the rest of their lives.

Joseph's last words, like those of his father Jacob, had great weight:

Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." And Joseph made the sons of Israel swear an oath and said, "God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up from this place." (Genesis 50:24–25)

What about the last words of Jesus? Just before His ascension, Jesus told the disciples that they needed to wait. Perhaps their first impulse would have been to rush back and tell everyone what they had seen and heard. Jesus had risen from the dead! He had risen into the sky and returned to heaven! What a story they had to tell, but Jesus told them to wait. In our own power, the deep things of God are way over our heads. We may have the best intentions and a strong desire to act. But we can get confused about the direction we should take. When we wait for the Holy Spirit, we receive direction and power to make it to the top.

### Lesson 2.1 The Gift Our Father Promised

Objective

2.1.1 *Analyze the promise, the command, the gift, and the Baptizer in Acts 1.*

### Lesson 2.2 The Work of the Church

Objective

2.2.1 *Explain the plan, the place, the power, and the purpose of witnessing. Relate these to self and others.*

### Lesson 2.3 Steps to the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Objective

2.3.1 *Identify four attitudes or actions that precede the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.*


 A graphic with a grey background. At the top is a large white number '2'. Below it, the word 'LESSON' is written in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. At the bottom right of the graphic is a smaller white number '1'.

## The Gift Our Father Promised

Luke began Acts with the **Ascension** and final words of Jesus. Fittingly, this is right where he had left off in his Gospel (Luke 24:45–53). Why? The ascension of Jesus was a significant event. It signaled the end of one chapter in the story of God’s work on earth, Jesus’ ministry. It also marked the opening of a new chapter in His work through the church.

Luke said, “In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven” (Acts 1:1–2). At the beginning of Acts, Luke summarized the time of Jesus’ ministry by saying all of that was just the beginning of what Jesus would do and teach. This same Jesus who has returned to heaven is continuing to do and to teach. Much of what He continues to do and teach is done through believers.

After His resurrection, Jesus showed himself to the believers: “He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). Jesus did not use those forty days as a platform for giving the disciples new teaching. Instead He emphasized the basic premise of His three-year ministry. Jesus’ teaching in the Gospels focused largely on the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God was basically defined by Jesus as something that is both now (present), and later (future). It is now in the heart. It is not seen. It is not political. When the Lord returns, the kingdom then will be one which is political, external, and for all. Jesus was reinforcing that message of the Kingdom and illustrating why, as King, He needed to lay down His life in Jerusalem and die for His people.

Now it was time for Him to return to the Father. He gathered His followers around Him on the eastern slope of the **Mount of Olives**, between Bethany and Jerusalem. He had accomplished His work on earth. It was time to pass the responsibility to the disciples He had commissioned and trained to complete His work. Before ascending to heaven, Jesus gave the disciples some final instructions. He commanded them to remain in Jerusalem until they received the special gift promised by the Father. The disciples would need the special power of God within them if they were to successfully carry out their mission. Only with the Holy Spirit’s power would the disciples reach the world with God’s story of love and salvation.

### 2.1.1 OBJECTIVE

*Analyze the promise, the command, the gift, and the Baptizer in Acts 1.*

- 1 Memorize the prophecy in Joel 2:28–29.
- 2 Has God poured out His Spirit on you? Describe your personal experience.
- 3 In what ways was it good for the disciples that Jesus go away? What is the benefit for believers today?

### The Promise

“Wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about,” Jesus said in Acts 1:4. Just what had the Father promised to believers?

Although Jesus was about to usher in a new era in God’s work on earth, nothing He said should have surprised the disciples—or us. The outpouring of God’s Holy Spirit on ordinary believers in an extraordinary way was a long-standing promise. The disciples were aware of God’s promise more than four hundred years earlier in Joel 2:28–29: “I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.”

Through John the Baptist the promise had been renewed. John had boldly proclaimed to the people: “I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Matthew 3:11).

Jesus said much about the coming of the Holy Spirit (John 14:15–26; 16:5–15). If the disciples had been paying attention, they would have known what to expect that day on the Mount of Olives. Jesus had told them, “It is for your good

that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you” (John 16:7).

As Jesus prepared to return to heaven, He made clear that the time had at last come for this promise to be fulfilled.

### The Command

Jesus did more than just suggest that His disciples remain in Jerusalem. He commanded them to wait for the **baptism in the Holy Spirit**. God’s will is that each believer be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Look at the command Jesus gave: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about” (Acts 1:4).

The Great Commission to spread the gospel was too important to leave to chance. The disciples would need the power of the Holy Spirit to finish the task to which Jesus had called them. When Jesus first appeared to His disciples after His resurrection, Thomas missed seeing the risen Lord. He was not in the room where the others had gathered (John 20:19–25). Jesus knew His followers would have to wait for the Holy Spirit. When a promise is delayed, human nature responds in one of two ways. Some people think they have time, so they delay getting ready. Others start out fine but grow weary of waiting if it takes longer than they think it should. Either way, human nature often leads people to miss out on something good when they have to wait.

Jesus told His followers to wait—not just when it was convenient or for as long as they felt like it. His instructions were specific. No one needed to guess about the timing of the promise or whether he or she had missed something. They would know they had waited long enough when they received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Human nature has not changed much. Believers can fall into the same trap today if they do not seek right away to obey the Lord’s command to be filled with the Spirit. Why is obeying the Lord’s command to wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit just as important today as it was almost two thousand years ago?

#### 1. The task is bigger than we are.

Jesus was saying to His church, *You need this Holy Spirit because the mission I am giving to you is too big for you to do with your own thinking, no matter how bright you are. You must rely on a power that is stronger than your own.* The church has to rely upon the person of God to do the work of God.

All of us need to be filled with the Spirit. His love for the lost gives us the power to love those who are not like us. The Spirit enables us to witness to those who are different from us. He empowers us to speak boldly in the face of opposition and persecution. Because the task is so big, we need the Holy Spirit’s power. God loves the whole world. Therefore, we must be filled with the Spirit to be effective witnesses as God desires.

#### 2. The task is too hard to accomplish without the Spirit’s power.

The disciples were filled with joy because Jesus had risen from the dead, and they saw Him ascend into heaven. Their hearts were full of emotion. But before long they would face troubles and hardships that would temper their first enthusiasm. Within weeks they would be scorned, rejected, and called drunks and liars. Some would be dragged to prison. Many of them would lose their lands, homes, and earthly possessions. Loved ones and fellow Jews would turn against them. Many would be beaten. Some would be killed. The task would be harder than they could imagine, so they needed more of the Spirit’s power to succeed. In many places Christians still

suffer such persecution. In others the barriers to evangelism are daunting. Like the disciples, we need the Spirit's power to do what Jesus has called us to do.

3. The task is not yet finished.

Still not everyone had heard the gospel. Yet waiting to receive the Holy Spirit is a command not just to those few disciples but also to all of us. They were told not to leave Jerusalem. The modern equivalent of that might be, *Do not get busy doing things—not even good things—until you get this power and this baptism in the Holy Spirit.*

### The Gift

When Jesus instructed His disciples to wait for the gift His Father promised, He was saying that in addition to everything He had taught them, they would also receive a gift.

4 Summarize three reasons why it was important for the disciples to wait for the gift the Father had promised.

The most precious gift a person can receive after salvation is the gift of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Luke often referred to the baptism in the Spirit as a gift from our Father. At least seven times in Luke and Acts, he referred to the baptism in the Spirit as being given by the Father.

Believers who seek to be filled with the Spirit should remember that the baptism is a precious gift. It is not something that must be earned. It is easier for us to wait for something if we understand its value. Author Harold Lindsell said the most precious gift a person can receive after salvation is the gift of being filled with the Holy Spirit (1970, 13–14). Luke refers to this promised gift in several ways. Notice some of the ways he describes this deeper relationship with God.

- the promise of my Father (Luke 24:49)
- the promise of the Father (Acts 1:4)
- the promise of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33)
- the gift of the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13; Acts 1:4; 2:38–39; 8:20; 10:45; 11:17; 15:8)
- baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5; 11:16)
- filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4)

Note that Luke most often refers to the baptism in the Spirit as a gift from our Father. There are at least seven references in Luke and Acts that refer to the baptism in the Spirit as something the Father gives us.

### The Baptizer

Luke sometimes referred to this inner filling as being baptized in the Spirit (Acts 1:5). This baptism is an immersion in the Holy Spirit. A person is baptized in water on the outside of his or her body. The baptism in the Spirit happens inside a believer.

5 How is the Holy Spirit a gift from the Father?

A pastor may baptize a believer in water. The person being baptized must understand what to do. To be baptized one must submit to the pastor. As the candidate submits, the pastor will lower that person into the water, then lift him or her up. However, a pastor cannot baptize a person who does not submit. In other words, there are two parts to a baptism—the pastor's part and the believer's part. Water baptism is possible only as two people work together. To be baptized in the Spirit, a believer must submit totally to God. Believers must submit their wills, their hearts, their minds, and their tongues and allow God to use them and fill them with His Spirit. All three persons of the Godhead have a role in the baptism in the Holy Spirit. It is difficult for humans to grasp the subtle

differences in the way the **Trinity** works together to fill believers. Although the Holy Spirit is a gift of the Father, it is the Son, Jesus, who baptizes believers in the Spirit. John the Baptist said: “I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Matthew 3:11).

6 Who baptizes believers in the Spirit?

We must ask Jesus to fill us with the Holy Spirit. He is the baptizer. Our part as believers is to come to Him, receive the Spirit, and speak in the new language the Spirit gives us.

## LESSON 2.2

7 What is the believer's part in being baptized in the Spirit?

### The Work of the Church

Luke's Gospel ends with a convinced group of believers, whose eyes Jesus had opened to the Scriptures (Luke 24:45). They were a body of commissioned believers. Before Pentecost, the believers were united, worshipping, and waiting to be clothed with God's power from on high (Luke 24:49). The purpose of Pentecost was not to create the church but to empower the church that already existed.

In his Gospel and in Acts, Luke stressed that the Holy Spirit empowers believers to serve. Luke gives many examples of the Spirit empowering Christians to witnesses for Jesus.

Although Luke, John, and Paul emphasize different ministries of the Holy Spirit, each emphasizes that the Holy Spirit gives us power to serve. In Luke's Gospel, the entire ministry of Jesus is because the Spirit is upon Him (Luke 4:18–19). John adds the Spirit's role in salvation. Paul includes what Luke and John teach and adds the Spirit's role in helping us live a holy life to serve.

The Spirit's ministry, according to Luke, John, and Paul		
Writer	Ministry of the Holy Spirit	Selected Scriptures
Luke	1) Service (The Spirit enables us to witness to the lost and help believers.)	1) Luke 1:15–17, 39–56, 67–80; 2:25–38; 3:21–22; 4:18–19; 11:5–13; 24:45–49; (And all references to the Spirit in Acts)
John	1) Service 2) Salvation (The Spirit draws us to Christ and then helps us live this life on earth.)	1) John 1:32; 7:37–39; 14:12–31; 15:26; 20:21–22 2) John 3:5–8; 16:8–11; 1 John 2:20
Paul	1) Service 2) Salvation 3) Sanctification (The Spirit enables us to live a holy life that pleases God.)	1) Rom. 15:19 2) Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 6:11, 12:13; 2 Cor. 1:22; Titus 3:5 3) Rom. 8:1–17; Gal. 5:22–23; 2 Thess. 2:13

### 2.2.1 OBJECTIVE

*Explain the plan, the place, the power, and the purpose of witnessing. Relate these to self and others.*

8 What statement made by the apostles in Acts 1 shows they still hoped Jesus would establish an earthly kingdom right away?

### The Plan to Witness

Forty days had gone by. Jesus had talked to His disciples about His program—the kingdom of God—and a person—the Holy Spirit. They just had one question: *Jesus, where is the kingdom?*

Jesus had instructed the disciples to wait for the Father's gift. He was talking about something urgent and life changing. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, they would soon change the world. The disciples' thoughts were headed in a different

direction. In Acts 1:6 the disciples introduced a topic that seemed to interest them more: “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

The Gospels record that Jesus said a lot about the kingdom of God. Looking back, we can understand why the disciples asked if it was time to restore the kingdom to Israel. The Old Testament prophets promised a kingdom to Israel, but the Romans ruled the Jews in Israel. The Jews were anxious for freedom from these harsh masters. When Jesus spoke of a new outpouring of the Spirit, it was a short leap for them to think about the restoration of the kingdom. God’s Word and Jewish tradition linked the Spirit’s coming with the coming of a new kingdom in the day of the Lord. (See Joel 2:28–32.) So when Jesus told them to wait for the Spirit’s coming, in their minds it probably seemed natural to think about the coming earthly kingdom. They were more than ready to hear that Israel’s political bondage was over.

Notice Jesus’ answer: “It is not for you to know the times [*chronos*] or the dates [*kairos*] the Father has set by his own authority” (Acts 1:7). The Greek words *chronos* and *kairos* both refer to a measure of time. *Chronos* is the word from which we get chronology (the study of events in time). It is not for Christians to know the length of time or the *kairos*—the season, the right time. It is for us to receive power when the Holy Spirit comes and to witness for Jesus: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8). The word *but* in Acts 1:8 is like a hinge. In that one word, Jesus turns our thoughts from God’s business to our business.

What do witnesses do? Faithful witnesses tell what they know about something. They are not required to be experts. They simply describe what they saw, heard, or experienced. As Christians we are witnesses that Jesus has risen from the dead. We are witnesses that He has saved us from sin. Our main business is to tell others.

Our holy lives and good deeds are two ways we witness. When Christians give food to the hungry, visit the sick, or help the needy, they show the love of God. But the witness of our deeds is not complete without words.

Imagine a man who is a silent witness in court. The witness is called to the front of the room. The lawyer asks the witness if he has seen something. The witness nods his head and smiles. Then the lawyer asks the witness to tell what he knows. The witness just smiles and remains silent. Each time the lawyer asks a question, the witness only smiles. This would be foolish. A witness who does not tell what he or she knows is no witness at all. To witness for Jesus, we must speak the right words for Him at the right times. Believers should never be afraid to witness for Jesus.

### The Place to Witness

Throw a rock into a pond of water, and the rock will cause a circle of waves to go out in all directions. These waves will continue, moving farther away from where they started. So it is with witnessing. The rock was thrown into the pond on the Day of Pentecost. Acts 1:8 describes three stages in which witnessing expanded.

9 How do you witness with your life? How do your actions support your spoken testimony? Do those around you know what you believe?



Based on *The NIV Study Bible*, pp. 1643, 1668.

First, Jesus' followers began witnessing in Jerusalem (Acts 1–7). Second, they took the gospel to the districts of Judea and Samaria and throughout Palestine\* (Acts 8–12). Third, their witnessing spread throughout the Roman world and to Rome itself (Acts 13–28).

Please Note:

\*The term *Palestine* is used throughout this course to identify the geographic region generally located between the Sea of Galilee and the Negev desert and west of the Jordan River. Although this term is not an official political label for this area either now or during the first century AD, it is a convenient way to reference a geographic area that is very difficult to name due to its tumultuous political, ethnic, and religious history. This descriptive term has been used since the fifth century BC, even though it was not officially applied as a political designation until the second century AD. It is used for convenience because of its general recognition and does not intend any historical, political, or ethnic implications.

This is the simplest way of looking at how witnessing expanded. No doubt the church grew in many directions. But as a companion of Paul's, Luke wrote about church growth in the direction of Paul's travels toward Rome.

Acts also includes a more complex report of how witnessing expanded. Unlike Acts 1:8, this report emphasizes five stages of expanded witnessing.

#### Five stages of church growth in Acts

Stage	Acts	New Boundary	Witnesses	Date (AD)
1	1:1–9:31 (See 9:31)	Throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria	The 120, Peter, Stephen, and Philip	35
2	9:32–12:25 (See 11:19)	As far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch	Peter, scattered believers, Barnabas, and Saul	40
3	13:1–15:35 (See 16:6)	Throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia	Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark (first missionary trip)	48
4	15:36–21:16 (See 16:9)	Over to Macedonia	Paul, Silas, and others (second and third missionary trips)	52
5	21:17–28:31 (See 28:14)	To Rome	Paul and Luke (trip to Rome)	60

Today each Christian must witness in his or her *Jerusalem*, that is, the place he or she lives. Within each believer's sphere of influence are people who need Jesus. Some are neighbors. Others are friends at school or work. God wants each Christian to witness about Jesus to those nearby. God has strategically placed you near some people only you can reach.

Yet our responsibility to witness does not stop with our *Jerusalem*. We are called to spread the gospel beyond our own neighborhoods. While not abandoning our *Jerusalem*, we should allow God to use us in *Judea, Samaria, and the whole earth*.

### The Power to Witness

10 What is your *Judea* and *Samaria*? What can you do to spread the gospel a little farther from home? Is there any excuse for not fulfilling Christ's instructions to witness in these different areas?

It takes more than obligation or desire to be a faithful witness for Jesus. Witnessing requires spiritual power. Only one kind of power will enable a Christian to be a faithful witness: the power that comes from the Holy Spirit. Around the world, those baptized in the Spirit witness with special zeal and power. The Spirit does signs and wonders through common believers who are full of Him. Regardless of how educated, experienced, or talented these Christians are, the Spirit gives them power to get the job done. Like the fishermen who first followed the Lord, we have the same spiritual power and the same power source.

### The Purpose of Witnessing

11 What power enables believers to witness for Jesus?

The Mount of Olives seemed to be one of Jesus' favorite places. He prayed at the base of the Mount of Olives in the Garden of Gethsemane. On the Mount of Olives, facing the Temple Mount, He taught one of His great sermons, the Olivet discourse (Matthew 24:3–25:46). He walked over the Mount of Olives to Bethany multiple times during the week before His death. It was fitting that Jesus ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives.

The angels said: "Jesus . . . will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). When Jesus returns to earth, He will return in the same resurrection body. He will come in the clouds and in great glory.

Zechariah 14:4 describes a future day, at the coming of the Lord: "On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives."

Since before the time Jesus walked on earth, the Mount of Olives has been a preferred burial ground. The whole mountainside is dotted with headstones marking graves. Jesus became the one human to ascend from the Mount of Olives rather than to remain in the grave. Surely the symbolism was not lost on Jesus' disciples and others who lived at that time. Jesus took a place symbolic of death and made it a place of triumph and ascension. That is what Christ does. He takes the symbols of death and turns them into symbols of life and hope.

It was vital for the disciples to be present as Jesus ascended to heaven. They had been eyewitnesses to the end of Jesus' presence on earth. They had been present during Jesus' ministry and had seen the miracles. They had personally seen and talked with the risen Christ. Now they were eyewitnesses to His ascension. All of those things would be pretty unbelievable if they had not seen them for themselves. Because they saw all of these things, they were credible witnesses for Jesus.

The disciples watched intently as Jesus ascended to heaven (Acts 1:9). Suddenly they found themselves with two men dressed in white. In the Bible, this is a common description of angels. The angels asked the disciples, "Why do you stand here

looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

What was wrong with gazing into heaven? Nothing, really. Every Christian needs times of looking to heaven for encouragement, direction, and communion with Jesus. But these times of fellowship are to prepare us and equip us for the task at hand. The time quickly comes when we must act upon the instructions we have received from the Lord. Jesus had called the disciples to share a message of hope with a lost world. It was time to shift their focus from the heavenly to the earthly.

The leaders of a church happily observed the spiritual growth of a young woman who had been faithfully attending services. She seemed to have such joy and depth as she worshiped the Lord each service. When they approached her about getting involved in some ministry, her answer was always the same. “Oh no,” she would say, “I like to worship the Lord. I would rather worship than work.”

God has called each believer to worship, but He has also called us to work. Guard against spending too much time thinking about heaven. Spend your time helping others consider their eternal destination. Your work is to witness. Be careful not to let questions about heaven, prophecy, or the time and date of Christ’s return keep you from working.

The purpose of witnessing is to get people ready to meet Jesus. Soon He will return just as He left. Blessed is that servant who is busy with the Master’s work when the Lord returns (Matthew 24:46).

12 Evaluate the balance in your own life. Are you “so heavenly minded you’re no earthly good”? Or do you keep your eyes on the present while being aware of the future? Explain.

## LESSON 2.3

### 2.3.1 OBJECTIVE

*Identify four attitudes or actions that precede the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.*

## Steps to the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

On the Day of Pentecost, the new church experienced an awesome outpouring of the Holy Spirit. God never intended this to be a one-time historical marker for the church. He wants us to experience the revival and power of Pentecost over and over again in every church, every generation, and every believer’s life. By examining the events leading up to that first Pentecost, we can take steps to precede a personal Pentecost.

We should not look for a recipe we can follow to ensure an outpouring of the Spirit in our churches today. Instead, we should see the Holy Spirit’s coming as a supernatural outgrowth of certain attitudes and actions on the part of believers—then and now. What makes a church or our lives conducive to the Holy Spirit’s coming? Four qualities are noted in this study. When churches or individual Christians begin to display these qualities, they open themselves up to a tremendous work of the Holy Spirit.

### Obedience

The first quality the Christian community displayed following the Ascension is obedience. The disciples obeyed Jesus’ command to return to Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Spirit’s coming. The disciples may have been eager to share the good news and report what they had just seen and heard—that Jesus was alive again and had ascended to heaven. Jesus had told them to wait, so they did. We disobey if we try to do more or less than God commands.

The relationship between obedience and blessing is a theme in Scripture. Two widows were blessed by Elijah and Elisha because they obeyed (1 Kings 17; 2 Kings 4). The lepers were cleansed because they obeyed Jesus (Luke 17:11–14).

13 What did the disciples do to obey Jesus before Pentecost?

Saul received his sight because he obeyed (Acts 9:1–19). The disobedient miss the good things God has planned for them (Matthew 22:1–14; 23:37–39; Acts 13:46). The wise obey God and receive His goodness.

14 Are there any areas in your life that are not in full obedience to God and His Word? What must you do to become obedient?

Do you desire to be filled with the Spirit? Acts 5:32 says that God gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey Him. We can never earn God's blessings. However, obedience is a key to receiving from God. Is there a blessing you desire from the heavenly Father? Search your heart. Has the Holy Spirit spoken to you about doing something? Mary's advice to the servants at the wedding of Cana applies to us, too: "Do whatever he tells you" (John 2:5). The path of obedience always leads to God's blessings.

## Unity

When you tie two cats' tails together, you have union—but you do not have unity. The church of Jesus Christ is often like that. People may be all together in union. Their names are all on the membership roll or on the contribution record. But there are differences, bad feelings, hidden agendas, and turf to protect. The church must get past that. We must rise above our differences by offering forgiveness and love. We must be truly reconciled in Christ.

15 What contributed more to the unity of the 120, being together or being obedient? Explain your opinion.

Acts 2:1 tells us, "They were all together in one place." The obedience of Jesus' followers led naturally to a state of unity. One hundred and twenty of Jesus' followers stayed together for ten days in a large upper room. Some were apostles. Others were ordinary believers who had chosen to follow Jesus. Some were men, and some were women. Likely some were more wealthy than others. Some had more prestige or social standing. Some were related to Jesus. His mother and brothers were in the group. Some had denied or rejected Jesus (Peter and Jesus' brothers). None of these differences were important there. They were together, united.

16 What can the church today do to encourage unity?

Such unity takes time to develop. One of the challenges for today's church is the feeling of having too little time. Busyness can have a devastating effect on the church. Becoming a unified body of believers takes a great deal of time being together, hearing God's Word together, and working together. It takes that level of being together to provide a place of warmth and relationship that becomes the fertile soil for growth and revival. Instead of putting a new believer into a community of strangers, the church needs to be a living web of deep human relationships graced by the Spirit of God.

The 120 in the Upper Room had ten days together between the Ascension and Pentecost. If they spent an average of sixteen waking hours a day together, the total hours for the ten days amounted to 160 hours. That is the equivalent of nearly three years of Sunday morning worship services.

## Prayer

Prayer is the life of the church. The Christian life and the church cannot be built on good programs, no matter how wonderful the programs are. Through prayer, a believer or group of believers submits to the Lord and depends on His will and leadership.

17 Why is prayer so important for Christians and churches?

The believers prayed constantly (Acts 1:14). They lived in an attitude of prayer. Paul refers to this as praying without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Apparently, they prayed both in the temple (Luke 24:53) and in the Upper Room during this time.

18 Is it possible to pray constantly? How do you measure up to this example of the early believers?

Praying constantly should be a way of life for believers. This type of prayer includes talking to and listening to God. It includes petitions with groaning (James 5:16; Romans 8:26). But it also includes joyful praise. Prayer can be

intense or it can be quiet, peaceful, and relaxed. Praying means staying in touch with God. A prayerful attitude means being aware of God and sensitive to Him throughout the day. Prayer keeps us in step with God.

Some people have the attitude that God will do whatever He wants in spite of what we do or ask. They feel little need to pray. But the Bible teaches that we should pray constantly. When we develop lives of constant prayerfulness, we open the door to a fresh move of God.

### Study and Application of the Scriptures

Another important preparation for the Holy Spirit's coming is studying and applying the Scriptures. Evidently the Lord did not give instructions about replacing Judas before He left. Now the disciples could no longer turn to Jesus physically for direction. They followed the pattern that all Christians since have used first in seeking God's guidance: do the Scriptures provide direction?

Luke records, "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus" (Acts 1:16). Through reading Psalms 69:25 and 109:8, the disciples were assured that indeed the Scriptures anticipated Judas being replaced.

Peter says that the Holy Spirit spoke through David. As believers, we base our faith on the Bible, placing the Scriptures on a level above humans. The Bible is our guide to God and to heaven. Notice what the apostles said about the authority of God's Word: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:20–21).

Paul and Peter affirm that the Bible is in a class by itself and that the Scriptures are the words of God Almighty! We value them above the words of men and angels (Galatians 1:8–9). Therefore, our lives must be guided by "It is written" (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10; 1 Corinthians 3:19). Scripture must rule our lives instead of tradition and human opinion (Matthew 15:1–9).

19 Whom did the apostles nominate to take Judas' place among the Twelve? Why? (See Acts 1:21–23.)

Who would fill the apostolic position abandoned by Judas Iscariot, the traitor? Peter and the other apostles, assured by the prophetic Scriptures, narrowed the choices to replace Judas to two qualified men. Notice that the Christian community had a clear standard for choosing, unrelated to influence, teaching ability, or who was related to whom.

20 What is an apostle?

The qualification the Christian community used shows us how the office of apostle was defined. An apostle was someone chosen by the Lord to be an authorized eyewitness of His ministry from His baptism until His ascension.

This was the church's first decision after Jesus ascended to heaven. They went straight to the Scriptures for guidance. They read the Scriptures. They absorbed what the Scriptures had to say. They wanted to be guided by it.

Then they did some very common things. They agreed there needed to be certain qualifications the person replacing Judas would demonstrate. The replacement had to have been with Jesus from the beginning of His ministry until the end. Perhaps there were only two who fit that description: "Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias" (Acts 1:23). The lot fell to Matthias, who became the twelfth apostle.

Once the choice was narrowed, what did they do next? They prayed specifically that God would direct them: ““Lord you know everyone’s heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen”” (Acts 1:24). Then they cast lots or drew straws. That is like choosing a church leader by tossing a coin. Casting lots—using rocks or sticks to designate the choice—was a common Old Testament practice (1 Chronicles 26:13–16; Jonah 1:7). Again they were guided by the Scriptures, especially since they asked God to overrule the lot. Proverbs 16:33 says, “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.” In the past, Jesus had specifically called and chosen the original twelve apostles. In the future, He would personally choose and call the apostle Paul as well (Acts 9:15). The disciples had used all the intelligence available to make the best choice. Then they gave Jesus the chance to personally select and call Judas’ replacement.

This is the last time casting lots is mentioned in the Bible. Perhaps after the church received the fullness of the Holy Spirit, believers no longer needed to cast lots to know the will of God. Throughout the New Testament, believers relied on the Holy Spirit for guidance. As believers, we base our faith on the Bible. The Bible is our guide to God and to heaven. What will be your standard for Pentecost? Will you turn to the Bible as your standard? It is important to allow the Scriptures to lead us under godly leaders. When we follow the Word of God—and leaders who interpret the Word accurately—we can know God is leading us.

21 How do your beliefs about the Holy Spirit line up with Scripture?

22 What are four attitudes and disciplines individuals or churches can practice to prepare for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit?

Acts 1:12–26 suggests that when a Christian or a church corporately does certain things, that person or church prepares for a powerful moving of the Holy Spirit. We must be totally committed to obeying the Lord. We must be willing to commit time to be together in unity, not just union. We must live lives of constant prayerfulness, and be people of the Word, seeking guidance and truth from the Bible daily. When we follow the example of the early church in these areas, there is no telling what God will do.



## Test Yourself



Circle the letter of the *best* answer.

1. How long were the believers to wait for the gift of the Father?
  - a) 30 days
  - b) 40 days
  - c) 50 days
  - d) Until they received
2. The believer's part in being baptized in the Holy Spirit is to
  - a) to be silent.
  - b) to plead and beg.
  - c) submit and receive.
  - d) fast and pray.
3. Concerning the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer, Luke emphasizes the Spirit's help in
  - a) salvation.
  - b) service.
  - c) sanctification.
  - d) all of the above.
4. The purpose of Pentecost was to
  - a) revive the church.
  - b) create the church.
  - c) comfort the church.
  - d) empower the church.
5. According to Acts 1:8, believers will receive
  - a) social authority and prestige.
  - b) power to witness.
  - c) political power and influence.
  - d) power to speak in tongues.
6. The word *kairos* means
  - a) "the right time or season."
  - b) "a series of events."
  - c) "time."
  - d) all of the above.
7. At the Ascension, Jesus symbolically turned a place of death (Mount of Olives) into a place of
  - a) worship.
  - b) triumph and life.
  - c) popularity.
  - d) judgment.
8. The purpose of witnessing is to
  - a) fulfill a believer's obligation to the Lord.
  - b) prepare people to meet the Lord.
  - c) increase the power and influence of the kingdom of God.
  - d) do all of the above.
9. Concerning replacing the position of Judas, the apostles sought direction from
  - a) God's Word.
  - b) tradition.
  - c) Jewish law.
  - d) each other.
10. Four attitudes and actions that preceded the outpouring of the Holy Spirit were
  - a) obedience, diligence, unity, and prayer.
  - b) unity, patience, prayer, and the study and application of God's Word.
  - c) prayer, obedience, patience, and unity.
  - d) obedience, unity, prayer, and the study and application of God's Word.

# Responses to Interactive Questions

## Chapter 2

Some of these responses may include information that is supplemental to the IST. These questions are intended to produce reflective thinking beyond the course content and your responses may vary from these examples.

**1** Memorize the prophecy in Joel 2:28–29.

“And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days” (NIV).

**2** Has God poured out His Spirit on you? Describe your personal experience.

Answers will vary.

**3** In what ways was it good for the disciples that Jesus go away? What is the benefit for believers today? Jesus was one person in one place while on earth. But when He went away, He sent the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can be with every believer, thus multiplying the ministry and effectiveness of the church. Each believer can live with the constant presence and infilling of the Holy Spirit.

**4** Summarize three reasons why it was important for the disciples to wait for the gift the Father had promised.

The task is bigger than we are, the task is too hard to accomplish without the Spirit’s power, and the task is not yet finished.

**5** How is the Holy Spirit a gift from the Father?

The Holy Spirit is a precious gift that the Father gives to His children who ask. Being filled with the Spirit is not something that can be earned or purchased.

**6** Who baptizes believers in the Spirit?

Jesus

**7** What is the believer’s part in being baptized in the Spirit?

The believer’s part is to come to Jesus, ask Him for His Spirit, receive the Spirit, and speak in the new language the Spirit gives us.

**8** What statement made by the apostles in Acts 1 shows they still hoped Jesus would establish an earthly kingdom right away?

“Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6)

**9** How do you witness with your life? How do your actions support your spoken testimony? Do those around you know what you believe?

Answers will vary.

**10** What is your Judea and Samaria? What can you do to spread the gospel a little farther from home? Is there any excuse for not fulfilling Christ’s instructions to witness in these different areas?

Answers will vary.

**11** What power enables believers to witness for Jesus?

The Holy Spirit gives believers power to witness.

**12** Evaluate the balance in your own life. Are you “so heavenly minded you’re no earthly good”? Or do you keep your eyes on the present while being aware of the future? Explain.

Answers will vary.

**13** What did the disciples do to obey Jesus before Pentecost?

They waited in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit, as Jesus commanded.

**14** Are there any areas in your life that are not in full obedience to God and His Word? What must you do to become obedient?

Answers will vary.

**15** What contributed more to unity of the 120, being together or being obedient? Explain your opinion.

Answers will vary.

**16** What can the church today do to encourage unity?

Answers will vary but should follow the biblical pattern seen here in Acts.

**17** Why is prayer so important for Christians and churches?

Through prayer, believers or churches submit to the Lord.

**18** Is it possible to pray constantly? How do you measure up to this example of the early believers?

Answers will vary.

**19** Whom did the apostles nominate to take Judas' place among the Twelve? Why? (See Acts 1:21–23.)

They proposed two men; Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. They were looking for men who had been with them during Jesus' ministry. The person selected had to be an eyewitness to the miracles, death, and resurrection of Jesus. That way he could become a witness with the other apostles of Jesus' life and resurrection.

**20** What is an apostle?

An apostle was someone chosen by the Lord to be an authorized eyewitness of His ministry.

**21** How do your beliefs about the Holy Spirit line up with Scripture?

Answers will vary.

**22** What are four attitudes and disciplines individuals or churches can practice to prepare for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit?

(1) Obedience, (2) unity, (3) prayer, and the (4) study and application of God's Word.

### UNIT PROGRESS EVALUATION 1

Now that you have finished Unit 1, review the lessons in preparation for Unit Progress Evaluation 1. You will find it in Essential Course Materials at the back of this IST. Answer all of the questions without referring to your course materials, Bible, or notes. When you have completed the UPE, check your answers with the answer key provided in Essential Course Materials. Review any items you may have answered incorrectly. Then you may proceed with your study of Unit 2. (Although UPE scores do not count as part of your final course grade, they indicate how well you learned the material and how well you may perform on the closed-book final examination.)

# UNIT 2

## The Witness of the Church in Jerusalem

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit brought confidence, identity, and a new sense of community to the believers. The church was born as the believers provided evidence that the resurrected Jesus is alive. This evidence, through discourse and miracles, affected people in different ways. Many were convinced and accepted the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. However, others were threatened by the power of the living Christ.

The conflict, which initially brewed between the apostles and the Jewish authority, later erupted into an unrestrained attack of the Jews upon the followers of Christ. It is not coincidence that anointed believers other than the apostles are used by the Spirit to do miraculous works. Luke indicates that anyone being used effectively in witness of Christ could be targeted for persecution.

### **Chapter 3      The Holy Spirit Is Poured Out**

Lessons

- 3.1 Pentecost Fulfilled
- 3.2 Signs of Spirit Baptism
- 3.3 Purposes of Speaking in Tongues

### **Chapter 4      The Birth of the Church**

Lessons

- 4.1 Responses to Pentecost
- 4.2 The Pattern of Peter's Preaching
- 4.3 The Biblical Pattern of a Dynamic Church

### **Chapter 5      Peter and John Heal a Lame Man**

Lessons

- 5.1 Embracing the Needs Around Us
- 5.2 Explaining the Gospel
- 5.3 Enduring Hardship and Testing

### **Chapter 6      The Growth of the Church**

Lessons

- 6.1 The Purifying of the Church
- 6.2 The Powerful Church
- 6.3 The Persistent Church

### **Chapter 7      Stephen: What Good Can Come of Trouble?**

Lessons

- 7.1 Conflict in the Church
- 7.2 Stephen's Arrest and Trial
- 7.3 The First Martyr

# CHAPTER 3

## The Holy Spirit Is Poured Out

On January 1, 1901, the modern Pentecostal movement was ignited in much the same way as in the Upper Room. Charles Parham challenged thirty-four Bible students in Topeka, Kansas, to study the Scriptures—especially Acts. They hoped to discover what they lacked in their Christian experience. They became convinced that they needed an outpouring of the Holy Spirit like the early believers experienced. Parham’s students gathered in a large, unfinished mansion called “Stone’s Folly” to seek God and a new baptism in the Holy Spirit. After a number of days of prayer and fasting, the Holy Spirit came upon that group in power. Agnes Ozman was the first to speak in **tongues**. Soon many others were baptized in the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. Parham believed this would be the beginning of a new Holy Spirit revival. He believed the Holy Spirit would bring power for witnessing and winning the world for God just as it had two thousand years earlier. Parham was right. Today, hundreds of millions of people worldwide are Pentecostal.

What is Pentecost? What does it mean to be Pentecostal? This chapter explores these important issues.

### Lesson 3.1 Pentecost Fulfilled

Objective

3.1.1 *Explain how the Day of Pentecost fulfills the Old Testament Feast of Pentecost and launches the Pentecostal era.*

### Lesson 3.2 Signs of Spirit Baptism

Objective

3.2.1 *Distinguish between two unique signs of the Spirit’s presence at Pentecost and the initial physical evidence of Spirit baptism that continues today.*

### Lesson 3.3 Purposes of Speaking in Tongues

Objective

3.3.1 *Analyze four purposes for speaking in tongues and demonstrate at least two in your own life.*


 A graphic with a large, stylized number '3' in the background. The word 'LESSON' is written in a serif font across the middle of the '3'. Below the '3', the number '1' is written in a smaller font, with a period before it, indicating 'Lesson 3.1'.

1 To what does *Pentecost* refer? What does the word mean?

### 3.1.1

#### OBJECTIVE

*Explain how the Day of Pentecost fulfills the Old Testament Feast of Pentecost and launches the Pentecostal era.*

2 When was the Day of Pentecost?

3 Is the Day of Pentecost over? Explain.

## Pentecost Fulfilled

The word *pentecost* has a history that goes back far earlier than the time when the Spirit was outpoured in Acts 2. The Greek word *pentékosté* means “the fiftieth.” Fifty refers to the number of days counted after the **Passover**. It is also known as the **Feast of Weeks**, for it falls seven weeks after **Firstfruits**, the offering of the first of the barley harvest to God. Pentecost was a day of celebration and joy for the end of the barley harvest. It also included offering the firstfruits of the new wheat harvest. When we learn a little more about the history of these feasts, we find many rich symbols. These help us better understand the work of God on the Day of Pentecost.

### The Old Testament Feast of Pentecost

The Feast of Pentecost was related to the wheat harvest. Likewise, the Day of Pentecost is related to spiritual harvest. Jesus said, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Luke 10:2). Pentecost prepares harvesters for the fields.

Before Pentecost, Peter was not a faithful witness. He knew the Lord and traveled with Him more than three years. He and the other disciples had baptized some believers in water (John 4:1–2). Jesus had given Peter and many other disciples a temporary measure of power (Luke 10:1–22). They used that power to witness and help people. This temporary anointing was only a taste of the Spirit’s power. Recall that Peter lacked the power to speak up for Christ. Because he lacked power, he denied that he knew the Lord (Luke 22:55–62).

Notice the change in Peter on the Day of Pentecost. The man who denied Christ before a few now proclaims Him to a crowd. Filled with the Spirit, Peter now has the power to witness. He stands up before the crowd and talks about Jesus. With great boldness he tells the listeners that they, with the help of wicked men, killed Jesus (Acts 2:23). Now, they need to repent! Truly, the Holy Spirit brings boldness to speak about Jesus. The purpose of being baptized in the Spirit is to give a believer power to witness.

We fully appreciate the Day of Pentecost when we understand the Old Testament Feast of Pentecost. That feast was to celebrate the harvest. Likewise, the Day of Pentecost is about harvest. God poured out His Spirit to enable believers to reap a spiritual harvest.

To fully grasp the beauty of the Lord’s work on the Day of Pentecost, one must have a basic understanding of some Old Testament feasts.

Old Testament feasts that foreshadow New Testament events			
Feast	How and Why It Was Celebrated	OT References	NT References
<b>Passover</b>	Sacrificing and eating a lamb to commemorate Israel's deliverance from Egypt and from death. When God saw the blood of the lamb on a home's doorposts, He would "pass over" that house, and those inside would be saved from death.	Exodus 12:1–14; Leviticus 23:5; Numbers 9:1–14; 28:16; Deuteronomy 16:1–8	Matthew 26:17; Mark 14:12–26; John 2:13; 11:55; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 11:28
<b>Unleavened Bread</b>	Started a day after Passover and ran for seven days. The people were to eat bread made without yeast, hold sacred assemblies, and present offerings to God.	Exodus 12:15–20; 13:3–10; 23:15; 34:18; Leviticus 23:6–8; Numbers 28:17–25; Deuteronomy 16:3–4, 8	Mark 14:1; Acts 12:3; 1 Corinthians 5:6–8
<b>Firstfruits</b>	The priest would wave the first sheaf of the barley harvest as an offering to God. No one could eat any fruit of the harvest until this had been done. Firstfruits seems to have been a thank offering looking forward to God's blessing on the harvest. Firstfruits also involved a burnt and a grain offering.	Leviticus 23:9–14	Romans 8:23; 1 Corinthians 15:20–23
<b>Pentecost</b> (Also called the Feast of Weeks, Feast of Harvest, and "firstfruits of the wheat harvest" in Exodus 34:22)	Celebrated fifty days after Passover. Pentecost was a day of thanksgiving to God for the harvest. The priest would wave two loaves of bread made from the firstfruits of the wheat harvest. These loaves were to be baked with leaven—the only offering where this symbol of sin was allowed. The offerings, sacrifices, and ceremonies marked the end of the barley harvest and beginning of the wheat harvest.	Exodus 23:16; 34:22; Leviticus 23:15–21; Numbers 28:26–31; Deuteronomy 16:9–12	Acts 2:1–4; 20:16; 1 Corinthians 16:8

4 How does Paul state the fulfillment of Passover in 1 Corinthians 5:7?

5 In 1 Corinthians 5:6–8, how does Paul state the fulfillment of the Feast of Unleavened Bread by portraying its significance for the cleansing of the Christian life?

6 The Feast of Firstfruits is fulfilled through what event as described in 1 Corinthians 15:20?

In the New Testament, each of the first four festivals is seen as fulfilled through the life and work of Christ.

Picture the following event. The last day the Lord lay in the tomb, a group from the **Sanhedrin** made its way to a harvest ground. Once the Saturday sun had set, they harvested the first fruit of the barley crop. They took the sheaves back to the temple to wave them before the Lord the next day. No Jewish person was to eat of the spring crop until that offering of firstfruits had been made.

Christ rose the very day of the firstfruits. It was not in the temple, but in the garden tomb that the first fruit of the resurrected life was waved before the Lord God. No one could participate in the resurrection life until He had done so. Whenever we celebrate Christ's resurrection, we are keeping the Feast of the Firstfruits.

Seven weeks after the offering of the Firstfruits came Pentecost. Forty-nine days (seven days in a week multiplied by seven weeks) suggests completion. The spring barley harvest was in. Instead of giving the raw grain offering of firstfruits, the cooked product of the harvest, a loaf, was offered. In the Bible, yeast is often a symbol of sin. Therefore, it was forbidden in most sacrifices to God. But the offering at the harvest festival of Pentecost was to include yeast. The harvest here is represented by a loaf of bread made with yeast. It symbolizes a harvest that will be a combination of flesh and spirit. We have yeast in us, the leaven of unrighteousness. Yet throughout the modern time of the church, God will use frail, imperfect humans to produce His harvest for eternity.

## The Day of Pentecost and Beyond

### Pentecost fulfilled

The Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 fulfilled the Feast of Pentecost from the Old Testament. The Old Testament feasts were like an empty container until New Testament truth was poured into them. A builder lays out wooden forms before pouring in the concrete. Then when the concrete is set, the forms can be removed. The forms are necessary to guide the content of what is being poured into the form. That is the way the old feasts function within our Christian faith. Once the truth is poured in, the forms have fulfilled their function. Now we keep these feasts not as a holiday once a year but perpetually in our hearts. The New Testament truth fills and completes the Old Testament form.

If we really want to understand the meaning of Pentecost, it must be related to the fact that God is gathering for himself a harvest of people. That harvest is to continue until the Day of Pentecost is over.

Just as the Day of Passover, Day of Firstfruits, and Day of Unleavened Bread are perpetual observances, so Pentecost is not just a twenty-four hour period of time. Rather, Pentecost is meant to describe a whole era in which the church is at work in the harvest, where the product of Christ's finished work is being gathered to present to God.

God did not send the Day of Pentecost so Christians would feel good. He wants us to feel good, but He is concerned that there will be a product, an end result to the sacrifice His Son made. Unless there is a fulfilling of Pentecost, a power of the harvest poured out on the Day of Pentecost, His small band of followers will never be effective in gathering the harvest to present to God.

Whenever we talk about Pentecost, we must not talk only of blessing but also of duty. If we try to do the duty of harvest or evangelism and have no power from the Spirit of God, then we will be unable to do it. However, if we have all delight and no duty, we will wind up as a kind of spiritual *bless-me club* and not complete God's work in the world. Pentecost joins these elements of God blessing His people and sending them into the harvest. God is saying, in effect, "I intended Pentecost to be more than just an agricultural feast. I intended it to celebrate the harvest of mankind into the kingdom of God."

This harvest is not yet complete. The *Day* of Pentecost will never end until the day the Lord returns.

### All together

If the Day of Pentecost continues to this day, why do we so rarely see outpourings of the Spirit on the scale of the one in Acts 2:4? Perhaps Acts 2:1 gives a clue: "When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place." The King James Version says "they were all with one accord." The importance of unity

7 Describe the relationship between the blessing and the duty of Pentecost. Which do you believe is more important?

8 In light of John 17:20–23, why is the unity of believers a necessary condition for the church's experience of Pentecost?

and fellowship between Christians cannot be overstated. If we want the Holy Spirit to move freely among us, we must tear down any walls that divide.

The Azusa Street Mission revival in Los Angeles in 1906 is an example of the unity of believers that marked the group gathered in the Upper Room. People of all races and genders and financial, educational, and social standings worshiped freely together. Leaders of this great revival were black *and* white, male *and* female. Scholar Cecil M. Robeck Jr. noted: "It is not an insignificant fact that a black man, W. J. Seymour, provided [Azusa's] leadership, and that everyone sensed a form of equality as sisters and brothers seeking God together" (Seymour 1906, 6).

## 3.2 LESSON

### 3.2.1 OBJECTIVE

*Distinguish between two unique signs of the Spirit's presence at Pentecost and the initial physical evidence of Spirit baptism that continues today.*

9 How does wind symbolize the work of the Spirit?

10 Does the sound like the blowing of a violent wind ever occur again in Acts when believers are baptized in the Holy Spirit? What can be inferred from this?

11 What does fire symbolize in relation to God?

## Signs of Spirit Baptism

One of the things we must do when reading Acts is distinguish between unique events not intended to be patterns for the church and events that are. On the Day of Pentecost, both kinds of events happened. In this study, we will learn which signs of the Holy Spirit's presence are meant to be part of the Christian experience today. Then, we will determine how we can know this.

### Unique Signs of Pentecost

#### A rushing, mighty wind

The sound of wind typifies the work of the Spirit. God created Adam by breathing into him the breath (wind) of life (Genesis 2:7). He remade mankind spiritually by breathing life into them (Ezekiel 37:5,14). The sound like the blowing of a violent wind that filled the room represented the life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit being felt by the 120 (Acts 2:2). Perhaps it represented the missionary work that would soon spread the gospel to the ends of the earth.

What the Holy Spirit is saying through this presence of wind is that He is going to move through His people in an unseen way. He is going to push them powerfully into the world. It will take the wind of the Holy Spirit to scatter the disciples into the world. Already they were hearing the sound of the rushing wind. The rushing and violent wind suggests that God was about to do something powerful and explosive in their lives.

In later passages in the book of Acts where people receive the Holy Spirit, there are no further references to this wind. This was a unique event. Through the symbol of the sound of wind, the Holy Spirit was saying to the church that there was going to be an invasion of the Spirit.

#### Tongues of fire

Fire is another expression of God's presence (Exodus 3:2). The disciples at Pentecost were set on fire by the Spirit of God to spread the unquenchable flame of the gospel. "They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them" (Acts 2:3). Unfortunately, some people always try to explain away the supernatural. They try to explain the tongues of fire as a natural event. Some thought this must be only sun streaming through the windows. But that takes God's power out of the equation. The tongues of fire are not seen again in Acts when people are filled with the Holy Spirit. Instead, the tongues of fire is a sign that the Holy Spirit comes as a purifying fire.

12 In light of this sign of fire, what is the importance of Luke 3:16–17?

The mighty wind and tongues of fire came before the baptism in the Spirit. They were never repeated in Acts. Therefore, Christians should not expect to see these signs repeated today when believers are baptized in the Spirit.

### Normative Sign of Pentecost: The Initial Physical Evidence

Acts 2:4 beautifully sums up the effect of Pentecost on believers: “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.” The 120 were ready to receive. They had been obedient to Christ’s command to wait. They had spent the waiting time praying and studying the Word of God. When the Spirit came, they were open to receive what was poured out on them. They were filled with the Spirit.

Luke is careful in later passages to show that this was not a one-time event. As the disciples grew in their walk with the Lord, they realized their human vessels were expandable, and God’s gift was boundless. They could be continually filled with more of God’s fullness.

Speaking with other tongues is the only supernatural sign described in Acts 2:1–4 that happens again. It is said to have happened after “all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit.” It required the involvement of the believers. The sound of wind and fire happened to and around them. Speaking in tongues occurred in and came out from them.

The Day of Pentecost has similarities to the Exodus. Both began with unique signs and wonders. Yet all through the history of Israel and the church, God continues to work supernaturally. The age of miracles is past only for the church that has no faith.

The initial Day of Pentecost is somewhat unique, yet the baptism in the Holy Spirit is not given once for all. The text of Acts shows the baptism in the Spirit to be available to all believers. Look over these verses: “In the last days . . . I will pour out my Spirit on all people” (Acts 2:17). “You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off” (Acts 2:38–39).

13 Have you seen signs and miracles occurring today? What do you think the church needs to do to see more miracles and wonders?

There are many places in Acts that mention the infilling of the Holy Spirit accompanied by supernatural evidence.

<b>Five reports in Acts where believers were first filled with the Holy Spirit</b>			
<b>#</b>	<b>Acts</b>	<b>Setting</b>	<b>Outward Evidence of the Inner Filling</b>
1.	2:1–4	The Day of Pentecost	All 120 spoke in new languages as soon as they were filled with the Holy Spirit.
2.	8:14–19	Believers at Samaria	Something happened that caused Simon to offer money.
3.	9:17–19	The conversion and filling of Saul	We know that Paul often spoke privately in unknown languages (1 Corinthians 14:18).
4.	10:44–46	The home of Cornelius	They spoke in new languages.
5.	19:1–7	Believers at Ephesus	They spoke in new languages and prophesied.

**Acts 2:1–4**

On the Day of Pentecost, 120 believers prayed in an upper room. They were waiting to be baptized in the Holy Spirit when they heard a sound like a great wind. At the same time, they saw what appeared to be tongues of fire (Acts 2:1–4). Both wind and fire were symbols of God's presence. In Job 38:1, God spoke out of a great swirling wind. In 1 Kings 19:11, a great wind came before the presence of God. God spoke to Moses from a flaming bush (Exodus 3:2). The Lord came down as a fire on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:18). Thus, the sound of wind and the sight of fire alerted the believers that God was near. These two signs came before the baptism in the Spirit, but they were never repeated in Acts.

Each of the 120 believers was filled with the Holy Spirit. As soon as they were filled, they all began to speak in tongues (Harris 1991, 39). The purpose of the baptism in the Spirit was to enable them to witness. Therefore, it is not surprising that the fullness of the Spirit affected their speech.

Today, there are over 520,000,000 Pentecostals and Charismatics (Barrett 2000, 25). These people are bold witnesses for Jesus. They believe in speaking in new languages, just as believers did at Pentecost and throughout Acts.

**Acts 8:14–19**

When Philip preached Christ to the people at Samaria, many men and women believed. Even Simon, who practiced evil magic, believed. After these received Jesus as their Savior, Philip baptized them in water (Acts 8:14–19).

The Samaritans, as all believers, received the Holy Spirit when they believed in Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the One who makes the presence of Christ real in each believer. All who belong to Jesus have the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9).

When we first come to Christ, we are thinking about our sins. Soon after, new believers begin thinking about telling others the good news. The Samaritans had been born again. But they had not yet received the fullness of the Spirit. They needed Him to fill their lives, giving them power to witness.

Do not stumble over the different ways Luke describes our relationship to the Spirit. From one point of view, Luke describes the Spirit as a gift Father promised. From a second point of view, Luke describes this wonderful relationship as a baptism. From a third point of view, he calls it a filling from within. Here in Acts 8 he says the Spirit came upon them (Acts 8:16). Each of Luke's descriptions helps us understand our relationship to the Spirit.

What happened when the Samaritan believers were filled with the Spirit? We cannot know for sure, but it seems that Simon, the former magician, saw and heard something that got his attention. Many Bible teachers think the Samaritans spoke in tongues. Some non-Pentecostals believe Simon heard the Samaritan believers speaking in new languages (Haenchen 1971, 304). On the Day of Pentecost, tongues attracted the attention of the crowd. In Samaria, it probably attracted the attention of Simon. He had already seen Philip do miracles. He did not offer money for this power. What caused him to offer money to the apostles was that he probably heard people he knew speaking in languages they did not know! (Horton 1994, 106).

**Acts 9:17–19**

The third time in Acts when believers were first filled with the Holy Spirit is the case of Saul who became Paul. Saul had been struck down by a great light and had heard the voice of Jesus as he was on his way to Damascus. His plan

was to persecute the Christians in that city. God had other plans. After Saul's miraculous meeting with Jesus, he was blind and had to be led to Damascus where God was preparing someone to help him (Acts 9:17–19).

God commanded a disciple named Ananias to help Saul. From Acts 9:17, we see that the Lord Jesus sent Ananias to Paul for two reasons. Ananias prayed for Paul to see again and also to be filled with the Spirit. The fact that Ananias said, "Brother Saul," shows that he knew Saul had already believed in his heart.

Luke does not repeat everything that happened. He does not tell us that Paul was filled with the Spirit or that he spoke in tongues. The biblical writers often skip over what was obvious to them. If it were not for a problem at Corinth, there would be no record in the Bible that Paul spoke in tongues. However, because of 1 Corinthians 14:18, we know that Paul spoke in tongues more than others did. When did he start speaking in tongues? It is logical to believe Paul spoke in tongues when he was first filled like the other apostles (Horton 1994, 119).

#### **Acts 10:44–46**

The fourth instance occurs at the house of Cornelius in Caesarea. Luke tells us that the Holy Spirit "came on" all who heard the message. This is the way he described what happened to the believers at Samaria when Peter and John went there (Acts 8:16). Peter and the other Jews know the Gentiles had been filled with the Spirit because they heard them speaking in tongues (Acts 10:45–46). Peter tells the account later in Jerusalem. There he emphasizes he was sure the Gentiles were baptized in the Holy Spirit. He knew they had received the same baptism and the same gift. How could Peter be sure? Because the Spirit came on them just as He came on the apostles at Pentecost (Acts 11:15–16). Likewise, we can be sure today that we have been baptized in the Holy Spirit if we speak in a language we have not learned (Acts 10:44–46).

#### **Acts 19:1–7**

The last example we will consider in this section happened in Ephesus, about twenty-three years after Pentecost (Holdcroft 1971, 112). Here is another clear example that the baptism in the Spirit is a different experience than being born-again. The twelve men had believed, and Paul baptized them in water. Who can deny that they were Christians at that point? But something was missing in their lives. They needed to be filled with the Spirit that was already with them. So Paul placed his hands on them, and they were filled with the Spirit. The evidence was that they spoke in tongues and prophesied (Acts 19:1–7).

In three of these examples from Acts, we are sure believers spoke in tongues when they were baptized in the Spirit. These three times included Jerusalem, Caesarea, and Ephesus (Acts 2, 10, 19). In the other two cases some evidence implies that they spoke in tongues (Acts 8, 9). In all five cases, believers did not seek to speak in tongues. The main purpose of the baptism in the Spirit is not to enable believers to speak in tongues but to give them power to witness for Jesus. However, speaking in tongues is the biblical sign. It shows believers are filled with the Holy Spirit they seek.

14 Look up the Scripture references in the chart. Describe what happened when believers were filled with the Holy Spirit. What indicates they likely spoke in other tongues?

<b>Evidence of the Holy Spirit's Baptism as recorded in Acts</b>		
<b>Reference</b>	<b>Setting</b>	<b>Outward Evidence of the Inner Filling</b>
Acts 2:1–4	The Day of Pentecost	All 120 believers who were present spoke in new languages as soon as they were filled with the Holy Spirit.
Acts 8:14–19	New believers in Samaria	
Acts 9:17–19	Saul's conversion and baptism	
Acts 10:44–46	The Gentile Cornelius' home	
Acts 19:1–7	Paul's encounter with believers in Ephesus	

15 Do you believe speaking in tongues is still for today? In one or two paragraphs, explain why you believe as you do.

More important than the signs of the Spirit's presence is the Spirit himself. John's prophecy in Mark 1:8 and Luke 3:16–17 was being fulfilled. Our Lord had promised His followers He would pray to the Father to give them the Spirit (John 14:16). At Pentecost, that prayer was answered.

Although one woman's husband, a preacher, strongly opposed speaking in tongues, she decided to see what the Bible said about it. She carefully and prayerfully read the second chapter of Acts. While she read, the Holy Spirit came upon her in power. She was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in other tongues. Hurrying to church, she saw a man who had recently come from France. She had helped lead him to the Lord. As she continued speaking in tongues, he got a strange look on his face. "When did you learn to speak French?" he later asked her. Just as surprised as the man, she replied, "I've never learned French. What did I say?"

16 What is more important than the signs of the Spirit's presence?

The man answered, "You said, 'Get ready! Get ready! Jesus is coming soon!'" (Seymour 1906, 15).

Those who come to God's Word with an open mind and open heart will soon be convinced: the baptism in the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues is still available to believers today.

# LESSON 3

## 3.3.1 OBJECTIVE

*Analyze four purposes for speaking in tongues and demonstrate at least two in your own life.*

17 What is the difference between speaking in tongues in 1 Corinthians 12 and in Acts 2:4?

## Purposes of Speaking in Tongues

### Initial Physical Evidence of Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Must the baptism in the Holy Spirit go along with speaking in other tongues? In Acts 2:4, the text says, “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues.” The Bible is our standard of faith and practice. We study it to know God and how to walk with Him. Some people argue that the Bible does not say expressly that because the early believers spoke in tongues that everyone will or must. After all, they say, even Paul indicated that some have the gift of tongues while others have different gifts. People often use Paul’s question in 1 Corinthians 12:30 to argue against speaking in tongues. But Paul addresses two different aspects of speaking in tongues. In 1 Corinthians 12, he is teaching about spiritual gifts when the Body is meeting. In the church setting, each Christian should allow God to use him or her through spiritual gifts to benefit the whole church. In Acts 2:4, the Christians were praying individually yet gathered together as they sought God.

Perhaps they were all praying in their own languages, Aramaic or Hebrew. Then all of a sudden, they found themselves speaking in languages that they did not know. Acts 2:8–11 lists fifteen specific language groups that the disciples were speaking. The whole town gathered to hear these Galilean people speaking the languages of the world. They were all speaking in tongues. It was not that some were speaking in tongues while some prophesied. Others were not doing works of healing, works of mercy, or miracles. They all spoke in tongues.

In Acts 2:4; 10:44–47; and 19:1–7, tongues served as the **initial physical evidence** of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Because of these repeated biblical examples as well as the experience of countless believers right up to the present, we believe that speaking in tongues is the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The Bible teaches us that not only the apostles, but also many other Christians spoke in tongues. On the Day of Pentecost, all 120 believers spoke in tongues (Acts 1:15; 2:4). At the home of Cornelius the Spirit came on *all* who heard the message, and they spoke in tongues (Acts 10:44–46). At Ephesus the twelve believers spoke in tongues (Acts 19:6–7). Paul thanked God that he spoke in tongues more than all of the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 14:18).

Speaking in tongues is not something we do on our own. It takes a cooperative, submissive relationship with God. Most miracles have two parts—one for God and one for us. God’s part is the big part, but He gives us a small part. In some miracles, the person was to fill a jar with water (John 2) or wash in a pool (John 9). In the baptism in the Holy Spirit, God enables a believer to speak a new language. The believer’s part is to speak. God chose a part for us that anyone can do.

To do our part, we must be totally submissive to God’s will. The word *baptize* means “to take completely under.” To be baptized in water, all of a person must go under the water. To be baptized in the Spirit, all of a person must come under the Spirit’s influence. But the tongue is the most unruly part of a person (James 3:8). No human can tame the tongue! Speaking in tongues shows that a believer has submitted the mind and even the tongue to the Holy Spirit. Thus that person has been baptized—placed completely under the Spirit’s control. The remaining challenge is to stay under the Spirit’s control!

To be baptized in the Holy Spirit, we must also demonstrate humility. The human mind is proud, but submitting to the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues requires us to set aside that pride and replace it with humility. Speaking in tongues links humility and faith because it requires us to depend on God, not on our own abilities. After all, our relationship with God is more spiritual than mental.

### One of Nine Gifts of the Spirit

In 1 Corinthians 12:10, 30, tongues is listed as one of the nine gifts of the Spirit expressly used in Christian worship. (Verse 30 indicates that messages in tongues need to be interpreted.) “Do all speak in tongues?” (1 Corinthians 12:30) refers to the gift of tongues in public worship. It does not apply to tongues associated with the baptism in the Spirit. That promise is to all (Acts 2:17, 38–39).

When in the corporate worship service, the gift of tongues is to be used in an orderly manner. In an organized worship service, it is not helpful for five people to jump up at the same time and start speaking in a language no one knows. “If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret” (1 Corinthians 14:27). First Corinthians 14:33 gives the reason for this: “For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.”

Even this instruction leaves room for another kind of speaking in tongues. If no one is available to interpret tongues, those with a message should “keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God” (1 Corinthians 14:28).

The baptism in the Holy Spirit was meant to cause us to walk in spiritual power that is beyond our native abilities. Today there is much talk about developing our spiritual gifts. Many times spiritual gifts are confused with natural talents. For example, if naturally someone is a speaker, he or she tends to exercise prophetic gifts. Someone who is nonverbal may more easily exercise gifts of service and mercy. But there must be a distinction between the natural and the supernatural. These 120 people were not qualified world changers. They were common, ordinary people who were not expected to change the world. The fact that these 120 turned the world upside down in thirty years is not a tribute to their natural ability. They did not have that ability naturally. They had a supernatural power that came upon them through the Holy Spirit.

While speaking in tongues as part of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is distinct from the gift of tongues, it does serve as a step toward the gifts of the Spirit. It is expected that those who are baptized in the Holy Spirit will seek also to be used in the gifts of the Spirit.

### A Regular Means of Personal Prayer

In 1 Corinthians 14:13–19 we see that speaking in tongues is a regular means of personal prayer. Paul called it praying with the (human) spirit. He said he used tongues in personal prayer more than even the Corinthians. But why is praying in tongues better than praying in our own language? From the Bible we find at least two reasons.

#### Praying in tongues praises God and builds up the person who prays.

Speaking in other tongues is a means of prayer and praise to God. Inspired by the Spirit, such prayer **edifies** or builds up the believer who prays. The following verses illustrate the purpose of tongues in prayer and praise. In Acts 2:11, we see that those who spoke in tongues declared the wonders (mighty works) of God. This is what praise is. In 1 Corinthians 14:2, Paul said that the person who speaks

18 What are your natural gifts and abilities? How are these different from your spiritual gifts?

in tongues speaks to God, not to people. The person who prays in tongues edifies himself (1 Corinthians 14:4).

It is important for the Christian to be edified in this manner. Rather than being self-serving, such a practice makes one strong enough to help others and to resist temptation.

### **Praying in tongues releases the human spirit to fully express itself to God.**

19 How does praying in tongues benefit the individual?

20 How does (or would) speaking in tongues help you personally? Describe a time when you needed (or have experienced) this building up in the Spirit.

In 1 Corinthians 14:4, Paul inferred that praying in tongues activates the human spirit in prayer. In distinguishing the spirit from the mind, Paul no doubt means the spirit is the inner collection of thoughts, needs, and feelings that cannot be expressed adequately through formal language. There are times when we may not know how to pray in a situation, or when we are prompted by the Spirit to pray for someone without knowing why. At these times, praying in tongues allows us to bypass our human minds and pray as directed by the Holy Spirit. In Romans 8:26–27, Paul says: “The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will.”

Since we cannot hug God, how do we communicate to Him in a way that is from the core of our being? When a person speaks to God in tongues, he or she communicates with God on a deeper level. The transmission of love is powerful and real. For a time, the mental faculty is parked and resting. At a deeper level, our inner core might be resting and communing with God also. That is the heart of the security and profound relationship with God through the Holy Spirit.

21 Have you ever been frustrated by not being able to adequately communicate the depth of your feelings for another person? For God? How did you attempt to communicate what you could not say?

A fourth function of tongues is seen in 1 Corinthians 14:21–25. Speaking in tongues is a sign to unbelievers. In this case, the unbeliever likely understands the language spoken without needing an interpreter. This is what happened on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2:5–13. It can be a powerful sign. Tongues were also a sign to believers. It was because Cornelius and his family spoke in tongues that Peter knew they had received the Holy Spirit. As the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues is a sign to the individual believer and to those around him or her that the individual has received the Baptism.

22 How does it feel to know someone truly understands you? How does this relate to how the Holy Spirit communicates with God for the believer?

In a tiny town in Yugoslavia, an uneducated peasant woman started a church with just a few people. In the service one Sunday was a priest. This man was highly educated and fluent in Hebrew. Yet he was walking away from God. He had an intellectual knowledge of the Bible but did not have a personal experience with God.

When the call was given to move to the altar to pray, this priest followed the others. He found himself beside a peasant woman deep in prayer. He was startled to realize she was speaking in clear, perfect Hebrew. He knew this woman could not have studied Hebrew. Nothing but God’s Spirit could explain how this woman was giving praise and adoration to God in Hebrew so powerfully. The priest left that meeting a believer.

Speaking in tongues removes barriers between people. In a move of the Holy Spirit, God makes no difference between church leaders and other believers. On the Day of Pentecost the apostles were filled with the Spirit and spoke in new languages. Common men and women also spoke in tongues on that day. Every believer can experience the baptism in the Holy Spirit, regardless of his or her position in the church, gender, or economic status.

During the height of the Azusa Street Mission revival, the Pentecostal believers were scorned and attacked by many people. One man, a missionary to the Philippines, decided he would expose speaking in tongues as a fraud. But the believers prayed powerfully that God would convince him.

One woman spoke to the man in a tongue she did not know. But the missionary knew it. The woman spoke the language of the unfriendly Philippine tribe where he had ministered. As he prayed in fear and repentance, another woman spoke in a different Philippine dialect. She quoted Acts 2:16: “‘This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel,’” (King James Version) she assured him. The missionary believed and was baptized in the Spirit, speaking in tongues himself (Seymour 1906, 7).

23 What are four purposes for speaking in tongues?

Speaking in tongues is adoring God. It is the closest we can get to the deepest kind of love toward God. It is the closest we can get, if you will, to hugging God until we see Him face to face. God gave this experience to the early church to give it a strong core of psychological, emotional, and spiritual power from the start. God’s people can always do great works for Him when their inner core is strong. Only when this core has grown weak do the great works cease. If we as individuals and as a church want to see God do mighty works in our present age, we must present the core of our lives to Him and ask Him to fill us anew with His Spirit.



## Test Yourself



Circle the letter of the *best* answer.

1. The word *pentecost* means
  - a) “the fifth.”
  - b) “the fifteenth.”
  - c) “the fiftieth.”
  - d) “the hundredth.”
2. Pentecost for the believer is a combination of
  - a) blessing and sacrifice.
  - b) blessing and duty.
  - c) duty and obedience.
  - d) obedience and sacrifice.
3. The Azusa Street Mission revival, like the Day of Pentecost, is an example of
  - a) segregation.
  - b) diversity.
  - c) unity.
  - d) tolerance.
4. A symbol of the purifying presence of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was
  - a) a mighty rushing wind.
  - b) the believers speaking in tongues.
  - c) the tongues of fire.
  - d) a violent earthquake.
5. The normative sign that a believer has received the baptism in Holy Spirit based upon the pattern of Acts is
  - a) laughter and joy.
  - b) prophesying.
  - c) speaking in tongues.
  - d) being slain in the Spirit.
6. According to Acts 19, the believers in Ephesus were baptized in the Holy Spirit and began to
  - a) speak in tongues.
  - b) leap with joy.
  - c) prophesy.
  - d) speak in tongues and prophesy.
7. In what chapters does Acts record the initial Holy Spirit baptism of believers?
  - a) 2, 8, 9, 10, 19
  - b) 2, 4, 8, 10
  - c) 2, 10, 19
  - d) 2, 7, 8, 11, 19
8. In what chapters in the book of Acts does speaking in tongues accompany the baptism in the Holy Spirit?
  - a) 2, 4, 10, 19
  - b) 2, 8, 10
  - c) 2, 10, 19
  - d) 2, 9, 10, 19
9. Speaking in tongues
  - a) happens when a believer is quiet and prostrate before God.
  - b) is based upon a cooperative and submissive relationship with God.
  - c) is something believers do on their own.
  - d) is all of the above.
10. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is available to
  - a) adults.
  - b) the spiritually mature.
  - c) those in leadership.
  - d) all believers.

## **Ten Questions about the Holy Spirit**

God promised believers the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4, 38). However, to receive a promise from God, we must accept it by faith. Sometimes believers' questions prevent them from receiving a promise. Let us look at ten questions often asked about the Holy Spirit.

### **1. Did I already receive the Holy Spirit when I was born again?**

The Holy Spirit, also referred to as the Spirit of sonship (Romans 8:15), enters each person when he or she is born again. When a person receives Jesus as Savior, the Holy Spirit enters that believer. The Spirit brings the inner witness and assurance that a person is God's child (Romans 8:16).

### **2. Why do we need to experience Spirit baptism if we already have the Holy Spirit?**

Although Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit onto His apostles and told them to receive the Spirit (John 20:22), they still needed to be baptized in the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. God wants us to mature and be empowered so we can witness of His Son.

### **3. Does the New Testament teach there is only one baptism?**

Ephesians 4:5 says there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." To understand this verse, a person must understand the purpose of Ephesians. Paul wrote to the believers at Ephesus to emphasize that in Christ, God brought Jews and Gentiles together into one body. In the past, the Gentiles were far off from God. They had no hope (Ephesians 2:11–12). A wall stood between them and the Jews, but Jesus broke down the wall (Ephesians 2:14). Now both Jews and Gentiles can come to God through Christ. There are many lords on the earth, but there is only one Lord over the church. There is not one Lord for Jews and a different one for Gentiles. There is only one Lord for both. Likewise, there is not one baptism for Jews and a different one for Gentiles. There is only one baptism for both.

### **4. Why did God link speaking in a new language to being filled with the Holy Spirit?**

There are several possible reasons. We will review a few.

- The purpose of being filled with the Spirit is to become witnesses for Jesus to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Thus, speaking in a new language is a sign that a believer will have a part in this global witnessing (Stronstad 1995, 123).
- The tongue is the most rebellious member of the body (James 3:1–12). Allowing the Holy Spirit to control the tongue may indicate complete surrender to God.
- Speaking in a new language reminds us of a great truth: We cannot do anything for God without His help. As often as believers speak in new languages, they remember to depend upon the invisible God. Speaking in tongues reminds us that we do not succeed by might or power, but by God's Spirit (Zechariah 4:6).
- Speaking in a new language is a form of praying. He who speaks in a tongue speaks (prays) to God (1 Corinthians 14:2,14). Jude refers to praying in the Spirit as a way we build ourselves up (Jude 20). God chose praying in a new language to edify us.

### **5. Are spiritual things like healings, miracles, and speaking in a new language for today?**

Some teach that spiritual gifts died with the apostles. They base this false teaching on a true passage. Take a minute to read 1 Corinthians 13:8–12.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

First Corinthians 13:8–12 contrasts two times: now and the future—when Jesus returns. Now we have a great need for spiritual gifts and power. Then we will not need spiritual gifts.

How long do we need spiritual gifts? Until Jesus returns. Some have said we do not need spiritual gifts because the Bible has come, and the Bible is perfect. However, the Bible itself tells us to eagerly desire spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 14:1)! We will need the spiritual gifts until Jesus is revealed at His second coming (1 Corinthians 1:7).

### **6. Is speaking in a new language only for those who are not mature? Is it the least of the gifts?**

Some who do not speak in tongues say tongues is the least of the gifts. The Bible does not say that speaking in tongues is the least of God's gifts. But if it did, should we refuse a gift from God because it was small? We should give thanks for all gifts God offers us, whether they are great or small.

Is speaking in tongues only for those who are not mature? The apostle Paul prayed in tongues privately. He spoke in tongues more than all of the Corinthian believers did (1 Corinthians 14:18). In other words, the one who was the most mature prayed in tongues the most! (Stronstad 1995, 47).

### **7. Does God give each believer a new language when he or she is filled with the Spirit? Or does God give different spiritual gifts to each believer?**

On the one hand, God does give different spiritual gifts to each believer. All are not apostles, prophets, teachers, or leaders in the church. Not all do miracles, speak in tongues, or interpret tongues to edify the church (1 Corinthians 12:27–31).

On the other hand, each believer does things in private that he or she does not do in public. A believer may not pray for the sick in church, but all believers can pray for the sick outside of church services (Mark 16:17–18). A believer may not teach in the church, but most adult believers teach at home. Similarly, 1 Corinthians 12–14 reminds us that all believers do not speak in an unknown language in a church service. Paul spoke in tongues more than all the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 14:18). In church, he preferred to speak in a language others knew. Thus, Paul contrasts his private praying in tongues with public church services.

Few have the specific gift of speaking in tongues to edify the entire church. But it is common in the Bible for all believers to speak in tongues when they are filled with the Spirit (Acts 10:46; 19:6). On the Day of Pentecost, all 120 believers were filled with the Spirit and spoke in tongues (Acts 2:4). Praying in a new language edifies the believer (1 Corinthians 14:4). Like Paul, each Christian

should be filled with the Spirit and pray in tongues privately. Focus on your own personal needs when you are alone. But in church, seek to edify others.

**8. Should I avoid all spiritual gifts because they might bring division or confusion? Should I seek love instead of the gifts?**

God does not want us to choose between love and spiritual gifts. Confusion and division come when believers do not walk in love. It is not spiritual gifts that bring confusion and division. Neither is it generous giving that causes division (1 Corinthians 13:3). It is the failure to walk in love. Love is the path we must walk as we practice spiritual gifts (Fee 1987, 625).

**9. Will God embarrass me by causing me to speak in a new language in public?**

The Holy Spirit enables a believer to speak in a new language but does not force a believer to speak. The Holy Spirit is as gentle as a dove. He does not force anyone to do anything. God always allows us to make choices. The believer may always choose to speak or be silent (1 Corinthians 14:28, 32). Also, believers may speak as loudly or as quietly as they choose as long as they are orderly and not simply drawing attention to themselves. God guides the believer in speaking a new language, but that believer will never be embarrassed by speaking in tongues. He or she may choose to speak or be silent.

**10. How can one be sure the new language is from God, not Satan or the flesh?**

Those who seek God will find Him. Jesus promised that when we pray to our Father in heaven, He will not deceive us. “Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (Luke 11:11–13).

# Responses to Interactive Questions

## Chapter 3

Some of these responses may include information that is supplemental to the IST. These questions are intended to produce reflective thinking beyond the course content and your responses may vary from these examples.

**1** To what does *Pentecost* refer? What does the word mean?

Pentecost refers to the number of days counted after Passover. *Pentecost* means “fiftieth.”

**2** When was the Day of Pentecost?

The Day of Pentecost was an Old Testament Feast as well as the birthday of the church in the New Testament. It took place fifty days after Passover.

**3** Is the Day of Pentecost over? Explain.

The church’s Pentecost began in Acts 2 but continues to the present day until the return of Christ. The Day of Pentecost is the era of the Spirit at work in and through believers.

**4** How does Paul state the fulfillment of Passover in 1 Corinthians 5:7?

Christ is our Passover lamb, sacrificed to save us.

**5** In 1 Corinthians 5:6–8, how does Paul state the fulfillment of the Feast of Unleavened Bread by portraying its significance for the cleansing of the Christian life?

Get rid of the old yeast of malice and wickedness. Celebrate the Festival with unyeasted bread of sincerity and truth.

**6** The Feast of Firstfruits is fulfilled through what event as described in 1 Corinthians 15:20?

The resurrection of Christ.

**7** Describe the relationship between the blessing and the duty of Pentecost. Which do you believe is more important?

Pentecost involves both aspects. God pours out His blessing on His people and gives them power to work in the harvest. Both are important but must be kept in proper balance. Answers will vary.

**8** In light of John 17:20–23, why is the unity of believers a necessary condition for the church’s experience of Pentecost?

Answers will vary. Without genuine love for the brothers and sisters, the whole Christian enterprise fails. One who would be used of God must want to experience and express His love at least as much as His power. God will not trust His power to a group of believers who lack unity, for they will only perpetuate their differences in the new believers.

**9** How does wind symbolize the work of the Spirit?

It symbolizes the bringing of new life.

**10** Does the sound like the blowing of a violent wind ever occur again in Acts when believers are baptized in the Holy Spirit? What can be inferred from this?

No. Rushing wind is not a normative or typical sign of being filled with the Spirit.

**11** What does fire symbolize in relation to God?

God’s presence (Exodus 3:2), judgment, and purification (Luke 3:16–17)

**12** In light of the sign of fire, what is the importance of Luke 3:16–17?

Luke recorded John the Baptist's words that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire, a symbol of judgment and purification.

**13** Have you seen signs and miracles occurring today? What do you think the church needs to do to see more miracles and wonders?

Answers will vary.

**14** Look up the Scripture references in the chart. Describe what happened when believers were filled with the Holy Spirit. What indicates they likely spoke in other tongues?

Evidence of the Holy Spirit's Baptism as recorded in Acts		
Reference	Setting	Outward Evidence of the Inner Filling
Acts 2:1–4	The Day of Pentecost	All 120 believers who were present spoke in new languages as soon as they were filled with the Holy Spirit.
Acts 8:14–19	New believers in Samaria	Samaritan believers must have shown supernatural signs of being filled with the Spirit, because the magician, Simon, tried to buy the power to bestow the Holy Spirit on others. They likely spoke in other tongues according to the New Testament pattern.
Acts 9:17–19	Saul's conversion and baptism	We are not specifically told Saul spoke in tongues when he was filled with the Spirit, but 1 Corinthians 14:18 makes it clear that Paul spoke in tongues often.
Acts 10:44–46	The Gentile Cornelius' home	The Holy Spirit came on the Gentile believers and they spoke in tongues and praised God.
Acts 19:1–7	Paul's encounter with believers in Ephesus	The Holy Spirit came on them and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

**15** Do you believe speaking in tongues is still for today? In one or two paragraphs, explain why you believe as you do.

Answers will vary.

**16** What is more important than the signs of the Spirit's presence?

The Spirit himself.

**17** What is the difference between speaking in tongues in 1 Corinthians 12 and in Acts 2:4?

First Corinthians 12 is speaking about a gift of the Spirit for use in corporate worship services. Acts 2:4 speaks of Christians praying individually to God in other languages.

**18** What are your natural gifts and abilities? How are these different from your spiritual gifts?

Answers will vary.

**19** How does praying in tongues benefit the individual?

It builds the believer up, or edifies him or her.

**20** How does (or would) speaking in tongues help you personally? Describe a time when you needed (or have experienced) this building up in the Spirit.

Answers will vary.

**21** Have you ever been frustrated by not being able to adequately communicate the depth of your feelings for another person? For God? How did you attempt to communicate what you could not say?

Answers will vary.

**22** How does it feel to know someone truly understands you? How does this relate to how the Holy Spirit communicates with God for the believer?

Answers will vary. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us, communicating with God on a deeper level than we are capable of on our own.

**23** What are four purposes for speaking in tongues?

Speaking in tongues is (1) the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, it is (2) one of nine gifts of the Spirit, it is (3) a regular means of personal prayer, and it (4) is a sign to unbelievers.

# CHAPTER 4

## The Birth of the Church

The people of the town had an idea of what rugby was, but only vaguely. So when construction began on a new rugby stadium, no one was impressed. At least not favorably. People grumbled when construction blocked a lane of traffic. They griped about the noise and the ruined view. When they saw signs announcing tickets for sale, few were interested. Most people predicted it would never last.

One clear evening, people noticed two spotlights piercing the night sky. Curious, some people set out to find the source of the light. Soon the sky rained colored, glittering fountains of fire and sound. Fireworks! Obviously, something very special was going on. Thousands of people followed the signs in the sky.

It took little time for people to trace the fireworks to the new field. Crowds stood outside looking up, but the best view was inside. Ushers invited people inside for a comfortable seat and a free look.

When the fireworks ended, the rugby game started. People who had never before seen the game found themselves enthralled with the fast action and great skill of the players. A lot of people's feelings toward rugby changed that night. Some signed up to learn to play. Many more signed up for season tickets. The spectacular sights and sounds of the spotlights and fireworks had drawn people to the field, but the exciting game made the people rugby fans. The game, not the fireworks, was of central importance.

On the Day of Pentecost when the church was born, the signs of the Holy Spirit's presence drew curious crowds. But the gospel message was of central importance. Three thousand who had gathered to sightsee ended up joining the team. That is the power and purpose of the Holy Spirit—then and now.

### Lesson 4.1 Responses to Pentecost

Objective

4.1.1 *Describe five typical responses to Pentecost.*

### Lesson 4.2 The Pattern of Peter's Preaching

Objective

4.2.1 *Identify four practical methods and three vital messages from Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost and their significance for those who witness or preach.*

### Lesson 4.3 The Biblical Pattern of a Dynamic Church

Objective

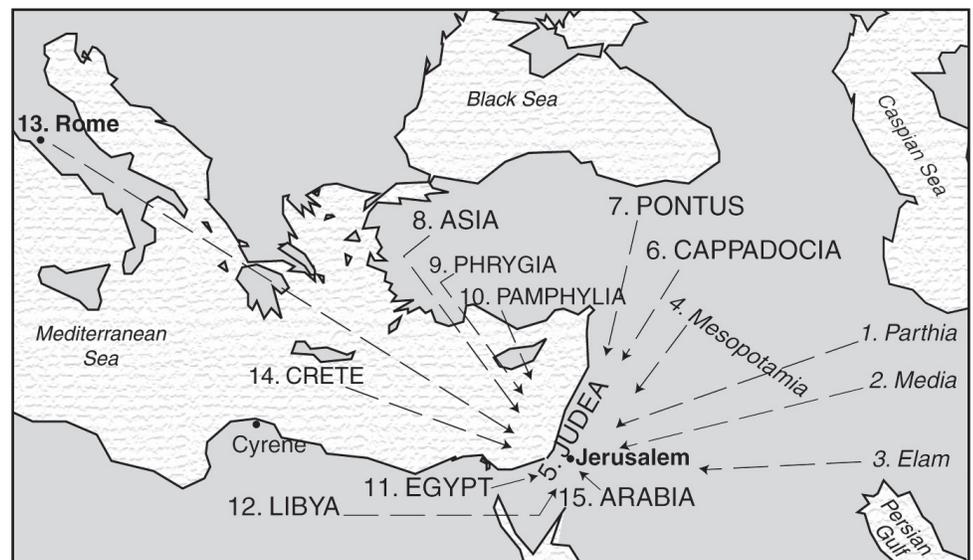
4.3.1 *Identify thirteen characteristics that mark a powerful and effective church.*

# 4 LESSON 1

## Responses to Pentecost

“Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5). Three major feasts drew Jewish pilgrims to Jerusalem from all over the world. These were Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. In Acts, we often find the Holy Spirit directing disciples to be at the right place at the right time to preach the gospel most effectively. The crowd in Acts 2 that gathered as the 120 spoke in other languages strongly suggests that the Spirit-filled disciples had gone into the temple area from their upper room of prayer. Gathering around them, divinely arranged at the height of the feast, were crowds who had come for Pentecost. (Read Acts 20:16. Note the importance a devout Jew would attach to reaching Jerusalem for a major festival.) The 120 evidently praised God in other tongues for quite some time. The news spread and the crowd began to discuss what was happening while the believers were still speaking.

This study will examine the reactions of the crowd to the Holy Spirit. Look around and you will find people still reacting in these ways to the work of the Holy Spirit.



At Pentecost, Jews came from at least fifteen different places.

### 4.1.1 OBJECTIVE

*Describe five typical responses to Pentecost.*

### Bewildered Interest

Acts 2:5 says that in Jerusalem there were Jews from every nation under heaven. The crowd was amazed and confused. They probably knew that most of the 120 were from Galilee by the way that they dressed (Horton 1994, 34). “When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language” (Acts 2:6). The listeners were amazed and confused to hear their own languages. How was it possible for the 120 (whose first language was **Aramaic**) to be speaking the languages of other nations?

Bewilderment is often the first reaction when people encounter others speaking in tongues. They do not understand what is going on.

In the book of Acts the gifts of the Spirit were given in a public setting, not within the four walls of a church. That suggests that where the Spirit is at work, He wants to call attention to Jesus. By the time we get to 1 Corinthians 12–14, we find that spiritual gifts occurred when believers gathered for worship. But in Acts, gifts of healing or miraculous gifts were poured out in public settings to draw the attention of the world to Jesus Christ.

1 What drew the crowd on the Day of Pentecost?

The work of the Holy Spirit generates the crowd. The believers did not have to advertise or launch a program to bring people in. Advertising and programs are not wrong. When the Holy Spirit is resting upon a body of believers, He does not need to be advertised. The most effective form of advertising is the power of God. Word spread all over the temple area and all over Jerusalem within a very short period of time. The crowd had been gathered and the stage set for evangelism to take place.

### Utter Amazement

2 In your experience, how do people who are not Pentecostal react to speaking in tongues? Why might they react this way?

In Acts 2, the sound of the 120 speaking in tongues drew the bewildered crowd. As the crowd heard the 120 declaring the wonders of God in the crowd's native languages—unusual in Jerusalem—they became utterly amazed and perplexed. Although they understood the languages being spoken, they knew the people speaking to them were unable to do so in their own ability. This power was beyond them. What could this be?

In all, fifteen distinct areas and languages are mentioned in Acts 2. In a matter of weeks, the Pentecostal pilgrims would go home. Some, no doubt, were among the three thousand who were saved (Acts 2:41). They would have been the first to carry the story of Jesus abroad. The gospel had already begun to advance. No wonder the Lord told the disciples to wait (Acts 1:4). He wanted His message to have an audience gathered from all over the world. The Holy Spirit had selected the strategic place and the means to focus the attention of pilgrims from the known world on Christ.

The crowd's reaction had gone from bewilderment (verse 6) to utter amazement (verse 7). By verse 12, they were "amazed and perplexed" as they looked for answers. Everything they saw increased their curiosity. The stage was set for Peter to give some answers.

### Mocking

Some people responded by mocking, "They have had too much wine" (Acts 2:13). Human nature is unchanging. Some people's reaction to what they do not understand is to make fun of it.

The 120 spilled out of the Upper Room into a public arena. Crowds could hear them praying to God in many languages. They were loud. They were so joyful that some mistook them as being drunk with cheap wine. Many worship services today are so serious and grim that no one would ever accuse Christians of being drunk in their experience with the Lord. What a wonderful thing it would be if the church were so delighted in the Lord that people might think they were drunk.

3 Who was most likely to mock the believers, those who understood one of the fifteen languages or those who spoke only Aramaic? Why?

When it was learned that the new girl at school was the daughter of a Pentecostal preacher, two boys started mocking her mercilessly on the playground. They called her "holy roller" and "monkey." They announced to everyone their belief that speaking in tongues was of the devil. They urged her to say something in tongues right then. They said every foreign word they could think of, then babbled and asked her if she could understand what they had said. They asked her how many pews she could jump and how often she swung from chandeliers. The girl never responded in anger.

After tiring of teasing the girl, the two slapped each other on the back and congratulated each other as they headed inside. "I guess we showed everyone how stupid speaking in tongues is," one boy said to the other.

“No,” said a third boy standing nearby. “The only thing you showed us is how cruel and ignorant you are.”

People who mock show more about themselves than they do about what they mock. Those who make fun of the work of the Holy Spirit only reveal their own spiritual emptiness. Such people need our understanding and our prayer, not our anger.

### Boldness

4 What was significant about Peter’s bold stand?

After the crowd had gathered, their curiosity growing, Peter spoke to them. Acts 2:14 says, “Peter stood up with **the Eleven**, raised his voice, and addressed the crowd.” Peter stood up not only physically, but also spiritually. Just a few weeks earlier, Peter had been in no position to stand up. He had denied Jesus three times at His trial. But God’s grace and restoration allowed Peter to be in this position now. For three years Peter had struggled to stand up. When it was time to get up on his feet and declare the glory of God, the Lord had made him whole. Now the Holy Spirit gave Peter power to stand boldly and speak.

You may be in a place like Peter was, having denied the Lord or failed Him. Maybe you have wondered if you could ever be strong. Take courage from Acts 2:14. With the Holy Spirit’s help, that day is coming. Peter stood up.

Then Peter spoke. He “lifted up his voice” (King James Version) or “raised his voice” (NIV). Peter spoke forcefully, with confidence. He did not whisper or falter. He was not tentative. Peter’s voice was loud and clear. His message was direct and bold. Speaking in tongues had drawn a crowd and stirred their interest. Now the Holy Spirit helped Peter explain what had happened and how to be saved.

### Unified Support

5 Who stood with Peter before the crowd?

Peter did not stand alone before the crowd. “Then Peter stood up with the Eleven” (Acts 2:14). The other eleven disciples—including Matthias, newly chosen—stood with Peter in an act of solidarity and strength.

Jesus knew the strength that comes with numbers. He sent His disciples out in pairs or in groups. Often all twelve ministered together. When the Eleven stood shoulder to shoulder with Peter, it undoubtedly gave Peter courage and strength.

6 Why was it important for people to see Jesus’ twelve disciples standing together?

It was also important for the people to see Jesus’ disciples standing together in unity. This gave strength and credibility to what Peter said. The testimony of just one person was not strong enough to establish anything as truth. The testimony of twelve was more than enough to testify to the truth of a matter.

On a more personal level, standing with Peter did something for each apostle. Like Peter, they stood and proclaimed their commitment to Jesus. They identified with Jesus and His mission. They announced to the world that they were followers of Jesus and that they believed the gospel message, for it had changed their lives. Taking such a public stand no doubt was significant in the days and years to follow. They had gone on public record as being totally sold out to Christ.

# 4 LESSON 2

## 4.2.1

### OBJECTIVE

*Identify four practical methods and three vital messages from Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost and their significance for those who witness or preach.*

## The Pattern of Peter's Preaching

There can be little doubt that Peter was a powerful, effective speaker for the early church. Three thousand responded after his first message (Acts 2:41). After his second, the church grew to more than five thousand men and unnumbered women and children. Of course, his success came from the Holy Spirit's power, but every Christian can benefit from studying Peter's methods and message. Those who do can learn much about evangelism and about God's heart, as well.

### Peter's Methods

#### Treat listeners with respect.

Many of the people who gathered to hear Peter that day had heard Jesus teach in those same temple grounds. Some of them had perhaps participated in the mob that lobbied for Jesus' crucifixion. Yet Peter's words are gracious and kind. "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you" (Acts 2:14). He emphasized their common bonds and put himself in the same boat with them. They were fellow Jews.

In Acts 2:29 Peter called them brothers. He spoke with no anger or ill will for how some of them had treated Jesus. Peter spoke by the grace of God. He reflected God's loving nature.

A central truth of the gospel is that **reconciliation** and forgiveness are integral parts of life. The Christian must not simply respond as he or she is treated. Christians have an obligation to go beyond what could normally be expected in any human relationship. Christians are expected to extend forgiveness and reconciliation even to those who have wronged us horribly. The Christian can never absolve his or her behavior by retaliating against the offender. Christians must have the loving grace of our Lord Jesus. When that grace comes into our lives, it comes as a gift of the Holy Spirit.

Peter had just been filled with the Spirit. He was in no position to be mean. We cannot have a mean and angry spirit along with the Holy Spirit. He is called the Holy Spirit because He is Holy. He is the Spirit that is unlike the human spirit, but like God.

#### Meet listeners where they are.

Like a good public speaker, Peter started with what his audience was interested in. At that moment, the crowd was not interested in Jesus. They wanted to know more about this strange event going on all around them. So he explained it to them: "These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'In the **last days**, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people'" (Acts 2:15-17).

Peter explained that these people speaking in other languages were fulfilling the prophecy of Joel. Whenever Christians speak in tongues, they are fulfilling Joel's prophecy. God promised to pour out His Spirit on young and old, men and women alike.

Although Peter's goal was to share the gospel with this crowd, he did not rush or push things. Christians today would do well to learn from Peter's example. We must start where people are and lead them to where they need to be. When someone has a need, a question, or a problem, these become starting points for our witness. It has been said that people do not care how much you know until they know how much you care. When we start at people's point of need or interest, we meet with openness and opportunity instead of resistance.

7 Some critics have said that the church spends its time answering questions no one is asking while ignoring questions that are relevant to people's lives today. How would you answer this accusation? How can Christians follow Peter's example by answering the questions of unbelievers?

8 Consider the situations described in the chart. Fill in how you would introduce Jesus to each person described.

**How would you introduce Jesus to a person in each situation?**

A teenager who feels unloved	
A parent whose only child has died	
A person who thinks the church is full of hypocrites	
A child whose parents are getting divorced	
A person trying to choose a career	
A person who has just been diagnosed with AIDS	
Someone who has made a terrible mistake that is ruining the life of his or her family	
A grandparent whose grandchildren are disappointing	
A young soldier who is afraid he or she will be sent to war	
A parent who is frightened by the state of the world	
A businessperson who has lost everything	
Someone who was betrayed by a loved one	
Someone whose life feels empty	

9 What gave Peter authority to speak?

**Speak with authority.**

Peter spoke with authority. This authority was not his own. The Holy Spirit illuminated the Scriptures—God’s Word—to Peter. This is the authority we must rely on today when we share the gospel. One function of the Spirit is to bring God’s truth to people. When our speech lines up with God’s written Word and the Holy Spirit bears witness, then we too can speak with the same authority Peter did. Speaking with this kind of authority will meet the authentic need of the human heart. Peter’s listeners were cut to the heart (Acts 2:37). Our words of authority will have the same effect.

10 Give an example from Acts 1 when Peter turned to God’s Word for guidance.

**Be prepared.**

During the three years Peter walked with Jesus, he was busy learning. In the gospels and the first chapter of Acts, we have already seen clues to his developing leadership. It seems that whenever Peter was faced with a challenge, his mind turned to God’s Word. He looked to the Old Testament to understand the present event. In Acts 1 when the group considered replacing Judas, he found direction from the Psalms.

Two of the most important qualifications for being an effective disciple are being willing to learn and willing to obey. Peter needed both of these qualities to be a useful witness on that first Pentecost Sunday. Peter was caught by surprise by the events of Pentecost. Jesus had told the disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit, but

He had not given details about what would happen. When the Holy Spirit fell and the crowd gathered, it was past time to prepare. Peter had no advance warning, no time to research a sermon. He could only rely on the Holy Spirit to bring to his mind the preparations he had already made. How had Peter prepared for this day? He prepared in the same ways Christians today must prepare themselves.

*Spend time with Jesus.* Peter walked and talked with Jesus. We may not have the privilege of walking with Jesus in the flesh, but we can still walk with Him. When we spend time in prayer, worship, and fellowship with Jesus, we are preparing ourselves for witnessing and service.

11 What are two of the most important qualifications for being an effective disciple?

*Spend time in God's Word.* Peter did not have a bound Bible with study notes. He had no concordance. At that time, God's Word consisted of separate scrolls. Scrolls were expensive, so the average person could not own one. The only complete sets were kept in the synagogue. Compared with Peter, Christians today have it easy. It is a simple matter for most Christians to have a complete Bible and lots of study tools. Peter did not let the scarceness of printed Scriptures keep him from reading, studying, and memorizing God's Word.

Education, study, and knowledge do not of themselves make for a powerful Christian witness. That can come only through God when He pours out His Spirit among us. But Christians are responsible to mature and prepare themselves to serve the Lord.

## Peter's Message

### This is what happened at Pentecost (Acts 2:16–21).

Peter quoted from Joel 2:28–32 to explain speaking in tongues as part of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. “‘In the last days,’ God says, ‘I will pour out my Spirit on all people’” (Acts 2:17). Most pilgrims to Jerusalem would be familiar with this prophecy. Then Peter put it into context for the amazed crowd. “‘This is that!’” (Acts 2:16, KJV) Peter told them.

With the simple statement, “‘This is that,’” Peter said a lot. He let the crowd know that they were now living in the last days, and he told of the work of the Spirit that would happen in the last days. The last days began with the first coming of Christ and will end with His Second Coming (Stamps 1992, 1647). Speaking in other languages was just the first of many indications that the Holy Spirit was truly at work in new and mighty ways.

God promised He would not be partial or have any favorites as He poured out His blessings. Note the following five areas in which God said He would treat all alike and have no favorites.

1. God promised He would not favor one nation over another. He said He would pour out His Spirit on all flesh or people.
2. God promised He would not favor men over women. He said He would pour out the Holy Spirit on both sons and daughters (Acts 2:18). Both males and females would prophesy. Recall that there were women among the 120 who spoke in tongues.
3. God promised He would not favor the old above the young. He said the young would see spiritual visions and the old would dream spiritual dreams. The baptism in the Spirit is for all ages. Many children have been filled with the Spirit at an early age. Likewise, many elderly people have been baptized in the Spirit.

4. God promised He would not favor the rich over the poor. He promised to pour out His Spirit even on male and female slaves. Israel was once a nation of slaves that God delivered from Egypt. Now Israel was under Roman rule. But through Pentecost, both rich and poor become God's slaves or property. Jesus bought us at Calvary. At Pentecost, He takes full possession of believers.
5. God promised not to favor the early over the late. He blesses both the first to hear and the last. Acts 2:19–20 refers to signs that will take place at the end of the last days. But Acts 2:21 assures us that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. In the years just before Jesus returns, conditions on earth will get worse. Because evil will increase, the love of most will grow cold (Matthew 24:12). The last days will be terrible days (2 Timothy 3:1–5). But even in the worst of times, God will help those who call on Him. Acts 2:39 says there is no time limit on receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. This gift is for parents, their children, and those of every generation and race.

Wow! What good news this is to all. God is not biased. He has no favorites. He will pour out His Holy Spirit on all. Pentecost is for everyone. Those of any race, gender, age, and social level, may drink of His Spirit at any time. Whosoever will may come!

### **Why Pentecost happened (Acts 2:22–36)**

Although Peter started where the crowd's interest lay, he quickly moved them to an understanding of whom Jesus is. His whole point was to prove that Jesus is Messiah and Lord and therefore deserving of their worship and obedience. To make his point, Peter cited four proofs of Jesus' claims.

1. God approved Jesus through miracles, wonders, and signs (Acts 2:22). These are the three words used in the Bible for supernatural acts.
2. God allowed Jesus to be crucified in Jerusalem (Acts 2:23). God had planned for Jesus to die, but this does not lessen the guilt of those who crucified Him.
3. God raised Jesus from the dead (Acts 2:24–32). Peter quotes David in Psalm 16:8–11. David prophesied about the Messiah's resurrection. When Peter spoke, David was in his tomb in Jerusalem. Therefore, the people understood that David was not prophesying about himself. The Holy Spirit used this explanation and illustration to convict many.
4. God exalted Jesus and gave Him the Spirit to pour out (Acts 2:33–36). Note the Trinity in Acts 2:33. The Father exalted the Son to sit at His right hand. This was the greatest place of power and honor. (In Christ, we are also seated at the right hand of God, Ephesians 2:6.) Then the Father gave the promise of the Spirit to the Son (John 16:7). Finally, the Son pours out the Spirit on us. The Father gave the promise, but Jesus is the One who baptizes us in the Spirit (John 1:33).

12 What would you say to someone who asked you to prove that Jesus is God's Son?

Peter was not asking the crowd to believe something unbelievable. Faith is important in becoming a Christian, but not a blind faith. We can be confident that the gospel is based on solid truth. After outlining the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, Peter spent the next verses (Acts 2:25–35) using the Old Testament to validate the Resurrection. Why did Peter do this? It was important for Peter to establish that what happened to Jesus was consistent with what God had done in the past and what He had said in His Word. The Old and New Testaments are unified because they support each other and bear witness to our one God.

13 How would you feel when you realized that you had been responsible for the death of the very person God chose as Messiah and Lord? How does this help you better understand the people's reaction in Acts 2:37?

### How Pentecost can come to each person (Acts 2:37–41)

Jesus taught that the Holy Spirit would “convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment” (John 16:8–11). As Peter preached, the Holy Spirit faithfully fulfilled Christ's words. People in the crowd were stirred and convicted: “When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’” (Acts 2:37). This is the question that all sinners should ask when they feel convicted. Peter told them to repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38). **Repentance** means a change of mind. Those who repent change their minds about sin. They turn away from sin toward God. It is impossible to face sin and God at the same time. No person can face north and south at the same time. We must choose one or the other. Those who repent choose to face God and walk toward Him.

When we turn from sin toward God, we are facing the Savior. His name is called Jesus because He saves His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). We have a part in our salvation; we must choose to turn from sin toward Jesus (Acts 2:40). Only He can free us from the power and penalty of our sins.

After Jesus saves a person, that believer is ready for water baptism. Baptism is the first step of obedience after receiving Jesus as Savior.

Baptism is an outward picture of an inner experience. A believer is baptized *for* or *because* his or her sins have been forgiven (Horton 1994, 46). Baptism shows that the old, sinful life was buried with Christ. Christ's descent into the grave is symbolized through the believers' burying of their old life in water. Coming up out of the water shows believers are rising with Christ to live a new, holy life (Romans 6:1–4).

Peter talked to the crowd about receiving “the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). There are five places in Acts where Luke refers to the baptism in the Spirit as a gift.

1. Jesus told the disciples to “wait for the gift my Father promised” (Acts 1:4).
2. Peter told Jews they would receive “the gift of the Holy Spirit” after they repented and were baptized (Acts 2:38).
3. Peter rebuked Simon the former sorcerer. Simon wanted to buy the ability to impart “the gift of God” to others (Acts 8:18–20). Peter taught him that God's gifts could not be bought or sold. They are free! Any believer who wants the gift of the baptism in the Spirit can have it.
4. Peter was sure that “the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God” (Acts 10:45–46).
5. Peter recalled that John baptized in water, but Jesus baptizes in the Holy Spirit. “God gave them [the Gentiles] the same gift as he gave us [the Jews]” (Acts 11:16–17).

Some Jews were offended when John the Baptist said they needed to be baptized. They said they were already children of Abraham (Matthew 3:9). John's baptism was not to make them Jews but to fulfill their need to repent of sinfulness. Likewise, some believers today are offended when told they need to be baptized in the Spirit. They say they are already Christians. But the baptism in the Spirit is not to make people Christians. It is for those who are already believers. The apostles were already followers of Christ, but they needed the gift of the Spirit (Acts 1:4). The Samaritans had believed, were baptized in water and in the Spirit (Acts 8:15–16). Paul preached Jesus to twelve men in Ephesus. They were born again, baptized in water, and filled with the Spirit,

14 What two commands and one promise did Peter give those who wished to know what to do when his sermon had ended?

speaking in tongues (Acts 19:1–7). Every person needs to repent, believe, and be baptized both in water and in the Spirit. Read Luke 11:9–13.

It is not enough to bring people to a point of conviction and belief without allowing them to respond in faith. Peter urged the listeners to act immediately. He invited them to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. If they would do these things, they would be forgiven of their sins and would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit that had first drawn them to the believers.

Out of mild curiosity, a college student wandered into a church near campus. He sat down on the back pew. The service was different from his church back home. He found himself listening closely as the lively preacher spoke about Jesus. As the service continued, the young man was gripped by conviction. He had been living a sinful, selfish life. He felt dirty inside and wanted to be clean. He also had a growing fear that he would die in his sin and go to hell. With each passing minute, the young man grew more determined to repent of his sins and give his life to God. He could barely contain himself as he waited for service to end. But he was shocked when the pastor dismissed the crowd with a blessing and brief prayer. People surged into the aisles and headed for the door. The young man tried to push through the crowd to reach the altar and the pastor, but the pastor had gone.

The young man's heart fell. Surely there was something more than this. But no. The church was emptying out, and so was that feeling of conviction and spiritual hunger. The young man shook himself, steeling himself against the longing in his heart. What had he been feeling? What was wrong with him? He was not any worse than any other college student. The preacher had merely played with his emotions. As he left, he warned himself never to set foot in a church like that again.

Just as Peter gave his listeners a chance to respond to the Holy Spirit, it is important that we give people a chance to repent. This is the job of every believer, not just the pastor or evangelist.

## 4 LESSON 3

### The Biblical Pattern of a Dynamic Church

Peter's remarkable sermon on the Day of Pentecost brought remarkable results. People were convicted by the Holy Spirit and moved to action. Although the success of the church is more than numbers, three thousand people were saved and baptized that day.

Such growth was not typical in the years that followed, but it could have been. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He still wants people to accept Him as Lord and Savior. Conviction is the work of the Holy Spirit. Church growth is God's responsibility. But there are many other parts of this success story that are our responsibilities as believers.

In this study we will look at the qualities of a biblical, dynamic church according to Acts 2:37–47.

#### Repentance

The first quality people must have in a biblical church is repentance. We must change our minds about who Jesus of Nazareth is. Before Peter's sermon, people in the crowd viewed Jesus as a man. They believed He was a prophet, whether true or false. That is much less than what Jesus Christ claimed to be—Lord and

#### 4.3.1 OBJECTIVE

*Identify thirteen characteristics that mark a powerful and effective church.*

Christ. All who come to Jesus must repent. They must change their minds. To change your mind in this kind of repentance is to change your way of living. It means that entrance into the church is not through absorption. It is not through being connected to a family of Christians. The only way to get into the church is to make a personal decision. Your faith and belief must line up with what the church bore witness to in Jesus Christ. The biblical church must teach and practice repentance.

Repentance is the first word for becoming a Christian. Today people stress the word *believe* more than the word *repent*. Believing in Jesus is important. Acts 16:31 says, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.” Believing in Jesus is like repainting a fence or a wall. A fresh coat of paint makes a thing look new and beautiful again. But repentance is like scraping the old paint off the wall. You must scrape the old stuff off to get the new coat to adhere as it should. There is no sense in believing in the Lord Jesus Christ if you are not determined to turn your life over to God and ask Him to change you.

### Baptism

15 How are repentance and baptism connected?

“Repent and be baptized . . . for the forgiveness of your sins” (Acts 2:38). Repentance and baptism are closely connected. Both involve the washing away of sins. Repentance is the spiritual act whereby the sins are washed away. Baptism is the physical act that symbolizes the washing that is taking place inside.

Peter did not say, “Be baptized someday if you feel good about it.” Too many Christians have become lax about following Jesus’ example and instruction to be baptized. If you have repented and believed in Jesus, you are under a scriptural obligation to be baptized.

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus told His followers to baptize new disciples “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” So in Acts 2:38, why did Peter say to be baptized “in the name of Jesus Christ?” Was Peter teaching baptism in the name of Jesus only? No.

What Peter was saying was clear to the Jews at that time. Baptism was familiar to Jews as a common element of religious life. For example, a Gentile proselyte had to be baptized to convert to Judaism. Some Jewish sects required baptism as part of the initiation rites. John’s baptism symbolized repentance from sin. Being immersed in water symbolizes leaving the old life and taking on a new life. Peter was saying this baptism is different from all others. It is baptism in the name of Jesus. He was not trying to set forth some new view of the doctrine of the Trinity or some opposite baptismal formula. He was simply saying that this baptism is in Jesus’ name. Those who are baptized in Jesus’ name are identifying themselves with Him as Lord and Savior.

### Receiving the Gift of the Holy Spirit

Repenting and being baptized are two things we can do. The third mark of a biblical church is something God has to do for us. “You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). This gift is also a promise. “The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:39). Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit in John 14:16–18, 25–26 and Acts 1:4, 8. In Acts 2:33, Peter said of Jesus: “Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.” The promised gift has evidence that can be seen and heard. It should not be difficult to judge whether a person or a church

16 In what two key areas will churches that reject the baptism in the Holy Spirit be lacking?

has received the promised gift of the Holy Spirit. Such a gift can be seen and heard by those who receive the gift and those who observe it.

Those who do not receive this gift will be lacking in two key areas: worship and evangelism. That's why the Holy Spirit is given. The Holy Spirit leads us to God in worship. He also leads us into the world in power. Without the Holy Spirit, the church is reduced to mechanical formulas to keep its members and reach out in a small way to others. The church must realize that only God can build it. The Spirit of God will descend only upon people whose hearts are poured out, broken, open, and dependent on God.

Receiving the gift of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit or praying with someone else to receive that gift is not difficult. The believer must follow four important steps.

1. Obey what Peter told the crowd (Acts 2:38). Repent, receive Jesus as Savior, and be baptized in water. Have you been born again? If not, turn toward God now. Repent of your sins and accept God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Have you been baptized in water to show that your sins are forgiven? If not, then obey the Lord and be baptized in water. Baptism in water is important. It is the first act of obedience for a new believer. As we obey what God commands, it gives us confidence when we pray (1 John 3:21–22).

2. Look at what God promises about the baptism in the Spirit. We need faith to receive this blessing from God. Faith comes by hearing God's Word (Romans 10:17). What does the Bible say about the promise of the Spirit's fullness? Read Acts 2:33,38–39; John 7:37–39; 14:16–17; and Luke 11:11–13.

Realize that the promise of the baptism in the Spirit is for you.

3. Ask and get ready to receive this precious gift the Father is offering you. Luke 11:13 states that God will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him. So ask! Pray something like, "Father, I believe Your promises are true. I believe the gift of the Holy Spirit is for me, today, right now. By faith, I have already received Your gift of salvation. Now by faith, I trust You to baptize me in the Holy Spirit. I expect that You will enable me to speak in a new language. I open my life to You. I reach out in faith to receive the gift of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. I thank You in the name of Jesus. Amen."

4. By faith do your part to receive this gift. The story of Peter walking on the water illustrates the believer's part (Matthew 14:22–33). It took God's help for Peter to walk on the water toward Jesus. Likewise, only God can enable you to speak in a language you do not know. God is ready to do His part. But you also have a part in the miracle. Jesus did not force Peter to leave the security of the boat. Neither did He pick up Peter's feet and cause him to step out onto the water. Jesus simply invited Peter to walk to Him. Peter's part was to begin walking. The miracle was not that Peter walked. He was using his feet in the way he used them each day. Likewise, the miracle of speaking in tongues is not that you talk. You will talk with the same tongue and voice you use each day. Just as it was Peter's choice to start walking and stop walking, it is your choice to start talking and to stop talking. God will do His part, but you must do your part.

### **Devoted to Doctrine**

The next ten hallmarks of a biblical church share an important purpose. They all are essential for incorporating new believers into the church. Winning souls is not enough. People must be integrated into the family of believers. Acts 2:42–47 gives ten important ways the church can assimilate new believers.

Acts 2:42 lists four things to which the believers devoted themselves. *Devoted* means to strongly follow, strongly persist in, and be totally committed to. These four things are core requirements of the church. We must be totally devoted to them or the church will lack the dynamics it needs.

17 What would be some challenges in bringing a large group of new believers into any church?

First, the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. Doctrine is important in building the church. Some people have made the mistake of valuing experience more than doctrine. We must not be caught up in a subjective experience that is without an objective reality based on God's Word.

18 Why did the apostles have the authority to teach?

One needs to be taught to live Christ's way. The apostles could teach this with authority since they had been commissioned by the Lord to do so. The church has always used the teaching of the apostles as an anchor. If it cannot be proved from the apostles' teaching, then it has no place as doctrine in the church.

19 What are four basic doctrines of the church?

The apostles had the words of Jesus. That was their doctrine. All the New Testament does, after the Books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, is to explain and develop for our understanding the teaching of Jesus. Doctrine is not complex. It is basic and essential to our lives as Christians. Every church and every believer must be devoted to doctrine.

20 What was the apostles' doctrine based on?

Teaching of the Apostles	Scriptures
1. The Scriptures are the inspired words of God, without any errors.	Acts 1:16; 4:25; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20–21
2. There is one true God. He exists as a Trinity of three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.	Matt. 28:19; John 14:16–17; Acts 17:24–31; 2 Cor. 13:14
3. All humans, except Jesus Christ, have sinned.	Acts 22:14; Rom. 3:23; Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22
4. Salvation is available only through Jesus Christ. He shed His blood on the cross as God's Lamb, to redeem us from our sins. To be saved from sin and judgment, a person must repent, and trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord.	Acts 2:38; 4:12; 10:43; 13:38–39; 26:15–18; Eph. 1:7; Rev. 5:6–10
5. All who receive Jesus as Savior must be baptized in water.	Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:12–13, 36–38; 9:18; 10:47–48; 19:5; 22:16
6. The Lord's Supper reminds believers of the Lord's death and return.	Matt. 26:26–29; Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23–26
7. The baptism in the Holy Spirit comes with the immediate outward sign of speaking in a new language. This is a gift the Father wants to give each believer, after being born again. This gift brings power to witness, serve Christ, and live above sin.	Acts 2:4; 10:45–46; 11:15–17; 19:1–7
8. Miracles, signs, wonders, healings, speaking in tongues, and other spiritual gifts are the church's inheritance until Jesus Christ returns.	Acts 3:1–10; 4:30; 5:15; 6:8; 8:13; 12:1–17; 15:12; 19:11; 28:1–9; Rom. 1:11; 1 Cor. 1:7; 12:1–14:40; 1 Thess. 5:19–20; 2 Tim. 1:6; Heb. 2:4; James 5:14–16

Teaching of the Apostles (continued)	Scriptures
9. God requires His children to live holy lives. This is possible as we choose to walk in the Spirit.	Acts 5:1–11; Rom. 8:1–2,13; 12:1–2; 1 Cor. 6:9–11; Gal. 5:19–21; Titus 2:11–14; Heb. 12:14; 1 Pet. 1:15–16; Rev. 3:4–6
10. The church is the spiritual family of God. It is a fellowship based on the blood of Jesus and created by the Spirit. The church serves in three directions. She evangelizes outward to the lost. She worships upward to God. She ministers inward to build up her members. All the ministry of the church depends on prayer and the Holy Spirit.	Matt. 28:18–19; Acts 2:38–39,47; 13:47; Rom. 12:1; 1 Cor. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:11; Eph. 4:29; 1 Thess. 5:11; Heb. 13:15; Jude 20
11. Jesus rose victorious over death. He ascended to the right hand of the Father. He will return to reward believers. They will be with Christ forever.	Acts 1:1–11; 2:20; 3:20–21; 23:6; 24:21–25; 26:8; 1 Cor. 15:51–52; 1 Thess. 4:16–17; Titus 2:13
12. Jesus will conquer Satan, the Antichrist, and evil. He will judge the disobedient. They will suffer in the lake of fire forever.	Matt. 8:12; 13:49–50; 25:31–46; 2 Thess. 2:1–12; Rev. 14:11; 20:10–14

### Devoted to Fellowship

Fellowship is *koinonia*. It stands for close interpersonal relationships among believers and the Lord. The Christian life is not meant to be a lonely life. God intends us to come alongside one another in fellowship. That involves more than acknowledging the person's presence. It means recognizing and connecting with those who gather for worship. The church has an obligation to make everyone feel welcome and included.

The challenge of the church is to carry that *koinonia* into every part of the church, then out the doors and into our homes. Christians must welcome and embrace each other so there are no lonely people and no prayer requests that go unnoticed.

### Devoted to Breaking Bread

*Breaking bread* refers to what we call communion. God never intended for communion to be ten minutes at the end of a service once a month for grape juice and crackers. He intended it to be a shared meal. Recall that Jesus, at a meal, introduced the bread and the cup (Matthew 26:26–29). Thus He transformed the Passover meal into a reminder of the new covenant. Part of communion should involve taking the cup and breaking the bread as a sacramental sign. It is more than just an eating experience. It is a transaction. God is involved. The broken bread symbolizes the broken body of Christ. The new wine is a sign of His shed blood. When early Christians ate together, part of that always included a sacramental sign of Christ's presence in their midst.

### Devoted to Prayer

They devoted themselves to prayer. It was not an option. The book of Acts tells us how they did it. They had times of personal prayer. They also prayed together at set times. Because they were good Jews, they were used to setting aside certain hours for prayer. People gathered for prayer in the temple at 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. Ongoing prayer was crucial to the life of the church. It is just as vital today.

<b>The early church was a praying church.</b>	
<b>When did the first believers pray?</b>	<b>Acts</b>
They prayed as they waited to be filled with the Spirit.	1:14
They prayed as they chose an apostle to replace Judas.	1:24
They prayed as a way of life.	2:42
They prayed on the way to the prayer meeting.	3:1
They prayed when they were threatened and persecuted.	4:24–31
They prayed for those who served the tables.	6:6
They prayed when they were dying.	7:59
They prayed for new believers to be filled with the Spirit.	8:15; 9:17–19; 19:6
They prayed before eating.	10:9
They prayed when believers were locked in prison.	12:5
They prayed for their missionaries.	13:3
They prayed when they chose church leaders.	14:23
They prayed when they were bleeding in prison.	16:25
They prayed when they said good-bye to friends.	20:36
They prayed for the sick to be healed.	28:8

### **Wonders and Miraculous Signs**

In this earliest church, “Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles” (Acts 2:43). Only God can bring about such signs and wonders. Notice that the miracles were being done by the apostles. Perhaps this was a way God chose to confirm their doctrine and teaching. Does this mean the rest of the church was not seeing miraculous things happen in answer to prayer? Not at all. God answered prayers. But the incredible kinds of things that stirred the whole community happened through the apostles. The Holy Spirit chooses when and where to work in such ways. All we can do is pray and ask God to make those things present.

### **Generosity**

“All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need” (Acts 2:44–45). No one was forced to give or to share. But when believers really fall in love with the Lord and are in *koinonia* fellowship with one another, they are sensitive to needs in the Body. It becomes unthinkable to live in luxury when another brother or sister has to go without the basics of life.

It can be hard to know who is truly in need. Some people try to lie and cheat others. Generous giving might encourage some to be lazy. The church worked out solutions to such problems. They worked out committees and systems. Those who refused to work were not to be fed. But the main point is that the body of Christ must be aware of and work to meet needs in its midst.

## Public Gathering for Worship

The believers continued to meet together every day in the temple courts. Day by day, the church showed solidarity when they came to learn, grow, and participate in worship. The act of gathering together was a witness to the world. Although the church had home groups and gathered in *koinonia* fellowship, it did not neglect larger occasions for being together. The early church made it a priority to come together. They were not isolated. At first they met daily, later weekly. It is essential for us today—as it was then—to give ourselves to public worship.

## Glad Meal Times

“They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts” (Acts 2:46). Although the believers’ food had not changed, their meals now became glad times. The Lord had done something in their lives that made them look at the same food in a different way. Sharing a meal with other believers was an act of love and fellowship that helped keep their hearts glad and sincere.

## Favor with People

The twelfth quality of a biblical church is another one they could not control. We cannot control how other people react to us when we follow Christ. Sometimes the church does not have favor because the world has turned against it and persecuted it. Later we will see that the church often grows through persecution. But Paul said we should pray for those in authority over us so we can live quiet and peaceful lives (1 Timothy 2:2). Having peace with and the favor of those in the world is a gracious gift of God. Seeking to live in peace and favor should be a quality of the church whenever possible.

## Growth

The last mark of a vibrant church in Acts 2 describes its growth. “The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). Growth is a natural part of a spiritually healthy church. Rather than evangelism being an activity of the church reserved for special occasions, Acts 2:47 portrays it as an activity of God. It was God who granted regular growth to a vibrant Christian community.

The believers had no control over this except to be faithful witnesses for the Lord. The church witnessed, but the Lord added to their number. Although we have a responsibility to witness, only God can grow a powerful, biblical church.

21 What are thirteen marks of a biblical church according to Acts 2:37–47?



## Test Yourself



Circle the letter of the *best* answer.

1. How many different nations does the book of Acts mention were present on the Day of Pentecost?
  - a) 7
  - b) 11
  - c) 15
  - d) 23
2. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter responded to the growing curiosity of the crowd by
  - a) standing up, raising his voice, and addressing them.
  - b) fleeing.
  - c) debating with them.
  - d) sending them away.
3. On the Day of Pentecost, the eleven disciples showed unified support by
  - a) cheering Peter on.
  - b) standing up with Peter.
  - c) sitting quietly nearby while Peter preached.
  - d) protecting Peter from the angry crowd.
4. How many people responded to Peter's message on the Day of Pentecost and were baptized?
  - a) 1,000
  - b) 2,000
  - c) 3,000
  - d) 5,000
5. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter treated his listeners with respect by
  - a) embracing them and giving them a holy kiss.
  - b) addressing them as brothers and fellow Jews.
  - c) being compassionate and loving.
  - d) doing all the above.
6. Although the events of Pentecost happened suddenly, Peter had prepared himself for this big day by
  - a) having his message prepared in advance.
  - b) spending time with Jesus and God's Word.
  - c) practicing extemporaneous speaking.
  - d) doing all of the above.
7. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter said people could receive the gift of the Holy Spirit if they would
  - a) be baptized.
  - b) repent and be baptized.
  - c) repent and cry out to God.
  - d) be baptized and join the church.
8. According to the New Testament, water baptism is
  - a) an outward picture of an inner experience.
  - b) a ceremonial cleansing.
  - c) a required ritual for church membership.
  - d) a ritual securing a believer's salvation.
9. The early church devoted themselves to
  - a) fellowship.
  - b) doctrine.
  - c) prayer.
  - d) all of the above.
10. The hallmarks of a biblical church are
  - a) repentance and baptism.
  - b) fellowship and prayer.
  - c) generosity and growth.
  - d) all of the above.

# Responses to Interactive Questions

## Chapter 4

Some of these responses may include information that is supplemental to the IST. These questions are intended to produce reflective thinking beyond the course content and your responses may vary from these examples.

**1** What drew the crowd on the Day of Pentecost?

The believers speaking in other tongues drew the crowd. The work of the Holy Spirit draws crowds to hear the gospel.

**2** In your experience, how do people who are not Pentecostal react to speaking in tongues? Why might they react this way?

Answers will vary.

**3** Who was most likely to mock the believers, those who understood one of the fifteen languages or those who spoke only Aramaic? Why?

Those who spoke only Aramaic might be more likely to mock. Speaking in tongues would sound like nonsense to them, but it would convince those who understood the miracle of Pentecost.

**4** What was significant about Peter's bold stand?

He had only recently denied Jesus. Now the Holy Spirit gave him power to stand fearlessly.

**5** Who stood with Peter before the crowd?

The eleven apostles, including Matthias

**6** Why was it important for people to see Jesus' twelve disciples standing together?

It gave strength and credibility to what Peter said.

**7** Some critics have said that the church spends its time answering questions no one is asking while ignoring questions that are relevant to people's lives today. How would you answer this accusation? How can Christians follow Peter's example by answering the questions of unbelievers?

Answers will vary.

**8** Consider the situations described in the chart. Fill in how you would introduce Jesus to each person described.

Answers will vary.

**9** What gave Peter authority to speak?

The Holy Spirit illuminated God's Word to Peter.

**10** Give an example from Acts 1 when Peter turned to God's Word for guidance.

In deciding to replace Judas, Peter turned to the Book of Psalms.

**11** What are two of the most important qualifications for being an effective disciple?

Being (1) willing to learn and (2) willing to obey

**12** What would you say to someone who asked you to prove that Jesus is God's Son?

Answers will vary.

**13** How would you feel when you realized that you had been responsible for the death of the very person God chose as Messiah and Lord? How does this help you better understand the people's reaction in Acts 2:37?

Answers will vary.

**14** What two commands and one promise did Peter give those who wished to know what to do when his sermon had ended?

- (1) “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.”
- (2) “And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

**15** How are repentance and baptism connected?

Both involve the washing away of sins. Repentance is the spiritual act. Baptism is the physical act that symbolizes that spiritual act.

**16** In what two key areas will churches that reject the baptism in the Holy Spirit be lacking?

- (1) Worship and (2) evangelism

**17** What would be some challenges in bringing in a large group of new believers into any church?

Answers will vary but could include logistics (where do you put everyone?), doctrine (how do we teach all these people what they need to know?), the need for new workers, setting a godly example for so many new people, discipleship of so many by so few, etc.

**18** Why did the apostles have the authority to teach?

The Lord had commissioned them to do so.

**19** What are four basic doctrines of the church?

Answers may vary but could include Jesus as (1) Savior, (2) Healer, (3) Baptizer, and (4) returning King.

**20** What was the apostles’ doctrine based on?

The teaching of Jesus.

**21** What are thirteen marks of a biblical church according to Acts 2:37–47?

- (1) Repentance, (2) baptism, (3) receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, (4) devotion to doctrine, (5) devotion to fellowship, (6) devotion to breaking bread or communion, (7) devotion to prayer, (8) signs and wonders, (9) generosity, (10) public gathering for worship, (11) glad meal times, (12) favor with people, and (13) growth.



# CHAPTER 5

## Peter and John Heal a Lame Man

When a young man died in a New Orleans pool at the close of 1985's summer swimming season, it was tragic. But the tragedy grew as details emerged. The man had been at a party celebrating a perfect safety season at the city's pools. For the first time in many years, not one person had drowned. Yet this man had drowned in a pool filled with one hundred trained, successful lifeguards.

Sometimes the church can be like that pool party—a gathering of people with much to celebrate. But like the lifeguards, tragic things happen when we let down our guard and become careless. We may feel safe and comfortable in our pool of the church, but we must never lose sight of the needs around us.

God has made Christians lifeguards. Like Jesus, we are to seek the lost and introduce them to salvation. Sometimes, as we enjoy fellowship with each other and with God, we start to see past those close to us who are sinking.

Is someone floundering in your *pool*? Needy people are everywhere, even in church. Look around. You cannot minister to their needs if you do not see them. Do not let anyone “drown” on your watch.

### Lesson 5.1 Embracing the Needs around Us

Objective

5.1.1 *Summarize and apply the lessons Acts 3:1–10 teaches about our responsibility toward others.*

### Lesson 5.2 Explaining the Gospel

Objective

5.2.1 *Analyze the two major themes of Peter's message to the Sanhedrin.*

### Lesson 5.3 Enduring Hardship and Testing

Objective

5.3.1 *Generate an appropriate response for why Christians sometimes suffer for doing good.*

5  
LESSON  
.1

## Embracing the Needs around Us

Jesus had promised that His disciples would duplicate His works (John 14:12). Now, for the first time following Jesus’ ascension, the disciples were fulfilling that promise. Many miracles were occurring at the time of the early church. (See Acts 2:43; 5:1–11, 12, 15, 16.) But the healing of the lame beggar is the only healing miracle recorded in the first seven chapters of Acts. Luke had many testimonies of miracles he could have shared. Why did he choose to write about this one healing miracle?

1 How many healing miracles are recorded in the first seven chapters of Acts?

The reason the healing of the lame man was singled out in Luke’s history is that it came at a critical moment in the life of the church. It spun the church in a new direction.

The healing of the lame man set in motion a sequence of events crucial in the development of the early church. Out of this miracle flowed the first preaching of the gospel to the Sanhedrin, the group that convicted and sentenced Jesus to death. Out of this miracle came the first imprisonment of the church leadership. Because of this milestone event, the church would have to reposition itself on the question of suffering. Other than in Job and Habakkuk, the primary verdict of the Old Testament had been that suffering was the consequence of sin. The events in Acts 3 and 4 introduce the idea that suffering is often the consequence of doing right. Those who follow Jesus should not expect to be exempt from suffering, but they can expect to see more than their share.

2 What new idea about suffering is introduced in Acts 3 and 4?

The task of the historian is to evaluate all the information and select stories that explain cause and effect. Luke chose material that linked together to form a chain of historical progression. Inspired by the Spirit, Luke was an excellent historian. For these reasons and others, Acts 3 and 4 is a passage of Scripture that is an important hinge in the development of the church’s ministry.

**5.1.1**  
OBJECTIVE

*Summarize and apply the lessons Acts 3:1–10 teaches about our responsibility toward others.*

### Look Needs in the Eye

Peter and John’s path crossed the lame man’s every day, but this was their first encounter. From Acts 2:46 we know that the believers continued to meet daily in the temple courts. Just three verses later, in Acts 3:2, we learn that the man who was lame was at those same temple courts daily.

3 The disciples were not the only people who had recently spent significant amounts of time at the temple courts. Look up the references in the chart, and write what eye-opening events the crippled beggar might have seen through the years.

Events the temple beggar may have witnessed during Jesus’ earthly ministry	
Read	What Happened
John 2:13–16	Jesus first cleansed the temple.
John 7:1–3, 14–44	
John 8:1–11	
John 8:48–59	
John 10:22–39	
Mark 11:15–19	
Matthew 21:14	
Matthew 21:15–16	
Mark 11:27–33	
Mark 12:35–37	

The beggar probably was so much a part of the landscape that it must have been easy to pass him without really seeing him. Within the fabric of our society, there will always be people we miss along the way. Whether on the way to worship, work, or just walking around the block, we must take time to fix our eyes on people along the way. Only when we take time to really look at people will needs we have missed before become evident. As Christians, we must be careful not to let our focus on what we are doing—even if that is a good thing—keep us from noticing people in need around us.

### Give What You Have

4 Ask God to direct your attention to people you may be overlooking. How can you meet some need in their lives?

The beggar had little hope. He had been disabled since his birth. In more than forty years, he had never been healthy and able to care for himself. He had always known what it was like to feel people's pity, discomfort, or scorn. He knew what it felt like to be overlooked. When he saw Peter and John, the man's hope was not large enough to imagine what blessing might be his. In spite of the healings, miracles, and power that Jesus and the disciples had displayed in the temple courts, this man seemed never to imagine that healing could be his. Instead, he asked for something small—a coin or two so he might buy bread to live and beg another day. Many people around us have been worn down with sorrows and the cares of life. What they seek—money, comfort, relief from pain, food to ease their hunger—is often too large for us to give them. Yet it is small compared with the spiritual blessings we can give them if only we are willing. Ask God to give you wisdom and compassion to find a way to meet the needs around you.

Sometimes the only thing we can offer a person is our faith in God. Nothing material will really help.

The gift of healing does not appear to be a common gift. It especially operated through the agency of the apostles. It can operate through any believer, but it does not usually operate through everyone. Yet it is important that we pray, "God, give me something to give people in need that cannot be measured in material terms. Help me to give something that is more than writing out a check."

In Acts 3:6 we see the unique gift of faith operating through Peter and John. The church must recognize that we must say more. If we cannot say to the needy, "Get up and walk," we must still say, "What I have I give you."

In any great revival, no matter how much God is doing, there will be needy people. The Jerusalem believers could have sat back and said, "We're having a wonderful revival in Jerusalem. Thousands of people are coming to the Lord. Miracles are occurring everywhere around us. We should just have praise-and-testimony services while we wait for the Lord to come again." No matter how great the revival, there will always be people like the beggar at the **Beautiful Gate**. What a contrast—a beggar and a beautiful building. As the Body of Christ, we have a responsibility to find those people and do what we can in the name of the Lord.

### Reach Out in Faith

You may or may not have the power and faith of Peter and John to say to the lame, "Stand up and walk." When God directs your attention to something and tugs at your heart, He will give you the power to do something. Peter acted in great faith when he reached out and grabbed the lame man, commanding him to walk on legs that had never walked before. We also must take a bold step in faith.

We must look at the needs around us and at the resources we have. Then we must trust God to supernaturally help us meet the needs we find.

When Peter reached out and took hold of the man, something wonderful happened: “Instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk” (Acts 3:7–8). Good things happen when we are willing to reach out to others on God’s behalf.

Had Peter not grabbed the man’s hand, who knows how the story might have ended. People in need may hesitate when we think they should jump. Perhaps they are afraid to hope things can change. Perhaps they have become used to being passive. Perhaps past experiences have made them feel powerless. Perhaps their strength is gone or the pain is too great. In such cases, a hand up from a Christian brother or sister can make all the difference in the world. Sometimes it may be pushing someone to do something that person might never do on his or her own. Sometimes it is walking with a person to the doctor, bill collector, or law enforcement office. Sometimes it might mean making someone stand for the first time on his or her own two feet. Sometimes a loving push or pull from a person who cares is all it takes.

Because Peter and John dared to reach out and touch this man, his life was changed. No longer a lame beggar, he was healed. He would now be a productive member of society. No longer confined to a sad life outside the temple, the man went with Peter and John into the temple courts. He went walking, jumping, and praising God! God’s touch through Peter and John had transformed this man’s life.

5 What happened when Peter and John reached out and touched the beggar?

A touch can heal the heart even when it cannot change circumstances. Human beings need kind, physical contact. A hand placed on the shoulder in compassion, a hug of empathy, or a warm handshake can remind a suffering person that someone cares—that he or she is not alone.

6 What was the man’s response to being healed?

Studies have shown that living creatures need nurturing physical contact. A 1955 study at the University of Wisconsin showed that baby monkeys raised with the best of everything they needed but without physical contact (hugging, touching, etc.) were maladjusted, sad—even bizarre—compared with monkeys who were held and touched. They discovered that touch-deprived monkeys would cling to anything soft that felt like another monkey—a piece of cloth, a blanket, even a diaper. The answer was clear: monkeys need physical contact with others—to be touched (Blum 2002).

Studies with people—young and old—have shown similar results. Studies have demonstrated that the amount of physical contact a person has with others plays a crucial role in mental and physical development as children and happiness and vitality as adults. Physical touch helps the human body deal with stress and pain and impacts a person’s ability to have positive relationships with others. The amount of positive physical contact (hugging, patting someone on the back or shoulder, etc.) even influences how well the body can fight off sickness.

Here is what other scientific studies have shown about the importance of touch:

- Psychiatric patients showed dramatic improvements when they received daily back rubs.
- Rabbits with high cholesterol who were petted regularly had 60 percent fewer blockages than rabbits fed the same diet that were not petted.
- When another person holds a patient’s wrist, the patient’s blood pressure gets lower and their heartbeat slows to more healthy levels.

- Rats held for fifteen minutes each day when they were young showed far less brain deterioration and memory loss as they aged when compared to rats that were not held (Blum, 2002).

Imagine what being touched can do for someone in need. Do you know someone who needs a hug or a touch of human kindness today? How can God use you to be His hand extended in love?

### Expect the Unexpected

This miracle did far more than change the life of one lame man. This seemingly insignificant person was a catalyst for a tremendous work of God. The lame man's healing and his lively response drew a crowd and caused quite a stir. "When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him" (Acts 3:9–10).

Once again an awestruck crowd gathered—a perfect forum for Peter to preach about Jesus. Peter and John could not have planned anything to attract a crowd so successfully. They likely would never have guessed that God would use this simple beggar to spark a revival in the temple courts. God seldom works the way we expect Him to work. God's ways are above our own. He understands what we do not and works in ways we cannot grasp.

Peter and John could have prayed, "Lord, give us the key to make afternoon worship at the temple into a rally in which thousands of people are saved. Help us take this city for You." But they never would have expected the way God would do it.

With our human understanding, we might have chosen a different way. We might reason that if someone really important were healed or saved, it might influence others to accept Jesus. If the beggar had been a rich person, he might have given lots of money to the church to help it grow. But God had a better plan. He chose to use a lame beggar the apostles had likely walked past every day without noticing. He chose to do something big in an unexpected way. He still does today.

## Explaining the Gospel

A noteworthy miracle had happened. Its *purpose* had been the healing of the lame man, but its *product* had become a crowd looking with wonder at the healed man. As at Pentecost, a crowd had gathered to whom Peter provided an unrehearsed explanation of the event that had just occurred. The miracle was a sign, a doorway in revealing the nature and authority of Jesus Christ. Not to preach would be to leave the crowd only in astonishment. Preaching would result in about five thousand men alone believing (Acts 4:4).

For the second time, without the opportunity of advance study or preparation, Peter preached. The Holy Spirit, not the apostles, was scheduling the apostles' ministry opportunities. Once more, the fire of the Holy Spirit was poured out on the altar of Peter's preparation. Here, as in Acts 2:14–36, we see an emerging pattern for the preaching of the gospel.

### Exalting Jesus

Peter began by asking a question that struck like lightning in the crowd. "Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?" (Acts 3:12). He spoke to

## 5 LESSON 2

7 What is the purpose of a miraculous sign like the healing of the lame man?

### 5.2.1 OBJECTIVE

Analyze the two major themes of Peter's message to the Sanhedrin.

the crowd as one of them, a fellow Jew (“Men of Israel”). He started at a point they had in common. But Peter was a Jew who had seen the fulfillment God had spoken through the prophets about the Messiah.

8 Who was ordering Peter’s opportunities to preach?

Rather than taking credit for the miracle, Peter explained that it was God’s doing. “‘The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus’” (Acts 3:13). He continued, “‘By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see’” (Acts 3:16).

Peter’s Description of Jesus	Acts
The One whom God raised from the dead	4:10
The cornerstone which the builders rejected	4:11
The only One who can save sinners	4:12

9 How did Peter exalt Jesus?

A Christian’s purpose should never be to gain attention, respect, or glory for him or herself. Our task must be to point people to Christ. Our heart’s desire should be to honor and lift up Jesus’ name and His work on the cross. In John 12:32, Jesus said, “‘I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.’” He said this to indicate His death on the cross. But when Christians lift up Jesus and His work on the cross, all people are drawn to Him.

Few individuals are drawn to Christ because of a Christian’s persuasive words or personal power. People’s lives are changed through the power of Christ. When Christians exalt Christ and His sacrifice, unbelievers will listen. They will come to Him. People will embrace Him.

Note how Peter, as in his Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:23–24), contrasted the shameful way the people had treated Jesus with the way God treated Him. People killed the author of life, but God glorified Him. This was accomplished by God raising Jesus from the dead and by continuing to do miracles in His name. This is a key part of Peter’s sermons.

10 In what two ways did God glorify Jesus?

Peter’s words were direct and harsh. Throughout history, the question of who killed Jesus has caused needless conflict between Jews and Christians. For too long, too many “Christians” have answered that it was the Jews who killed Jesus. In the New Testament, no one is ever charged with the crucifixion of Christ except those who were directly involved. Everyone else—Jew and non-Jew—if they are charged, are charged with unbelief. Some in the crowd at the temple in Acts 3 were members of the Sanhedrin—the group that took part in the decision to crucify Jesus. It was these men Peter rightly charged with Jesus’ death: “‘You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this’” (Acts 3:13–15).

11 Who is the central person in your testimony to unbelievers? Is it Christ, or is it you? Ask a mature Christian brother or sister to discuss this and hold you accountable for the manner in which you witness.

The fable is told of the donkey that carried Christ into Jerusalem at His triumphal entry. Crowds of people gathered and shouted praises. Some sang, and many waved palm branches in welcoming celebration. Others spread their coats on the ground before the donkey. With each step, the foolish little donkey’s pride grew. He must really be something for all of these people to think so much of him. He puffed out his chest, held his head high, and enjoyed the applause.

This is just a silly story, but it illustrates a point. Too many Christians are full of themselves when they should be full of Jesus. Christians should humbly ask God to use them. When He does, they must be careful not to take any of the honor that truly belongs to Jesus.

### Extending God's Forgiveness

The next part of Peter's sermon tells us something about the heart of God. After bluntly charging the religious leaders with the death of God's Son, Peter extended a hand in forgiveness. Peter showed the great grace of God in attributing Christ's death to the ignorance of the people and their rulers.

12 What does Peter's sermon in Acts 3:17–26 tell us about the heart of God?

The Old Testament distinguished clearly between two kinds of sin. Sins of ignorance were one type of sin. Such unintentional sins could be forgiven upon repentance and an acceptable sacrifice (Leviticus 4:2,13,22; 5:15; Numbers 15:24, 27–29). But sins of a high hand were intentional sins. Such sins were to be punished severely. No sacrifice would bring forgiveness (Exodus 21:14; Numbers 15:30; Deuteronomy 17:12; Psalm 19:13).

13 What is the difference between sins of ignorance and sins of a high hand?

Did the people who betrayed Jesus and plotted His death—the people who yelled, “Crucify Him!”—know what they were doing? Was it an act of first-degree murder against an innocent Son of God? The scriptural answer is clear. It was a deliberate act. In Acts 3:13–15, Peter boldly indicted them for this crime.

Then Peter did a remarkable thing. Calling those he had just condemned “brothers,” he said: “I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders” (Acts 3:17). Through use of the word *ignorance*, Peter assured the crowd that God had chosen to view their deliberate sin of the high hand as a lesser sin of ignorance. He was telling them that God would not treat their sin as something that could never be forgiven. Instead, He offered pardon. “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out” (Acts 3:19).

14 What type of sin had the Sanhedrin committed in killing Jesus?

Peter ended his sermon by indicating God's blessing and forgiveness would first be given to those responsible for Christ's death. Through the grace of God, there is amnesty in the air. God's forgiveness is free and total and complete. He offers it to every person. If God can forgive someone who was directly responsible for killing Jesus, think of what God is willing to do for people today who have failed or sinned. God wants to forgive not only sins of ignorance, but also deliberate, rebellious sins. God is willing to think the best of us and forgive us freely.

15 What word does Peter use to describe their sin? What does his word choice indicate about how God is willing to treat those who killed His Son?

What a relief and joy for Peter's listeners who wished to repent. What a welcome gift of grace this foreshadowed for those who sin today. God freely extends forgiveness to all who repent. It matters not what we have done as God's enemies. He seeks to make us friends.

16 Since God is willing to forgive even the worst sinners who repent, do we have any right or excuse not to forgive others—or ourselves? Explain.

It is said that General George Washington was once asked by a friend to save the life of another man condemned to die for treason. But the man's deliberate treason was too serious for mercy or favors. “I am sorry,” Washington reportedly told the man firmly. “You have walked seventy miles for nothing. I cannot spare the life of your friend.”

“Friend?” The man replied. “This man is not my friend, but my most bitter enemy.” The mediator was a minister. The condemned man had opposed his ministry and fought against him at every turn. Somehow the minister was able to forgive the man, even going to great lengths to plead for his life.

Washington pardoned the man, who returned home with his old enemy—now true friends.

Such forgiveness and love is not common in the natural world, but that is the kind of love and forgiveness Jesus offers to even the worst sinners. “God

demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). When we were God’s enemies, He made peace with us, embraced us, and forgave us by sacrificing His own Son (Romans 5:10). No matter how terrible or deliberate our sin against Him, God reaches out to us in love and forgiveness.

## 5.3.1 LESSON

### 5.3.1 OBJECTIVE

*Generate an appropriate response for why Christians sometimes suffer for doing good.*

17 What group of people caused trouble for Peter?

18 Retaliation is the normal human response to being unfairly attacked as Peter and John were. How did Peter and John respond instead? How difficult would it have been for you to respond as Peter and John did?

## Enduring Hardship and Testing

Peter’s second sermon met with hostility as well as success. Trouble came not from the irreligious but from the religious leaders. Seeing the crowd and the growing number of believers, the priests and temple guards may have scattered the new Christians by arresting their leaders. The gospel messengers, so powerful in healing and preaching, were powerless to stop their own arrest. Even so, Peter and John, like all believers in the New Testament, were not bitter, violent, or defensive when attacked. Those who would minister the gospel today can learn much from the suffering and reactions of the leaders of the early church.

### Suffering for Doing Good

Somehow many Christians have gotten the idea that doing the right thing will ensure that things go right for them. When something unexpected happens or they face trials or setbacks, they are shocked. They wring their hands and try to figure out what went wrong and how to fix it. Unhelpful fellow Christians sit back in judgment: *Surely this bad thing happened because of some personal failure.* Sometimes in working for God, just the opposite is true.

God had just used Peter and John in a powerful way. A man who had been lame for more than forty years had been healed. The large crowd had seen proof of God’s power and believed in Jesus. Acts 4:4 says, “Many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand.” It seems likely that two thousand men alone (not to mention women and children) put their faith in Jesus that day. This response was a direct result of the miracle of healing and Peter’s sermon. But in this world it sometimes seems that no good deed goes unpunished.

In spite of—even because of—this great success, Peter and John were arrested and thrown in prison overnight. Notice the reasons given in Acts 4:2. “They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.” Such teaching threatened the authority of the religious leaders. They did not like the fact that Peter and John could come into their domain and draw a bigger crowd with more success than they could. Furthermore, they did not like having their pre-conceived notions and pet beliefs countered. These are still two of the most common reasons those with religious standing fight against the work of God today.

A religious sect known as the **Sadducees** ruled over the temple. The highest-ranking Sadducee, the high priest, led the Sanhedrin. The captain of the temple guard was a priest next in rank to the high priest. Sadducees did not believe in resurrection of the dead. They did not believe in a coming Messiah. Everything Peter and John did and said directly opposed the Sadducees’ beliefs. No wonder they wanted to stop these apostles.

An important lesson from Acts 3 and 4 is this: Whenever a great work of God is about to be advanced, leadership will be severely tested. A great victory has been won

for God. The church stands at the brink of even greater things. That's when the enemy strikes. He must stop this before it goes any further, so Satan tries to discourage or destroy the leadership. Satan probably would have liked for them to say, "It is useless. We might as well feel sorry for ourselves. Tomorrow we face the Sanhedrin. What will they do with us?" Satan seeks to discourage and destroy Christians through fear. While fear looks at the future with negativity, faith sees the future with hope.

Peter and John were the number one and number two leaders in the early church. If Peter and John could be destroyed or silenced, perhaps all the leadership could be stopped. Leadership is always on the vulnerable edge. They are often the first to be attacked. That is why it is so important for the church to pray for those in leadership.

Leaders are not the only ones who are attacked or crushed for doing good. Anyone who spends time with other people, even Christians, will get hurt sooner or later. Your motives will be misunderstood. Your work for God will be overlooked or criticized. Yet Christians who are wounded while working for God must not give in to discouragement. Deciding that pleasing God is more important than pleasing people is an important first step. Peter and John had this in mind when they replied to the Sanhedrin's threats. "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19–20).

After spending the night in jail, Peter and John had to face the same group whose leaders had arrested Jesus. This group had falsely accused Him on trumped-up charges. They had pressed Jesus illegally to testify against himself. Then when the high priest declared Him guilty of blasphemy, they spat in Jesus' face. They hit and slapped Him, blindfolded and taunted Him (Matthew 26:57–58; Mark 14:53–65). At dawn the next day, the whole Sanhedrin had gathered to approve the charges against Him and condemn Him to death.

At Jesus' trial, Peter had cringed outside the meeting place. He sought to be close to Jesus, yet in fear denied Him. But everything had changed for Peter. Now he met the Sanhedrin without fear and boldly proclaimed Jesus.

It can give us courage to remember that although the enemy may rage against us when we work for God, he cannot prevail. No matter what is brought against us, God's purpose will win out.

Great good came from Peter and John's unfair suffering. As a direct result of their arrest, Peter was able to preach a Spirit-inspired sermon before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:8). He exalted Jesus and pointed to His sacrifice and resurrection (Acts 4:10–11). He explained the way to salvation through Jesus (Acts 4:12). The Sanhedrin could not argue with or cover up the miracle God had done through Peter and John. "Everybody living in Jerusalem knows they have done an outstanding miracle, and we cannot deny it" (Acts 4:16). The religious rulers could not escape the truth that these men showed a power and understanding far beyond their own strength and ability. "They took note that these men had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

Even these facts did not stop the Sanhedrin from making threats. There was no happily ever after. "After further threats they let them go" (Acts 4:21). Peter and John's Spirit-inspired speech did not change the religious leaders' hearts. The leaders would wait for another day to try to stop these men and this new movement.

### The Sovereignty of God

As soon as they were released, Peter and John went back to their friends and told them what the council had ordered. Immediately the group took the problem

19 Who are your leaders locally, nationally, and internationally? Why is it important to pray for them?

20 What phrase in Acts 4:8 suggests the source of Peter's assurance and wisdom on this occasion?

21 What should you do when it seems another Christian is opposing you or working against what you are trying to do for God?

22 How many others in the Bible can you think of who suffered for being righteous?

23 Have you ever suffered for doing right? How can you apply this study to your own life?

24 What is meant by the title *Sovereign Lord*?

25 How should knowing you have a sovereign Lord affect your attitudes and responses when life seems unfair and out of control?

26 What difficulties or hardships in your life have you been able to recognize as God's working for good?

27 After being released by the Sanhedrin, what did the believers pray for and what did they not pray for?

to God in prayer. "When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. 'Sovereign Lord,' they said, 'you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them'" (Acts 4:24).

They started by acknowledging that God is **sovereign**. The words translated "Sovereign Lord" are one word in the Greek language—*despotes*, which is correctly translated "despot." Although the word *despot* has a negative connotation today, this is not its original or primary meaning. It refers to a ruler with absolute power and authority. The word here is used to describe a God who is in total control. Peter and John's situation just seemed out of control. At the beginning of their prayer, they were saying, *No matter what it looks like, You, God, are in absolute control. You are our Sovereign Lord.*

Christians are not accidents waiting to happen. We live under the sovereignty and in the divine plan of God. The time we most need to fall back on God's sovereignty often is the very time when it looks like He is not sovereign and things seem hopelessly out of control. It is then that we should pray, "Sovereign Lord."

In addition, the believers showed that they understood that bad things often serve God's purpose. "Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen" (Acts 4:27–28).

Perhaps recognizing this gave them courage to pray as they did next: "Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus" (Acts 4:29–30).

They did not pray for protection. They did not pray that the persecution would end. They prayed not for vengeance but for courage. They asked God to give them courage to continue doing what was right. They asked for strength to speak God's Word with boldness. They asked for God to move among them and stir the people again with miraculous signs and wonders in Jesus' name. How many of us today would have had the heart and the courage to pray this prayer in the face of arrest and threats?

When the prayer was finished, the place (not the group) was shaken! This was a sign of their continued advance. As in Acts 4:8, we see the continuing result of the Spirit's filling. The Word was spoken boldly. The believers had greater need of God than ever before. He filled their greater need. They had more of Him, and He had more of them. That is the result of the continual filling of the Spirit.

Some people think bad things should not happen to believers, but God uses our trials to perfect us and further His work.

When a person learns to drive, the tendency is to watch the road directly in front of the car. This gives an incomplete and sometimes dangerous picture. It takes a while for the new driver to realize that things look less scary and are more secure when he or she shifts his or her gaze farther down the road.

When suffering and hardships fill our road, our tendency as Christians is to focus on them. When we learn to take our eyes off the rough road directly in front of us and keep them fixed on Jesus, we can better see the whole road. We can see that it straightens out just ahead. We can see that this difficult turn is leading to a better place. We learn to trust the sovereignty of God.



## Test Yourself



Circle the letter of the *best* answer.

1. The lame man healed in Acts 3 responded to his healing by
  - a) reporting it to the Sanhedrin.
  - b) walking, leaping, and praising God.
  - c) going to the temple to be cleansed.
  - d) falling at the apostles' feet in gratitude.
2. The account of the crippled beggar at the Gate Beautiful teaches the importance of
  - a) physical touch.
  - b) wealth.
  - c) thanksgiving.
  - d) eloquent speaking.
3. In Acts 3, the healing of the crippled man at the Gate Beautiful resulted in
  - a) Peter preaching the gospel to the Sanhedrin.
  - b) Peter and John being imprisoned.
  - c) the man being healed.
  - d) all of the above.
4. The biblical principles from the account of the crippled man at the Gate Beautiful are
  - a) recognize the needs of others, reach out in faith, give what you have, and expect the unexpected.
  - b) give generously, show compassion, and meet people's physical needs.
  - c) show compassion, pray daily at church, reach out in faith, and expect the unexpected.
  - d) give generously, meet people's physical needs, and expect the unexpected.
5. The two major themes of Peter's message to the Sanhedrin in Acts 3 were
  - a) repentance and rebuke.
  - b) exalting Jesus and extending God's forgiveness.
  - c) compassion and forgiveness.
  - d) evangelism and the second coming of Christ.
6. In ministry, our goal should be to
  - a) build our own ministry.
  - b) bring glory to ourselves.
  - c) point people to Christ.
  - d) serve our own needs.
7. Peter's message to the Jews and their leaders, following the healing of the lame man in Acts 3, indicated that God had chosen to view their active role in Jesus' crucifixion as a sin of
  - a) omission.
  - b) ignorance.
  - c) death.
  - d) hatred.
8. Which group of people responded hostilely to Peter's message in Acts 4?
  - a) Irreligious onlookers
  - b) Religious leaders
  - c) Roman soldiers
  - d) Greeks
9. Christians go through times of suffering because
  - a) of sin.
  - b) they are doing God's will.
  - c) of God's sovereignty.
  - d) all the above can be true.
10. According to the IST, the title Sovereign Lord means
  - a) "God is in control."
  - b) "God is worthy of our praise."
  - c) "God can do what He wants."
  - d) "God is all-knowing."

# Responses to Interactive Questions

## Chapter 5

Some of these responses may include information that is supplemental to the IST. These questions are intended to produce reflective thinking beyond the course content and your responses may vary from these examples.

**1** How many healing miracles are recorded in the first seven chapters of Acts?

Just one, the healing of the lame beggar.

**2** What new idea about suffering is introduced in Acts 3 and 4?

Suffering is often the consequence of doing right; certainly suffering is not always a consequence of doing wrong.

**3** The disciples were not the only people who had recently spent significant amounts of time at the temple courts. Look up the references in the chart, and write what eye-opening events the crippled beggar might have seen through the years.

Events the temple beggar may have witnessed during Jesus' earthly ministry	
Read	What Happened
John 2:13–16	Jesus first cleansed the temple.
John 7:1–3, 14–44	Jesus taught in the temple court at the Feast of Tabernacles.
John 8:1–11	Jesus taught in the temple courts and forgave a woman caught in adultery.
John 8:48–59	Critics argued with Jesus in the temple and tried to stone Him.
John 10:22–39	Jesus' opponents confronted Him in the temple area (Solomon's Colonnade) at the Feast of Dedication. Again they tried to seize and stone Jesus.
Mark 11:15–19	Before a large crowd, Jesus again cleared the temple of merchants.
Matthew 21:14	Jesus healed the lame and blind in the temple.
Matthew 21:15–16	Children shouted praises to Jesus, making the chief priests and teachers of the law indignant.
Mark 11:27–33	The religious leaders confronted Jesus about His authority to minister.
Mark 12:35–37	Jesus delighted large crowds with His teaching in the temple courts.

**4** Ask God to direct your attention to people you may be overlooking. How can you meet some need in their lives?

Answers will vary.

**5** What happened when Peter and John reached out and touched the beggar?

He was healed.

**6** What was the man's response to being healed?

The man went with Peter and John into the temple courts, walking, jumping, and praising God. His life was transformed.

**7** What was the purpose of a miraculous sign like the healing of the lame man?

Miracles are signs, a doorway to reveal the nature and authority of Jesus Christ.

**8** Who was ordering Peter's opportunities to preach?

The Holy Spirit

**9** How did Peter exalt Jesus?

Peter gave God credit for the miracle rather than claiming it for himself.

**10** In what two ways did God glorify Jesus?

God glorified Jesus by (1) raising Jesus from the dead and by continuing to (2) do miracles in Jesus' name.

**11** Who is the central person in your testimony to unbelievers? Is it Christ, or is it you? Ask a mature Christian brother or sister to discuss this and hold you accountable for the manner in which you witness.

Answers will vary.

**12** What does Peter's sermon in Acts 3:17–26 tell us about the heart of God?

God's heart is willing to forgive even the worst sinners.

**13** What is the difference between sins of ignorance and sins of a high hand?

Sins of ignorance were unintentional. In the Old Testament, when a person repented and offered an acceptable sacrifice, he or she could be forgiven of such sins. But sins of a high hand were intentional. No sacrifice could bring forgiveness. Such sins were to be punished severely.

**14** What type of sin had the Sanhedrin committed in killing Jesus?

The Sanhedrin had committed an intentional sin of a high hand.

**15** What word does Peter use to describe their sin? What does his word choice indicate about how God is willing to treat those who killed His Son?

Peter uses the word ignorance to describe their sin. It shows that God is willing to offer pardon even to those who killed Jesus.

**16** Since God is willing to forgive even the worst sinners who repent, do we have any right or excuse not to forgive others—or ourselves? Explain.

Answers will vary, but God's willingness to forgive should spur believers to forgive also.

**17** What group of people caused trouble for Peter?

Peter's trouble came not from the irreligious, but religious leaders, the Sanhedrin.

**18** Retaliation is the normal human response to being unfairly attacked as Peter and John were. How did Peter and John respond instead? How difficult would it have been for you to respond as Peter and John did?

Some normal human responses would be to get defensive, get angry, or fight back. Peter and John were not bitter, violent, or defensive. Answers about a personal response will vary.

**19** Who are your leaders locally, nationally, and internationally? Why is it important to pray for them?

Answers will vary.

**20** What phrase in Acts 4:8 suggests the source of Peter's assurance and wisdom on this occasion?

"Filled with the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit gave Peter power to witness in spite of danger.

**21** What should you do when it seems another Christian is opposing you or working against what you are trying to do for God?

Answers will vary, but Christians should first look at their own hearts and motives. Likely some in the Sanhedrin sincerely thought they were doing God's work. Some who identify with Peter and John might actually be more like the Sanhedrin. Christians who find themselves in conflict with other Christians for doing right should follow Peter and John's example. They should speak the truth boldly but with respect. They should not fear or back down from what is right no matter what the result or cost. They must leave the outcome in God's hands and trust Him to work it out for His glory.

**22** How many others in the Bible can you think of who suffered for being righteous?

Answers will vary. They could include: Abel, Gideon, David, Elijah, Job, Jeremiah, Zechariah, Paul, and James.

**23** Have you ever suffered for doing right? How can you apply this study to your own life?

Answers will vary.

**24** What is meant by the title Sovereign Lord?

Sovereign Lord refers to a ruler with absolute power and authority. It means God is in total control of every situation we may face.

**25** How should knowing you have a sovereign Lord affect your attitudes and responses when life seems unfair and out of control?

Answers will vary, but should deal with the concept of giving us peace and assurance knowing God is in control and is working even in what seems like chaos.

**26** What difficulties or hardships in your life have you been able to recognize as God's working for good?

Answers will vary.

**27** After being released by the Sanhedrin, what did the believers pray for and what did they not pray for?

They did not pray for protection or that the persecution would end. They prayed not for vengeance but for courage to continue doing what was right. They asked for strength to speak God's Word with boldness. They asked God to move among them and stir the people again with miraculous signs and wonders in Jesus' name.

# CHAPTER 6

## The Growth of the Church

Doris Wood had poor vision. She could see only 50 percent with one eye and 20 percent with the other eye. This caused her to wear very thick glasses. Then a powerful revival came to the Bible school she was attending in Springfield, Missouri. Instead of going to classes, teachers and students spent time in prayer and worship. As she prayed, it seemed that a voice within her said, *Doris, take off your glasses.* She did nothing. People had prayed for her eyes many times. But her sight never got better. Then the voice spoke again. *Doris, take off your glasses.* Again, she doubted that God was speaking to her. Finally, the voice came a third time. She responded, *If I take them off, I do not ever want to put them on again.* At that moment, she had a vision of Christ on the cross. Blood was flowing from His wounds. In her vision, Doris took some of the blood and put it on her eyes. The presence of Jesus was very real to her. She did not even remember throwing her glasses across the room. She was healed instantly! The vision of Jesus continued for a long time as she prayed in an unknown language. Doris never needed the glasses again.

When the church gives God room to move, great miracles occur. These miracles are often accompanied by persecution, but God is faithful, and His plan will be fulfilled. This chapter covers the purifying of the early church and shows the power God gave to overcome the accompanying persecution.

### Lesson 6.1 The Purifying of the Church

Objectives

- 6.1.1 Summarize specific ways Christians showed concern about meeting needs within the Body and what you can learn from their example.
- 6.1.2 Explain why Ananias and Sapphira were judged so severely.

### Lesson 6.2 The Powerful Church

Objective

- 6.2.1 Describe five distinguishing marks of a powerful church.

### Lesson 6.3 The Persistent Church

Objective

- 6.3.1 Understand three tactics Satan uses to attack the church, and be on guard against such assaults in your own life.


 A graphic with a large number '6' and the word 'LESSON' in a serif font, with a smaller '1' below it. The background is a gradient from light to dark.

## The Purifying of the Church

One characteristic of Luke's writing is that he bridges stories of single events with summaries. For example, between the events of Pentecost and the healing of the lame man is the summary that describes the life of the early church (Acts 2:42–47).

Two more summaries occur in Acts 4:32–5:42 that link specific events and provide a setting for the next recorded incident. Acts 4:32–35 is the first of these. It helps readers get from the prayer meeting after Peter and John were freed from jail to the events surrounding the gifts of **Barnabas** and **Ananias and Sapphira**.

The information in these summaries is vital. It helps us understand causes, effects, and motives. It helps explain why God judged Ananias and Sapphira so severely.

### 6.1.1 OBJECTIVE

*Summarize specific ways Christians showed concern about meeting needs within the Body and what you can learn from their example.*

### The Right Stuff

Did you hear about the church that split before it even got started? Half of the founders wanted to name it Grace United Church, and the other half insisted on United Grace Church.

#### Unity and selflessness (Acts 4:32)

Lack of unity in the church is no laughing matter. Christians too often split up over non-essentials. It takes more than a name to show the world that Christians are united. The first trait of the early church is that they were united. This unity showed itself in their financial care for one another. The believers in Acts 4 are a wonderful example of the unity and selflessness the church should display. "All the believers were one in heart and mind" (Acts 4:32).

The people of God are to get along. They must lay aside petty differences and agree to submerge distinctive personalities and even ideas for the good of the whole. They must be "one in heart and mind." Christian involvement is far more than agreeing with a doctrine or attending a church service. It is a way of life! It translates into action that impacts the bottom line. The church in Acts shared their possessions and their money. "No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had" (Acts 4:32).

#### Powerful testimony (Acts 4:33)

Luke writes, "With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all." Notice what they testified about. We are not told they spoke about the importance of giving to the church. We are not told they spoke about unity. Instead they talked about the Lord's resurrection. This is the focal point of the gospel. Christians today would do well to keep the sacrifice and resurrection of Christ at the center of their message. Such a message has the power of the risen Lord, for it is His story. Now, as then, it is vital for the church to keep its priorities straight. Caring for the needy is important, but it is not to be more important than the central truths of the gospel.

#### Generosity (Acts 4:34–37)

"There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need" (Acts 4:34–35).

No one was pressured to give. No early church edict said everyone must join in. So we should not view Christian socialism as a pattern to be practiced throughout the body of Christ. In fact, when Ananias and Sapphira offered their

gift, Peter said to them in Acts 5:4, “‘Did not it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, was not the money at your disposal?’”

Believers were free to do with their money and resources what they wished. The selling of assets appears to have related only to additional homes. We read later of the church meeting in homes. If everyone had sold their homes, there would be none left in which to meet. The land and homes appear to be those not used personally by the owners.

Later we find the Gentile believers being called to address financial needs in the Jerusalem church. Some might think this need arose because the Christians squandered their funds. That opinion fails to account for one important fact. Feelings in Jerusalem society quickly turned against those early believers. They were laid off from work. Because of their faith, their property was confiscated.

In the 1990s, a man lost his job and could not find a new one for more than a year, his coworker and fellow Christian felt God wanted him to help. Although he had little money, he had company stock that was doing well. Against expert advice, he sold some stock each month to pay the man’s expenses until he found a new job.

Less than one year later, the company that employed the generous man went bankrupt after a scandal. His retirement funds were gone, and his stocks were worthless. Instead of being bitter, he recognized an important truth. Helping a fellow Christian had cost him nothing he would not have lost anyway. He was glad he had obeyed God. Ironically, it was the same man he had helped who paid his mortgage and helped him get a job with his new company.

When we give to help other Christians in obedience to God, we give something we cannot keep to gain something we cannot lose.

The early church’s selling of assets to meet the common need was not repeated in any other new church. But we should embrace the spirit of what this church was reaching for. The church body has an obligation to meet the needs of its own members. This principle is repeated throughout the New Testament. The way of meeting that need may change, but the purpose remains the same.

The example of these believers should spur us to look at what we have. Almost everyone has something he or she does not need; that asset could be used for God’s work.

Barnabas is just one example of the unselfishness that marked the church. Likely he is introduced here because of his later importance in Acts. He is also used as a representative of the Spirit-filled community. His giving stands out in sharp contrast to the giving of Ananias and Sapphira.

Notice what we are told about Barnabas in Acts 4:36–37. His name was Joseph, but he was renamed Barnabas by the apostles. His new name reflected his character. He was an encourager. Although he was a Jew, his home was on the island of Cyprus. He was a **Levite** and could have assisted with certain aspects of temple worship. He sold property that belonged to him and brought the money to the apostles. It seems likely that Barnabas was a continual source of inspiration and encouragement to others. Later in Acts we will see more traits of Barnabas that manifest his true nature as an encourager.

When we give generously to God and His people, we do more than accomplish something material. We encourage the body of Christ and become a positive example for others to follow.

## 6.1.2 OBJECTIVE

*Explain why Ananias and Sapphira were judged so severely.*

1 Compare and contrast the gift of Barnabas with that of Ananias and Sapphira.

2 How did Peter know Ananias was lying?

## The Wrong Stuff

### Seeking personal recognition (Acts 5:1–2)

The summary of Acts 4:32–35 provides the context to understand Ananias and Sapphira’s moral treachery. “Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. With his wife’s full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles’ feet” (Acts 5:1–2).

Selling land and giving the money to the church became a highly approved church activity. People who did so, like Barnabas, were held in high esteem. So it appears Ananias and Sapphira decided to build their reputations through giving. They were the first believers who wanted recognition for their offering, and they hid their real motive for giving.

### Lying testimony (Acts 5:3–4)

Peter knew what Ananias and Sapphira were doing. We are not told how Peter knew they were lying. Perhaps he had already heard about the price of their land. It is more likely that one of the gifts of the Spirit, the word of knowledge, operated through Peter: “Peter said, ‘Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?’” (Acts 5:3).

Peter made clear of what sin Ananias and Sapphira were not guilty. They did not sin when they kept some of the money for themselves. Peter said, “Did not it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, was not the money at your disposal?” (Acts 5:4). Ananias and Sapphira were under no obligation to give all or even any money from the sale of their land.

Although they lied to Peter about how much money they had received for the land, they were punished for a far greater sin. “You have lied to the Holy Spirit . . . You have not lied to men but to God” (Acts 5:3–4).

The early church was about to learn that lying to God had severe and immediate consequences.

### Judgment (Acts 5:5–11)

Judgment came swiftly to Ananias and Sapphira. First the husband, and later the wife, fell down dead. Can you imagine how people would react if such a thing happened in a church service today? That’s about how they reacted then. “Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events” (Acts 5:11).

What happened to Ananias and Sapphira may shock and puzzle us. They were doing something good. In spite of the fact that they kept some of the money, they were still giving a lot to the church. God’s response raises questions about purity and the fact that it is only by His grace that we are not all carried out dead, for we all have sinned.

We need to ask if such punishment for lying was unique or normative. Was it meant to be a pattern, so that when anybody lied in the church, he or she would be struck dead? If so, a lot more people would die in church services. The New Testament does not contain another description of a member of the Christian community being struck dead as a consequence of sin. So it was unique, not normative. This experience tells us two things.

First, God is responsible for the manner in which He judges our sin. First Timothy 5:24 says that some people’s sins precede them to judgment, and others’ sins follow after them. This means that someday all of the secrets of our lives will be revealed. Some people’s sinful secrets are revealed in this life. But some people will not be caught in their sin. Their judgment will become clear on that final day. However, whether sooner or later, it is sure that judgment for sin will come.

3 Summarize the meaning of Matthew 18:15–17.

4 What are two reasons Ananias and Sapphira were punished so severely?

In Ananias and Sapphira’s case, God chose to move His judgment into the present as a clear warning to the church to walk in purity. The normal process of church discipline was suspended by direct intervention of God.

The second thing Ananias and Sapphira’s experience tells us involves credibility. The heart of Christianity is the claim that Jesus rose from the dead. At the birth of the church, the whole credibility of the Christian message fell upon the witness of the apostles and others who were eyewitnesses. The integrity or credibility of these people was about all they had going for them. Had the lie of Ananias and Sapphira become known but left unaddressed, the credibility of the entire church would have suffered.

This event shows that God holds truth very dearly. If He will move in judgment against someone who is lying in a relatively minor sense—fudging the figures—can you imagine what God would do to someone who is directly lying and saying Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead if He had not? If God acted in judgment against this couple for lying about money, would He not act in even greater judgment if the apostles had been lying about the Resurrection?

The results of the judgment on Ananias and Sapphira are immediately apparent. Reverent awe rested on the whole church. People felt both fear and respect.

The story of Ananias and Sapphira motivates us to avoid sinning. And if we should sin, it challenges us to confess and repent, lest we face the prospect of meeting the Lord with unconfessed sin in our lives (2 Timothy 2:19–20). It should encourage us to live and speak the truth, knowing our words and actions affect the credibility of the gospel in the eyes of the world.

## 6 LESSON 2

### 6.2.1 OBJECTIVE

*Describe five distinguishing marks of a powerful church.*

5 What lesson from the lives of Barnabas, Ananias, and Sapphira is most relevant for your life today?

6 Locate four times the words *signs* and *wonders* have already been used together in Acts 2 and 4.

## The Powerful Church

Acts 5:12–16 shows the church operating in power. This is another crucial summary passage. It gives context to enhance our understanding of another key event, the apostles’ standing before the Sanhedrin in Acts 5:17–42. Try reading directly from Acts 5:11 to 5:17 without this passage. Notice how difficult it would be to follow. Without verses 12–16 one might assume the apostles were imprisoned because of the death of Ananias and Sapphira.

Anyone who teaches must keep the student in mind. You may be able to jump from one point to the next, but you need to show your students how or why you made the jump.

## The Apostles Did Many Signs and Wonders

Acts 5:12 says, “The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people.” A church cannot manufacture miracles. But a church can have an atmosphere of faith and worship in which God can perform His acts more easily among us.

We are told again that only the apostles were performing the miraculous signs and wonders.

7 Look up the references given in the chart. In the appropriate boxes, describe the supernatural event and explain how it resulted in church growth.

<b>Supernatural events were a major key to church growth in Acts.</b>		
<b>Acts</b>	<b>Supernatural Event</b>	<b>Result</b>
1:3–8	Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to His disciples for 40 days.	They believed He was alive.
1:9–11	Jesus ascended into heaven. Angels instructed the disciples.	The disciples waited in Jerusalem to be baptized in the Holy Spirit.
2:1–4; 2:41		
3:1–4:4		
5:1–11		
5:12–18		
5:17–20 5:27, 40–42		
6:8, 10, 15 8:1, 4		

8 Why do you think signs and wonders led to growth of the church? Do you think that was the purpose of the miracles? Explain.

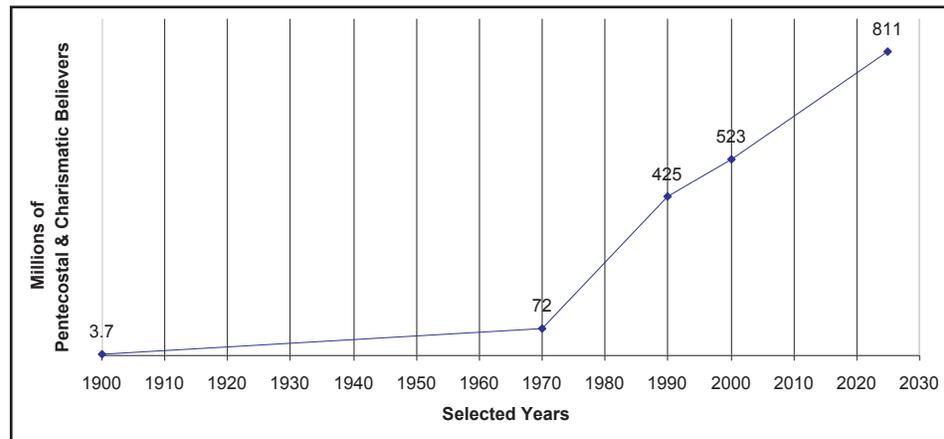
Supernatural events continue to help the church grow today. There are those who do not believe such miracles are available to the church today. They prefer to say the age of miracles died with the apostles (Wimber and Springer 1986, 157–174). However, supernatural events have continued throughout church history. Note the following selected, short summary.

- Justin Martyr, AD 100–165, wrote that believers of his day cast out many demons and healed the sick.
- Irenaeus, AD 140–203, wrote that some in his day cast out demons and healed the sick. He said it was not possible to name the number of spiritual gifts God had given to believers throughout the world.
- Tertullian, AD 160–220, wrote about those set free from demons and healed in his day.
- Ambrose, AD 339–397, testified about healings and tongues in his lifetime.
- Augustine, AD 354–430, wrote about the blind, the sick, the demon-possessed, and the dead who were healed in his days.
- Francis of Assisi, 1181–1226, had many miracles in his ministry.
- Martin Luther, 1483–1546, cured the sick in the name of Jesus.
- John Wesley, 1703–1791, said that spiritual gifts were taken away for two reasons. *First*, because of a lack of faith and holiness. *Second*, because dry, formal men began to ridicule whatever gifts they themselves did not have. Furthermore, these leaders described God's gifts as insane and fake. Wesley's journal describes more than two hundred healings in his ministry (Wimber and Springer 1986, 157–174).

In recent years, thousands of healings and miracles have taken place (Rumph 1996) in various nations of the world. In *Acts Today*, author Ralph W. Harris tells of many healings, miracles, and messages in tongues being understood by visitors (1995).

Pentecostal churches, who place an emphasis on the supernatural, are growing faster than others. In 2003, Pentecostals represented 80 percent of all

Protestant believers in Latin America. Pentecostals and Charismatics believe in miracles, healings, and praying in tongues. There are about 647,810,000 Great Commission Christians. We define these as active church members who take the Great Commission seriously (Matthew 28:19–20). They obey Christ’s command to share the good news with the lost. Of these, 523,767,000 are either Pentecostal or Charismatic (Barrett 2000, 25). In other words, five out of every six Great Commission Christians in the world are Pentecostal or Charismatic. This means that more than 80 percent of those working for church growth expect signs and wonders today. Many recognize David Barrett as the leading person who gathers missions statistics. He predicts that by the year 2025, 91 percent of all Great Commission Christians will be Pentecostal or Charismatic (Barrett 2000, 25). These believe the Holy Spirit works through believers now as He did in the early church.



Growth of Pentecostal and Charismatic believers from 1900–2025 as projected by missiologist David Barrett (2000, 25).

### The Believers Met Publicly Despite Threats and Warnings

The apostles were supported by all the believers gathering together. Gathering together is important. The church loses some of its power when its members fail to express solidarity by gathering together publicly. Some people regard involvement in the body of Christ as an elective. They decide whether to participate based on what else they have to do. But in any dynamic advance of the church, every individual believer senses a responsibility to be present in community. In the early church, there was a commitment to be present when the community met in large public meetings and in smaller home group cells. Each of the thousands of believers added to the church in Acts 1–4 had this commitment.

They gathered as a whole group in spite of threats and warnings in Acts 4:18, 21. They were committed to meeting together in spite of danger or inconvenience. The believers did not hide away in private meetings but continued to meet in public, visible places. They met outside in **Solomon’s Colonnade**, a beautiful section of the temple where thousands of people could gather. Their faithful presence and solidarity were a witness to the world.

God understands and is forgiving of many legitimate reasons for not going to church. But too often excuses are just excuses that reveal how little we value God’s power in our lives and in our churches.

## Only the Truly Committed Dared Join the Church

“No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number” (Acts 5:13–14). At first this may seem to contradict itself.

One explanation could be that Acts 5:13 refers to the apostles. The awesome display of miraculous power in their lives is so outstanding that no one else would presume to belong in that company. Yet new believers were being attracted to join.

Another explanation might be that the judgment against Ananias and Sapphira kept people from joining casually. The couple’s fate showed that being a Christian was too dangerous for anyone who was insincere or half-hearted in their commitment. Still, many more did choose to join the church. This shows the power of the church and its message.

In some countries today Christians are persecuted by the State. In one such place, it is a crime for churches to meet if they were not licensed by the government. Churches that teach the gospel are almost never approved. One evening, one house church’s secret meeting was interrupted by an armed soldier wearing a government uniform. He stood at the front of the church and threatened the believers. He gave one chance for those who were not willing to suffer for their faith to leave now and never come back. Several in the small group left, some sobbing, their heads hanging and eyes downcast. Others prayed aloud. The rest remained, wide-eyed in fear, but determined.

“Any more who choose to leave?” he asked. No one spoke, but no one else moved. “Good,” the soldier said, laying down his weapon and loosening his collar. “I would like to join you and hear what you have to say, but I will not join with any who are not committed enough to your God to suffer for Him.”

While there is a place in the church for seekers trying to make up their minds, each believer must reach a point where he or she commits fully to serving God—no matter what the cost. A church of such committed believers is powerful and will accomplish great things for God.

## God Used Peter Supernaturally

“People brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter’s shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by” (Acts 5:15). Peter’s ministry was so powerful that as his shadow fell on the sick or lame, they were healed. Sometimes God gives unique, singular ministries of miracles through His servants. Such ministries cannot be copied or programmed.

9 What gifts has God not given you to use in ministry? What gifts has He given you?

How do you think the other eleven apostles felt about Peter’s special ministry? Do you think they envied Peter’s *shadow* ministry? We are not told that they did. When Christians start thinking that way about other people’s gifts, they start discounting themselves and the unique ministry gifts God has given them. A Christian should not try to be someone else but should be the person God made him or her to be.

In the body of Christ, believers must be willing to set people free to be whatever God has called them to be. People must be encouraged to go as high and as far and as deep as the Spirit of God enables them to go. The early church did not fret because one person had the shadow ministry and the other eleven did not.

## Reaching Jerusalem’s Suburbs

10 How many were healed by the apostles?

“Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed” (Acts 5:16). God was doing great things. Crowds gathered from the towns around Jerusalem bringing their sick. Notice how the gospel was starting to get out of Jerusalem.

This movement speeds up as we go through Acts. It is a central step toward fulfilling Jesus' command in Acts 1:8: "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

## 6 LESSON 3

### The Persistent Church

The activities of the powerful church recorded in Acts 5:12–16 filled the chief priests and other Sadducees with jealousy. They did not believe in the miraculous, and their unbelief was threatened by reality. The fact that they were spiritually powerless was all too evident in contrast with the power of the Spirit-filled apostles. Can you imagine how they felt when they saw people bringing the sick from the towns all around Jerusalem for Peter to heal them? Peter—the very man they had ordered not to speak anymore about Jesus! The sick lay in the streets waiting for Peter to pass by, and as he did they were healed.

And more disturbing than these things was the fact that the crowds were looking to the apostles for spiritual leadership instead of to the chief priests and teachers of the Law. More than ever, great crowds were turning to faith in Jesus—more than the three thousand, more than five thousand. Where would it all end?

Acts 5:17–42 gives a glimpse of the persecution of the church. We see why the Sanhedrin opposed the gospel, and we infer a Satanic strategy to attack and try to defeat the church. But even more importantly, we see the Holy Spirit's protection and the persistence of the church. Opposition and persecution could not stop them. Nothing could.

Persecution of believers in Acts 1–7				
Acts	Source of Persecution	Reason for Persecution	Description of Persecution	Result of Persecution
1:3; 2:23– 41	Unbelieving Jewish leaders	Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and the Messiah. The masses believed Him.	They nailed Him to a cross.	He died, but rose from the dead. He ascended and sent the promised gift of the Spirit. Millions follow Him.
4:1– 31	Sadducees	The apostles healed a crippled man and preached the resurrection of the dead through Jesus.	They put Peter and John in jail. The Sanhedrin threatened them.	The disciples prayed for boldness. All were filled with the Holy Spirit.
5:17– 41	Jewish high priest and Sadducees	Some Jewish leaders were jealous over the success of the apostles.	The Sanhedrin jailed the apostles and later beat them.	An angel released them. They rejoiced for being worthy of suffering for the Name.
6:9– 8:1, 4	Unbelieving Jews and the Sanhedrin	By the Spirit, Stephen did great wonders and miraculous signs and spoke with wisdom about Jesus.	They brought him to the Sanhedrin, produced false witnesses, and stoned him.	In Jerusalem, great persecution broke out. All except the apostles were scattered, preaching wherever they went.

**6.3.1**

OBJECTIVE

*Understand three tactics Satan uses to attack the church, and be on guard against such assaults in your own life.*

**Satan’s Attacks**

“The high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail” (Acts 5:17–18).

Spurred by the jealousy of the Sadducees, the religious leaders had the apostles thrown in jail. Last time it had been Peter and John. This time it was all the apostles. Look at some of the ways Satan may attack Christians. Satan is predictable; God is not. The strategies used against the church in Acts are the same today. Three satanic strategies against the church are as follows:

1. Satan tries to defeat the church (or the Christian) by causing doubt, fear, despair, or sin. Satan also tries to cause the Christian to blame God or others.
2. Satan tries to defeat the church by causing division. Often this is done through the selfishness of individuals. Many times he uses doctrinal issues to divide the church.
3. Satan tries to defeat the church or individual through persecution or seduction. Actually persecution and seduction are two sides of the same coin. The seduction of material gain often weakens a Christian’s faith. Persecution often increases his or her faith. In Acts, we do not see Satan using seduction to any great degree. That comes later in church history.

Every time the church faces an attack, the Holy Spirit moves to guide and protect the church, ensuring victory.

11 Identify the obstacles Peter and John faced in Acts 4:1–22. How did they respond?

12 Explain how the church was challenged in Acts 5:1–11. How effective were the challenges? Why?

13 Explain the source of the challenge against the church in Acts 5:17–40. How successful is this challenge? Why?

14 How is the challenge of 4:1–22 met with a victory in 4:23–37?

15 How is the challenge of 5:1–11 met with victory in 5:12–16?

16 How is the challenge of 5:17–40 met with victory in 5:41–42?

Persecution of believers in Acts 8–28				
Acts	Source of Persecution	Reason for Persecution	Description of Persecution	Result of Persecution
8:1,5,11	Unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem	They were jealous (5:17), angry (7:57), and did not believe in Jesus (1 Tim. 1:13).	They beat, killed, or imprisoned believers. Sometimes they took their property (Heb. 10:34).	Philip went to a city of Samaria and preached. Many believed.
8:3–4	Saul	He thought he was serving God!	He began to destroy the church, house to house. Believers were beaten, imprisoned, or killed (Acts 9:1–2; 22:4, 19; 26:10–11).	Believers were scattered. They preached the Word wherever they went.
9:23–25	Unbelieving Jews in Damascus	Saul was proving that Jesus was the Messiah.	They planned to kill him.	His followers lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall. He went to Jerusalem.
11:19–21	See 8:1 above.	See 8:1 above.	See 8:1 above.	Those scattered told the good news in Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch.
12:1–17,24	King Herod	Herod desired to please the unbelieving Jews.	He had James’ head cut off; later he put Peter in prison.	Believers were encouraged when God freed Peter from prison. The Word of God continued to increase and spread.

<b>Persecution of believers in Acts 8–28 (continued)</b>				
<b>Acts</b>	<b>Source of Persecution</b>	<b>Reason for Persecution</b>	<b>Description of Persecution</b>	<b>Result of Persecution</b>
13:44–49	Unbelieving Jews in Antioch of Pisidia	Jealousy over the crowds that gathered to hear the Word of the Lord from Paul	They talked badly against what Paul was saying.	The apostles turned to the Gentiles. Many believed. God's Word spread throughout the whole region.
13:50–52	Unbelieving Jews in Antioch of Pisidia	Jealousy over the Jewish crowds and Gentile believers	They used God-fearing women with influence and leading men to stir up persecution. They expelled the apostles.	The apostles shook the dust from their feet as a protest (See Luke 9:5). The disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.
14:1–7	Jews who refused to believe at Iconium	Unbelief	They stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds. They planned to stone the apostles.	They fled to Lystra and Derbe and continued to preach the good news.
14:19–22	Jews from Iconium and Antioch	Unbelief and jealousy over the crowds	They stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city.	The disciples prayed for him. Paul got up and went back into the city. Later, he taught that we must go through hardships to enter God's kingdom.
17:1–10	Unbelieving Jews of Thessalonica	Jealousy	They formed a mob and started a riot.	Paul and Silas escaped to Berea.
17:13–15	Unbelieving Jews of Thessalonica	Jealousy	They stirred up the crowd.	Paul and Silas escaped to Athens.
18:1–17	Unbelieving Jews of Corinth	Unbelief	Jews opposed Paul and became abusive. Later, they united and took him to court.	He shook out his clothes and turned to the Gentiles. Many Corinthians believed. Gallio threw the case out of court.
19:8–10, 20	Unbelieving Jews in Ephesus	They refused to believe.	They publicly slandered the Way.	Paul left the synagogue. He taught beside it for 2 years. Many Jews and Greeks believed.
19:23–20:1	Demetrius, a silversmith	He was losing money. People were not buying the idols of Artemis that he made.	They started a riot and rushed into the theater.	The city clerk dismissed the case. Paul encouraged the disciples and left for Macedonia.
20:3	Unbelieving Jews of Greece	Unbelief	They made a plot against Paul.	He changed his plans and returned to Macedonia.
21:27–23:35	Unbelieving Jews	Unbelief; Paul's ministry to the Gentiles	They seized Paul and incited the crowd. They ousted him from the temple and tried to kill him. At least 40 men vowed to kill him.	The Romans moved Paul to a prison in Caesarea, in Herod's palace.

<b>Persecution of believers in Acts 8–28 (continued)</b>				
<b>Acts</b>	<b>Source of Persecution</b>	<b>Reason for Persecution</b>	<b>Description of Persecution</b>	<b>Result of Persecution</b>
24	The high priest and some elders	Preaching Jesus	They accused Paul with a lawyer before Governor Felix.	Paul testified to the governor and others. He was bound for 2 years.
25–26	Chief priests and Jewish leaders	Preaching Jesus	They made serious charges that they could not prove. Paul was put in chains.	Paul testified to Festus. Then he appealed to Caesar. A few days later Paul testified to King Agrippa and city leaders.
27	Chief priests and Jewish leaders	Preaching Jesus	Paul was taken as a prisoner to Rome. The ship was lost to a great storm.	Paul became a friend with Julius, the centurion. Also, all 276 survived the storm because of Paul.
28:1–10	Chief priests and Jewish leaders	Preaching Jesus	Paul continued his journey to Rome as a prisoner.	Paul healed the sick on the island of Malta.
28:11–31	Chief priests and Jewish leaders	Preaching Jesus	Paul was chained and guarded for 2 years.	Boldly and without hindrance, he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.

### Divine Intervention

17 Read the passages noted in the chart and fill in the appropriate boxes. The first two rows are completed for you.

“During the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out” (Acts 5:19). The Lord intervened and miraculously freed the apostles. Sometimes we think that when we have problems God is obligated to open prison doors or intervene on our behalf. But is that the pattern observed in the book of Acts?

<b>God’s response to persecuted believers in Acts</b>			
<b>Reference</b>	<b>Who was involved?</b>	<b>What circumstances?</b>	<b>Divine intervention?</b>
<b>Acts 4:1–23</b>	Peter and John	Before the Sanhedrin after healing the lame beggar	no
<b>Acts 5:17–21</b>	All the apostles	Before the Sanhedrin after doing many miracles	yes
<b>Acts 5:40</b>			
<b>Acts 7:54–8:1</b>			
<b>Acts 8:3</b>			
<b>Acts 12:1–2</b>			
<b>Acts 12:3–17</b>			
<b>Acts 14:19</b>			
<b>Acts 16:19–34</b>			

18 Out of the thirteen times of trouble listed in the chart, how many times did God provide deliverance?

God's response to persecuted believers in Acts (continued)			
Reference	Who was involved?	What circumstances?	Divine intervention?
Acts 21:30–23:30			
Acts 23:31–26:32			
Acts 27:1–28:6			
Acts 28:14–31			

Divine intervention or the lack of it was—and still is—in God's hands. He knows best which will advance the gospel most.

In the examples of divine intervention, only once is human faith noted—by Paul before his shipwreck. The mature Christian will not yield to Satan's accusations of lack of faith if he or she is not miraculously delivered during times of persecution or trouble. We must learn to trust God in whatever circumstance we face. When we do, we avoid the agonies and tortures caused by yielding to the thought, *I did not have enough faith*. (For the example of Paul's maturing experience, see Philippians 4:11–13.)

Release from persecution and trouble is not the common pattern in the book of Acts. More often we see a situation like that of Acts 4:24–31 where the believers gathered and prayed. They prayed not that God would make the circumstances easier but that He would give them more power and courage in the circumstances. They prayed for boldness and that God would continue to use them.

### Persistence

In 1958, Nicky Cruz was the vicious leader of the most notorious street gang in New York City, the Mau Maus. After numerous arrests, a psychiatrist for the state offered his opinion about Nicky's future, saying the young man was "headed to prison, the electric chair, and hell" (Cruz).

When he met a skinny young street preacher named David Wilkerson, Cruz mocked him. David Wilkerson responded in love. Though violently rejected, Wilkerson persisted in his mission. Nicky spat on Wilkerson, beat him up, and threatened his life. But the preacher responded with a smile, respect, and relentless love. When Cruz went to disrupt a meeting Wilkerson held, the message finally got through to the gang member. Cruz felt convicted, asked God to forgive him, and gave his life to God. Cruz turned his life around and became a minister like Wilkerson, ministering to gang members. This happened all because one young Christian never gave up or backed down in spite of personal danger and persecution (Cruz).

Although the apostles were in danger—they were supposed to be in prison—they were obedient and persistent. They did not let the threats or danger of persecution keep them from obeying God's instruction to witness. When the angel of the Lord freed them from the jail, he had told them to return to the temple courts and preach. So that's exactly what they did. "At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people" (Acts 5:21).

The officers no doubt felt embarrassed and shocked when they faced the Sanhedrin with the news that the prisoners were gone. Imagine what the Sanhedrin must have thought. Had the apostles infected their own group to the extent that someone inside their organization had released the apostles? It seems their own beliefs would not allow them to believe a supernatural explanation.

Sometimes the safest place is in the center of a storm. The apostles were in a place of high visibility. The temple courts were under the administrative control of the Sadducees and high priests. As they went to arrest the apostles for the second time, the officers knew the apostles were safe in the crowd that admired them. However, the apostles quietly accompanied the officers. These men were no doubt relieved to have escaped a potential hail of stones from the people.

The tone of the trial in Acts 5:28 is more severe than it had been in Acts 4:7. Last time the Sanhedrin had opened with a question: “By what power or what name did you do this?” This time they leveled a charge: “We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name . . . yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man’s blood” (Acts 5:28).

Peter and the other apostles would not back down in fear. Their priorities were right. “We must obey God rather than men!” they replied (Acts 5:29). Then Peter repeated his charge against the Sanhedrin—that they had killed the Son of God. The popularity of Peter and John and the healing of the lame man had kept the Sanhedrin from punishing them then. But this time the Sanhedrin appeared ready to defy the people and do something drastic. Their anger was aroused by the apostles’ accusation and boldness. The Sanhedrin was reluctant to speak the name of Jesus. Its leaders chose to refer to Him only as “this man.” But they were furious and ready to put to death those who spoke of Him.

### Unlikely Assistance

19 What two examples does Gamaliel give to illustrate his belief in the sovereignty of God?

The voice of reason came from an unexpected source that day. You may remember that the principal enemies of Christ in the Gospels were the Pharisees. But by this time the Sadducees had emerged as the gospel’s biggest threat (Acts 4:1; 5:17).

**Gamaliel** was one of the most loved and revered rabbis of the first century. He was a leader of the **Hillel school of the Pharisees** and the most influential Pharisee in the Council. He rose to speak at the moment when the Sanhedrin appeared ready to order the apostles’ execution. Gamaliel’s high position is seen by his authority to order the apostles out of the room and his ability to sway the Sanhedrin to a more moderate position (Acts 5:34–40).

Gamaliel gave these examples to prove his point. “Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God” (Acts 5:38–39).

What Gamaliel said about the Christian faith was true. But what about his assumption that if it was of human origin, it would fail? Can the Christian always take that *wait and see* view? The test of the genuineness of a movement lies in its agreement with the teachings and claims of Jesus Christ, not in whether it endures (many heretical movements do). Christians must take a stand against heresy that arises in the church, not wait for it to die out on its own.

Although there was a flaw in Gamaliel’s reasoning, God used his words to subdue the Sanhedrin. Gamaliel’s intervention brought the Sanhedrin to a moment of decision. The council could not pursue an important course of action with a divided house. The Sadducees, who wanted the death of the apostles, had to yield to the moderation of the Pharisee minority, which had majority influence with the people. Instead of putting the apostles to death, they had them flogged. They ordered them to speak no more in the name of Jesus and let them go.

## Worthy of Suffering

“The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name” (Acts 5:41).

20 Why was suffering a reason to rejoice for the apostles?

We must remember that “Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12). Working for God will exact a cost from us. The early church was prepared for that kind of suffering for the cause of Christ. They rejoiced that they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the name of Jesus.

21 What is your usual response to suffering and persecution? What might help you respond more like the apostles?

In unity, the apostles had met their first major obstacle. They had not wavered. In fact, their first beating was a source of joy rather than sorrow. All of them had fled to avoid the blows given to Christ on the night of His betrayal. But the sting of that failure was now gone. They had stood still for the stripes to cut their backs. They had become the first to suffer for His name. They had now been identified with Him in His sufferings (Philippians 3:10).

With new power and boldness they continued their mission. “Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ” (Acts 5:42).



## Test Yourself



Circle the letter of the *best* answer.

1. According to Acts 4, the early church demonstrated unity and selflessness by
  - a) never disagreeing with one another.
  - b) financially taking care of one another.
  - c) fellowshiping together.
  - d) keeping their possessions to themselves.
2. The focus of the Christian message is
  - a) Christ's death and resurrection.
  - b) water baptism.
  - c) the second coming of Christ.
  - d) judgment of God.
3. Barnabas
  - a) sold a field and gave the money to the apostles.
  - b) was a Levite and his name means "Son of Encouragement."
  - c) was a Jew from the island of Cyprus.
  - d) was all of the above.
4. The main principle to be learned from the account of Ananias and Sapphira is that
  - a) keeping money for ourselves is sin in God's eyes.
  - b) God hates lying and desires integrity among His people.
  - c) all believers are to sell their possessions and give them to the church.
  - d) all believers are to live in poverty.
5. One of the marks of a powerful church is
  - a) signs and wonders.
  - b) generosity.
  - c) honesty.
  - d) strong attendance.
6. According to Acts 5, when faced by threats and warnings, the believers
  - a) fled for their lives.
  - b) hid in their homes.
  - c) continued to meet publicly.
  - d) did all of the above.
7. In the book of Acts, persecution of the church came from
  - a) unbelieving Jews.
  - b) Sadducees.
  - c) the Sanhedrin.
  - d) all of the above.
8. After the apostles were flogged for preaching Christ they
  - a) rejoiced that they were worthy to suffer for Christ.
  - b) returned to their homes discouraged.
  - c) scattered to different parts of the region.
  - d) no longer publicly proclaimed Christ.
9. Gamaliel recommended that the apostles be
  - a) flogged.
  - b) released.
  - c) killed.
  - d) stoned.
10. According to the Bible, suffering and persecution
  - a) are to be avoided by Christians.
  - b) should be expected.
  - c) will destroy the church.
  - d) are a result of sin.

# Responses to Interactive Questions

## Chapter 6

Some of these responses may include information that is supplemental to the IST. These questions are intended to produce reflective thinking beyond the course content and your responses may vary from these examples.

**1** Compare and contrast Barnabas' gift with that of Ananias and Sapphira.

Barnabas gave all the money from the sale of his land. Ananias and Sapphira kept some for themselves but said they gave it all. Barnabas gave to help and encourage Christians in need. Ananias and Sapphira gave to earn respect and enhance their own reputation.

**2** How did Peter know Ananias was lying?

We are not told for sure, but Acts 5:3 says, "you have lied to the Holy Spirit." It is likely the word of knowledge operated through Peter.

**3** Summarize the meaning of Matthew 18:15–17.

Some people's outward characteristics clearly distinguish them from believers. If such people refuse to repent, they should be put out of the church.

**4** What are two reasons Ananias and Sapphira were punished so severely?

First, God controls the timing of judgment for sin and may move it up as He wishes. Second, it was important that the Christians' credibility not be compromised.

**5** What lesson from the lives of Barnabas, Ananias, and Sapphira is most relevant for your life today?

Answers will vary.

**6** Locate four times the words *signs and wonders* have already been used together in Acts 2 and 4.

(1) Acts 2:19, (2) 2:22, (3) 2:43, and (4) 4:30

**7** Look up the references given in the chart. In the appropriate boxes, describe the supernatural event and explain how it resulted in church growth.

<b>Supernatural events were a major key to church growth in Acts.</b>		
<b>Acts</b>	<b>Supernatural Event</b>	<b>Result</b>
1:3–8	Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to His disciples for 40 days.	They believed He was alive.
1:9–11	Jesus ascended into heaven. Angels instructed the disciples.	The disciples waited in Jerusalem to be baptized in the Holy Spirit.
2:1–4; 2:41	The 120 were filled with the Holy Spirit. They spoke in various languages.	About 3,000 believed and were baptized after Peter explained the miracle of Pentecost.
3:1–4:4	The crippled beggar was healed. Peter explained what happened.	The number of believers grew to five thousand men, plus women and children.
5:1–11	God struck Ananias and Sapphira dead for lying to the Holy Spirit.	Great fear (respect) seized the whole church and all who heard.
5:12–18	The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people.	More and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. Leaders became jealous and put the apostles in jail.
5:17–20 5:27, 40–42	An angel opened the doors of the jail and told the apostles to go tell the full message in the temple.	The apostles were questioned, flogged, and ordered not to speak in Jesus' name. Still, they continued teaching.
6:8, 10, 15 8:1, 4	Stephen did great wonders and miraculous signs. He spoke with great wisdom by the Spirit. His face shone like an angel as they stoned him.	A great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem. All except the apostles were scattered. They preached the Word wherever they went.

**8** Why do you think signs and wonders led to growth of the church? Do you think that was the purpose of the miracles? Explain.

Answers will vary.

**9** What gifts has God not given you to use in ministry? What gifts has He given you?

Answers will vary.

**10** How many were healed by the apostles?

All. We are not told specific numbers, but all who came were healed.

**11** Identify the obstacles Peter and John faced in Acts 4:1–22. How did they respond?

Peter and John faced fear, doubt, and blame, but they overcame these. They praised God for what happened to them, trusting in God's sovereignty (Acts 4:24).

**12** Explain how the church was challenged in Acts 5:1–11. How effective was it? Why?

The church faced potential division through inroads of a selfish spirit. God's judgment of Ananias and Sapphira rooted out sin and selfishness and brought a healthy fear and reverence for God's holiness.

**13** Explain the source of the challenge against the church in Acts 5:17–40. How successful was this challenge? Why?

The Sadducees became jealous, bringing physical persecution against all the apostles. It was unsuccessful, for the apostles rejoiced in the persecution and continued their ministry.

**14** How is the challenge of 4:1–22 met with a victory in 4:23–37?

The attempt to harass Peter and John unified the believers even more. They sensed a greater need for boldness, and they manifested great love for each other.

**15** How is the challenge of 5:1–11 met with victory in 5:12–16?

Satan should have left Ananias and Sapphira alone (Acts 5:2). By the time the incident is over, there is a greater fear and reverence for God in the church and population, signs and wonders are abundant, and more than ever believers are added to the church.

**16** How is the challenge of 5:17–40 met with victory in 5:41–42?

The public proclamation of the gospel is undiminished, the apostles are more popular than ever, and the church continues to grow.

**17** Read the passages noted in the chart, and fill in the appropriate boxes. The first two rows are completed for you.

<b>God's response to persecuted believers in Acts</b>			
<b>Reference</b>	<b>Who was involved?</b>	<b>What circumstances?</b>	<b>Divine intervention?</b>
<b>Acts 4:1–23</b>	Peter and John	Before the Sanhedrin after healing the lame beggar	No
<b>Acts 5:17–21</b>	All the apostles	Before the Sanhedrin after doing many miracles	Yes
<b>Acts 5:40</b>	All the apostles	Before the Sanhedrin after preaching in the temple courts again	No. The apostles were beaten and threatened.
<b>Acts 7:54–8:1</b>	Stephen	Falsely accused of blasphemy against God and the Law	No. Stephen was stoned to death.
<b>Acts 8:3</b>	Unnamed Christians	Saul put them in prison because of their faith in Jesus.	No. Although Saul later became the apostle Paul, this came too late to help these Christians.
<b>Acts 12:1–2</b>	The apostle James	Herod arrested him and others.	No. James was killed by the sword.
<b>Acts 12:3–17</b>	Peter	Herod seized Peter also, intending to kill him.	Yes. An angel released Peter.
<b>Acts 14:19</b>	Paul at Lystra	Jews from Antioch and Iconium turned the crowds against Paul.	No. Paul was stoned and left for dead.
<b>Acts 16:19–34</b>	Paul and Silas at Philippi	After delivering a girl from an evil spirit, Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown in prison.	Yes, although God opened the prison doors with an earthquake.
<b>Acts 21:30–23:30</b>	Paul at Jerusalem	Paul was accused of bringing Gentiles into the temple and arrested.	No.
<b>Acts 23:31–26:32</b>	Paul at Caesarea	Paul is imprisoned by Felix and Festus.	No.
<b>Acts 27:1–28:6</b>	Paul	Paul is shipwrecked and bitten by a poisonous snake.	Yes.
<b>Acts 28:14–31</b>	Paul in Rome	Paul awaits trial before Caesar.	No. Acts ends with Paul having been in prison in Rome for two years.

**18** Out of these thirteen times of trouble, how many times did God provide deliverance?

Four times

**19** What two examples does Gamaliel give to illustrate his belief in the sovereignty of God?

(1) Theudas, whose followers were scattered when he was killed; and (2) Judas the Galilean, whose revolt failed and his followers scattered when he was killed.

**20** Why was suffering a reason to rejoice for the apostles?

Because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.

**21** What is your usual response to suffering and persecution? What might help you respond more like the apostles?

Answers will vary.

# CHAPTER 7

## Stephen: What Good Can Come of Trouble?

In the winter of 1927, Victor Plymire, missionary to Tibet, lost his beloved wife and son to smallpox. He wrote, ““On January 29, I followed my two loved ones to this lonely spot on the Tibetan mountains. My dear wife and little boy were placed in one grave. Why these two dear ones were called away, I do not know. I do not question. They were so earnest in trying to evangelize this vast region. It is so very hard in the natural, now entirely alone . . .”” (Booze and Ketcher 2003, 32).

Years passed, and the Bamboo Curtain closed China to missionaries. Victor Plymire died never knowing the good God would work from his family’s suffering. More decades passed, and China became more open to the outside world. Some churches were allowed to reopen. Church property taken away years before would be returned, but only if there was proof it had once belonged to a church. The son of a Chinese Christian who had worked with the Plymires tried to get the church property back. But he needed some document to prove the church had truly existed there.

That is when Plymire’s other son, David, found the deed to the property his father had purchased to bury David’s mother and brother. Providentially, the deed was not in Plymire’s own name, but the name of the church. With this proof of the church’s historic existence, the church grounds and building were restored to the pastor and congregation. The church is now a growing, thriving church spreading the gospel in Huangyuan.

God often works good from trouble and suffering. Stephen’s story in Acts 6 and 7 also shows this to be true.

### Lesson 7.1 Conflict in the Church

#### Objectives

- 7.1.1 *Identify three qualifications used in the selection of the seven and relate why each is essential in a church leader.*
- 7.1.2 *Describe the methods used by the apostles in handling the first church problem and apply the same methods to problems that may arise in your church.*

### Lesson 7.2 Stephen’s Arrest and Trial

#### Objective

- 7.2.1 *Justify why Stephen’s pointed sermon was necessary.*

### Lesson 7.3 The First Martyr

#### Objective

- 7.3.1 *Explain the significance of Stephen’s death and its application to your own life.*

# 7 LESSON 1

## 7.1.1 OBJECTIVE

*Identify three qualifications used in the selection of the seven and relate why each is essential in a church leader.*

1 In your experience, what are some things people disagree about in a church? How important are such disagreements?

## Conflict in the Church

Acts 6 introduces problems that arose within the Christian community. It also demonstrates how effectively the church addressed the problems and found practical solutions. This study will provide insights into the value of Christian conduct and charity. Mature, effective ministry requires flexibility and willingness to change.

### The Cause of the Conflict

Luke shows us that the early church was not perfect. By honestly writing about the flaws and problems of the church, Luke wrote true history, not just a public relations brochure. One mark of a person of God or a spiritual church is to openly recount failings rather than attempting to ignore or cover them up. When we openly admit, confess, and use our failings as learning experiences, we set others free to be honest about themselves and to trust the Lord to help them.

As explored in Chapter 6, Satan has three ways he continually tries to defeat the work of God. The first thing he tries to do is defeat the leadership. Through doubt or discouragement, he tries to pick off the leaders or destroy their effectiveness. The second thing he attempts is to divide the body so it becomes locked in quarrels among itself. In this way, Christians' attention gets diverted from a larger mission. This is the tactic the church faced in Acts 6.

Whenever people get together, even in a church, they are sure to be some disagreements. There is no sense in pretending and acting as if everything is always right. People get angry with others in the Body, and they disagree. Disagreements come over strategy, teaching, choice of music—just about anything.

The early church had their problems. This first problem Luke notes was the result of a cultural division. At this point the church had not broadened beyond a Jewish base. It did not yet include Gentiles, but it did include **Grecian Jews** and **Hebraic Jews**. Grecian Jews were those who had come back to Jerusalem after living in foreign lands. They had picked up the ways of those lands, but many of the Grecian Jews had never learned to speak, read, or write Hebrew.

The Hebraic Jews were longtime residents of Jerusalem. They did not speak Greek and avoided Greek ways. Their widows were typically cared for within the **synagogue**. As the church developed, the community of believers also took care of the Christian widows. But the Greek-speaking widows faced what they had faced in their pre-Christian experience. A cultural prejudice against them made them feel they were not treated as well as the Hebraic Jewish widows. So they began murmuring about the situation.

The word *murmur* (Acts 6:1 in the KJV, “complain” in the NIV) sends a warning chill. Look at Numbers 11:1. The children of Israel were on their way through the wilderness to Canaan’s promised land. Signs and wonders had accompanied their exit from Egypt, and miraculous intervention sustained them. Then, rather than praising the Lord for His blessings, they began to complain. It was their first step on the road to unbelief, failure to enter Canaan, and rebellion.

In Jesus Christ, God’s people had gone through a new exodus. There had been deliverance through Calvary and through the resurrection. The Holy Spirit was gathering a new community. In the midst of the signs and wonders and dynamic moving of God, echoes of the wilderness find their way into the church. The murmuring had begun. Was the church now to repeat the experience of Israel in the wilderness? After the church had seen and shared in the blessings of God, was the thankful spirit of Acts 2:46 to be replaced by the complaining spirit of 6:1?

Often, those who complain are not really interested in finding a solution. They just want to let everyone know they are discontented. God's Word tells us that when we see something that is wrong or disagree with how something is handled, we are not to murmur. Instead, we are to go to the person who is directly responsible and seek a cure. Complaining evades and talks around the problem. It gets a lot of other people unhappy and becomes a festering sore in the Body.

2 From Matthew 5:23–24 and 18:15–17, what is the correct way to handle disputes with other believers?

Becoming believers in Jesus had not automatically rooted out all prejudice. The full acceptance of other believers regardless of gender, language, culture, or color came with learning the implications of the gospel (Galatians 3:26–28). This takes time and tempering under the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The Grecian believers felt the same pattern of discrimination they had experienced before they were believers. This may have been a legitimate problem. But they showed lack of wisdom and obedience to Christ's teaching (Matthew 5:23–24) by not immediately trying to settle the matters themselves with the Hebrews. When Christians feel wronged by other believers, they are to bring the hurt directly to the person who caused it and seek reconciliation. If needed, they can seek the counsel and help of spiritual leaders.

Almost all church problems begin when this approach is ignored. Often people murmur and complain not to find a solution but to arouse sympathy for their problems. But the Christian method of problem solving involves honesty, directness, and true love.

## 7.12 OBJECTIVE

*Describe the methods used by the apostles in handling the first church problem and apply the same methods to problems that may arise in your church.*

3 How might the problem have become worse if the apostles had ignored it?

### A Godly Response to Conflict

If members of a church have acted unwisely in creating a problem and keeping it going, leaders must act wisely and decisively to solve it. Most serious church problems exist because of leaders' lack of wisdom or courage in solving them.

The apostles took five steps when faced with division in the church.

1. They recognized the problem existed and took intelligent steps to solve it. Ignoring problems usually only compounds them. Most issues are best dealt with at once. That is how the apostles handled complaints about the distribution of food to the widows.
2. They did not condemn or accuse either side. They did not scold the Hebraic Jews for being unfair or berate the Grecian Jews for causing trouble or complaining. The apostles wisely took the focus away from pointing the finger of blame and placed it squarely on finding a solution that would work for everyone. Leaders must be fair and recognize that some things are legitimate problems. Regardless of our best intentions, inequities and problems do occur.
3. They honestly faced their own limitations. The apostles recognized that their first priority and calling was to preach and teach the Word. Whether or not they were gifted and strong in areas of administering a welfare program, they realized they could not do everything at once. Peter and the apostles did not take the criticism personally. That is hard when you are in leadership and someone complains about a problem. But they had the wisdom to know that this was a legitimate problem. Even though the problem was not their fault, they were not excused from listening and trying to solve it.

Nothing is gained when a leader responds to a group with resentment, self-serving threats, condemnation, or judgmental words and unkind deeds. Even though they had been beaten (5:40) and busy (5:42), they did not use that as an excuse. Poor leadership could have splintered the Jerusalem church.

However, wise leadership brought the church together so even greater growth could occur. If leaders in a church are willing to assume that kind of honesty and humility, people almost always respond positively.

The apostles recognized the problem was occurring because their structure had not grown to accommodate the growing numbers of people and needs. The apostles did not have time to do every leadership task. As the Jerusalem church grew, they were stretched too thin. The solution was not for them to try to do the work better. Instead they needed to arrange their priorities and involve others in ministry.

4. They were open to change. Anytime there is growth, there must be change. People must be willing to change gears and get used to doing something in a new way. This is especially true in the church. Too often churches or individuals get in ruts and no longer are willing to change. The attitude, *We have always done it this way; this is the way it always should be*, keeps people from entering into new ministries and experiences God has for them. And other people cannot get involved in ministries they are called to and capable of doing. A good example is Stephen. His selection to serve in this way opened the door to a growing opportunity to minister in other ways (Acts 6:8).
5. They delegated authority to others who were qualified and capable. “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:2–4).

In Matthew 21:12, the word for *tables* is the same as in Acts 6:2. A form of *tables* is used in Matthew 25:27 and translated “bankers.” While “wait on tables” (6:2) can mean the actual serving of food, it is more likely that it involved administering the church funds for the needy. The seven appear to fill the role of administrators more than chefs.

4 What were the three qualifications used to select the seven leaders?

The word *serve* (tables) is a verb related to the noun from which we derive the word *deacon*. That is why these seven are often called “deacons.” Luke, however, avoids using this term to describe them, for the office of deacon as we see it in 1 Timothy 3:8–13 had not yet developed to this degree. However, “to serve” can denote all forms of ministry. In a sense, all God’s people are deacons—those who serve.

5 Explain why you feel each is essential in a church leader.

The apostles required three qualifications for the seven chosen. They were to be men of good reputation, full of wisdom, and full of the Holy Spirit. The good reputation was to protect them from accusations of prejudice. Wisdom was needed to administer their responsibilities toward individuals and the church. But these two were not enough. There had to be a fullness of the Spirit. Even though they had worldly responsibilities, their duties were also spiritual and required the Spirit’s help.

6 What are five steps the apostles took to handle the conflict?

Notice the safeguards in the apostles’ method. While the apostles set out the criteria for choosing the seven, the whole church picked those who met the criteria.

It is safe to assume that most of the mature believers were Hebrews, not Hellenists (those who adopted Greek culture). Yet the seven chosen all have Greek names. Stephen, Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicholas from Antioch (a Gentile who had converted to Judaism before becoming a believer) were chosen. It seems that in a spirit of love, the whole church elected all seven from the Grecians. This showed their trust in the impartiality of the minority who had been overlooked.

## The Good that Comes from Handling Conflict Well

The apostles' godly handling of the situation pleased the whole group (Acts 6:5) and united what was in danger of being divided. The church had been effectively reorganized. A whole new division of leadership had emerged under the apostles. Because there was better networking to meet internal needs, there could be more external growth. So what happened as a result of their settling the problem and leaving everyone free to do his job? "The word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7).

Growth always comes with trial, difficulty, and danger. Satan's attempt to divide the church failed because of the pastoral care of the apostles. Their decisive action and wise handling of a potentially explosive problem allowed their ministries to have even greater impact in the days that followed. Having put its first potential division behind it, the church went right on growing.

How anyone in the body of Christ handles problems is vital. If we do not handle conflicts well, the work of the Lord gets derailed. Murmuring is a critical test of leadership. Often the well-being of a church rests in the maturity and wisdom of its leaders. Leaders can easily compound problems in conflict situations.

Notice the chain of events recorded following the church trouble in Acts 6. Stephen emerged as a leader in Acts 6 and his eventual martyrdom was followed by the persecution by Saul. That sent Philip to Samaria and to the Ethiopian official. It also sent believers to Antioch. In turn, Antioch sent relief to Jerusalem and also sent out the missionary Paul, whose labors resulted in churches and letters. Today, we still benefit from the good God worked through the problem seen in Acts 6. Good can come out of trouble. Romans 8:28 does not say that all things are good but that "in all things God works for the good of those who love him."

7 How does believing God is working good make the trouble easier to bear?

A young girl with a talent for speed skating pursued her dream of Olympic gold. Her coaches believed she had the potential to be the best skater at the ice rink. But she lived with her single mother, and the family was poor. Because her mother worked the night shift, she could not drive her daughter to skating practice each evening after school. So the girl rode an old bike thirty minutes each way. At first she was exhausted after biking and practicing, and she had less time to do her homework and to sleep. It seemed like a terrible added burden for such a promising athlete to bear.

8 What experience have you had that shows that God works out difficulties for good?

But after a few months, it became obvious that this problem was working for the girl's good. Riding the bike exercised the same leg muscles she needed for skating. The extra workout made her stronger and gave her better endurance than any of the other skaters. After years of biking and skating, the young woman won two Olympic medals. She credited the victory to the good that came from her poverty. Good things truly can come from difficulties.

## 7 LESSON .2

### Stephen's Arrest and Trial

Many years ago a minister of a growing congregation was interrupted during his Sunday sermon. A young woman of ill repute in the community walked to the pulpit with a crying baby in her arms. Thrusting him into the minister's arms, she announced loudly, "He's your son. You take care of him." Then she turned and walked out, leaving the minister speechless.

The congregation started to whisper and murmur. Some shook their heads in disapproval. Many left. Although the minister denied fathering the child, his ministry was ruined. The church split, and his reputation in the community was ruined.

The minister took the child into his home and raised him with all the love due a son. He taught the boy to love and serve the Lord. All the while he continued ministering to those who would have him, mostly the lowest members of society.

Ten years later the woman reappeared. In the same church where she had left her son with the minister, she came to the altar to repent. She publicly admitted that she had lied. Desperate and tired, she had decided to dump the boy with the minister she had never met before that moment. What changed her mind? The kind and loving way in which the minister had raised the child in the face of false accusations and a ruined life.

Sometimes a person's godliness can lead to vicious and unfair attacks. But those who respond in a godly manner can speak more powerfully than any sermon about the faithfulness, forgiveness, and love of God. Stephen's life, message, and death spoke in ways that could not be ignored by those who attacked him.

## 7.2.1 OBJECTIVE

*Justify why Stephen's pointed sermon was necessary.*

## Stephen's Ministry and the Charges Against Him

### Stephen's ministry

In the New Testament two words describe a crown. The first, *diadem*, portrays a permanent crown due one because of royal authority (Revelation 19:12). The second, *stephanos*, is the laurel wreath with which an athlete is crowned. This crown signifies the tribute due the athlete for winning the race (2 Timothy 4:8). Stephen's name itself, meaning "crown," signifies the course of faith he completed and for which he received the crown of life (James 1:12).

Stephen was the first person to be killed for his witness for Christ. This incident marks an important step toward the sacrificial meaning of the Greek word for witness, *martus*. This word came to mean a testimony so true that the witness will die to uphold it rather than deny it, our word *martyr*.

Stephen's ministry was not just limited to administering the distribution of food and money to needy believers. Acts 6:8 says, "Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people."

At the time of his appointment, Stephen was described as "a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 6:5). It was not the laying on of the apostles' hands that gave Stephen the power for this powerful ministry, but the Holy Spirit's indwelling.

Stephen ministered in the synagogues. The word *synagogue* literally means "a gathering together." The verb form is used in Hebrews 10:25 as an instruction to believers ("Let us not give up meeting together"). It is the forerunner of today's church. The synagogue dates back to the dispersion of the Jews, perhaps in the time of Ezra. It served at least three functions: worship, education, and social interchange. While there was only one temple, there were many synagogues. Synagogues existed throughout the Mediterranean world. They could be formed with a minimum of ten Jewish men. The synagogue was led by local elders. Synagogues were not places for sacrifice. That was reserved for the temple.

It was in the synagogues where Stephen stirred the anger of enemies. "Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)—Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of

9 How does the setting for Stephen's preaching ministry differ from the setting of the apostles' preaching? Compare Acts 6:9 with Acts 3:11–4:4; 5:12–21,42.

Cilicia and Asia” (Acts 6:9). Stephen’s preaching in the synagogue brought the same reaction as that of the apostles’ preaching. The result was persecution.

Jews in the Synagogue of the Freedman likely were descendants of slaves who had been deported to Rome and other places by Pompeii in 63 BC. These people had returned from Cyrene, an area in North Africa (currently Libya), Alexandria (which had the largest Jewish population in the world outside of Israel at that time), Cilicia (in eastern Turkey), and Asia (today’s western Turkey).

Who in the New Testament was from Cilicia? Saul. Tarsus was a city in Cilicia. Since in Acts 8:1 we learn that those who killed Stephen laid their clothes at Saul’s feet, it seems quite possible that Saul had listened to Stephen preach in the Synagogue of the Freedmen. Saul had listened and spoken with Stephen as Stephen spoke of the issues of the relevance of the law and the temple.

### **The charges against Stephen**

Unlike the apostles earlier, Stephen was not arrested for preaching the resurrection of Christ. Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrin on the charge that he spoke against the law and the temple.

Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, “We have heard Stephen speak words of blasphemy against Moses and against God.” So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. They produced false witnesses, who testified, “This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us” (Acts 6:11–14).

The charge against Stephen was a distortion of what he had actually said. The witnesses were false ones. The distortion probably was the same as that applied to Christ (compare John 2:19–22 with Mark 14:58–59). Stephen’s defense in Acts 7 showed that he had not spoken of the temple’s physical destruction. Instead, he implied its irrelevance for Christian belief and practice.

At that time, believing in Jesus was something to be added onto the Jewish religion. Little had changed for the believers except that they now confessed that Jesus was Lord. They still followed the dietary laws. They went to the temple and offered sacrifices, even though Christ, the perfect sacrifice, had been given. Reading Stephen’s defense closely will show that he never said to set aside the law of Moses. He never said the temple was irrelevant.

It is clear from reading between the lines that Stephen had begun to understand the broader implications of faith in Christ. Stephen was starting to understand that if we have been liberated by Christ from the law, if salvation is by grace rather than by works, why would we still participate in a lifestyle that celebrates a covenant based on the Law? Why were they still worshipping in the temple and looking to priests to mediate the relationship with God when believers are all priests unto God? Sacrifices are no longer necessary because the perfect sacrifice had come. It is quite possible that Stephen’s comparisons of the Old Testament order with the new order instituted by Jesus were in the spirit of the book of Hebrews, which portrays Christ as superior to the Law and the temple.

From the reaction of the crowd, it appears that the false witnesses gave just enough misrepresentation to his words to infuriate the crowd. This was not hard when the charge of “preaching against the Law” was made against a Grecian Jew. The deep-seated prejudice against the Grecian Jews made it easier for them to

10 Why was Stephen arrested and put on trial?

11 What were some of the implications of faith in Christ that Stephen was first to recognize?

12 What New Testament book wrestles with the same concepts that are reflected in Stephen’s preaching?

believe the charge. It is interesting to note that Saul, whom we meet for the first time at Stephen's death, later faced the same accusation (compare Acts 6:13 with 21:28).

When you challenge religious tradition, you are in hot water. And Stephen did challenge it. He spoke so forcefully that people could not argue. "These men began to argue with Stephen, but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke" (Acts 6:9–10). What happens when you have political power and you lose an argument? You use your political power and forget reasoning. You always know you have lost the contest of ideas when you have to resort to force to get your way. The Freedmen were losing their argument with Stephen on the intellectual and spiritual plains, so they brought him before the Sanhedrin.

13 Why do you believe Stephen's face glowed? Why did this not stop his accusers from killing him?

"All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel" (Acts 6:15). Stephen was ready. Before he said a word, he had already made a statement. No one in the room could doubt Stephen's character and relationship with God. The look of the heavenly was already on his face.

14 Stephen and others on trial preached Christ rather than defending themselves. What does this communicate about what was most important to them?

In all of the trial speeches in the book of Acts, no defendant concerned himself with getting a personal acquittal. Instead, each took the occasion to proclaim Christ. They were trying to win their audience to Christ, not free themselves.

### Stephen's Powerful Response

"Then the high priest asked him, 'Are these charges true?' To this he replied: 'Brothers and fathers, listen to me!'" (Acts 7:1–2).

15 How did Stephen try to connect with his listeners and show he was a good Jew?

Stephen knew what he was doing. He had been accused of breaking the law of Moses and speaking against the temple. So he took great pains to show what a good Jew he was. He started out by addressing the Sanhedrin as "brothers and fathers." He was appealing to their brotherhood. "I'm one of you!" Then he noted the highlights of Israel's history. His is the longest sermon in Acts.

Stephen's sermon (called his *apology* from the Greek word *apologia*, which could imply a reasoned defense of one's faith [see 1 Peter 3:15]) represents a fulfillment of the Lord's words. "'When they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you'" (Matthew 10:19–20). Although Stephen's apology was unrehearsed, his words showed that he was thoroughly versed in the Old Testament and had committed its message to his mind. On this occasion the Holy Spirit simply selected which scriptural teaching should be recalled and applied.

Stephen showed an utter lack of concern for his own safety. Since Pentecost, the Sanhedrin had twice been indecisive about whether it should militantly oppose the Christian message. Stephen brought them to a decision. Stephen's sermon in Acts 7 was probably typical of the content and spirit of his synagogue preaching (Acts 6:9–10). It was preaching that demanded a verdict.

Stephen had four distinct sections in his sermon.

### God's relationship with the patriarchs (Acts 7:2–17)

Stephen's introduction immediately implied continuity between the God who revealed himself to Abraham and the revelation of God in Christ. When Stephen said, "'The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham,'" he was beginning to connect Christian faith with God's revelation to Abraham. Throughout the history of Israel, beginning with Abraham, Stephen illustrated that the key epochs were initiated by God. The call of Abraham was an example of God's sovereign choice, but Abraham's response to that call demonstrated his faith in God.

Stephen was starting to lay a foundation by showing that Abraham believed and worshiped God before the Law and without the temple. The Jews prided themselves on being the children of Abraham, but Stephen pointed out that the unbelief in Israel even from the time of the patriarchs is in sharp contrast with Abraham's faith. To the observant listener, Stephen was beginning to imply that the Law and temple did nothing to stop Israel's habit of unbelief, a habit not shared by Abraham.

Next Stephen spoke of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. He recounted how Joseph's brothers would not believe God's revelation about him. They sold him because of jealousy. (Remember Matthew 27:18 and Acts 5:17?) Yet God preserved Joseph and used him to save his family—including the very ones who had betrayed him.

Notice how Stephen's approach became more deliberate. He traced to Jacob's sons the root of the sin of betrayal and the salvation the betrayed one brought to his betrayers. Even this he contrasted with the faith of Jacob, who asked to be buried in the promised land rather than in Egypt where he was living. The patriarchs' tombs in Israel were a sign that they died in faith.

### **Moses and the Law (Acts 7:18–43)**

The Sanhedrin prized its relationship to Moses and the Law. Stephen next showed how Moses himself was rejected and the Law spurned by those who were supposed to be God's people. Moses was God's means to deliver Israel from Egypt. But the people refused his leadership and God's deliverance when it was first revealed.

Again the rejected one becomes the deliver and ruler appointed by God. Moses spoke of another prophet (whom Stephen knew was Jesus) like himself whom God would raise up. Like Moses, Jesus was rejected as deliverer and ruler, yet God established Him.

Not only was Moses rejected while in Egypt, but he was also spurned after he led Israel forth with signs and wonders from Egypt. Although Moses was visited by the angel of the Lord on Mount Sinai and received the Law the Sanhedrin so highly valued, still Israel refused to obey him. They wanted to return to Egypt and practice idolatry. Stephen used Israel's repeated rejection of Moses to illustrate the Sanhedrin's repeated rejection of Christ.

### **Solomon's Temple and God's presence (Acts 7:44–50)**

Stephen went on to answer their charge about him concerning the Temple. He reminded them that the tabernacle lasted only until the days of David. Then David's son, Solomon, built the temple—relatively late in Israel's history as God's chosen nation. Yet both Solomon and Isaiah recognized that the temple could not really contain God's presence. Solomon said, “‘Will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!’” (1 Kings 8:27). Stephen quoted from Isaiah 66:1–2: “‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me? says the Lord. Or where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things?’” (Acts 7:49).

Stephen was not saying that God had not manifested His presence in the temple. But he used the prophets' own words to say that no temple or structure built by humans could contain the God who created heaven and earth. (See 1 Kings 8:27; 2 Chronicles 6:1–2, 18; and Isaiah 57:15.)

### **Pattern of rejection (Acts 7:51–52)**

Finally Stephen made his point. Wherever God raised up men of faith, Israel rebelled against them. “‘You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there

16 Did Israel's possession of a place of worship (tent of witness or temple) guarantee the purity and vitality of its faith, based on Stephen's statement in 7:44–50?

17 Do you ever make Israel's mistake, emphasizing a certain place to assure you of a connection with God rather than focusing on a personal relationship with Him? Which is stronger with you, your outer appearance of godliness or your inner connection to Him?

ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute?” (Acts 7:51–52). This pattern was repeated with Jesus. ““They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him”” (Acts 7:52).

Stephen drew his conclusion with bold language. The Sanhedrin’s repeated refusal of Christ was rooted in the evil spiritual pattern of Israel’s history. Abraham had believed without the evidence of land, son, law, or temple. But those who rejected so clear a witness as Jesus were not the heirs of Abraham’s faith. They were uncircumcised in heart and ears (Jeremiah 9:26).

Had Israel believed Moses and received with faith the Law? No! They were still a stiff-necked people. The Sanhedrin members were sons of the persecutors, not of the prophets. Jesus made this point in Matthew 23:31. With or without the Law and the temple, many people rejected God and His plan. This rejection reached its peak in the betrayal and murder of Christ.

Although the following is not in Stephen’s outline, the examples he uses illustrate the four phases in the life of each person God calls to accomplish His purpose.

1. Our call is from God.
  - A. God appeared to Abraham (7:2).
  - B. God was with Joseph (7:9).
  - C. Moses was called by God (7:31–34).
2. Our call necessitates choice.
  - A. Abraham had to decide to leave highly developed Mesopotamia (7:4).
  - B. Joseph was true to God in his afflictions (Genesis 39:7–23).
  - C. Moses identified with his brothers, although he was taught in the wisdom of Egypt (7:22).
3. Our choice is followed by a time of death.
  - A. Abraham had neither land nor a son, and the promise appeared dead (7:5).
  - B. Joseph’s dream appeared lost in his afflictions (7:9).
  - C. Moses spent years in exile (7:29) and rejection (7:39).
4. Our time of death is followed by vindication.
  - A. Abraham’s posterity gained the land.
  - B. Joseph’s dream came true.
  - C. Moses came to be recognized as a dominant man in Israel’s history.

Christ himself went through the process of choice in His temptation, time of death, and vindication.

Stephen was called not by his own will but by action of the Holy Spirit through the election of the church. He chose to respond. He now faced the time of death, but vindication would come (7:55–56). Remember that the time of death is the most difficult. Our dreams and work die, and we become distressed; but we have assurance that ours is a religion of resurrection. The death is for the glory of God. He will finish your life and ministry with vindication, if your deeds have been done in Him.

This chart summarizes some of the facts Stephen mentioned.

<b>Fifteen historical facts in Stephen's speech</b>		
<b>Historical Facts</b>		<b>Scripture</b>
1.	God appeared to Abraham in Mesopotamia. He called him to leave his relatives and country. Abraham obeyed and left the land of the Chaldeans (Babylonians).	Gen. 11:31–12:5; Neh. 9:7; Acts 7:2–5
2.	God promised to give Canaan to Abraham and his seed. First, however, they would be slaves for 400 or more years! Then God would punish the nation that enslaved them.	Exod. 1:8–11; 12:40; Acts 7:5–6; Gal. 3:17
3.	Circumcision was a sign of the covenant between God and Abraham.	Gen. 17:9–14; Acts 7:8
4.	Abraham's descendants were Isaac, Jacob, and the 12 patriarchs, or grandfathers of the Jews.	Gen. 21:2–4; 25:26; Acts 7:8
5.	The patriarchs were jealous of Joseph. They sold him as a slave into Egypt. But God was with him. He rescued Joseph, gave him wisdom, and made him ruler over all of Egypt.	Gen. 37; 41:39–43; Acts 7:9–10
6.	Joseph revealed himself to his brothers and rescued them from the famine. Jacob and his whole family, about 75 people, went down to Egypt.	Gen. 42–46; Acts 7:11–14
7.	The time for God to fulfill His promise to Abraham grew near. The number of Israelites greatly increased in Egypt. A new king arose who did not know Joseph. He persecuted the Israelites.	Exod. 1:7–22; Acts 7:17–19
8.	Then Moses was born and hidden for 3 months. Outside, Pharaoh's daughter found him. She raised him as her own son. He was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action.	Exod. 2:1–10; Acts 7:20–22
9.	At age 40, Moses thought his own people would recognize that God was using him to rescue them. But they did not. They rejected him as their ruler and judge. He fled to Midian. There, God gave him two sons.	Exod. 2:11–22; Acts 7:23–29
10.	When Moses was 80 years old, an angel appeared to him at the burning bush. This is the same Moses the Israelites rejected. God himself sent Moses to be their ruler and deliverer.	Exod. 3; Acts 7:30–36
11.	Moses promised that God would send a special prophet from among the Israelites.	Deut. 18:15,18; Acts 7:37–38
12.	The Jewish fathers refused to obey Moses. Instead, they rejected him and turned their hearts back to Egypt. They made a gold calf and worshiped it!	Exod. 32; Acts 7:39–41
13.	God rejected them. He left them to worship their idols. Also, He promised to send them into exile beyond Babylon.	Amos 5:25–27; Acts 7:42–43
14.	The Israelites had the tent in the desert. This tent contained the Commandments. Moses made the tent by the pattern God gave to him. The tent remained until the time of David.	Exod. 25:8–40; Acts 7:44–45
15.	David desired to build a place for God to dwell. But Solomon built the temple. Still, the Most High does not live in houses built by humans. Heaven is His throne and earth His footstool. He created everything!	1 Kings 8:17; 6:1–38; Isa. 66:1–2; Acts 7:46–50

# 7 LESSON 3

## The First Martyr

In 1555 a Christian named Rogers was given one last chance to forsake his faith. “That which I have preached I will seal with my blood,” he responded firmly.

“Then you are a heretic,” his jailer said, condemning him without mercy.

“We shall see,” Rogers said calmly. “At the judgment we shall see.”

Knowing this man was going to burn him to death, Rogers said to him, “I will pray for you.”

Through the ages, countless martyrs have died for their faith with the love, forgiveness, and spirit of our Lord Jesus. Stephen was the first. Here is the account of what can be learned from Stephen’s brave example (Foxe 1981, 391).

### 7.3.1

#### OBJECTIVE

*Explain the significance of Stephen’s death and its application to your own life.*

### Full of the Spirit

Stephen’s ringing address to the Sanhedrin brought a furious response. “When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him” (Acts 7:54). These people knew exactly what Stephen was saying to them, and they did not like it. The rage of the Sanhedrin went unchecked by Gamaliel. Gamaliel’s student, Saul (Acts 22:3), had clearly shown he disagreed with Gamaliel’s philosophy (Acts 7:58; 8:1).

Before, the Sanhedrin was cautious in punishing the apostles because the people liked them. But Stephen’s criticism of the temple removed any caution the Sanhedrin had. (Compare Acts 4:21–5:26 with Acts 6:11–12.) Without the restraint of the people or more moderate Pharisees, the Sanhedrin imposed the death sentence on Stephen.

Tradition indicates that a person who was to be stoned was led to a precipice at least twice the height of the individual. The condemned was pushed over the precipice. If the fall did not kill him or her, a priest was positioned at the bottom of the cliff next to the body. The first witness came and dropped a rock on the body from above. Then the body was inspected again. Was the person dead? Witness after witness would drop a rock on the condemned person until he or she died. It was a formal execution, but with a semblance of mercy since the rock-dropping stopped at death. This could have been the manner in which Stephen was killed.

The next phrase is vital. Acts 7:55 tells us that Stephen was “full of the Holy Spirit.” When a person is filled with the Spirit, he or she has no room for anger. The desire for retaliation is gone. Stephen did not look to his attackers and mirror hateful attitudes. Instead, Stephen looked up to heaven.

### Heavenly Vision

Full of the Spirit, Stephen looked up to heaven. He saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at God’s right hand. Stephen’s eyes were not on his accusers or on his situation. His face mirrored what he saw, looking toward heaven.

Acts 7:56 tells us Stephen saw Jesus *standing* at the right hand of God. The Epistles tell us that when Christ ascended to heaven, He was *seated* at the right hand of the Father (Ephesians 1:20). The place at the right hand was symbolic of highest honor and authority. But when Stephen saw Him, Jesus was not sitting. He was standing. Perhaps the reason is that Jesus knew Stephen soon would be coming into His presence. Already He had risen from His throne to meet Stephen.

18 Read Acts 6:3,8; 7:55. What are the terms used to describe the fullness of Stephen’s life?

“At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him” (Acts 7:57–58). The contrast between the actions of the Sanhedrin and those of Stephen are dramatic. The religious leaders were looking and acting just like their father. Jesus said in John 8:44, ““You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning.”” But Stephen followed another’s example.

### Following Jesus’ Example

19 What statements of Stephen show he died consciously following the Lord in His death?

“While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit’” (Acts 7:59). After looking to heaven and seeing Jesus, Stephen had the grace to follow his Master’s powerful example even unto death. At His death, Jesus had commended His spirit to the Father (Luke 23:46). Stephen committed his spirit at death to Jesus (Acts 7:59). Then, as his life drained away, his final words were words of forgiveness. “He fell on his knees and cried out, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them’” (Acts 7:60). Only Luke recorded similar words of forgiveness by Christ on the Cross: ““Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing”” (Luke 23:34).

20 What does this reveal about Stephen’s attitude toward the Sanhedrin?

Stephen personified the instruction in 1 Peter 2:20–21: “If you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps.”

21 Explain the significance of Stephen’s death and its application to your own life.

Acts 7:59 says not that Stephen died, but that “he fell asleep.” The word *asleep* is commonly used in the New Testament for a Christian’s death. It is as though for a Christian, death is too hard a word. Stephen did not cease to exist. For the Christian, death is the doorway to eternal life with Christ. So Christians fall asleep in death and awake in the presence of God.

22 Read Matthew 23:27–37. How do Stephen’s stern words and weeping heart mirror the behavior and attitude of Jesus?

Harsh as it may seem, Stephen’s sermon had come from a man with a weeping heart. Stephen’s message had been proclaimed with justice, not anger. Even after the Sanhedrin’s four rejections of Jesus and His followers, repentance was still possible.

23 What notable New Testament figure is introduced at the death of Stephen?

As Stephen was stoned, the witnesses laid their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul (Acts 7:58). Acts 8:1 tells us that “Saul was there, giving approval to his death.” On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem. All but the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Saul was instrumental in that persecution. It seems likely that Stephen’s ministry and his prayer were instrumental in the eventual conversion of Saul.

24 Like Stephen, Christians need not see death as defeat but as entry into the Lord’s presence. How does the way Stephen faced death help you to face death personally?

What good can come out of trouble? Because there was trouble in the church, Stephen emerged as a leader. Because Stephen was put in a place of responsibility, he began preaching. He spoke about the implications of the Christian faith in a way that none of the other apostles did. Because he did this, he came in direct confrontation with the religious establishment and with a man named Saul. Because of that Stephen was martyred. Because Stephen was martyred, the church was persecuted and scattered. Because the church was scattered, Philip went to Samaria. For the first time, people in Samaria heard the gospel. Because the church was scattered, some Christians went as far as Antioch in Syria. There a church was founded not only for Jews but also for Gentiles. Later, Gentiles helped the Jerusalem Christians in their time of great need. Furthermore, probably in part because of Stephen’s ministry and prayer, Saul became the apostle Paul. Paul wrote about two-thirds of the New Testament. Is it

25 What good can come out of difficult circumstances in your life and church?

possible that had there not been a church problem, we would not have two-thirds of the New Testament?

What good can come from trouble? God is working to refine His church. God will refine each of us, too, if we patiently let Him work on us. The cause-and-effect relationship is not often seen in a short time. It takes a while to see it work out. But God does all things well when we put our trust in Him.

Persecution does not mean defeat. Instead of being a destructive blow, the death of Stephen became a rallying cry. His message brought a new vitality to the church. It helped cut the umbilical cord to its Jewish traditions, setting it on the course that will take the gospel to every man and woman in the world. God is working for good in the church and in our lives.



## Test Yourself



Circle the letter of the *best* answer.

1. Grecian Jews were those who had
  - a) come back to Jerusalem from foreign lands.
  - b) picked up the ways and customs of foreign lands.
  - c) never learned to speak, read, or write Hebrew.
  - d) done all of the above.
2. The biblical way of handling disputes is found in
  - a) Matthew 5:23–24.
  - b) John 5:1–4.
  - c) Acts 7:1–5.
  - d) Philippians 4:6–10.
3. The seven men chosen to serve the Grecian widows in Acts 6 were men
  - a) of good reputation, popularity, and full of the Holy Spirit.
  - b) of wealth, full of wisdom, and of good reputation.
  - c) of good reputation, full of wisdom, and full of the Holy Spirit.
  - d) of popularity, full of wisdom and of the Holy Spirit.
4. The seven men chosen to serve the Grecian widows in Acts 6 had
  - a) Greek names.
  - b) Hebrew names.
  - c) Roman names.
  - d) Aramaic names.
5. Stephen's name means
  - a) "prince."
  - b) "witness."
  - c) "crown."
  - d) "victorious."
6. The word *synagogue* literally means
  - a) "holy place."
  - b) "a gathering together."
  - c) "the place of God's presence."
  - d) "temple."
7. The synagogue served the function of
  - a) worship.
  - b) education.
  - c) social interchange.
  - d) all of the above.
8. Stephen's sermon to the Sanhedrin is called his
  - a) "testimony."
  - b) "indictment."
  - c) "apology."
  - d) "homily."
9. From the death of Stephen, one learns that death is
  - a) an end in itself.
  - b) inevitable.
  - c) painful.
  - d) a doorway into the presence of God.
10. Stephen was stoned
  - a) at the Sanhedrin.
  - b) outside the city.
  - c) at Golgotha.
  - d) near the Mount of Olives.

# Responses to Interactive Questions

## Chapter 7

Some of these responses may include information that is supplemental to the IST. These questions are intended to produce reflective thinking beyond the course content and your responses may vary from these examples.

**1** In your experience, what are some things people disagree about in a church? How important are such disagreements?

Answers will vary.

**2** From Matthew 5:23–24 and 18:15–17, what is the correct way to handle disputes with other believers?

Before a Christian can be right with God, he or she must first make things right with other Christians with whom he or she has a dispute. First, the offended must go alone to the offender and try to resolve things. If the latter will not listen, the offended should take along one or two others to witness what is said. If there is still no reconciliation, the problem should be brought to the church for arbitration. If that still does not work, the offender should no longer be regarded as a Christian brother or sister.

**3** How might the problem have become worse if the apostles had ignored it?

Answers will vary but might include that the feelings would have escalated. The Grecian Jews would have felt angry and embittered, while their complaints might have alienated the Hebraic Jews or made them defensive. The end result would be greater division and more bad feelings.

**4** What were the three qualifications used to select the seven leaders?

Those chosen were to have (1) good reputations, be (2) full of wisdom, and (3) full of the Spirit.

**5** Explain why you feel each is essential in a church leader.

Answers will vary.

**6** What are five steps the apostles took to handle the conflict?

(1) They recognized the problem existed and took intelligent steps to solve it; (2) they did not condemn or accuse either sides; (3) they honestly faced their own limitations; (4) they were open to change; and (5) they delegated authority to others.

**7** How does believing God is working good make the trouble easier to bear?

Answers will vary.

**8** What experience have you had that shows that God works out difficulties for good?

Answers will vary.

**9** How does the setting for Stephen's preaching ministry differ from the setting of the apostles' preaching? Compare Acts 6:9 with Acts 3:11–4:4; 5:12–21,42.

Stephen's ministry was in the synagogue; the apostles' was in the temple.

**10** Why was Stephen arrested and put on trial?

He was charged with speaking against the Law and the Temple.

**11** What were some of the implications of faith in Christ that Stephen was first to recognize?

If salvation is by grace rather than by bondage to works, what are we still doing participating in a lifestyle celebrating a covenant with God based on the Law? Why were they still worshiping in the temple and looking to priests to mediate the relationship with God when believers are all priests unto God? Sacrifices are no longer necessary because the perfect sacrifice had come.

**12** What New Testament book wrestles with the same concepts that are reflected in Stephen's preaching?

Hebrews

**13** Why do you believe Stephen’s face glowed? Why did this not stop his accusers from killing him?

Answers will vary. It was obviously some heavenly manifestation of Stephen’s godliness. Stephen’s enemies were fighting against God, so such a reminder of Stephen’s relationship with God would not work in his favor.

**14** Stephen and others on trial preached Christ rather than defending themselves. What does this communicate about what was most important to them?

Answers will vary, but should emphasize that these men valued Christ more than their own lives.

**15** How did Stephen try to connect with his listeners and show he was a good Jew?

He called them “brothers and fathers.”

**16** Did Israel’s possession of a place of worship (tent of witness or temple) guarantee the purity and vitality of its faith, based on Stephen’s statement in 7:44–50?

No.

**17** Do you ever make Israel’s mistake, emphasizing a certain place to assure you of a connection with God rather than focusing on a personal relationship with Him? Which is stronger with you, your outer appearance of godliness or your inner connection to Him?

Answers will vary.

**18** Read Acts 6:3,8; 7:55. What are the terms used to describe the fullness of Stephen’s life?

Stephen was full of the Spirit and of wisdom (6:3), full of grace and power (6:8), and full of the Holy Spirit (7:55).

**19** What statements of Stephen show he died consciously following the Lord in His death?

“Lord Jesus, receive my Spirit” and “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.”

**20** What does this reveal about Stephen’s attitude toward the Sanhedrin?

He did not hate them, but forgave them.

**21** Explain the significance of Stephen’s death and its application to your own life.

Answers will vary.

**22** Read Matthew 23:27–37. How do Stephen’s stern words and weeping heart mirror the behavior and attitude of Jesus?

Jesus sternly denounced the hypocrites, then wept, longing to embrace those who rejected Him.

**23** What notable New Testament figure is introduced at the death of Stephen?

Saul, who would later become the apostle Paul.

**24** Like Stephen, Christians need not see death as defeat but as entry into the Lord’s presence. How does the way Stephen faced death help you to face death personally?

Answers will vary.

**25** What good can come out of difficult circumstances in your life and church?

Answers will vary.

## UNIT PROGRESS EVALUATION 2

Now that you have finished Unit 2, review the lessons in preparation for Unit Progress Evaluation 2. You will find it in the Essential Course Materials section at the back of this IST. Answer all of the questions without referring to your course materials, Bible, or notes. When you have completed the UPE, check your answers with the answer key provided in the Essential Course Materials section, and review any items you may have answered incorrectly. Then you may proceed with your study of Unit 3. (Although UPE scores do not count as part of your final course grade, they indicate how well you learned the material and how well you may perform on the closed-book final examination.)

# 3 UNIT

## The Witness of the Church in Judea and Samaria

The persecution of believers that began after Stephen's execution created the church's mass evacuation of Jerusalem. Relocating into villages and towns throughout Palestine, the believers were separated from familiar surroundings of the temple and symbols related to being God's people.

The believers' displacement from Jerusalem, however, gave them greater opportunity to evangelize other areas. The enemies of the church, including Saul, did not foresee that the strength of the body was not in the ability to congregate in large numbers. Rather, the church's strength flowed from the presence of the Holy Spirit, and God's Spirit was not confined to any one geographical place. Wherever Spirit-filled believers traveled, the power of God traveled with them. What began, therefore, as a fire contained in Jerusalem became a raging inferno across the world. This amazing success was the direct result of intense persecution.

### **Chapter 8      Scattered Seed: The Church Expands**

#### Lessons

- 8.1 Mass Evangelism
- 8.2 Personal Evangelism
- 8.3 Seed for Future Harvests

### **Chapter 9      The Acts of the Apostles**

#### Lessons

- 9.1 Peter's Expanding Ministry
- 9.2 Antioch: The Changing Shape of the Church
- 9.3 Jerusalem: The Difficult Will of God



# CHAPTER 8

## Scattered Seed: The Church Expands

An old woman lived alone in the country with only the songbirds for company. She loved the birds and fed them scraps of bread from her own table every day. She was thrilled when a family of bluebirds made a nest in the tree right beside her bedroom window. Every morning she awoke to their beautiful song.

But one night, lightning struck the tree and split it in half down to the ground. The beautiful tree seemed mortally wounded. The woman had no choice but to remove the two halves of the tree. She missed the tree's shade, but most of all she missed the songbirds.

Before long, the woman noticed an amazing thing. From the stump of the tree, six saplings had sprouted. The trees grew quickly, and within a few years, the six new trees held many new families of songbirds to delight the woman.

Bad things happen. We cannot control many of them. A loved one gets sick. We lose our job. An enemy falsely accuses us. We suffer. At the death of Stephen, the church suffered a severe blow. Believers were scattered to many places to avoid persecution. Would the church survive or ever thrive again? Acts 8 and 9 record good news for the church. Although struck down for a time, the church—like that old woman's tree—will soon see even better days.

### Lesson 8.1 Mass Evangelism

Objective

8.1.1 *Describe what caused the church to begin evangelism efforts outside Jerusalem.*

### Lesson 8.2 Personal Evangelism

Objective

8.2.1 *Discuss the significance of Philip's ministry to the lone Ethiopian eunuch, listing at least two important evangelism principles.*

### Lesson 8.3 Seed for Future Harvests

Objective

8.3.1 *Explain the effects of Saul's persecution, conversion, and early ministry in the church.*


 A graphic with a large number '8' and a smaller '1' next to it, with the word 'LESSON' written across the '8'.

## Mass Evangelism

Acts 6–9:31 deals with the theme that persecution of the church leads to expansion. In these chapters, Luke noted the growth of the church through Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. In doing so, he keyed in on three central personalities. In chapters 6 and 7 he focused on Stephen. In chapter 8 he focused on Philip. In the early part of chapter 8 and in chapter 9, he keyed in on Saul. These were the three people most responsible for the expansion of the church through persecution.

The Jerusalem church's connection with the temple and with Jewish culture may have prevented it from taking the gospel across cultural barriers. Peter preached Jesus as the only means of salvation for the whole earth (Acts 4:12). It was Stephen's understanding that the gospel is distinct from Jewish practices that opened the way for the gospel to cross borders of language, race, culture, religion, and gender.

Stephen's message shattered the idea that the gospel fit with the current practices of Judaism. Had the Sanhedrin admitted the truth of Stephen's teaching, all of Jewish life would have changed. The Sanhedrin's growing rejection and hatred of the church (Acts 5:33) needed only the trigger of Stephen's ministry to release its full hatred.

### 8.1.1 OBJECTIVE

*Describe what caused the church to begin evangelism efforts outside Jerusalem.*

### Saul's Destructive Mission

At the death of Stephen, we are introduced to a man who will play a pivotal role in the future of the church—for evil *and* for good. “Saul was there, giving approval to his death” (Acts 8:1).

“On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church” (Acts 8:2–3). Still a young man, Saul played a major role in the persecution that resulted from Stephen's death. “Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison” (Acts 8:3). But Saul was just one figure in a whole system of persecution.

1 Who was scattered after the death of Stephen? Who remained behind?

The early believers had no unhealthy desire for imprisonment or death. They followed the words of Jesus in Matthew 10:23: ““When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another.”” It seems unlikely that every Christian in Jerusalem was able to flee. It seems more likely that those who fled were those being persecuted because of their teaching—the leaders.

Then why did the apostles stay? One viewpoint is that they stayed because a shepherd does not desert the flock when it is attacked. The apostles testified to their solidarity with God's suffering people by remaining behind in spite of pressure.

But perhaps there is another reason. Stephen was not killed for preaching Christ's resurrection. The apostles had preached Christ's resurrection and not been killed for it. The spur that brought Stephen's death was that he had added the implications of Christ's life and ministry. If Christ was risen, why were people still trying to keep the law of Moses? Stephen spoke against the commercial and ritual law and the temple as the centerpieces for a life pleasing to God.

The apostles were not yet at that point in their preaching. They had simply added to their Jewish faith the belief that Jesus rose from the dead. This may be one of the reasons why the apostles could stay in Jerusalem and the Hellenistic deacons had to leave. Ultimately they would all have to leave. But for now, the apostles stayed with the flock in Jerusalem.

## Philip's Evangelistic Ministry in Samaria

2 Why do you think the apostles might have chosen to stay in Jerusalem when others fled?

As a direct result of the scattering after Stephen's death, Philip went to Samaria. There he would become the first specialized **evangelist** in the history of the church.

Samaria is today's West Bank. The West Bank is not the west bank of a river. It is a massive territory that is almost as big as the country of Israel is today. The West Bank was occupied by non-Jews as it is now. In those days, the people were called Samaritans. The Samaritans were people who descended from the northern tribes, the tribes that split away from Solomon's son, Rehoboam. Jeroboam ruled these ten tribes of the northern kingdom known as Israel. The remaining tribes—the southern kingdom—remained loyal to the Davidic line under Rehoboam. This southern kingdom was known as Judah. For a period of about two centuries, the northern kingdom practiced idolatry and other heathen ways. They tried to merge some of these practices with the Jewish faith.

In 722, the Assyrians conquered the north. (Judah did not fall, but survived for 150 more years.) The Assyrians deported many of the people to other lands and brought in people of other lands and religions. The Jewish people who remained in the land intermarried with people who were not Jews. One of the groups that gradually emerged from that was the Samaritans. They kept some of the Jewish faith, but had mixed other practices. They worshiped at a temple on Mount Gerazim and had their own sacrificial system and priesthood. Because they were considered theological, cultural, and religious "half-breeds" by the Jews, Samaritans were treated as outsiders.

While the Jews generally disliked and were uncomfortable with the Samaritans, Philip seemed a stark contrast. It was to Samaria that he fled. Acts 8:4–5 tells us, "Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there." Like Stephen, Philip started out by waiting tables—not as a waiter but by dispersing the welfare funds at a moneychanger's table. Philip started serving God where there was a need and an opportunity. As he faithfully served God, the opportunity came to do more. Christians who present themselves in willing service to the Lord open the door for God to guide them into even greater ministry.

Some people resist serving in small or lowly ways. Philip's preaching ministry followed his willingness to serve.

The story is told of a pastor who stood before his congregation asking for their help. "God has given us this beautiful church and property," he stated. "It is up to all of us to take good care of it. The way we care for it is a witness to the neighborhood. If you are willing to cut the grass, pick up stones, sweep, or clean this weekend, please raise your hand." Many in the congregation smiled back at the pastor as they raised their hands.

"Great!" the pastor said, pleased. "I cannot do it. I am the leader of this church. I have a Ph.D. degree and a Master of Divinity degree. It would not be right for me to get my hands dirty with such small tasks."

Half the hands in the air went down, and every smile disappeared. What had seemed like a precious act of service to the Lord just a moment ago now seemed like an insult. This pastor had the wrong idea about service. Unfortunately, that was what many in the church would learn about how to serve God.

3 Are there any unimportant jobs in the kingdom of God?

In Acts, the coming of the gospel to a new area is almost always attended by signs of divine power in the form of healings or **exorcisms**. Notice Luke's record of signs of divine power that accompanied the preaching of the gospel in Samaria. The lame and paralyzed were healed, and evil spirits were cast out.

Perhaps there is a special reason Philip seemed to cast out a large number of demons. Simon, a magician or sorcerer, had great power and prestige in that city. Simon had convinced the people that he was some supernatural “Great Power.” Maybe the Samaritans’ involvement with Simon’s world of the occult created the conditions under which many were possessed (Acts 8:7). Simon seems not to have been possessed of evil spirits, for neither Philip nor Peter and John prayed to **exorcise** demons from him. Not all sorcerers are demon possessed. According to the apostle Paul in Galatians 5:20, sorcery is listed as “a work of the flesh” (Kings James Version).

4 Is Philip’s casting out of evil spirits the first mention of exorcism in Acts? If not, locate a previous example.

For a long time the Samaritans believed the magic Simon did was proof he was the “Great Power.” While Simon used sorcery or magic, the signs and miracles that accompanied Philip’s ministry were the real thing. Whatever Simon’s works were, they were not signs—windows of revelation into the nature of God and the truth of salvation. “Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw” (Acts 8:13). Note the contrasts: the people had been amazed at Simon’s magic (Acts 8:9,11), but Simon himself was amazed at the signs and miracles happening through Philip (Acts 8:13). Like Moses (Exodus 8:18), Philip had topped the sorcerers. When the Lord is working, His signs far exceed those of the occult.

### Peter and John’s Follow-Up in Samaria

5 What two factors led the Samaritans to accept Philip’s message?

“When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them” (Acts 8:14). This was likely a fact-finding mission. This ministry in Samaria had not been planned by the church. It was a by-product of persecution. But its importance is seen in the fact that Peter and John, the top leaders in the church, were sent. The Jerusalem church showed the importance of unity and interdependence of Christians and churches. If a church was going to exist in Samaria, the Jerusalem church was determined to be linked to it.

6 What six results of Philip’s ministry in the Samaritan city are mentioned in Acts 8:6–8,12–13?

The open-mindedness of the apostles toward the Samaritans showed great progress in their understanding of the gospel. In Matthew 10:5, Jesus sent the disciples to preach and heal on their first training mission with some restrictions. “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans.” Later, in Matthew 28, Jesus told the same disciples to go into all the world. But at first He told them not to go to the Samaritans. We can better understand this when we see the depth of ill will between the Samaritans and the Jews, even Jesus’ disciples. In Luke 9:51–56 we see some Samaritans refusing to welcome Jesus to their village because He was going to Jerusalem to the Temple. They would not help a person going to a rival worship site. Note James and John’s response to this snub. “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?” (Luke 9:54). They were ready to preach a message of damnation and judgment, not a gospel of love and reconciliation.

Jesus started His disciples preaching to people of their own culture. As they learned from Him, their biases would eventually disappear, although it might take some time (Acts 10:28). When we begin following Jesus, He does not always change all of our thinking overnight. The changing of our thinking is a lifelong growth process.

When Peter and John arrived in Samaria, they saw that the Samaritan believers had experienced salvation. They had not received the experience that had come at Pentecost. The apostles prayed that the Samaritans would receive the Holy Spirit. We are not told how long they prayed, but we are told of something new. Peter and John placed their hands on the new believers and prayed for them. Those they prayed for in this way were filled with the Spirit. In the New Testament, a person

who was filled with the power of God would lay hands on a person who was spiritually hungry and open to God. When that combination occurs, God works.

The mention of prayer leaves room for the possibility that hours or even days of prayer by Peter and John took place before they laid hands on anyone. The gift of the baptism in the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands did not necessarily occur immediately or because they were apostles. God worked through their humble and yielded spirits as they continually acknowledged their need of the Holy Spirit's fullness by seeking daily direction for their ministry.

The question may be asked, why did Philip not lead the Samaritan believers into the baptism in the Spirit? By comparing Acts 8:14–18 with Acts 1:4–5, 8; 10:45–46; and 11:16–18, we gain insight. In Acts 1, the Lord ordained a waiting period before the Holy Spirit would be poured forth. In Acts 10 and 11, the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit in the same manner as at Pentecost, speaking in other tongues. This was evidence to those who were reluctant to receive Gentiles into the church. This outpouring convinced them that God had saved the Gentiles. It is likely that in His sovereignty, Jesus waited to pour forth the Holy Spirit until Peter and John arrived so that both the Samaritans and the Jerusalem church would have no doubt that their experience and equality in Christ were the same. Also, Peter and John's confirmation of the Spirit's work in the Samaritans would probably have greater credibility with the Jerusalem church than the witness of the **Hellenist** Philip.

7 What two actions did Peter and John take in ministering to the believers that they might receive the Holy Spirit?

We are not told specifically that the Samaritans spoke in other tongues. But obviously something happened. Acts 8:18–19 says, "When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money and said, 'Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.'" Simon had already seen demons leaving people. He had seen paralytics and lame people healed, but he had not wanted to buy those abilities. The visible evidence of the Holy Spirit was of sufficient weight to awaken Simon's interest in buying the gift.

8 One thing occurred in Samaria at the pouring forth of the Spirit that had not happened at Pentecost. What was it?

When Philip came to town, Simon was replaced as the most powerful man. And when the apostles visited Philip, Philip deferred to them. Philip had not laid hands on anyone. They had not received the Holy Spirit under his ministry. Perhaps Simon was thinking, "If I can get whatever Peter and John are doing that Philip is not doing, I will regain my place and once more be over Philip." It seems Simon was looking for prestige and power, not a fuller relationship with God. From Simon comes the word **simony**, meaning "to buy or sell a church office for money."

In strong and clear language, Peter told Simon he would perish with his money unless he repented of his wickedness (Acts 8:20–23). Even if Simon were a believing, baptized Christian (Acts 8:13), the state of his heart showed him to be away from God and in sin.

9 Look at Luke 9:51–55 and John 4:27. Contrast Peter and John's attitudes toward Samaritans with those displayed in 8:14–25.

Peter seemed doubtful of Simon's desire to repent. The "perhaps" in Acts 8:22 can be better understood as an expression not of Peter's doubt that God would forgive but of his doubt that Simon would repent. Notice in Acts 8:24 that while Simon appeared concerned about the consequences Peter mentioned, the sin itself did not seem to bother him.

Philip's powerful ministry to the Samaritans had not been a deliberate decision by the Jerusalem church. It was the result of persecution that scattered the workers. The warmth and reality of the Samaritans' faith in Christ led Peter and John to take part in the Samaritan ministry. Inspired by their new experience in bringing the gospel to people of another culture, they continued Philip's ministry with passion. "Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages" (Acts 8:25).


 A graphic with a large number '8' and a smaller '2' next to it, with the word 'LESSON' written across the '8'.

### 8.2.1 OBJECTIVE

*Discuss the significance of Philip's ministry to the lone Ethiopian eunuch, listing at least two important evangelism principles.*

10 What characteristics did Luke give of the man to whom the angel of the Lord sent Philip in Acts 8:27–28?

11 What does the distance the eunuch was willing to travel to reach Jerusalem by chariot say about him?

12 What are some good strategies for reaching out to people whose needs we cannot easily see?

## Personal Evangelism

While Acts 8:2–25 shows us God's concern for the people of Samaria, Acts 8:26–38 shows us God's concern for individuals. These verses give a balanced look at the place of personal evangelism as well as mass evangelism—ministry on a broader scale. Neither of these ministries is more important than the other. Both are needed to reach the world for Jesus.

### The Holy Spirit's Timely Prompting

In the midst of a great revival in Samaria, God had new instructions for Philip. “An angel of the Lord said to Philip, ‘Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza’” (Acts 8:26). From a human viewpoint it does not seem to make sense to call Philip away from his successful ministry in Samaria. Imagine Philip's response if he thought, *I cannot leave. I have never had a meeting like this in my life. People are healed and delivered every time I preach. I have just gotten established, and this is a big work!* That is the natural response when we think in numbers, but God does not.

Philip obeyed without question the command of the angel, even though it meant leaving a fruitful ministry in Samaria. He walked until the Spirit told him to go up to an Ethiopian **eunuch** who was returning to his home from Jerusalem.

Ethiopia is south of Egypt in Africa. This man's race, appearance, culture, and religious background were far different from Philip's. Perhaps Philip's experiences in Samaria had been just a warm-up for the mission God would give him next. This important official had traveled a great distance to worship God in Jerusalem. But he had two strikes against him. First, he was not a Jew but a Gentile. That alone would keep him from getting past the outer court of the temple. Second, he was a eunuch. Deuteronomy 23:1 says, “No one who has been emasculated by crushing or cutting may enter the assembly of the Lord.”

Judaism did not seek to convert Gentiles. Perhaps this had affected the believers who were coming into the church. Maybe they took a look at this man and said, “He does not need the gospel. He would not be interested.” The church understands the need to minister to those who are down and out. How many times has the church discriminated against the “up and out”? No welcome would await a pilgrim such as this eunuch. In fact, he would have been barred from all but the outer court of the temple, even if he were a full-fledged **proselyte**. A death sentence could be passed on any who entered one of the access gates in the six-foot-high wall separating the courts accessible to Jews but not to Gentiles. Large signs were posted at each gate warning Gentiles that the penalty for entry was death.

Although the man had gone to Jerusalem seeking God, he returned with no more understanding than he had before. But God knows each person's heart. If you worry about the lost and what is going to happen to those who have never heard a clear witness for Jesus Christ, remember this man. He had a heart that was determined to find God; and God was determined to find him. “The Spirit told Philip, ‘Go to that chariot and stay near it’” (Acts 8:29).

The evangelist Philip was ready to minister to a multitude or to one man. If the Lord felt it was important for Philip to change location, Philip felt it was important to go. It was not his task to complain or ask why. It was his joy to obey.

The Spirit prompted Philip's approach at the precise moment of opportunity. The eunuch was more than midway through his reading aloud of Isaiah's Servant Song (Isaiah 52:13–53:12). Philip's question, “Do you understand what you are reading?” awakened in the man the hope that Philip had the answer.

In another display of the Holy Spirit’s perfect timing, the man was reading Isaiah’s prophecy about Christ’s crucifixion. “He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth” (Acts 8:32–33). This passage and the man’s question opened the door for Philip to tell him about Jesus. Acts 8:35 says, “Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.”

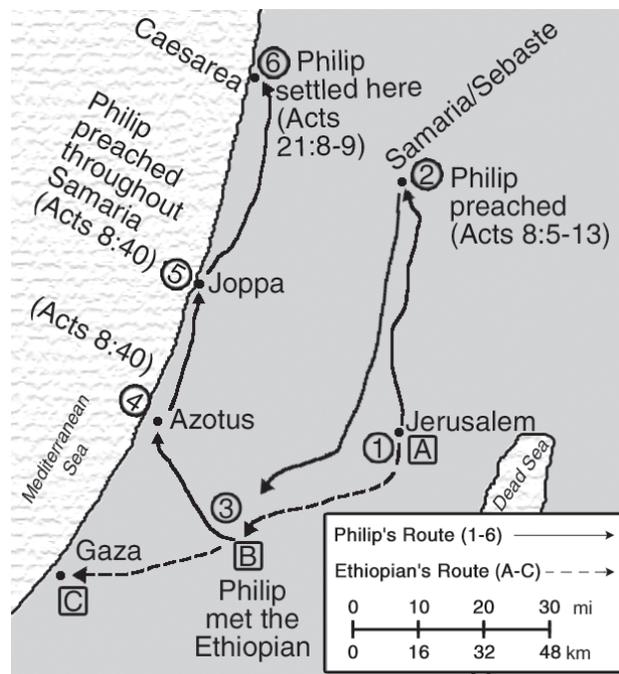
Philip’s ministry to this one person bore immediate fruit. The eunuch believed in Jesus. In another example of the Holy Spirit’s perfect timing, they happened by a body of water at that very moment. “The eunuch said, ‘Look, here is water. Why should not I be baptized?’” (Acts 8:36). He had his driver stop the chariot, and he and Philip went down to the water. The eunuch’s faith in Christ is shown by his wish to be baptized. The fact that Philip baptized him shows that Philip believed the man’s faith was genuine.

“When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:39). Philip’s obedience to God had brought great joy to this man.

### Concern for One, Concern for the World

13 Had the eunuch continued reading his scroll until he came to Isaiah 56:3–8, how would his joy have been even greater?

It would be wonderful to know what effect this man’s salvation had in Ethiopia. Might he not have been the first to take the gospel to that far-off land? While the Ethiopian returned home, Philip continued his far-flung ministry. After disappearing from the eunuch’s presence, Philip appeared at Azotus. This was the Old Testament’s Ashdod, one of the five Philistine cities. At the time of Philip, it served as the headquarters of Roman procurators. From Azotus, Philip “traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea” (Acts 8:40). Study the map of Palestine in the first century. Azotus was about nineteen miles from Gaza and sixty miles from Caesarea, where Philip was headed. But Philip did not just travel to Caesarea. He preached the gospel in town after town all along the way.



What Acts 8 says is that if we are going to be a biblical church and a biblical people, we must be world-oriented Christians. We must care about people

wherever they might be. We must show this concern through our prayers, with our giving, and by getting involved. We have an obligation to fulfill the Great Commission. The reason the Lord gives blessings is so that believers can bless others. The Lord will build His church, and He wants our willing cooperation.

This is a great generation to be alive. This is not an age of defeat and gloom. This is an age of unmatched growth and opportunity for the body of Christ. No missionary expansion of the church in history has surpassed its growth in the last generation. Christians today have a chance to be involved through prayer, giving, and going.

## LESSON 3

### Seed for Future Harvests

In any phase of the church's development, God is planning and developing a seed that will come to fruition in the next stage of development. We may not even see it growing in our midst. Only God may know it is there, and He is always working out His own purposes.

If you look at the situation in Acts, you might be tempted to see Stephen's persecution and get discouraged. Looking at problems can lead us to despair. But God is always at work, even if we do not see it at the moment. During this time of persecution, God was at work developing the great persecutor Saul into the great apostle to the Gentiles, Paul. God was preparing to use Paul to catapult the church into its most wonderful age of expansion. As Acts 9 opens, no one would have guessed that this persecutor would one day be a great leader in the church. No one could imagine that his conversion would shape Christianity more than any other conversion in history. But God knew. God had planted the seeds. God was preparing. Soon would come the time when God would act.

#### 8.3.1 OBJECTIVE

*Explain the effects of Saul's persecution, conversion, and early ministry in the church.*

#### Saul's Conversion

Deep in the jungle a man raised a crop of coca plants for making cocaine. Although it was illegal and dangerous, he made a good living from his crops. When he became a Christian, he knew he needed to make a radical change. He could no longer grow coca plants for drugs. But what else could he do? How could he support his family? He destroyed the plants and tried to think of some other crop he could grow that would please God and support his large family.

One day a research team from a drug company visited the man's house. They had found growing wild in his fields a rare plant that they needed for a new cancer drug. They wanted to buy all that he could grow—at a good price. That field that once grew plants that produced sin and death soon produced plants with the potential to help and heal mankind.

That is how it was with Saul's conversion. Once he met Jesus, the life which had once produced violence and death changed radically. From that moment on, Saul's life would produce healing and life to the people of the world.

Who was Saul? Paul (his Roman name, as compared with Saul, his Jewish name) was from Tarsus, "no ordinary city" (Acts 21:39). Tarsus was in the province of Cilicia, located in what is now Eastern Turkey. At that time Tarsus had the third leading library in the world. Only Athens and Alexandria were more important learning centers. In Tarsus, Saul had the best secular learning. Later, when Paul addressed the Areopagus on Mars Hill (Acts 17), his secular learning was evident as he quoted with ease pagan poets of their classic literature. Not

only did Saul have the best secular education, but he also trained as a rabbi. He learned a trade—tentmaking—but he also learned the Scriptures in rabbinic schools. At some point, he moved to Jerusalem, where he trained under Gamaliel (Acts 5:33–40), the leading rabbi of that time. The product of two cultures and educations, Saul was uniquely fitted for his missionary task. He was at home in both the Greek world and in the Jewish world. And his Roman citizenship gave him the ability to go about his task freely.

Did Saul ever come in contact with Jesus when the Lord walked on the earth? Some have taken 2 Corinthians 5:16 as a clue that he did. But Paul never says so. In the Corinthian reference, Paul is concerned not with seeing Jesus physically but with knowing Him.

Saul’s religious convictions prior to conversion are strongly stated.

14 What do the Scripture passages in the chart tell us about Saul? Fill in your answers.

Bible reference	What it tells us about Saul
Galatians 1:13–14	
Philippians 3:4–6	
2 Corinthians 11:22	
Acts 22:3	
Acts 22:25–28	
Acts 26:4–5	

“Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples” (Acts 9:1). He had everything a religious bigot could dream of. The law was on his side. Evidently there were several times in the administration of Palestine where there was a gap before the arrival of a new Roman governor. For that brief time the Sanhedrin had more authority than usual. This appears to have been one of those times. With permission from the high priest, who with the Sanhedrin was permitted control of internal Jewish affairs, Saul set out for Damascus. The goal of his week-long, two-hundred-mile journey was to find believers—likely Jerusalem believers who had fled his persecution—and return them bound to Jerusalem.

On the road to Damascus, Saul had a sudden, dramatic meeting with Jesus (Acts 9:4–6). Of the thousands of conversions described in Acts, Saul’s is the only one preceded by a personal divine manifestation. Luke’s only other descriptions in the first twelve chapters of individuals receiving salvation involve the eunuch and Cornelius. Although the Holy Spirit was uniquely at work, they responded because of the witness of believers. Saul alone had a personal revelation from Jesus Christ.

Note Paul’s explanation in Galatians 1:1, 11–12 concerning his personal revelation. It was needed to establish his credentials as an apostle. Since he did not have the credentials of one of the Twelve (Acts 1:21–22), God had set him apart as a unique apostle, one “abnormally born” (1 Corinthians 15:8). The only time in the New Testament when Jesus revealed himself to a sinner was for the purpose of establishing Paul as an apostle.

Apparently, although the soldiers with Saul saw the light and heard the noise, it sounded like words only to Saul. Only Saul heard Jesus’ message, so he had to accept or reject Christ based on faith, not on the confirmation of any other person.

In Acts 9:6, Jesus sent Paul on to Damascus with a new attitude and purpose. “Get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

Saul’s actions directly after meeting Jesus offer a good example for us today.

### **Saul was remorseful (Acts 9:9).**

15 What one command did the Lord give Saul, and how did Saul respond to it?

One of the marks of true conversion is remorse. Paul’s genuine experience is seen by his immediate response. He chose not to eat or drink anything for three days. He was stunned. He had met the Lord whose people he had been persecuting. Imagine his thoughts during those days. He knew what he had done to Stephen. He knew what he had done to other believers. If we have truly met the living Christ, our life should change. Our old life will bring remorse about anything we have done that displeases God.

### **Saul prayed (Acts 9:11).**

God spoke to Ananias, a disciple in Damascus. “Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight” (Acts 9:11–12). Saul had not yet been baptized in water. He was still blind. He had not been filled with the Holy Spirit. But already God was speaking to him in visions. Such visions tend to be nurtured in an atmosphere of intense prayer. Prayer is essential for the life of the individual Christian and the church.

Visions are a means of guidance in Acts. Like the dreams of Joseph (Matthew 1:20; 2:13, 19, 22), their presence indicates a life so filled with God’s presence that He has ready access to the subconscious or inner spiritual nature of people.

Both Ananias (whose name means “the Lord is gracious”) and Saul were directed by visions. Ananias’ willingness (“Yes, Lord” in Acts 9:10) gave way to momentary questioning of the Lord (Acts 9:13) when he learned God’s instructions. His questioning shows that he knew about Saul’s threatening reason for coming to Damascus.

### **Saul connected with the body of Christ (Acts 9:10–17).**

It was necessary for Saul to link up with other Christians. The Lord sent a disciple named Ananias to Saul to connect him to the body of Christ. God did not call Saul to found a new denomination, new movement, or independent ministry. Saul’s ministry was to be part of the body of Christ and the church already in place.

16 From Acts 9:15–16, note the three purposes for Saul’s life revealed to Ananias and the process Saul would go through in achieving them.

Ananias was well aware of Saul’s past (Acts 9:13–14). It was not easy to trust this man who had been the gospel’s enemy. But he listened to God’s reassurance in Acts 9:15–16 and obeyed. Ananias went to the house and placed his hands on Saul. His actions show that he accepted Saul right away. So do his words: “Brother Saul” (Acts 9:17). The man who had tried to destroy the church and all Christians—who had just days earlier been his greatest enemy—was now his brother. Ananias provided what Saul needed—both physically and spiritually. “The Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength” (Acts 9:17–19). The new believer spent several days with the disciples in Damascus (Acts 9:20).

## Saul's New Life

Saved, healed, filled with the Spirit, and baptized in water, Saul was ready to eat. Then he wasted no time. He got busy for God with the same zeal he had shown while persecuting the church. "At once he began to preach in the synagogue that Jesus is the Son of God" (Acts 9:20). This is the only reference in Acts where Jesus is called by the title "Son of God." The fact that Saul used it so quickly shows his knowledge and acceptance of the Messiah's divinity.

Saul's first preaching was a powerful declaration, no doubt from his own experience, that "Jesus is the Son of God." Everyone who heard Paul speak was astonished. "Is not he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And has not he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?" (Acts 9:21).

17 What is preaching?

Paul's speaking is called preaching. To preach simply means to announce the good news. But in verse 22 Paul's speaking is called "proving." This is a formal word that means using logical arguments to lay out one's facts and convince others of the truth. When Saul was first converted, he did what all new believers do. He testified. He announced the good news. But his baffling the opposition in verse 22 was a result of having studied. If we network Galatians 1 with Acts 9, we find there was an interval of time when Saul went to Arabia to study. Probably Galatians 1:17–18 should be inserted between Acts 9:21 and 22. Three years of study, prayer, and possible ministry further prepared him for a ministry of "proving that Jesus is the Christ" (Acts 9:22). This ministry not only involved his testimony but also centered on how Christ fulfilled the prophecies of the Scriptures.

18 Who can and should preach?

One proof of Saul's dramatic life change was that his own life was endangered by the enemies of the church. "The Jews conspired to kill him" (Acts 9:23). They watched the city gates, planning to kill Saul as he left. But learning of the plot, Saul escaped by being lowered in a basket through an opening in the city wall. Note the irony in the fact that Saul, who came to Damascus seeking believers' lives, leaves fleeing for his own.

19 What is the difference between preaching and proving?

Escaping to Jerusalem, Saul once again tried to join up with other believers. When a person is genuinely saved, he or she wants to have a relationship to other members in God's family, for the body of Christ is one (1 Corinthians 12:12–27). Although three years had passed, the Jerusalem church still feared him. They did not trust that he really was a disciple.

20 Has someone been a Barnabas to you? Explain. How can you be a Barnabas to someone else?

Once again Barnabas lived up to his name, "son of encouragement." He became a connector within the body of Christ, joining its members together. "Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus" (Acts 9:27).

Barnabas was effective. Acts 9:28 says that Saul was able to stay with them, moving freely and speaking boldly in Christ's name.

Like Stephen before him, Saul talked and debated with the Grecian Jews. As before, they responded with violence. They tried to kill him. To save Saul's life, the Jerusalem believers took him to Caesarea and then sent him home to Tarsus. He stayed there for ten years. It may have seemed that his ministry was over.

If you find yourself in a season of inactivity like Saul did, do not despair. Perhaps you felt effective for God in the past, but things have changed. You feel like it is over, and you do not know if God will ever use you again. Do not worry. If you know in your heart that you are doing your best in obedience to God, that is all you can—or need to—do.

21 Are you in a place of ministry or of waiting? What encouragement does Saul's example offer you in your present situation?

Saul might have died in Tarsus, but the Holy Spirit had other plans for him (Acts 11:25–26). When the Holy Spirit has other plans for you, He will move you out of your waiting place and get you into the mainstream where He wants to use you.

“Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace” (Acts 9:31). Saul’s persecution had scattered the church, but God had worked good from that. The flame of the gospel spread to other cities and regions and even across ocean waters (8:1; 11:19). The impact of Saul the Christian is yet to be seen in Acts. But already his preaching in Damascus is evident. He preached the gospel powerfully, and opponents sought to still his voice by killing him.

With Saul in Tarsus, the time of turbulence that had begun with Stephen was over for a while. The church can and does grow also in times of peace.



## Test Yourself



Circle the letter of the *best* answer.

1. Following Stephen's death, who remained in Jerusalem after persecution broke out against the church?
  - a) The apostles
  - b) All believers
  - c) Only the Jewish believers
  - d) Only the Greek believers
2. While Stephen was being stoned, the men doing the stoning placed their cloaks at the feet of
  - a) Caiaphas.
  - b) Theophilus
  - c) Gamaliel.
  - d) Saul.
3. After persecution broke out against the church, Philip preached the gospel in
  - a) Judea.
  - b) Samaria.
  - c) Tarsus.
  - d) Ethiopia.
4. When Peter and John arrived in Samaria, they
  - a) prayed that the believers might receive the Holy Spirit.
  - b) baptized the believers in water.
  - c) partook of the Lord's Supper with the Samaritan believers.
  - d) did all of the above.
5. When Philip met the Ethiopian eunuch on the road, the Ethiopian was
  - a) on his way to Jerusalem.
  - b) returning home from Jerusalem.
  - c) on his way to Antioch.
  - d) returning home from Samaria.
6. A proselyte is one who
  - a) converts from one religion to another.
  - b) teaches false doctrine.
  - c) believes in many gods.
  - d) adopts the culture and customs of another culture.
7. After Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch, Philip
  - a) walked back to Samaria.
  - b) was taken away by the Spirit.
  - c) rode with the eunuch to the nearest town.
  - d) tucked in his cloak and ran to Jerusalem.
8. Paul was uniquely fitted for the missionary task that God had given because of his
  - a) secular education.
  - b) religious training under Gamaliel.
  - c) tentmaking skills.
  - d) background in all of the above.
9. *Paul* was the apostle's
  - a) Jewish name.
  - b) Roman name.
  - c) Christian name.
  - d) Aramaic name.
10. Saul's conversion is recorded in Acts
  - a) 6.
  - b) 7.
  - c) 8.
  - d) 9.

# Responses to Interactive Questions

## Chapter 8

Some of these responses may include information that is supplemental to the IST. These questions are intended to produce reflective thinking beyond the course content and your responses may vary from these examples.

**1** Who was scattered after the death of Stephen? Who remained behind?

Acts 8:1 says that “all except the apostles were scattered.” It seems reasonable that this refers to the mid-level leaders, such as the remaining members of the seven selected to oversee the church welfare system.

**2** Why do you think the apostles might have chosen to stay in Jerusalem when others fled?

Answers may vary. Flight had been an earlier sign of their failure. They may have felt pastoral responsibility toward those who remained behind. They might not have wanted the imprisoned believers to feel abandoned.

**3** Are there any unimportant jobs in the kingdom of God?

Answers will vary but should indicate that all jobs done in the right spirit are important.

**4** Is Philip’s casting out of evil spirits the first mention of exorcism in Acts? If not, locate a previous example.

It is not the first time. A previous example can be found in Acts 5:16.

**5** What two factors led the Samaritans to accept Philip’s message?

The word he proclaimed and the signs he performed

**6** What six results of Philip’s ministry in the Samaritan city are mentioned in Acts 8:6–8,12–13?

(1) The people paid close attention to Philip (8:6). (2) Signs followed—exorcisms and healing the lame (8:7). (3) There was much joy in the city (8:8). (4) Many believed the good news (8:12). (5) Men and women were baptized (8:12). (6) Simon the sorcerer believed (8:13).

**7** What two actions did Peter and John take in ministering to the believers that they might receive the Holy Spirit?

They prayed for them and laid hands on them.

**8** One thing occurred in Samaria at the pouring forth of the Spirit that had not happened at Pentecost. What was it?

The apostles laid their hands on believers.

**9** Look at Luke 9:51–55 and John 4:27. Contrast Peter and John’s attitudes toward Samaritans with those displayed in 8:14–25.

They seem to have overcome their prejudice against the Samaritans and embraced them as brothers and sisters.

**10** What characteristics did Luke give of the man to whom the angel of the Lord sent Philip in Acts 8:27–28?

(1) He was an Ethiopian. (2) He was a eunuch, castrated or born with physical defects. (3) He was the treasurer of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. (4) He had gone as a pilgrim to Jerusalem. (5) He was reading from the Book of Isaiah.

**11** What does the distance the eunuch was willing to travel to reach Jerusalem by chariot say about him?

Answers will vary but should include the idea that the man seemed very determined or spiritually hungry to undertake such a long, difficult journey.

**12** What are some good strategies for reaching out to people whose needs we cannot easily see?

Answers will vary.

**13** Had the eunuch continued reading his scroll until he came to Isaiah 56:3–8, how would his joy have been even greater?

Isaiah 56:3–8 promises that God would draw the foreigner and the eunuch to himself. With these wonderful promises, the eunuch could look with joy toward the time of fulfillment, when he would be no longer an alien but a fellow citizen.

**14** What do the Scripture passages in the chart tell us about Saul? Fill in your answers.

Bible reference	What it tells us about Saul
<b>Galatians 1:13–14</b>	Violently persecuted the church, advanced in Judaism beyond many his own age, extremely zealous for Jewish traditions
<b>Philippians 3:4–6</b>	Circumcised, Jewish, from Benjamin's tribe, a Hebrew of Hebrews, a Pharisee, a zealous persecutor of the church, and faultless in the performance of legalistic righteousness
<b>2 Corinthians 11:22</b>	A Hebrew, not lacking any of the Jewish credentials possessed by his critics
<b>Acts 22:3</b>	A Jew, born in Tarsus, thoroughly trained under Gamaliel, zealous for God
<b>Acts 22:25–28</b>	A Roman citizen from birth
<b>Acts 26:4–5</b>	A Pharisee

**15** What one command did the Lord give Saul, and how did Saul respond to it?

The Lord commanded obedience by instructing Saul to wait in Damascus for further instructions. Saul added to his obedience the sign of total remorse and repentance, abstaining from food and drink (and praying) until his orders come.

**16** From Acts 9:15–16, note the three purposes for Saul's life revealed to Ananias and the process Saul would go through in achieving them.

Paul would carry the Lord's name to Gentiles, kings, and the sons of Israel. He would suffer much for Christ. Acts 13–28 shows the fulfillment of this prophecy.

**17** What is preaching?

Announcing the good news.

**18** Who can and should preach?

Any believer can and should tell others the good news.

**19** What is the difference between preaching and proving?

Preaching involves telling our own experiences. Proving takes study and wisdom and involves logical arguments to persuade.

**20** Has someone been a Barnabas to you? Explain. How can you be a Barnabas to someone else?

Answers will vary.

**21** Are you in a place of ministry or of waiting? What encouragement does Saul's example offer you in your present situation?

Answers will vary.



# CHAPTER 9

## The Acts of the Apostles

As a young pastor, I felt God's urging to lead the church I pastored to greater involvement in missions. We planned the church's first missions convention. Six missionaries were scheduled to speak through a weekend of events. From a church of three hundred that had never given more than five thousand dollars a year to missions, I told the missionaries I wanted to believe God for thirty thousand dollars in faith promises. I felt the congregation might think the goal was unrealistic, so I did not tell them.

The missions banquet on Friday night was poorly attended, and the service on Saturday was a disaster. Only twelve people attended. Battling discouragement, I felt God telling me: "Remember the storm at sea. And remember that the purpose of the trial is to illuminate the coming victory. So why don't you tell these twelve people what you really have in mind for tomorrow?"

I obeyed and shared my belief that God would have us raise thirty thousand dollars for missions. The next day, when the church pledged exactly thirty thousand dollars, the victory was especially sweet because of the setback and faith of the previous Saturday.

As a result of this study, you will become more conscious of God's working in and through people to build His kingdom. You will also appreciate the timing of His program and your need to listen and move with the Spirit.

### Lesson 9.1 Peter's Expanding Ministry

Objective

9.1.1 *Summarize the stages of the church's expansion to full-fledged ministry to the Gentiles and the implications of the change for the church.*

### Lesson 9.2 Antioch: The Changing Shape of the Church

Objective

9.2.1 *Describe the new methods, leaders, and mission of the Antioch church and the example this church sets for churches today.*

### Lesson 9.3 Jerusalem: The Difficult Will of God

Objective

9.3.1 *Identify five reasons why Christians suffer.*

# 9 LESSON 1

## 9.1.1 OBJECTIVE

*Summarize the stages of the church's expansion to full-fledged ministry to the Gentiles and the implications of the change for the church.*

1 What kind of effect would seeing someone healed have on your community? Explain.

2 Why do you think the believers sent for Peter? Do you think they were hoping for a miracle or for consolation? Explain your answer.

## Peter's Expanding Ministry

After his ministry in Samaria, Peter visited scattered Christian communities throughout Judea. He likely had more contact with Gentiles in these regions, and here began a dramatic change. The time had arrived for the gospel to cross the barrier separating Jews and Gentiles. It was time to openly proclaim Jesus Christ to the Gentiles.

### After Samaria: Peter at Lydda and Joppa

Many children learn to ride a bike in stages. First, they learn to ride a tricycle. When they have mastered that and have grown taller, they may graduate to a bicycle with training wheels. The training wheels keep the bike from falling over while the child learns to balance on two wheels. It is a great day when the training wheels come off, and the child can ride a bike alone. Yet there is more learning and growing to be done. As the child grows, so should the bike and the complexity of its operation (additional speeds, features, etc.). So it is with spiritual growth and learning. God starts His children out with tasks they can handle and then increases the scope and size of the ministry as His children and the church grow.

Persecution had caused a reluctant church to break out of its narrow confines. They took the gospel to people who were not quite Gentiles, but neither were they quite Jews—the Samaritans. In Acts 9:32–11:18 we see the next step. The gospel would soon go beyond the outer fringes of Judaism to the Gentiles. But Peter was not yet ready for the task. He must go through Samaria and then Lydda and Joppa. In Lydda, Peter found a paralyzed man who had been bedridden for eight years. The healing of Aeneas had a powerful ripple effect. “All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord” (Acts 9:35).

Aeneas is the only paralyzed person healed in the Gospels or in Acts whose name is given. Perhaps it is because Aeneas became a believer and was later well known in the church.

The report of Aeneas' healing reached Joppa, where Tabitha (Aramaic)—or Dorcas (Greek)—had died. Dorcas had always done good deeds and helped the poor. Already in the church there seemed to be a respect for God's calling and gifts. Believers were wise enough to recognize that the ministry of a person like Dorcas, who was doing good things, was valid. God's callings are meant to be complementary. A church body has room for those who do good works. There is room for prophets, like the four daughters of Philip, and for teachers, like Priscilla. We do harm to people when we try to force them into a ministry and a calling they do not have. The Lord has appointed all the gifts needed for the church to function properly. We must be careful to encourage every single one.

The raising of Dorcas is the first miracle in Acts where the person to whom the miracle occurred was clearly identified as a believer before the miracle occurred.

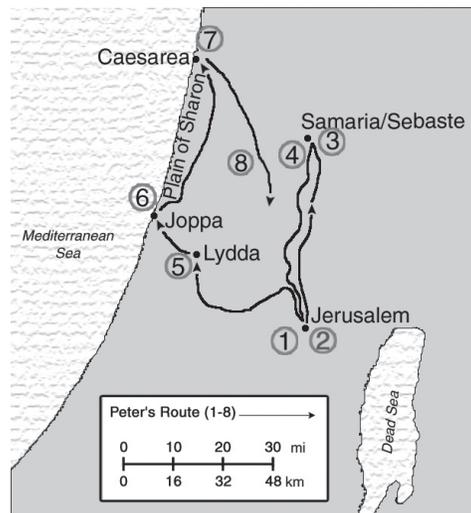
Luke, being a doctor, made special note of the common practice of preparing a body for burial. Dorcas' body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. Because of the warm climate and lack of ability to preserve bodies, burials always took place on the same day as the death.

Hearing of Peter's miracles in nearby Lydda, Dorcas' fellow Christians sent two men to urge him, “Please come at once!” (Acts 9:38).

Peter went with them and was taken to the room where Dorcas was. “All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them” (Acts 9:39).

Interestingly, Peter said, “Tabitha, arise.” Years earlier he had heard Jesus say to Jairus’ daughter, “Little girl, I say to you, arise.” (Mark 5:41, English Standard Version). Could it be that Peter’s faith to raise a dead woman came from his connection to a prior event that was so similar? Is it possible that sometimes we do not exercise faith because we have not built upon or remembered what Christ has done before as we have witnessed His power?

“Then he [Peter] called the believers and the widows and presented her to them alive. This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord” (Acts 9:41–42). The church was expanding out of Jerusalem and to the coastlines.



Acts 9:43 provides another vital detail. “Peter stayed in Joppa for some time with a tanner named Simon.” Although the art of tanning hides was necessary, it was unpleasant. By Jewish law, tanners had to live outside the city walls, because they touched dead animals. This left them in a constant state of uncleanness (Leviticus 11:24). Peter could not have stayed with a tanner like Simon if he were still strictly observing all the Jewish regulations.

When God expands the borders of a person’s life, He often does it in stages. From the house of Simon the tanner, God would lead Peter to the home of Cornelius the Gentile centurion.

## The Next Step

Peter’s ministry to Samaritans and Simon the tanner was a cultural and time bridge between witnessing to the Jews and Gentiles. The beautiful seaport town of Caesarea lay only thirty miles north on the coast from Joppa, but Peter was entering another world.

Cornelius was a centurion, a leader of about a hundred soldiers. Centurions were considered the backbone of the Roman army. Cornelius was a powerful, wealthy man. Acts 10:2 gives four important details about his faith and character:

1. Cornelius was devout. This means he followed the way of Judaism. Devout did not simply mean pious. It meant fitting into the religious devotion practiced by the Jews.
2. Cornelius was God-fearing. *God-fearing* is a technical term from the first century that described a Gentile who was attracted to Judaism. God-fearers attended the synagogue but sat in a separate section in the back. They generally observed Jewish religious practices but had not submitted to circumcision. God-fearers had already become Jews in their hearts

3 If Cornelius was devout, God-fearing, liberal in charity, and a man of prayer, did he need to be saved? Base your answer on Matthew 5:5; John 3:21; Acts 4:12; 11:18; and Ephesians 2:8–9.

but had not yet completed the conversion physically. God-fearers like Cornelius had the Word of God in their hearts and were ready to become the leaders of the Gentile churches that would soon be founded.

3. Cornelius was generous. He gave liberally to those in need.
4. Cornelius prayed regularly. This probably means he prayed at the set times of a devout Jew, at 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Pious Jews prayed at the time of the morning and evening sacrifices at the temple.

For about three hundred years before the birth of Jesus, the Jewish people had been scattered all over the then-known world. Wherever they were scattered, they established synagogues. The Jews living in and near Jerusalem had no association with Gentiles for fear of becoming ceremonially unclean. However, Jews living away from Palestine, through business relations and friendships, were more open to Gentile contacts. Jews elsewhere in the Roman Empire would invite Gentile friends and business associates to their synagogues to hear the learned lectures of their rabbis. The back rows in the synagogues would be open to Gentile visitors.

4 A first-century person called a God-fearer was what?

At that time only Judaism taught monotheism (the worship of one God). All other religions had multitudes of gods and goddesses. Only Judaism had high ethical standards. In the other religions, gods would rape goddesses, and new gods and goddesses would be born. Prostitution was a liturgical part of religious worship. At that time, half of the world's population were slaves. Only Judaism promised a coming Messiah or Deliverer. Many Gentiles were attracted to the Jewish concepts of monotheism, high ethical standards, and a promised Messiah-Deliverer. The technical term for these Gentiles was *God-fearers*.

5 Read Acts 10:3. Do you believe God knows each person individually? Explain.

Some church historians believe there were two million Gentile God-fearers at the time of the apostle Paul. By divine providence, God had prepared a people among the Gentiles who were familiar with the Old Testament. They were open to the gospel preached by the apostles and evangelists. Some had a distorted understanding of the promised Messiah. The early church preachers would give a clear, correct understanding of this promised Messiah as being the Lord Jesus Christ.

Like many God-fearers, Cornelius may have had some knowledge of a promised Messiah. But based on the words of the angel to Cornelius, ““He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved”” (Acts 11:14), Cornelius did not know how to be saved.

6 Have you ever had the Lord direct you in such a way that you were in the right place at the right time? Explain.

As Cornelius prayed at the time of the temple sacrifices in Jerusalem, he had a vision of an angel of God. Although the angel did not preach the gospel to Cornelius, he gave directions that would take him to someone who would.

At noon the next day, Peter also took time to pray. If he had not, the vision would not have come to him. Had the vision not come, would he have welcomed Cornelius' messengers? In divine timing, Peter went to pray as the messengers drew near the city.

7 In what similar ways did God prepare Cornelius and Peter for the next step in spreading the gospel? Why was it important for God to prepare them both?

While Peter was waiting for lunch, he fell into a trance. The word *trance* comes from the Greek word *ekstasis*, which means “being outside oneself.” Paul had a similar experience at least twice (Acts 22:17; 2 Corinthians 12:1–4). The word can describe a person who is in a special moment of revelation from God when that person does not exhibit consciousness of external surroundings.

Peter was like many Christians. He needed to see and be told more than once before he understood and obeyed. Three times Peter was commanded to kill and eat what was in the sheet. Three times he protested on religious grounds. In Mark 7 Jesus had taught that all foods are clean. But traditions die hard. Although

Peter had made progress (preaching to the Samaritans and staying with Simon), he was still living under the kosher laws.

God was not teaching Peter about changing his diet but about changing his attitude toward Gentiles. After the third time of Peter's seeing the vision, while Peter was still thinking about it, the Spirit gave clear directions. "Simon, three men are looking for you. So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them" (Acts 10:19–20). Peter might not have completely understood, but he obeyed.

### The Beginning of Gentile Christianity

When Peter's group arrived at Cornelius' house, they found they were expected. Cornelius had brought together a large gathering of relatives and close friends. Peter graciously explained the common fact known to all present: Jewish customs forbade his being present. Yet God had shown him that he must lay aside the prejudices of the past. Although Peter undoubtedly knew his purpose for being there, he waited tactfully for Cornelius to invite him to witness.

Peter's sermon to Cornelius has often been called "the small (or condensed) gospel." Its movement of thought closely parallels the development within Mark's Gospel. Early and reliable tradition says Mark wrote his Gospel from Peter's preaching.

Peter told the basic facts of the gospel, beginning with John's baptism. Then he told of the anointing of Jesus, His ministry, death, resurrection, and commission to witness. He ended with the coming judgment and Christ's provision for the forgiveness of sins. When Peter's sermon came to this point, the audience so readily received the unique work of Christ that the Spirit fell on them (Acts 10:44). "While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message" (Acts 10:44).

8 What is the significance of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles?

The Jewish believers who had gone with Peter were astonished at what they saw and heard. It went against their experience and their religious prejudices to think God would give the Holy Spirit to Gentiles. God left no doubt as to their salvation. The physical manifestation of the Holy Spirit was a sign that they had been fully accepted by God into His family.

### Peter's Explanation

Space was precious to Luke. It has been estimated that his original scroll of Acts measured around thirty-five meters, or about 114 feet, in length. Given his need to be brief, we may attach great importance to any event that Luke gave much space. Stephen's sermon is one example. Cornelius' salvation is another. It rates nearly two times as much space as Luke gave to the account of Pentecost.

9 Why did Luke give so much space to the story of Cornelius?

The single greatest theological problem the Early church wrestled with was whether a Gentile could be saved without first becoming a Jew. The sovereign act of God in Cornelius' salvation clearly showed the direction the Holy Spirit intended for the church to take.

Pentecost is not less important than the initial outpouring on the Gentiles. But Pentecost did not pose a problem. The salvation of Gentiles did. The church's understanding of its membership qualifications changed because of this event. That is why Luke devoted so much space to it. The entire subject of salvation available to "whosoever will" and the equality of all believers, Jews and Gentiles, was at stake.

Word of the events at Cornelius' house traveled quickly. A few days later, when Peter made the sixty-mile trip from Caesarea to Jerusalem, the news had

10 How did some from the circumcision party respond to events at Cornelius' house?

already arrived. Some from the **circumcision party** spoke against Peter. ““You went to the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them”” (Acts 11:3).

When Peter was criticized, he did not respond by defending his authority as an apostle. Rather, he told of the events prior to and including his meeting at Cornelius' house. Peter persuaded the Jerusalem church with the same evidence that had convinced him. This evidence included his own vision and the Spirit's orders, Cornelius' vision, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues.

Speaking in tongues was more than just a part of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. It was the sign and confirmation that the Gentiles had been truly saved. Nowhere does Scripture say that one must be baptized in the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues to be saved. Yet at Cornelius' home, Peter needed some evidence to permit him to proceed with water baptism. The infilling of the Spirit accompanied by tongues was that evidence.

After Peter's account of God's supernatural leading and the Holy Spirit's outpouring on the Gentiles, even the critics were silent. A conclusion had been reached from which the church could never turn away. ““So then, God has even granted the Gentiles repentance unto life”” (Acts 11:18).

## 9.2 LESSON

### Antioch: The Changing Shape of the Church

Located three hundred miles north of Jerusalem, the Syrian city of Antioch was to become the church's base of operations for missionary activity to the Gentile world. With a population of around 500,000, Antioch ranked as the third largest city in the ancient world. Only Rome and Alexandria were larger. All three had large Jewish communities.

Antioch was a truly cosmopolitan city, universal and progressive. Here Jew and Gentile, Greek and barbarian rubbed shoulders. It was strategically located, a place where Mediterranean civilization met the Syrian desert. It was the cosmopolitan character of Antioch that made racial and religious differences so much less important than they would have been in Jerusalem.

Teeming with a diverse population, located in a river valley surrounded by mountains, possessing the ancient world's best water supply, Antioch was also known for its moral filth. Yet in a city and setting such as this, the gospel was about to take its greatest leap forward.

#### 9.2.1 OBJECTIVE

*Describe the new methods, leaders, and mission of the Antioch church and the example this church sets for churches today.*

#### New Methods

The story is told of the Russian Czar puzzled by a sentry guard posted in an unlikely spot on the Kremlin grounds. When he inquired as to the purpose for this guard's unusual position, no one could explain. Finally it was learned that many years earlier at that spot, Catherine the Great had noticed the first flowers of spring. She ordered a guard posted so that no one would step on them. The flowers—the reason for posting the guard—had long since disappeared. More than one hundred years had passed without anyone questioning the reason for the guard's position (Larson 1993, 264).

In the church, we must be careful not to let rituals and traditions outlive their reason for being. We must be careful to adapt and grow so we can reach the world with the gospel as effectively as possible.

The scattered believers from Jerusalem went abroad witnessing only to Jews. In Antioch a major change occurred. “Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus” (Acts 11:20). This marks a major shift in the church. These traveling evangelists adopted a new method that would have a profound impact on the mission and effectiveness of the church. They spoke to the Greeks in their own language. Up to that point, all the preaching had been in Hebrew or Aramaic. Suddenly there were people saying, “It does not matter that you are not a Jew. We will speak your own language to you.” That created an uproar.

11 What is one example of the different emphasis believers used to preach more effectively to the Greeks?

It may be possible that the believers spoke Aramaic, which was translated by an interpreter. But this is unlikely. Speaking to the Greeks no doubt involved speaking Greek and using Greek thought forms. For example, they preached Jesus as Lord, a term much more meaningful to the Gentile mind than *Christ* or *Messiah*, terms meaningful to Jews.

Sometimes we think the gospel can only be communicated one way or to certain kinds of people. Usually that is the way with which we feel the greatest comfort. Sometimes speaking someone’s language goes beyond words. People appreciate different styles and communicate uniquely through music, nonverbal expressions, art, and traditions and customs. Generally speaking, it is fair to say that an effective presentation of the gospel cannot be made unless both the gospel and the culture of the people one is attempting to reach are known.

12 Have you ever successfully used a new way to gear the gospel message to the particular needs and interests of someone who was not like you? Describe it.

In the body of Christ, flexibility must be a watchword, but we must never compromise doctrine. There was no difference doctrinally between the churches in Jerusalem and Antioch. They both believed in the resurrection, the infallibility of God’s Word, and all the great doctrines of the church. But there was a world of difference because the language, culture, ethnic composition, and religious backgrounds were different. Though the message does not change, believers must put forth an earnest effort to learn the language and culture of the people we want to reach and to conquer any prejudice that may exist.

13 What was the difference between the first messengers of the gospel to Antioch and the second?

The first messengers of the gospel to Antioch (11:19) were unsuccessful in reaching Greeks, not because they did not have adequate knowledge of the Lord, but because they did not have an adequate methodology and motivation to reach them. The second group of believers who came from Cyprus and Cyrene not only knew the Lord, but they also knew how to speak of Him to the Gentiles at Antioch. They also understood the need to reach beyond traditional cultural boundaries. When the gospel is proclaimed in a language that can be understood by the audience, a great response occurs (11:21). How sobering to realize that people may reject the message of the gospel because our method is inadequate. We must ask God to help us to have both the motivation and sound methods for proclaiming the gospel message.

### New Leaders

Just as we must use new methods, so we must have new leaders. The new leaders in Antioch were Barnabas and Paul. Neither man was a leader in the Jerusalem church, although Barnabas was highly respected as an encourager. He was sent by the Jerusalem church to check on the new work at Antioch. “When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts” (Acts 11:23). If Barnabas had been a **Judaizer** or legalist, he could have seen that the new believers did not follow the Jewish traditions. They did not wear the religious garments and prayer phylacteries. He might have objected to the baptizing of men who were

not circumcised. He could have decided that Antioch was a mess that needed to be straightened out.

Instead, Barnabas saw what God had done. People's lives had been changed. He looked not for an external change but for a fundamental life change. Had their hearts changed? Were they honest, delivered, repentant? Barnabas saw all these things in the church at Antioch, and he was glad.

Barnabas encouraged the church. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith. Under his leadership, "a great number of people were brought to the Lord" (Acts 11:24).

Barnabas realized the growing church needed a kind of ministry he could not provide. So he traveled 125 miles north to Tarsus. There was Saul, or Paul, one of the brightest scholars of the Hebrew world. He had studied under Gamaliel. He was fluent in the literature and language of the Gentile world. After his dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus, Saul had left Jerusalem because his conversion and witnessing had stirred up too much trouble. Saul disappeared in Tarsus for about ten years. No one knows what he was doing during that time. But Barnabas remembered the incredible melding of the Hebrew and Greek worlds in this person's life.

14 Compare the ministry strengths of Barnabas and Saul from Acts 11:22–25.

Before Saul went to Antioch, Barnabas' ministry was described as **exhortation**, or encouragement. After Saul arrived, the ministry to the Antioch church was described as teaching. There is a world of difference between encouraging and teaching. Encouraging ministries tell motivational stories that warm the heart and inspire. But teaching ministries pass on the important, foundational doctrines of the church. Teaching helps new believers grow deep roots. Barnabas was a strong leader because he recognized his own limitations and Saul's strengths. He found the best person to compensate for his lack of teaching ability. Barnabas believed in team ministry. He never seemed to worry about his position. Instead, he was concerned about the growth and development of the Lord's work.

The church today needs leaders with the large heart of Barnabas—ministers who seek to build not their own kingdom but the kingdom of God.

Antioch was one of the great centers for chariot races. It had a professional chariot franchise. Charioteers were aligned with various parties. How natural that in a sports city like Antioch the partisans would attach an athletic name to the new community in its midst. They were known as Christians, *the partisans of Christ*, or *the little Christs*.

The term *Christian* was initially not a title chosen by the believers to describe themselves, but one chosen by others. Using the guideline that Christ ascended to heaven in approximately the year AD 30, and Saul and Barnabas came to Jerusalem in AD 46 (Acts 11:30), it can be asserted that the name Christian began to be used around AD 45 (Acts 11:26), or approximately fifteen years after the birth of the church.

## New Mission

Acts 11:27 indicates that whatever new thing God is doing, it is always linked to the community He has already gathered. Luke did not record whether Barnabas reported back to the Jerusalem church regarding the progress of the Gentiles at Antioch. The news that did reach Jerusalem was so well received that prophets from the Jerusalem church came to Antioch.

The prophets were not evangelists. Their primary ministry was to the body of Christ. It appears there was a difference between those who held the office of prophet, such as Agabus, and those who prophesied on occasion (every believer). Prophets such as Agabus appear to have given all their time to ministry.

We often think of a prophet as one who makes predictive statements. Agabus fits that concept. But predictive statements do not appear to have been the major element of prophecy in the Old Testament or the New. Prophets were forth-tellers and fore-tellers. They provided encouragement for believers and insight into God's Word and ways. When a prophet did make a prediction regarding the future, the prediction had to come to pass or he would be disregarded as a prophet from that time on (Deuteronomy 18:22).

Through the Spirit, the prophet Agabus predicted a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. This happened during the reign of the emperor Claudius. The church believed the prophecy and set out to make provision for the time of famine. "The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul" (Acts 11:29–30).

The Antioch church was a Gentile church. It had not been started by the Jerusalem church. The Jerusalem church was one of the most non-missionary churches in the early church because it was encapsulated within its culture. It did not look beyond its cultural walls. The Antioch church could have kept its distance from the Jerusalem church. They could have felt overlooked and been unwilling to help those who had done so little to help them.

Instead, the church at Antioch did a marvelous thing. They readily responded to meet the needs of their own fellowship as well as those of the distant members of the body of Christ. Wherever the body hurt or suffered need, the other members responded in an appropriate way.

The largely Gentile church of Antioch showed real spiritual maturity through its gifts for the Jerusalem church. Their example shows that an effective church is one that cares about the body of Christ elsewhere. When our churches today support missions and the planting of churches in various parts of world, they follow the Antioch example.

The Antioch church had new methods and new leaders. Now they would have a new mission, because Antioch—not Jerusalem—would become the missionary center for church growth in Acts 13–28. It was always to Antioch that Paul the missionary would return, because it was the church with the biggest heart for reaching the world.

Christians, today as then, also respond with their substance to meet whatever needs exist. These needs include evangelism at home, missionary evangelism abroad, charitable needs, and support of ministers and ministries that nourish the life and encourage the development of the body of Christ. This response is the key to unlocking the storehouse of abounding riches to every believer (2 Corinthians 9:8).

We must keep flexible and open enough to realize that in every generation God wants to break through in areas we have not touched with ministries we have not imagined. The Lord uses different languages, art forms, education levels, and all kinds of people so that by all means we might win some. Are we true to Christ in our basic doctrines? Can we be flexible on everything else so that we can see Christ plant His flag of ownership in every life, whether the person is like us or different from us? The church will take the shape that the Holy Spirit has for the hour in which it lives.


 A graphic for Lesson 9.3. It features a large, stylized number '9' in a light grey font. The word 'LESSON' is written in a smaller, bold, black font across the middle of the '9'. A smaller number '3' is positioned at the bottom right of the '9'. The background is a dark grey gradient.

## Jerusalem: The Difficult Will of God

Tensions developed within the observant Jewish community about the followers of Jesus. As the Christian movement grew into a faith with appeal to both Jews and Gentiles, the tension only increased. No longer could the followers of Jesus be considered another sect within Judaism (such as the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, or Zealots). Christianity was a faith distinct from Judaism.

The disciples responded to this tension and outright persecution in the same manner as the Lord—never did they hit back or return the violence. As the distinction grew in Jerusalem and Judea between followers of Jesus and the observant Jewish community, fresh persecution broke out.

With new popular backing, Herod began to persecute the believers.

### Why? The Reasons for Suffering

“King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword” (Acts 12:1–2). Two of Christ’s inner circle of three apostles were arrested. One would be executed and the other released. We are never told why one was released and the other executed. We can detect no good human reasons at all for James’ death.

Was James outside the will of God? Did he lack the faith Peter had to be delivered? Did someone mess up? The answer to these questions is no. But the answers to why God allows good people to suffer are difficult and complex.

#### **Our suffering can sweeten the victory to follow.**

Sometimes our loss is allowed so we can appreciate and value more greatly the victory that is soon to follow. This is generally the case when there is no death involved—the loss of a job or some other kind of setback. Some trials are not meant to be permanent but to prepare for a great victory. In Mark 4, the storm at sea is a classic example of this. The disciples were in the middle of a frightening storm. The greatness of the storm only helped them better appreciate the power of the Lord over the storm. Were it not for the storm, they never would have known the depth of peace and the power Christ’s presence brings.

As a young boy in China, my father tried to toughen me up by making me watch the butchering of sheep and chickens. I was fascinated by the way the chickens jerked after their heads were chopped off. “Let go of that chicken after you chop its head off,” I urged, curious. My father did. I had never seen such an active chicken. Then after a flurry of activity, it was over. The body lay still.

Many trials are like that. The enemy already has a mortal wound. We may see a whole lot of feathers flying around, but there is no real substance. If we remain true, the thing will drop dead at our feet, and we will go on.

#### **Our suffering can be discipline from the Lord.**

It is always possible that suffering may be an act of discipline from God. Hebrews 12:6 says, “The Lord disciplines those he loves.” In the Old Testament, Israel was forced to wander in the wilderness for forty years because the Israelites had disobeyed God. As a general rule, God does not use extreme measures to punish people. For example, if someone exceeds the speed limit, the death sentence would be out of proportion to the severity of the crime. Some people mistakenly think that when someone loses a spouse or child, the reason might be God’s punishment for sin. That does not fit with what Jesus taught us about our heavenly Father.

### 9.3.1 OBJECTIVE

*Identify five reasons why Christians suffer.*

15 Is it ever our job to decide whether suffering is God’s discipline? Is it ever appropriate to tell someone his or her suffering is punishment from God? Explain.

16 Think of one person who has been an example or resource to you in a time of difficulty. How did he or she help you?

### **Our suffering allows us to become a resource.**

Sometimes, what we suffer allows us to become a resource, a help, and an example to others. Out of our own pain we can encourage and give hope to others. People who have endured the death of a child, terrible illness, or divorce can minister to others in those situations because they have been through them. The stability and strength we gain in trouble can be passed on to others.

Paul set the example for us. To the Romans, he wrote, “I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong” (Romans 1:11). Three years after writing that letter, he finally got to Rome, but as a prisoner. Still, his time in Rome proved stabilizing to the church that would soon undergo terrible persecution at the hand of the emperor Nero. The example of Paul strengthened them and showed them that suffering does not mean a person is out of God’s will. In fact, it may show the opposite—that we are in God’s will.

As Paul said in Romans 5:3–4, “We know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.” It is a four-step process that brings one out on the other end purified, whole, alive, and a contributing member of the body of Christ.

### **God may use suffering to change our direction.**

God may be using our trials to get us going in a different direction, one we would not have chosen on our own. Stephen’s death was an example of this. Because of that tragedy and the persecution that followed, the church got going in a whole new direction. Believers reached out to Samaritans and Gentiles.

### **We may never know the reason for our suffering.**

17 How many books of the Bible did the apostle James write? How many churches does Acts record him planting? How many sermons are we told he preached?

We may never understand why God allows some tragedies to occur. “The secret things belong to the Lord our God” (Deuteronomy 29:29). From a human perspective, James’ death (Acts 12:2) served no purpose. Jesus had invested three years in him. He was one of the inner circle of three, yet we never read a sermon he preached or a letter or book he wrote. Why was James killed when Peter was released? It is likely the church that prayed for Peter also prayed for James. The outcome is not related to anyone’s faith or the power of anyone’s prayer. It is a matter related to the sovereignty of God. His ways remain mysterious and hidden to us.

18 Was James’ life wasted? Explain your answer.

The Lord reserves within His sovereign judgment when to have us move from His presence on earth to His presence in heaven. Faith serves God in the midst of mystery, in the midst of not knowing. Our faith must be anchored in God, and we must trust Him. Because our faith is based on the solid Rock, we can weather the times when we have many questions.

19 List some possible reasons for suffering.

## **Miraculous Deliverance**

After James’ death, Herod arrested Peter. He intended to bring him to trial and execution. Guarding Peter were sixteen soldiers, four to a squad. It was a normal practice for the Romans to assign watches at three-hour intervals. Two soldiers would be bound hand-to-hand with Peter. Two more would stand guard at his cell door.

“So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him” (Acts 12:5). Already Peter had been in prison twice (Acts 4:1–4 and 5:17–21). He had become a veteran in Christ’s army. While the church prayed for him, Peter left the problems to the Lord and went to sleep. If the Lord wanted to

20 What is one of the greatest lessons we can learn in deliverance or death?

release him through the decision of men, that was fine (Acts 4:21). If He wanted to release him through the intervention of an angel, that was fine (Acts 5:19). If he wanted to release him through death, that was also fine (Acts 12:2).

Peter's actions reflect the trust of an active faith. Perhaps the greatest lesson for us in either deliverance or death is to learn the principle of trust. It is our loving Father's option whether we shall be with Him by way of death or whether we shall glorify Him and His work through deliverance. An active trust comes only through absolute obedience to His will.

When an angel of the Lord woke Peter and led him out of the prison to freedom, Peter thought he was seeing a vision. Once outside the prison, Peter really woke up. Clearly he had expected death. Unlike before (Acts 5:19–21), this was no time for public preaching. Peter had to go into hiding. He went to the house of Mary, the mother of Mark. This was likely one of the chief meeting places of the Jerusalem church.

Luke's humorous account of the disbelief among those praying for Peter has been a source of comfort to many prayer groups through history. Often, when God has answered their prayers, Christians have been surprised by the quick answers.

### Divine Judgment

The Herod of Acts 12 is Herod Agrippa I. He is the third Herod mentioned in the New Testament. Herod the Great, the ruler at the time of Christ's birth (Matthew 2:3) was this Herod's grandfather. Herod Antipas, who murdered John the Baptist (Mark 6:14–29) and was involved in trying Jesus (Luke 23:7–12), was the uncle of Herod Agrippa I. Herod Agrippa I was the first and only Herod after his grandfather who ruled all of Palestine (AD 41–44). He had replaced the Roman governors, like Pilate. He had endeared himself to the Jewish people because of his piety. Herod knew the Law and the commandments. He made a big show of obeying them. So his disobedience to those laws was a particularly serious matter.

The citizens of Tyre and Sidon, who depended on Herod's good will for shipping trade and grain supplies from the breadbasket of Galilee, had offended Herod. As Acts 12:1–2,19 show, it was no small thing to face Herod's anger. With the help of the king's personal servant, Blastus, a peace delegation from Tyre and Sidon gained an audience with Herod at his headquarters in Caesarea.

“On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. They shouted, ‘This is the voice of a god, not of a man.’ Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died” (Acts 12:21–23). In mercy, the Lord had not punished Herod when he killed James. But as a man given to the practice of religion, Herod knew well the first commandment (Exodus 20:3). Violating the commandments by allowing people to worship him brought God's swift judgment.

Even Saul, who killed Christians, never set himself up as God. Luke shows the world that Herod, a man well-known and respected among the Jews for his piety, was at heart irreligious and blasphemous.

To God's servant, Peter, an angel from the Lord brought deliverance. To a blasphemer of God, an angel from the Lord brought judgment.

“But the word of God continued to increase and spread” (Acts 12:24). In spite of or because of the events in Acts 12, the gospel continued to spread.

This brings us back to Barnabas and Saul. At the close of Acts 12, their mission finished, Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch. Perhaps chapter 12 is a passing of the torch from Peter to Paul. Starting in Acts 13, the focus of Luke's book and the expansion of the church turns to Paul. The great mission to the world was just beginning.



## Test Yourself



Circle the letter of the *best* answer.

1. The healing of Aeneas impacted the region of
  - a) Tarsus.
  - b) Antioch.
  - c) Lydda and Sharon.
  - d) Samaria.
2. God prepared Peter to go to Cornelius' home through a/an
  - a) dream.
  - b) vision.
  - c) angel.
  - d) word of prophecy.
3. Peter's vision on the roof of Simon the tanner's home was about
  - a) unclean animals.
  - b) meat offered to idols.
  - c) abstaining from wine.
  - d) all of the above.
4. In Joppa, Peter prayed for Dorcas that she might be
  - a) raised back to life.
  - b) set free from demon possession.
  - c) healed of leprosy.
  - d) able to walk again.
5. Antioch
  - a) was known for its moral filth.
  - b) was ranked as the third largest city in the ancient world.
  - c) possessed the ancient world's best water supply.
  - d) was all of the above.
6. The church in Antioch became a missionary center for church growth because of
  - a) its new methods.
  - b) its new leaders.
  - c) its new mission.
  - d) all of the above.
7. The church of Antioch showed spiritual maturity by
  - a) planting other churches in Antioch.
  - b) sending gifts to Jerusalem.
  - c) holding all night prayer meetings.
  - d) doing all of the above.
8. According to the IST, a believer's suffering
  - a) can be discipline from the Lord.
  - b) allows one to become a resource.
  - c) can make sweeter the victory to follow.
  - d) can do all of the above.
9. After Peter's miraculous release from prison, he went to the house of
  - a) Mary, the mother of Mark.
  - b) Martha, the mother of James.
  - c) Barnabas.
  - d) Agabus, the prophet.
10. Who was struck down by God and eaten by worms in Acts 12?
  - a) Caiaphas
  - b) Elymas
  - c) Herod the Great
  - d) Herod Agrippa I

# Responses to Interactive Questions

## Chapter 9

Some of these responses may include information that is supplemental to the IST. These questions are intended to produce reflective thinking beyond the course content and your responses may vary from these examples.

**1** What kind of effect would seeing someone healed have on your community? Explain.

Answers will vary.

**2** Why do you think the believers sent for Peter? Do you think they were hoping for a miracle or for consolation? Explain your answer.

Answers will vary.

**3** If Cornelius was devout, God-fearing, liberal in charity, and a man of prayer, did he need to be saved? Base your answer on Matthew 5:5; John 3:21; Acts 4:12; 11:18; and Ephesians 2:8–9.

Answers will vary. Jesus promised to satisfy the hungry. The “good” person who is walking toward the light will embrace the greater light of Christ. If salvation could be obtained by our goodness, Christ need not have come. Only through faith in Jesus Christ can anyone be saved.

**4** A first-century person called a God-fearer was what?

God-fearer was a technical term that described a Gentile attracted to Judaism. God-fearers had already become Jews in their hearts but had not yet completed the conversion physically.

**5** Read Acts 10:3. Do you believe God knows each person individually? Explain.

Answers will vary. God called Cornelius by name. As our creator and redeemer, He knows each of us intimately.

**6** Have you ever had the Lord direct you in such a way that you were in the right place at the right time? Explain.

Answers will vary.

**7** In what similar ways did God prepare Cornelius and Peter for the next step in spreading the gospel? Why was it important for God to prepare them both?

While in prayer, both men saw a vision and got instructions from the Lord. To break the religious and social barriers, it was necessary for God to do something unusual.

**8** What is the significance of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles?

This clearly showed that non-Jews were accepted by God without first becoming Jews and being circumcised. It opened a whole new world of evangelism.

**9** Why did Luke give so much space to the story of Cornelius?

The implications of these events posed the single greatest theological problem of the early church—whether a Gentile could be saved without first becoming a Jew.

**10** How did some from the circumcision party respond to events at Cornelius’ house?

They complained and discounted what God had done at Caesarea.

**11** What is one example of the different emphasis believers used to preach more effectively to the Greeks?

They preached Jesus as Lord, a term much more meaningful to the Gentile mind than Christ or Messiah, terms meaningful to the Jews.

**12** Have you ever successfully used a new way to gear the gospel message to the particular needs and interests of someone who was not like you? Describe it.

Answers will vary.

**13** What was the difference between the first messengers of the gospel to Antioch and the second?

The first were unsuccessful, not because they did not have adequate knowledge of the Lord, but because they did not have an adequate methodology to reach the Gentiles. The second group of believers not only knew the Lord, but also knew how to speak of Him to the Gentiles.

**14** Compare the ministry strengths of Barnabas and Saul from Acts 11:22–25.

Barnabas was an exhorter or encourager. Saul was a teacher.

**15** Is it ever our job to decide whether suffering is God's discipline? Is it ever appropriate to tell someone his or her suffering is punishment from God? Explain.

Answers will vary.

**16** Think of one person who has been an example or resource to you in a time of difficulty. How did he or she help you?

Answers will vary.

**17** How many books of the Bible did the apostle James write? How many churches does Acts record him planting? How many sermons are we told he preached?

None.

**18** Was James' life wasted? Explain your answer.

No. He was a significant leader in the early church.

**19** List some possible reasons for suffering.

(1) To make the victory sweeter; (2) discipline from the Lord; (3) so we can be a resource and example for others; (4) to change our direction; (5) we may never know.

**20** What is one of the greatest lessons we can learn in deliverance or death?

The principle of trust in God.

### UNIT PROGRESS EVALUATION 3

Now that you have finished Unit 3, review the lessons in preparation for Unit Progress Evaluation 3. You will find it in Essential Course Materials at the back of this IST. Answer all of the questions without referring to your course materials, Bible, or notes. When you have completed the UPE, check your answers with the answer key provided in Essential Course Materials. Review any items you may have answered incorrectly. Then you may proceed with your study of Unit 4. (Although UPE scores do not count as part of your final course grade, they indicate how well you learned the material and how well you may perform on the closed-book final examination.)



# UNIT 4

## The Witness of the Church to the Ends of the Earth

Paul's first two missionary journeys were similar in strategy. He and his companions traveled from city to city declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ. This team established congregations among those who believed in Jesus. Through this approach, large segments of the Roman Empire were introduced to Jesus Christ. Follow-up visits by Paul also provided strength and growth.

Paul's third missionary journey began with the same plan; he intended to strengthen and encourage the disciples. After about four to six months of follow-up ministry, Paul traveled to Ephesus, a key cultural and commercial city on the western coast of Asia. His work there represented a shift in strategy. Paul remained in Ephesus for several years, evangelizing the entire province from this ministry headquarters. Acts 19:10, 20 testifies to the regional effectiveness of Paul's ministry.

Because of intense Jewish hostility toward Paul and his Gentile mission, Paul was tried three times and imprisoned for many years. Luke's narrative of early Christianity ends with an account of the shackled Paul relentlessly declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ to all who would listen.

### **Chapter 10      The First Missionary Journey**

#### Lessons

- 10.1 To Galatia: On the Cutting Edge of Spiritual Growth
- 10.2 The Galatian Ministry: How to Minister Successfully
- 10.3 The Jerusalem Council: A Biblical Pattern of Conflict Resolution

### **Chapter 11      The Second Missionary Journey**

#### Lessons

- 11.1 The Second Missionary Journey Begins
- 11.2 A Tale of Three Cities
- 11.3 Corinth: The Final Leg of the Journey

### **Chapter 12      Paul's Third Missionary Journey**

#### Lessons

- 12.1 Ephesus: Battle for a City
- 12.2 From Ephesus to Jerusalem: The Rest of the Journey

### **Chapter 13      Paul's Journey to Rome**

#### Lessons

- 13.1 Paul's Imprisonment in Jerusalem
- 13.2 Paul's Imprisonment in Caesarea
- 13.3 Paul's Imprisonment in Rome

# CHAPTER 10

## The First Missionary Journey

In the early 1900s an earnest young man spent hours praying. He was eager to serve God in any way God would lead him. As he prayed, Alfred heard a word—he was not sure if it was audible or in his head. He had never heard the word and did not even know what language it was. He heard the word again clearly. Intrigued, he went to the library. He repeated the word that was seared on his mind and asked the librarian to help him find what it meant. After some research, she found that it was the name of a village in India. The young man believed God was calling him to that place as a missionary. It took every cent in his pocket to place a down payment on a ticket for a ship that would depart six weeks later. He would have to earn or raise the rest before he could go. But he knew God was calling him to go and would provide the way.

Six weeks later he stood in the ticket line, his trunk packed and ready to go. He lacked almost half the money he needed for the voyage, yet he felt God’s call and assurance. Each time the line moved, the man prayed that God would confirm His call by providing a way for him to go to the mission field. Just as he stepped up to the ticket counter, a stranger approached him.

“Are you Alfred?” the man asked. “God told me to give this to you.” He handed Alfred an envelope and disappeared.

Inside the envelope was exactly the amount of money the young man needed to pay the balance on his ticket. Thus started a missionary adventure that lasted more than half a century and extended to the third generation of the man’s family.

This chapter will explore Paul’s first missionary journey. It started with a call by the Holy Spirit, borne in prayer and confirmed by God and the church leaders. Paul’s missionary journeys impacted the church—and the world—right up to the present time.

### Lesson 10.1 To Galatia: On the Cutting Edge of Spiritual Growth

Objective

*10.1.1 Understand the spiritual climate that led to Barnabas and Paul’s first missionary journey, and list seven principles of missions.*

### Lesson 10.2 The Galatian Ministry: How to Minister Successfully

Objective

*10.2.1 Apply six keys for overcoming difficulties in ministry.*

### Lesson 10.3 The Jerusalem Council: A Biblical Pattern of Conflict Resolution

Objective

*10.3.1 Outline a biblical pattern for conflict resolution in the church.*

# 10

LESSON 1

## To Galatia: On the Cutting Edge of Spiritual Growth

Acts 13 begins around AD 46. A period of about fifteen years had passed between Acts 1 and 12. Within the next thirteen years, Acts 13–20 records the founding of churches in the following cities and Roman provinces: Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe in Galatia; Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea in Macedonia; Athens and Corinth in Achaia; and Ephesus in the province of Asia Minor. Certainly more churches than these were established. For example, we are not told of the start of the church in Rome, but it was already thriving when Paul arrived. The churches listed above were born as a direct result of Paul’s missionary labors.

The growth of the church between AD 46 and 58 would be even more astounding than the growth experienced in the first fifteen years of existence. The church had to realize that the gospel was intended for people of other cultures. Thus preliminary developments, such as Paul’s persecution, caused believers to spread to new territories and begin the larger witness Jesus intended (Acts 1:8). The breakthrough with Cornelius and the salvation of the Gentiles opened the minds of believers to infinite possibilities for evangelism. Paul’s conversion, the ministry of Barnabas, and the founding of the Antioch church were needed developments that made Paul’s missionary success possible.

### 10.1.1 OBJECTIVE

*Understand the spiritual climate that led to Barnabas and Paul’s first missionary journey, and list seven principles of missions.*

### From Antioch: Take on More Responsibility

#### Sharing leadership (Acts 13:1)

Five men shared leadership in the thriving Antioch church. When the Lord is about to do a new thing, He will often raise up new leaders to do it. So the list of Acts 13:1 differs from the one in Acts 1:13. The five leaders exercised a ministry in words: prophecy and teaching. Unity characterized the leadership of the Antioch church. All were out to build God’s kingdom, not their own. Ministerial competition occurs only in those whose dedication to the Lord springs from selfish motives (Philippians 1:15,17). A big part of the reason the church in Acts grew was that the leaders saw themselves as members of a closely-knit team. The unity they had was an example for the whole church.

The five leaders at Antioch were remarkable men. Barnabas, the encourager, had been sent by the Jerusalem church to act as an official observer. He helped individuals and churches grow. Simeon, called Niger, may have carried Christ’s cross (Mark 15:21). Niger probably refers to his dark complexion. He may have been the first black leader in the church. Lucius of Cyrene may have been one of those who first preached to the Gentiles at Antioch (Acts 11:20). Manaen had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch. The actual description of Manaen is that he was Herod’s foster brother. However, the term was loosely used of young men who had gone to school with royalty such as Herod. This is Herod Antipas, the man who murdered John and judged Jesus. Manaen apparently came from the upper class of society.

Then, the fifth leader among the group was Paul. He was highly qualified by personality, background, and God’s appointment to reach all people—Roman, Greek, or Jewish.

#### Worshipping and fellowship (Acts 13:2)

The Antioch church grew dynamically, but the leaders did not become so wrapped up in ministry that they neglected worship and spiritual fellowship. Leaders who are responsible for a growing work face the temptation of

neglecting time with the Lord. In trying to minister to everyone, they may neglect times of fellowship and spiritual renewal with other workers. Ministers must not only be concerned with ministry, but also with their devotional lives. Time spent with God is the wellspring of spiritual power.

### **God's will and call (Acts 13:2)**

“While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Paul for the work to which I have called them.’” (Acts 13:2). Although we do not know more of Barnabas' call, we do know of Paul's. If Paul was converted around AD 34 and his first missionary journey began about AD 46–47, then some twelve years had passed between Paul's call and his being set apart by the Antioch church.

It is possible for a person to know God's will for his or her life, and yet a time period may pass between the knowledge and the fulfillment of God's will. This twelve-year wait had proved important in Paul's training and spiritual preparation for the years that lay ahead. God's way was for him to go with the backing, vision, and prayerful support of the Antioch church, a church that did not yet exist when Paul was converted.

The Antioch leaders chose two key people from their own midst because the Holy Spirit had directed them to do so. Taking the gospel to new places demands that the church send its very best. The Antioch church unselfishly gave the two men who had been most vital in its own growth (Acts 11:24–26).

### **Prayer and fasting (Acts 13:3)**

The leaders of the Antioch church were meeting for no other purpose than worshipping the Lord and fasting. Sometimes the temptation of the church is to neglect prayer for conferences. But when we focus on the Lord, He will direct us to His will and plan—saving the lost. The Antioch church prayed, and the Lord gave them plans. We must not reverse that order.

The fasting of the Antioch leaders gave them a heightened sensitivity to the Lord's leading. Their fasting for the future ministry of Barnabas and Paul marked the earnestness of their intercession with God.

### **Commissioning (Acts 13:3)**

After they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off” (Acts 13:3). The church leaders' laying hands on Barnabas and Paul did not impart a spiritual gift or call that the two did not already have. Instead, the gesture showed their agreement with and backing of Barnabas and Paul's call.

## **To Cyprus: Push out to New Horizons**

Sent on their way by the Antioch church and the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:3–4) Barnabas and Paul started their first missionary voyage. From their example in Acts 13:4–12, we find seven principles of missions work to apply to our own ministries today.

### **Missionary work is a team effort (Acts 13:4).**

The first missionary team included three: Barnabas, Paul, and Mark. Except for a few brief periods, Paul was always with one or more associates. The Lord himself sent out the disciples in teams of two (Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1). The church followed the Lord's pattern in seeing missionary work as a team effort. Solo missionaries are too prone to discouragement if things are difficult. If the work progresses, a person alone may become proud. The company of others brings needed encouragement and balance.

1 Evaluate your own prayer life. What adjustments or improvements can you make to be available for God to lead and use you?

### Start with the familiar (Acts 13:4).

The first leg of the journey led the missionary team to Cyprus. This was Barnabas' home (Acts 4:36). The team's first stop in this familiar place can teach us a second important principle of missionary work. Missionaries must be aware of culture shock. The Holy Spirit led Barnabas and Paul first to Cyprus, not to a culture totally alien from their own. Cyprus could be a place of adjustment and learning for them. Cyprus gave them time to adjust to their calling and to the culture change.

Barnabas and Paul set sail from Seleucia, a port city of Antioch. Their first destination was Salamis, the leading eastern city of Cyprus. The trip was approximately one hundred miles.



### Start in the logical place (Acts 13:5).

“When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues” (Acts 13:5). At Salamis, Barnabas and Paul demonstrated a third principle of missionary activity that became a pattern for all of Paul's labors. They preached first at the logical starting place, with the Jews. Paul started at the synagogues. The proselytes and Gentile God-fearers already had knowledge of God that made them the most prepared to receive the gospel. They were prime candidates to serve as new leaders for the new Christian community that would be established in that community.

### Extend your reach (Acts 13:6).

“They traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos” (Acts 13:6). The missionaries moved frequently, staying for a length of time only at key population centers. (For Cyprus, this included Salamis and Paphos.) The team's purpose was to establish churches rather than remain with them. Key population centers were targeted for ministry because they could be used to spread the gospel throughout an entire area.

We have no record of Barnabas and Paul founding churches at Cyprus. No doubt the churches were already established. If so, their ministry on Cyprus was one of evangelism rather than church planting.

### **Expect opposition (Acts 13:6–8).**

2 Have you ever encountered opposition when you have worked for God? How did you respond?

“Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them” (Acts 13:8). A fifth principle of missionary work is that missionaries will always encounter—and should always expect—opposition. Paphos was the center of Roman rule on Cyprus. At Paphos, proconsul Sergius Paulus wanted to hear the Word of God. This was the highest ranking Roman ruler in the entire province. With this great opportunity came great opposition. A Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named, ironically, Bar-Jesus (son of Jesus; his other name, Elymas, means “sorcerer, magician, or wise man” and is likely a name Bar-Jesus gave himself) tried to turn the proconsul from the faith.

3 How is the encounter with Elymas an encouragement to you or other Christian workers who encounter opposition?

Luke’s historical accuracy must be noted in the designation he gives to Sergius Paulus as proconsul. Proconsuls were administrators of areas under the jurisdiction of the Roman Senate. These included areas that were peaceful and went along with the rule of Rome. Procurators were administrators of areas under the jurisdiction of the Roman Emperor. Emperors appointed procurators over territories that were difficult to govern. Stronger control was needed in these areas with rebellious populations. Historical records confirm that Cyprus was under the control of the Senate and would have a proconsul.

### **Be full of the Spirit (Acts 13:9–11).**

It was 1931, and the Japanese had just invaded China. In the violence and lawlessness that ensued, missionary Annie Bailie lived in constant danger. Once, in the middle of the night, armed men broke into Annie’s house. They grabbed the missionary and handled her roughly, threatening to harm her. But Annie, a tiny woman, would not be intimidated. Annie’s Chinese co-worker, a woman named Poon Tai Koo stood nearby clutching a Bible. One of the men grabbed the Bible, but Poon Tai Koo called on the name of the Lord. Instantly, the man snatched his hand back as if it had been burned. Then the Holy Spirit came upon Annie in power. She spoke in other tongues, praying and praising God. The intruders panicked and tried to leave, but they could not seem to find the door. When Poon Tai Koo led them to the door to leave, they were happy to leave—empty-handed (Booze and Ketcher 2003, 106–108).

The sixth principle of missionary activity from this Acts passage is clear. An attack against missionaries or their message must be met by believers who are filled with the Spirit. Notice what we are told about Paul as he rebuked Elymas. “Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas” (Acts 13:9). Paul did not shrink from a confrontation once it had been provoked. Nor did he respond in his own power or wisdom. He relied upon the Holy Spirit to counter the attack of the enemy. Being filled afresh with the Holy Spirit, Paul was led by the Holy Spirit to pronounce blindness as judgment on Elymas.

This is an unusual miracle. It is the only one that is destructive toward a person. All the other miracles are restorative. Why does this occur here? Perhaps because Paul knew the value of not having his sight (Acts 9:8; 26:18). When he was converted, he lost his sight for three days. In that time of blindness, he gained spiritual sight. Elymas’s blindness was only for a time, as had been Paul’s.

4 What are seven principles of missions activity found in Acts 13:4–12?

**When the gospel is faithfully preached in truth and power, people will believe on the Lord (Acts 13:12).**

“When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord” (Acts 13:12). This is the seventh principle of missionary activity shown in Barnabas and Paul’s experience at Cyprus. When the gospel is faithfully proclaimed in truth and power, people will believe in the Lord.

In Acts 13:9, Luke changed the name by which he referred to Paul. From then on, he used the Roman *Paul* (meaning “little”) rather than the Jewish *Saul* (meaning “asked [of God]”). It is quite a coincidence that this change occurs on the occasion of Paul’s appearance before a Roman governor who had the same name: Paul. Perhaps it also indicates that Paul was now entering his ministry to the Gentiles.

**To Pisidian Antioch: Be Resolute**

5 Have you ever quit when you should have pressed on? What did you learn from the experience?

**Mark turned back (Acts 13:13).**

“From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem” (Acts 13:13). We do not know the specific reasons why Mark left Paul and Barnabas. We do know that Paul interpreted Mark’s departure as desertion. This was the basis of his later decision to refuse to take Mark on the second missionary journey and resulted in the breakup of Paul and Barnabas’ missionary partnership at the start of the second journey, since Barnabas wanted to give his younger cousin another chance.

**Paul preached his first recorded sermon (Acts 13:14–43).**

“From Perga they went on to Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down. After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the synagogue rulers sent word to them, saying, ‘Brothers, if you have a message of encouragement for the people, please speak.’ Standing up, Paul motioned with his hand and said: ‘Men of Israel and you Gentiles who worship God, listen to me!’” (Acts 13:14–16).

Paul’s first recorded sermon in Acts may be divided into two parts. The first (13:16–25) traced the sovereign acts of God in Israel’s history from the time Israel was chosen until Christ’s coming. Paul’s review of God’s dealings with Israel has been called the Old Testament *kerygma*. This means the “proclamation or announcement of God’s saving activity in calling and sustaining His chosen people.” God had revealed himself throughout the history of His people. At decisive moments, He appeared to change the course of their destiny. Paul showed his audience that the same God who acted in Israel’s history also brought forth Jesus Christ. The whole of Israel’s history led to one person—Jesus. Nothing could have been more central in gaining the attention of the synagogue audience than for Paul to link God’s past activity in Israel’s history with His most recent act in bringing to Israel a savior.

Next, Paul launched into the new—proclaiming Jesus’ life, death, resurrection, fulfillment of Scriptures, provision for the forgiveness of sins, and a call for a response. If Jesus was crucified in accordance with the Scriptures and those who crucified Him did not recognize they were fulfilling prophecy, then Paul’s audience should not repeat their folly. They must understand the additional Scriptures that spoke of Christ’s resurrection. Paul repeated the same logic used by Peter on the Day of Pentecost. Only Jesus could fulfill the words of David, “‘You will not let your Holy One see decay’” (Psalm 16:10; Acts 13:35). Christ’s resurrection in fulfillment of Scripture demands a response. Forgiveness from sin and freedom from guilt (which the law of Moses could not bring) are promised in Christ.

6 What were the two parts of Paul's sermon in Acts 13:14–43?

Paul concluded by quoting Habakkuk, the prophet who had warned of the impending invasion of Babylon. That prophecy came true in spite of those who scoffed. If those perished who neglected a message brought by a prophet, how much more would those perish who rejected the message of Christ?

Paul's message in the Jewish synagogue was well received. "The people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath" (Acts 13:42). In addition, "many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God" (Acts 13:43). In addition, word spread to the whole city in one week's time. On the next Sabbath, the synagogue overflowed with crowds.

### Paul encountered jealousy (Acts 13:44–49).

7 Why did the Jews talk abusively against what Paul said?

"When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying" (Acts 13:45). Jealousy again threatened the gospel message. Jesus had been delivered up by the Sanhedrin because of jealousy (Matthew 27:18). The apostles had been arrested because the Sadducees were filled with jealousy (Acts 5:17). When the Jews of Pisidian Antioch saw the city gathered for the first time at their synagogue, the response once again was jealousy.

8 Have you ever criticized someone of whom you were actually jealous?

We must recognize that often the verbal arguments against the gospel are not always the real reasons the gospel is opposed. Luke notes that the real reason the Jews opposed Paul's message was spiritual sin (they saw the crowds and became jealous) rather than valid theological grounds.

In response to their rejection, Paul began preaching directly to Gentiles outside the synagogue. Many Gentiles believed the good news of Jesus. Luke once more showed the mystery of God's sovereignty and humankind's freedom. As Christ's death had been the plan of God and the act of humans (Acts 2:23), so the salvation of individual people was the plan of God and the choice of humans.

At Pisidian Antioch, we see the validity of Paul's missionary strategy of reaching the urban center first and then letting the gospel message fan out to the outlying areas. The city may be likened to the hub of a wheel. From it proceed the spokes to the rim. Paul started with the hub, not the rim.

# 10.2

LESSON

## The Galatian Ministry: How to Minister Successfully

Four cities in the southern part of the Roman province of Galatia were the focus of the first missionary journey. Two of the cities were located in the region known as **Phrygia**: Antioch (near Pisidia, called Pisidian Antioch to differentiate it from Syrian Antioch) and Iconium. Two other towns in the province of Galatia visited by Paul and Barnabas were located in the region of **Lycaonia**: Lystra and Derbe. Carefully study Acts 13:50–14:21. From these events, believers can draw six applications to apply to their own lives.

### 10.2.1

OBJECTIVE

*Apply six keys to overcoming difficulties in ministry.*

### Do Not Give Up When You Meet Resistance

"The Jews incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region" (Acts 13:50). In spite of their good intentions and successes, Paul and Barnabas faced continual persecution, potential discouragement, and

harassment as they traveled through Galatia. Their experiences teach us to expect opposition to our ministry. Opposition does not necessarily mean we are doing something wrong. Sometimes it is evidence that we are doing something important and right. Paul and Barnabas did not let the resistance stop them from working for God. They “shook the dust from their feet in protest” against the people of Pisidian Antioch and went on to preach at Iconium (Acts 13:51).

### **Keep a Good Attitude**

In spite of resistance and rejection, the missionaries kept a positive attitude. “The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 13:52). Blame, complaint, and self-pity destroy Christian experience. The toughness of the circumstances creates new “stretch” in our experience. Our new capacity must be filled with the Holy Spirit, who brings joy. Grumbling and downhearted Christians never show the world that Jesus is risen. The deeper a submarine goes, the greater must be its resistance to pressure. God’s Spirit pressurizes the chambers of our inner being.

### **Be Adaptable**

9 From your own experience or observation, how is being full of joy connected to being filled with the Spirit?

Paul and Barnabas were predictable in some ways. One could count on them to go to the major urban centers in a region, preach in the synagogue first, and then proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles. But at other times, they showed a remarkable adaptability to change their plans according to the needs of a situation or an inner sense of divine leading. When faced with opposition at Iconium, they decided to remain (Acts 14:2–3). Later, when a plot to stone them was discovered, they fled to Lystra, twenty-three miles to the southeast.

One moment, during Paul’s sermon, a great miracle occurred (Acts 14:8–10). Then the crowd mistook Barnabas for the god Zeus, and Paul for his spokesman, Hermes. At first Paul and Barnabas did not realize what was happening because they did not understand the local language. Finally they understood that a sacrifice was being planned in their honor. They expressed horror at this sacrilege by tearing their clothes. Their preaching to the mob contrasts strongly with their preaching to the synagogue audience. The mob knew nothing of the Scriptures, so Barnabas and Paul did not refer to the Scriptures.

10 Give one positive example of adaptability, either in your church or from your own life.

Then the same crowd that had sought to honor Paul stoned him. Paul, who had wrought a miracle on the man born lame, could not save himself. He was seriously injured by the rioting crowd. They dragged him out of the city, convinced he was dead. Miraculously, he got up and prepared to continue his work. Although he had fled persecution at Iconium, Paul went back into Lystra immediately after his stoning.

11 What examples have you seen of this principle that the greatest battles often follow the greatest victories?

### **Be Prepared for the Worst Battles after the Victories**

Sometimes our greatest trials come after our greatest victories. The victories give us faith and courage to face the trials. Paul’s stoning at Lystra (Acts 14:19) followed closely after the healing of the lame man (Acts 14:8–10). Jesus’ blessing from the Father at His baptism was followed closely by His temptation by the devil (Mark 1:10–13). Peter tells us, “Do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ” (1 Peter 4:12–13).

12 From Acts 14:20–22, describe the important role other believers play in the encouragement of struggling Christians.

13 Is there someone who needs your encouragement today? List two or three things you can do to strengthen a fellow believer going through a time of trouble or testing.

14 What are six principles for overcoming difficulties in ministry?

15 Acts 14:22–23 lists four ways Paul and Barnabas followed through in establishing the new converts in the faith. What were these four ways?

## Fight the Good Fight

When Paul was attacked and mistreated, he did not give up. “After the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city” (Acts 14:20). Sometimes God may lead His child to a place of rest during a storm, but the more common pattern is that of Paul. When chased out of Antioch, Paul did not become resigned to defeat, but rather pursued his objective (Acts 14:1). When persecuted at Iconium, he continued boldly to speak the message (Acts 14:3). And in Lystra, he courageously returned to the city where he had been viciously assaulted with stones (Acts 14:20). Finally, Paul returned to all the cities from which he had been chased (Acts 14:21). The apostle did not live passively. Some people drop out of ministries because someone offended them or because they have not been as successful as they had hoped. Such people need to look again at Paul’s example.

Missionary George Roy Wood had good reason not to keep working in Tibet in 1934. A Tibetan chief had tried to kill him, and the poison had made Wood deathly ill. He thought he was going to die. Far away, God awakened his wife to pray for him. She prayed until she felt peace. About that time, Wood vomited and at once began to feel better. One month later, a group from the tribe of the Tibetan chief told Wood, “We gave you enough poison to kill ten men. Your God is greater than ours. Please come and tell us about Him.”

## Look at What God Is Accomplishing

What is God doing within our own lives when we are out doing things for Him? By the time the first missionary journey was completed, the church had been taken to new areas of the world. But just as great is what God had accomplished in Paul’s life. He had a new depth. In writing to the Galatians, the people of the new churches he had founded on this trip, he talked to them about the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22). Where do these qualities grow best? Such fruit grows best in the soil of testing.

Romans 5:3–5 provides the sequence: suffering produces endurance; endurance produces character; and character produces hope. The fruit of the Spirit can be developed only in those who have been tried. How can one learn patience or self-control unless he or she faces situations that tempt him or her to lose both patience and control?

It was through his ministry in Lystra that Paul found a valuable future fellow minister, Timothy (Acts 16:1). Perhaps Timothy was more influenced by the way Paul faced suffering and stoning at Lystra than by the more dramatic healing of the lame man (2 Timothy 3:11). Who knows how deeply we can influence others who watch how we, moved by the Holy Spirit, respond to setbacks with joy? God is always at work doing something good in believers as a result of trial—and in others who watch the believers’ godly responses.

The first missionary journey ended with Paul and Barnabas retracing their steps. It likely took much courage to go back to these places. It was important for the believers left behind in Galatia to know that those who had brought them the gospel were also willing to suffer for it. The example of Barnabas and Paul gave courage to believers in those cities who would also have to suffer for their faith.

“They sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles” (Acts 14:26–27). The church

at Antioch provided an example of the way churches ought to receive returning missionaries. The report of missionaries should be eagerly awaited by the church. The church needs to be together to hear what God has accomplished through the messengers it has sent.

Notice what Paul and Barnabas reported. In humility, they passed over their many heroic actions. It was not their exploits for God but rather His grace lavished on them that was their theme. God, not they, had done the work and opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.

## 10.3 LESSON

### The Jerusalem Council: A Biblical Pattern of Conflict Resolution

The Jerusalem Council is the name most often given to the church conference of Acts 15. It also has been called the first ecumenical council of the church. Luke described the event that triggered the convening of the council (Acts: 15:1–5), the council itself (Acts 15:6–21), and the effects of the council (15:22–35).

The central issues of the church sprang from the conversion of so many Gentiles. Must Gentiles be subject to the Law? Must they be circumcised to be saved? The basic question boiled down to this. Is one justified by the Law plus faith in Christ or by faith alone? The witness of Peter, Barnabas, and Paul led James to suggest a compromise that established the principle of Gentile liberty without compromising the regard Jewish Christians had for the Law. With this issue resolved, the way was paved for further missionary tours.

We see here the beauty of the Spirit’s work among brethren coming from different cultural and religious backgrounds. These people submerged their smaller prejudices and experiences so the larger issue of Christian unity might prevail.

#### 10.3.1 OBJECTIVE

*Outline a biblical pattern for conflict resolution in the church.*

#### Reasons for the Jerusalem Council

Two young hikers setting off on their first adventure followed the directions of a seasoned climber who had promised them an unforgettable view. After hours of walking down and then up a steep ravine, they were nearly exhausted when they reached the other side. As they rested, they looked around at the spectacular view and agreed that, while difficult, the climb was worth it. When they rounded a bend, they spotted a footbridge that spanned the difficult ravine. They walked across the bridge and made it back in just a fraction of the time it had taken them to get there. The next day, they asked the guide why he had not told them about the easier route via the bridge. “I did not find that bridge until after I’d made the climb the hard way,” he explained. “If I had to do it, why should it be any different for you?”

For years the Jews had reached God through the difficult requirements of the Law. Now Jesus had provided the bridge to God. Many Jewish Christians had trouble accepting that Gentiles could reach God without traveling that difficult path requiring circumcision, kosher diet, and other Jewish ceremonial laws. The Jerusalem Council was necessary to settle the issue once and for all.

The underlying causes that produced the Jerusalem Council had been building for twenty years. Believers in the Jerusalem church saw the revelation of Jesus as Messiah as completing their ancestral faith rather than changing it. They saw Christ as the fulfillment of prophecy, but they still taught and practiced that believers also needed

16 For how long had the underlying causes that produced the Jerusalem Council been building?

17 The conversion of what two groups added to the rigid conservatism regarding requirements for Gentile believers?

to fulfill the requirements of the Law. The conversion of many priests (Acts 6:7) and Pharisees (Acts 15:5) was a conversion to faith in Jesus as the Messiah, but not a conversion away from the traditions and practices they had long held. The believers in Jerusalem still worshiped in the temple (Acts 2:46). Church members had the narrow cultural and racial perspective that God would only save those who lived as they did.

The Pharisee party had consistently and strongly opposed Jesus. Yet their basic doctrine had many common points: belief in the inspiration of the Law, Psalms, and prophets and in the Resurrection, angels, and the need for a Messiah. The Pharisees who believed in the Lord only added to their existing doctrine the declaration that Jesus, by His resurrection, proved himself to be the Messiah.

Stephen was tried and killed not because he preached the resurrection of Jesus but because his preaching of the gospel implied that the Law and temple worship were no longer central to salvation. The extension of the gospel to the Samaritans, the Ethiopian eunuch, Cornelius, and the people at Antioch had not come through the missionary efforts of the Jerusalem church. Not once do we read of the Jerusalem church's seeking to fulfill the Great Commission. Rather, the gospel spread because of special revelation (Acts 8:26; 10:1–6, 9–20) and persecution (8:1, 4; 11:19–20).

The Jerusalem church did believe in spreading the gospel. Most believed Gentiles should not be accepted into the church until they became practicing Jews. Because of strong conservative elements in the church, no plans could be made for evangelizing Gentiles. The question of reaching the Gentiles would have been overshadowed by the debate on how to reach them. Rather than waiting for the Jerusalem church to come up with a strategy, the Lord bypassed them to reach the Gentiles and then confronted the Jerusalem church with increasing numbers of Gentile believers.

One of the greatest hindrances to growth in the church today is this same mentality in Christian communities that create their own cultures and traditions which prevent unbelievers from coming to faith.

18 What specific event led to the Jerusalem Council?

Acts 15:1–5 describes the specific event that led to the calling of the Jerusalem Council. Members of the circumcision party came from Judea to Antioch and started pushing their views on the Gentile believers. “Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: ‘Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved’” (Acts 15:1). It seems unlikely that these men had been sent by the Jerusalem church. They appear to have acted on their own in coming, as they had no hand in planting the church in Antioch nor any part in the missionary work.

19 Based on Acts 15:2, is it always wrong for Christians to sharply dispute with other Christians?

“This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them” (Acts 15:2). This was no small argument. The dispute was sharp. We can reconstruct Paul's approach to the Judaizers by reading the book of Galatians, which was written either during this time or shortly after the Jerusalem Council.

Rather than allowing the issue to cause a rift between them and the Jewish believers in Jerusalem, the Antioch church responded wisely. “So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question” (Acts 15:2).

The response of the believers in Phoenicia and Samaria and even the church in Jerusalem to God's work among the Gentiles was joyful and welcoming. Everyone seemed truly glad to hear of the great inroads the gospel was making among the Gentiles. It was time for this vital issue to be resolved by the church once and for all.

## Six Steps to Resolve Church Conflict

Acts 15:5–36 shows us six steps followed by the church in solving the problem that threatened to divide it.

### 1. Clearly define the problem (Acts 15:5).

The issue for the council's consideration was clearly defined by some from the party of the Pharisees: "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the Law of Moses" (Acts 15:5). Stating the issue clearly lets everyone know what is involved. For issues to be dealt with, they must first be clearly defined and understood by all.

### 2. Have a full and open discussion of the issue (Acts 15:6–7).

The apostles and elders met and had a full discussion of the issue. "After much discussion" (verse 7) indicates that perhaps quite a number of people presented their viewpoints. (The body of believers was much too large for everyone to discuss it, so only the leaders and those most involved were included in the discussions.) If people are going to be part of the solution, they must be part of the process. A church is not meant to be made up of a dictatorial group where one person lays down God's rule for everyone else. We are meant to be a community. When we have a problem that affects the community, the church community is to come together.

### 3. Listen to the experiences of godly people whose past walk with God gives them insight into the present situation (Acts 15:7–12).

After much discussion, Peter stood and told of the conversion of Cornelius. God had validated Cornelius' salvation, not through circumcision but through the giving of the Holy Spirit. So then, Peter concluded, "Why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are" (Acts 15:10–11). God had shown through Cornelius that salvation comes by His grace.

Following Peter's address, Barnabas and Paul also told about what God had done among the Gentiles through them. The supernatural element in their ministry among the Gentiles undoubtedly served to vindicate their mission and to indicate God's approval.

The issue was not resolved by experience alone, but relevant experiences were considered. The experiences of Peter, Paul, and Barnabas weighed as one of the important factors in the council's decision.

### 4. Test experience with the Scriptures (Acts 15:13–19) and make decisions from a right understanding and application of the Word.

James recognized that this issue had indeed been addressed in Scripture. He quoted Amos 9:11–12 to show that what they were discussing had been foreseen by the prophets. David's tent, his kingdom, had fallen. But God had promised to rebuild and "restore it that the remnant of men, including Gentiles who would bear His name, may seek the Lord" (Acts 15:16–17). From this James concluded that it had always been God's intention to include the Gentiles. This led to the God-pleasing decision: "It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God" (Acts 15:19).

This does not mean that whoever can quote the most Scripture should prevail. The sheer quantity of the Scriptures was on the side of the Judaizers. They were well-practiced in quoting all the texts on circumcision, keeping the Sabbath, and

20 With whom should you discuss the issues of conflict in which you are involved?

21 Why are personal experiences by themselves not sufficient for ensuring godly decisions?

the dietary and kosher laws. But bulk is not as important as intent. Christians must be careful to read the consistent meaning through the Scripture that unites it all. Jesus said the Scriptures cannot be broken. They cannot be set against themselves. The cord that runs through all of Scripture is God's desire to reach out to and have a relationship with all people—not just Jews—through faith.

### 5. Separate the major issues from the minor ones (Acts 15:20–21).

22 What issues could not be compromised at the Jerusalem Council?

The decision had been reached: whom God receives, let the church not reject. A fifth step in solving church disputes is to separate the major issues (on which there can be no compromise) from the minor issues (on which there can be compromise). Issues that could not be compromised included repentance and faith in Christ. Cultural issues that were a matter of tradition and preference included the Judaizers' issues—circumcision and dietary laws. Still, the Gentiles were asked to compromise, too. They were asked as a matter of love, not salvation, to refrain from making a show of their liberty in areas where Jewish believers had questions of conscience. Paul indicated that those who insist on keeping certain legalistic regulations are actually weaker in the faith. So the stronger or more liberated believer should, in love, refrain from practices that would offend (Romans 14:1–15:13).

23 What issues were simply matters of preference or culture that were not essential to salvation?

24 If you are involved in a conflict, what are the major issues that must not be compromised? What are the issues of preference on which you can compromise to achieve unity and peace?

James cited four restrictions for the Gentile believers. Three deal with eating (food offered to idols, things strangled, and blood). Because Jewish and Gentile believers were to share meals together, these considerations were to be observed. Otherwise meal times might cause hard feelings and display dissension to unbelievers. The call to avoid sexual immorality is commanded for righteousness, not a cultural preference. James instructed Gentile Christians to respect and conform to the Jewish believers' moral scruples. With many Gentiles, immorality was a part of feasting. It was proper that the Gentiles should conform to the higher godly code of relations between the sexes instead of following the lower pagan standards to which most Gentiles had been accustomed.

### 6. Clearly communicate the decision to everyone it will affect (Acts 15:22–32).

25 What four restrictions were placed on the Gentile believers?

When a decision is reached, both the deliberation process and the conclusion should be made known. The result must not be left in doubt. People should not go away thinking that no definite action has been taken.

26 In what two ways was the Council's decision communicated to the Gentiles?

The decision of the Jerusalem Council was communicated in a letter outlining what had been decided. To back up the letter, they sent two of their own brothers from Jerusalem. Judas and Silas (who themselves were prophets) were to be the loving face of the Jerusalem church; they would bring encouragement to the churches in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia.

The Gentiles could rejoice at the Jerusalem Council's decision. The leadership of the Jerusalem church, and probably most believers, was completely satisfied with the results (see verse 25, "we all agreed"). Knowing that they were moving forward with God, they could write, "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (Acts 15:28).



## Test Yourself



Circle the letter of the *best* answer.

1. The five leaders of the church of Antioch mentioned in Acts 13 are
  - a) Luke, Barnabas, Lucuis of Cyrene, Manaen, and Paul.
  - b) Lucuis of Cyrene, Niger, Luke, Manaen, and Barnabas.
  - c) Mark, Lucuis of Cyrene, Niger, Paul and Barnabas.
  - d) Barnabas, Paul, Lucuis of Cyrene, Manaen, and Niger.
2. The Jewish sorcerer that opposed Paul at Paphos was named
  - a) Simon.
  - b) Elymas.
  - c) Legion.
  - d) Demos.
3. Which of the following is NOT a principle of missions according to Acts 13?
  - a) Work is a team effort.
  - b) Expect opposition.
  - c) Be a solo missionary.
  - d) Be full of the Spirit.
4. According to the IST, *kerygma*
  - a) refers to preaching and teaching under the power of the Holy Spirit.
  - b) is the proclamation or announcement of God's saving activity in calling and sustaining His chosen people.
  - c) refers to poetic literature within the Old Testament.
  - d) is all of the above.
5. Shortly after Paul healed a crippled man in Lystra, the crowd
  - a) had a feast in his honor.
  - b) stoned him and left him for dead.
  - c) believed and followed Christ.
  - d) asked Paul and Barnabas to leave.
6. A key to overcoming difficulty is
  - a) to be adaptable.
  - b) to keep a good attitude.
  - c) to not give up when you meet resistance.
  - d) all of the above.
7. On their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas ministered in the region of what province?
  - a) Achaia
  - b) Galatia
  - c) Macedonia
  - d) Cappadocia
8. The Jerusalem Council is recorded in Acts chapter
  - a) 13.
  - b) 15.
  - c) 19.
  - d) 23.
9. A principle for resolving conflict that can be learned from the Jerusalem Council is
  - a) compromise until church leadership changes.
  - b) accommodate the opposing side.
  - c) separate the major issues from the minor issues.
  - d) avoid major confrontations.
10. Based upon the Jerusalem Council, Gentile believers were to avoid
  - a) food offered to idols.
  - b) sexual immorality.
  - c) consuming blood.
  - d) all of the above.

# Responses to Interactive Questions

## Chapter 10

Some of these responses may include information that is supplemental to the IST. These questions are intended to produce reflective thinking beyond the course content and your responses may vary from these examples.

**1** Evaluate your own prayer life. What adjustments or improvements can you make to be available for God to lead and use you?

Answers will vary.

**2** Have you ever encountered opposition when you have worked for God? How did you respond?

Answers will vary.

**3** How is the encounter with Elymas an encouragement to you or other Christian workers who encounter opposition?

Answers will vary.

**4** What are seven principles of missions activity found in Acts 13:4–12?

(1) Missionary work is a team effort. (2) Start with the familiar. (3) Start in the logical place. (4) Extend your reach. (5) Expect opposition. (6) Be full of the Spirit. (7) When the gospel is faithfully preached in truth and power, people will believe on the Lord.

**5** Have you ever quit when you should have pressed on? What did you learn from the experience?

Answers will vary.

**6** What were the two parts of Paul's sermon in Acts 13:14–43?

The first part traced God's sovereign acts in Israel's history. The second part was about Jesus—His life, death, resurrection, and provision for the forgiveness of sins.

**7** Why did the Jews talk abusively against what Paul said?

They were jealous.

**8** Have you ever criticized someone of whom you were actually jealous?

Answers will vary.

**9** From your own experience or observation, how is being full of joy connected to being filled with the Spirit?

Answers will vary.

**10** Give one positive example of adaptability, either in your church or from your own life.

Answers will vary.

**11** What examples have you seen of this principle that the greatest battles often follow the greatest victories?

Answers will vary.

**12** From Acts 14:20–22, describe the important role other believers play in the encouragement of struggling Christians.

After the disciples gathered around the wounded Paul, he was able to get up and return to the city. Paul and Barnabas returned to all the towns they had previously visited and encouraged believers to remain true to the faith.

**13** Is there someone who needs your encouragement today? List two or three things you can do to strengthen a fellow believer going through a time of trouble or testing.

Answers will vary.

**14** What are six principles for overcoming difficulties in ministry?

(1) Don't give up when you meet resistance. (2) Keep a good attitude. (3) Be adaptable. (4) Be prepared for the worst battles after the greatest victories. (5) Fight the good fight. (6) Look at what God is accomplishing in and through you.

**15** Acts 14:22–23 lists four ways Paul and Barnabas followed through in establishing the new converts in the faith. What were these four ways?

(1) Strengthening the disciples. (2) Encouraging them to remain true to the faith and alerting them that “we must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). (3) Appointing elders in every place. (4) Being committed to the Lord with prayer and fasting.

**16** For how long had the underlying causes that produced the Jerusalem Council been building?

For twenty years.

**17** The conversion of what two groups added to the rigid conservatism regarding requirements for Gentile believers?

(1) Priests (Acts 6:7) and (2) Pharisees (Acts 15:5)

**18** What specific event led to the Jerusalem Council?

“Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: ‘Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved’” (Acts 15:1).

**19** Based on Acts 15:2, is it always wrong for Christians to sharply dispute with other Christians?

No. Sometimes it is important to defend truths that must not be compromised.

**20** With whom should you discuss the issues of conflict in which you are involved?

Answers will vary.

**21** Why are personal experiences by themselves not sufficient for ensuring godly decisions?

Our experiences are important, but they are not infallible. They can be biased and can lead us astray.

**22** What issues could not be compromised at the Jerusalem Council?

Repentance and faith in Christ.

**23** What issues were simply matters of preference or culture that were not essential to salvation?

Cultural issues that were a matter of tradition and preference, such as circumcision and dietary laws.

**24** If you are involved in a conflict, what are the major issues that must not be compromised? What are the issues on which you can compromise to achieve unity and peace?

Answers will vary.

**25** What four restrictions were placed on the Gentile believers?

“Abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality” (Acts 15:29).

**26** In what two ways was the Council's decision communicated to the Gentiles?

They wrote a letter outlining what had been decided. Then they sent Judas and Silas to communicate the loving spirit of the Jerusalem church and give encouragement to the Gentile believers.

# 11 CHAPTER

## The Second Missionary Journey

A young girl felt God's call to missions at an early age. At Bible college, when she listened to a man with a thriving ministry in India, she desperately wanted to go to India. But when she graduated and was accepted for missionary service, she was told she could not go to India. No missionaries were being sent to India at the time. She would have to choose another field. For years her heart had been set on India. It was difficult to switch directions and choose another place of ministry. She prayed about it but felt no direct guidance. She studied many countries but felt no inclination in a particular direction.

Then one day she was talking to a friend who mentioned an Asian country that was very dangerous and closed to the gospel. Suddenly the matter was solved. The missionary knew that was the country to which she would go. Friends and leaders tried to talk her out of it. Could it really be God's will to send a young single woman to such a difficult place?

When she went out to raise her support, she felt a bit anxious. She was no practiced preacher, just a young woman with no missionary experience. Would the people want to support her missionary work? But when she stood to speak, the Spirit of God overwhelmed her. She could only stand and weep. No sermon was preached or appeal given, yet many people came to the altar to repent or commit themselves to Christian service. The young missionary raised a large portion of her support that day. No one could doubt that God was leading her and would bless her ministry in this difficult nation.

Paul's second missionary journey began with uncertainty and a lack of direction, but it was not without God's blessing and guidance. Sometimes God reveals His will in simple, clear ways. Other times we must wait for Him to reveal the next step as we faithfully pursue that part of His plan that He has shown us.

### Lesson 11.1 The Second Missionary Journey Begins

Objective

*11.1.1 Identify five lessons for those who want to follow God's leading based on Paul's experiences in Acts 15:36–16:40.*

### Lesson 11.2 A Tale of Three Cities

Objective

*11.2.1 Contrast Paul's approaches in preaching the gospel in the different cities as well as the manner in which the message was received in each city.*

### Lesson 11.3 Corinth: The Final Leg of the Journey

Objective

*11.3.1 Understand the unique challenges to ministry in Corinth and three ways God helped Paul meet those challenges.*

# 11 LESSON 1

## The Second Missionary Journey Begins

The bulk of God’s will is plainly known in the Scripture. The Bible tells us what kind of people Christians are supposed to be. The unknown parts of His will have to do with direction and timing: where we are to go; what, specifically, we are to do; and when we are to go or do it. The second missionary journey can be a great comfort for Christians unsure of God’s leading. It tells the story of an apostle who set out on a grand venture without any idea of where he would end up or what he would be doing. The five points that follow are by no means an exhaustive study of God’s leading. They are reflective of elements that are almost always present when we seek God’s leading for our lives.

### 11.1.1

#### OBJECTIVE

*Identify five lessons for those who want to follow God’s leading based on Paul’s experiences in Acts 15:36–16:40.*

1 How did the second missionary journey get started?

### God Does Not Always Lead the Same Way

For Paul, God’s direction began with a Damascus Road experience (Acts 9:1–6). This was followed by a trance experience at the temple in Jerusalem (Acts 22:17–21). Next, God used Barnabas to get him into ministry at Antioch (Acts 11:25–26). To launch the first missionary journey, the leaders (including Barnabas and Paul) had discovered God’s leading during a time of prayer and fasting (Acts 13:1–3). Until the start of the second missionary journey, there was a strong aspect of the divine in God’s leading of Paul.

Notice how differently the second journey began: “Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, ‘Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing’” (Acts 15:36).

Paul’s proposal was a logical step to follow up on the churches they had planted. But it is not at all like the beginning of the first missionary journey: “In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers . . . While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them’” (Acts 13:1–2).

When the Lord does not give divine guidance through visions, angels, or miracles, believers are free to use good judgment. Most of God’s will is already known through the Scriptures. If we are becoming the person God wants, what we do and where we go often takes care of itself. If we make a mistake in judgment when our motives were godly, God will still work through our decisions. Often we are afraid to do something for fear it is not God’s will. It is okay to move forward and find out. Operate with a view that the light is green rather than red. Paul and Barnabas’ decision in Acts 15:36 shows that Christians do not have to bypass their brains when faced with decisions.

### A Rocky Start Does Not Mean a Crash Landing

When Christians are making judgment calls, there is bound to be disagreement—even among Spirit-filled believers. Acts 15:37–39 describes the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas: “Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company.”

This is the third conflict in Acts. The first was a dispute over social fairness (Acts 6:1–7). That problem was solved by frank acknowledgment of the problem and no self-pity or assigning of blame.

The second conflict was an issue of doctrine that was resolved at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15. That time the solution included clearly stating

the problem, discussing possible solutions, the witness of Scripture, and a compromise on what was possible to compromise.

This time the conflict was over methods. One cannot say that Barnabas or Paul was jealous of the other. Nor can one say that either had sin in his life. They simply did not agree about whether John Mark should be a part of the next missionary trip. Paul would not take him, and Barnabas would not go without him. The issue could not be compromised, so they agreed to differ.

Ultimately both Paul and Barnabas were right. But they did not know that the other could be right at the time. For Paul, the best indicator of future behavior was John Mark's past performance. But to Barnabas, John Mark deserved a second chance—especially so since he was a relative.

Paul and Barnabas did not try to ignore their difference or attempt to resolve it with a fleece. Each did what he believed was best and right. In this case, their split doubled the missionary reach of the original team. Look at these unexpected benefits.

- Paul chose a new companion, Silas. Silas' Roman citizenship would prove an important asset on this trip (Acts 16:37).
- If Barnabas and Mark had been on the team, there might not have been room for Timothy (Acts 16:3) and Luke (Acts 16:10).
- Under the son of encouragement (Barnabas), Mark would recover from his earlier failure (Acts 13:13). He would be a living example that God could use a person who had failed at first.
- Because of Barnabas' faith in his cousin, we have Mark's Gospel.
- Paul later realized that Mark was no longer a quitter and found him useful. In fact, he asked Mark to come to Rome at a time when Christian leaders feared for their lives (2 Timothy 4:11).

At this point Barnabas passed from the scene of apostolic history. In salvaging John Mark, Barnabas became the spiritual father of all those who have begun and failed. The church needs people like Barnabas who will lift the fallen and show faith in people who may have given up on themselves.

As Acts 15 ends, we see that the church had grown throughout the regions to the north of Jerusalem all the way to Antioch of Syria. From Antioch it had reached out to the northeast corner of the Mediterranean Sea and beyond, advancing westward through Cilicia and South Galatia.

Do not misread a rocky start as an indication that God is not in your plans.

### **Not Knowing Where You Are Going Does Not Mean You Are Going Nowhere**

“Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas” (Acts 16:6–8). The simple words belie the huge undertaking this represents. Consider the expanse. From Antioch to Lystra by land is almost 500 miles. From Lystra through Phrygia and Galatia is at least another 250 miles, then from Galatia to Troas is another 700 miles. All of this is up and down mountains. From their departure point in Antioch to Troas, Paul traveled a minimum of 1,450 miles, the last 950 of which involved not knowing where they were going, only where they were not supposed to go.

2 What were some unexpected benefits of the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas?



3 How did the Holy Spirit keep Paul from going to Asia or Bithynia?

Paul's task was to stay sensitive to the Spirit. We do not know the means the Spirit was using to check him, but we do know Paul was sensitive. When his rationality and the Spirit's checking were in conflict, he listened to the Spirit.

One contemporary Christian leader balances sound judgment with the Spirit's leading in this way. He sets a fast for a specific number of days, telling the Lord in advance what he has decided to do. He agrees to give up the venture if he breaks the fast. But if he completes the fast and the Lord does not check him in that time, he believes his choice is in line with God's will.

Rationality must be tempered by a constant openness to the Spirit. He knows things we do not. If we are not praying about our decisions or interceding for God's will, then we might plunge dangerously ahead into what looks like a good choice.

The key thing to remember when we are being checked by the Spirit is not to get passive. Paul never sat down and pouted. He continued to walk until he ran out of walking room. We must have dogged determination to keep active.

### Knocked Down But Not Out

At Troas Paul received a vision. A man from Macedonia was standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us" (Acts 16:9). The four missionaries sailed immediately for Macedonia. Luke provided a log of ports-of-call. The voyage from Troas to Samothrace, a mountainous island rising to nearly five thousand feet, took one day. The second day, the missionaries reached the town of Neapolis on the Macedonian coast. They traveled by land to Philippi, some ten miles away.

4 Where did Paul start ministering in Philippi since there was no synagogue?

This Roman colony had no synagogue because the Jewish population had fewer than ten adult males. But Paul learned that a small group of Jewish women and God-fearers met outside the city gate by the river Gangites, a custom where there was

no synagogue. Paul and his companions went to this informal meeting place on the Sabbath. They did not despise the small crowd or the fact that they were women.

This meeting set the stage for Paul's first message in Europe and the conversion of Lydia. The great door of opportunity at Philippi was the open heart of one woman and her household.

Some women of high standing opposed the gospel (Acts 13:50), but others, like Lydia, embraced it. Lydia's wealth may be presumed not only because she was an immigrant Thyatiran distributor of her home city's costly purple goods. She also had a home large enough to house the four missionaries. First, she had an open heart, then an open home.

5 Who was the first recorded convert in Europe?

Some days later, Paul cast a demonic spirit from a slave girl. For his efforts he ended up in jail. Thus far, the second missionary journey had been difficult. It had not begun with supernatural leading but with an argument. The team had walked hundreds of miles not knowing where to go—only where not to go. After 1,500 miles from their starting point and days of sailing in response to the vision of the Macedonian man, they had arrived to find no man waiting to receive them. Philippi did not even have a synagogue to be their starting place. Their first efforts had brought no big results. Finally, they had delivered a girl enslaved by demons. For this their only reward was pain, humiliation, and imprisonment.

6 How will you relate to God when faced with disaster?

The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. (Acts 16:22–24)

At that moment, the whole second missionary journey hung in the balance. Paul and Silas could not see into the future. They could not see the results pending in Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth. They could not see the letters still to be written.

7 Who might be watching your life, your response to trouble? What will they learn about God from what they see in you?

Paul and Silas did not interpret God by their circumstances. They did not accuse God or engage in blame and self-pity.

A grave marker in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, reads, "Billie Hall, six months." John and Cuba Hall were struggling missionaries when their only child, Billie, grew deathly ill. Cuba recalled, "Every day and at night, the Africans would come and look in our window. Would we stay if our child died?"

8 What does the diversity of the Philippian converts tell us about the power of God and the chance for unity in our own varied churches today?

The Africans were watching to see how they would react if they prayed to their God and the baby still died. Would they keep their faith?

The Halls committed their son to the Lord, accepted his death as God's will, and refused to become bitter. The Africans saw how the family handled this crisis. The Halls' response in tragedy became the initial means of opening doors for the gospel in the country of Burkina Faso.

People were watching Paul and Silas' reaction in that jail. "About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them" (Acts 16:25). No matter what our experience, the truth about God is always true. Jesus is risen. We have a God in heaven, a loving, heavenly Father who longs for us to be in His family. We have a Lord who never leaves us or forsakes us.

Paul and Silas made a conscious decision to stay in God's will by not becoming bitter. That was a defining moment for the rest of Paul's life. From that moment on, everything changed.

Attitude is everything. What happens in us is more important than what happens to us. Keep your song no matter how dark your night or how grievous your hurt. No matter what your experience may show, God will never leave us or forsake us. When you walk in God's will, the next earthquake you experience just might be God's method for freeing you from your chains.

# 11.2

## LESSON

### 11.2.1

OBJECTIVE

*Contrast Paul's approaches in preaching the gospel in the different cities as well as the manner in which the message was received in each city.*

9 Summarize Paul's approach to ministry in Thessalonica.

10 What spurred the Thessalonians to reject the gospel?

11 Have you ever been rejected by others when trying to share the gospel? Why do you believe you were rejected?

## A Tale of Three Cities

We do not know the length of Paul's stay in Philippi. Probably it lasted only a matter of weeks. We do know that he entered the town unknown and left it a public figure. When he arrived, there were no believers. When he left, the first Christian church in Europe was in existence. Luke remained in Philippi, probably to serve as its pastor. (Note that the "we" of 16:10–40 becomes "they" in 17:1). Luke did not rejoin Paul until about eight years had passed (Acts 20:5).

The journey west along the **Egnatian Way** to Thessalonica took Paul, Silas, and Timothy through the towns of Amphipolis and Apollonia. These towns were not major urban centers like Philippi and Thessalonica. Possibly Paul knew that if he founded churches at Philippi and Thessalonica, he could rely on them to spread the gospel to the cities in between.

## Stirring Hearts in Thessalonica

Upon arriving in Thessalonica, Paul stuck with his usual game plan. "As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. 'This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ,' he said" (Acts 17:2–3). Paul may have mentioned his own experience, but his emphasis was on Jesus and how He fulfilled the Scriptures. In calling his listeners to accept the truth, Paul did not appeal simply to his own experience. He pointed them to the Word of God.

Paul debated, not in an argumentative way, but in a good way. Questions were in order. He had spent years of preparation becoming ready to answer questions. Paul exemplified the challenge of Peter: "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15).

Some Jewish people believed Paul's message. Many Gentile God-fearers and leading women of the city also believed.

One's social standing does not necessarily make him or her more receptive or more resistant to the gospel. Leading women at Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:50) rejected the gospel, while many of the leading women of Thessalonica accepted (Acts 17:4).

As at Jerusalem (Acts 5:17) and Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:45), at Thessalonica (Acts 17:5) the true reasons for the people's rejection of the gospel did not spring from conscience but from jealousy. "They rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city" (Acts 17:5).

An interesting charge is made against Paul and the others. The ringleaders of the mob said, "These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here" (Acts 17:6). Obviously, if applied only to Paul and Silas, this statement was an exaggeration. They have traveled only the part of the world from Jerusalem to Thessalonica. The phrase may refer to Christians in general. If

so, we see the widespread and highly significant effect of the gospel by AD 50. This complaint became a compliment to the early church, which was trying to make Christ fully known everywhere.

### Opening Eyes in Berea

“As soon as it was night, the brothers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea” (Acts 17:10). Paul went to the synagogue in each town, but he received a far different reception in each of them. The Berean Jews are commended for the eager and diligent way they searched the Scriptures to see whether or not Paul was right in his interpretation and application (Acts 17:11).

When individuals respond to another religion with emotional attacks, persecution, abusive language, or physical violence, they could be showing a lack of confidence in their own faith. Believing that their religion cannot successfully stand if defended only by words, they must resort to other devices. The Christian, however, recognizes that God will validate His words with saving and healing actions. Thus Paul could remind the Thessalonians, “Our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction” (1 Thessalonians 1:5).

Hearing that Paul was at Berea, Thessalonian Jews traveled down to arouse the emotions of the crowds. Concerned for Paul’s safety (Acts 17:10), the Berean believers sent Paul off to Athens. During Paul’s stay at Berea, Timothy arrived from Thessalonica. Timothy and Silas remained behind at Berea while Paul traveled on to Athens, escorted by some of the Berean believers.

### Challenging Minds in Athens

When Paul visited Athens, the city was no longer important as a political center. It had been the city of Pericles and Demosthenes, of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. But when Paul arrived, it was four hundred years after its golden age. It was still a center of beauty, art, culture, and knowledge.

Paul had spent his early years in the busy city of Tarsus. As a child, and later as a missionary, he had seen idols throughout the Gentile world. Only at Athens, however, do we read that his spirit was greatly distressed at seeing so many idols. *Greatly distressed* is translated from just one word in Greek. It is the word from which the word *paroxysm* comes. Paul’s spirit was in upheaval over the scope of superstition and idolatry in a place that claimed to produce the world’s intellectual leaders.

Paul may have been sent to Athens to rest. The men who escorted Paul may have felt that Athens was a safe place for Paul, a contrast to the intolerance of Thessalonica and Berea. Athens loved new things (Acts 17:21), while the other towns seemed to reject the new. But Paul could not just keep himself busy in the Athens library, touring the city, or simply resting when such idolatry confronted him at every step.

When Paul disputed them, the **Epicurean** and **Stoic** philosophies were already in their fourth century of existence. These philosophies, under different forms and names, remain very much alive in the modern world.

Epicureans were **agnostics**. They believed God either did not exist or was too far away from the world to know or care about it. Everything happened by chance. In those days, people lived with two great fears: the gods and death. Epicureanism sought to remove these fears by denying that the gods existed or by saying that they lived for pleasure if they did exist. No one should fear death,

12 In what two places did Paul first minister in Athens?

13 What two philosophical groups did Paul meet in Athens, and what was their opinion of him?

they taught, for death is the end. One had to make the best of what one had at the moment. “Eat, drink, and be merry” was their creed.

The Stoics, on the other hand, were **pantheists**. They believed God was in all. They believed everything was controlled by fate. Therefore, apathy (literally, without emotion or feeling) was the most desirable trait one could have. They taught that one must live with determined resolve and accept the best or worst with calmness.

Intellectual communities pose a unique challenge to the church. Like Athens, many intellectual communities seem to be devoted to learning, yet they seem unable to arrive at truth. The word *university* comes from two Latin words, *uni*, meaning “one” and *versity*, meaning “truth.” It means “one truth.”

Paul spoke the language of this intellectual community. Notice how his sermon differed from what he preached in Acts 13. When he was in a synagogue, the Scriptures were his text. But in Athens, Paul never quoted a single Bible verse. He quoted Greek poets. His text was the statue to an unknown God. Paul preached to connect with the people on their own wavelength.

Paul made some powerful points. He addressed many of the philosophies that oppose Christianity. Some have ancient names. Others are more modern. Study the philosophies in the chart.

14 How did Paul’s sermon to intellectuals differ from his sermons to Jews?

Philosophies Athenians might have adopted	
Agnosticism	View that if there is a God, He is unknowable
Gnosticism	In part, the belief that God is so much spirit that He would never have created matter
Pantheism	View that rejects independent existence of God outside the forces and laws within the universe
Atheism	View that there is no God
Hedonism	View that pleasure is the principal good and the proper goal of human behavior (similar in outlook to Epicureanism)
Polytheism	Belief in the existence of many gods
Deism	Religion based on reason, excludes divine revelation
Humanism	View which holds that humankind is capable of self-fulfillment and ethical conduct without resorting to supernaturalism
Racism	Attitude that one race is superior to another
Determinism	View that everything is determined by a sequence of causes independent of one’s will (similar to Stoicism)
Idolatry	Belief in idols and their worship
Religiosity	State of being obtrusively and sentimentally religious to a point of excess
Dualism	View that the universe is under the domination of two opposing principles, one evil and the other good
Kantianism	View that God is beyond all possible experience and knowledge
Universalism	View that all persons will ultimately be saved by God
Existentialism	View that limits human concerns to the here and now rather than to their origin and destiny
Nihilism	View that existence is senseless and useless

Paul's simple sermon on Mars Hill strongly refuted these philosophies. To the *agnostics*, Paul said, "What you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you" (Acts 17:23). Paul was saying, "You can know God."

To the *atheists* who do not believe there is a God, he said specifically, "The God who made the world . . ." (Acts 17:24).

To the *pantheists* who say that God is in all and is not a separate entity outside of creation, Paul said, "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else" (Acts 17:24–25).

To the *Gnostics* who said if there was a God, the only way to know Him is to get secret knowledge for yourself until you can reach God, Paul said that God made the world and everything in it. He said that people could find God and know Him.

He struck a blow against racism, the view that one group is superior to another, in verse 26: "From one man he made every nation of men." Regardless of skin color, all people are of the same bloodline.

Paul took aim at what in modern terms is *continuism*, the view that God is beyond knowing. In Acts 17:27, he said, "God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us." God is knowable, and you can experience and find Him in your own life.

In Acts 17:28, Paul gave the response to *humanism*, which basically says that man is capable of self-fulfillment and ethical conduct without supernatural revelation. Paul said instead, "In him we live and move and have our being." Life is lived within the context of our relationship with God.

Paul addressed *nihilism*, which says existence is senseless and useless. He said this is not true. We live, move, and have our being because of God. We are His offspring.

In regard to *idolatry*, Paul said: "Since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man's design and skill" (Acts 17:29).

Paul confronted *universalism*, the view that ultimately everything is going to be all right, and God is going to save everyone. He said, "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed" (Acts 17:30–31).

He took aim at *deism*, the religion of Thomas Jefferson and many others in the Western world, which holds that no revelation is necessary. One can know God or experience life simply by virtue of human reason. But Paul said that God commands everyone to repent. "He has given proof of this to all men by raising him [Jesus] from the dead" (Acts 17:31). We have our source of knowledge in a revelation that God has made to us through Jesus.

Paul also laid to rest *hedonism*, the view that pleasure is the main good and proper goal of human behavior. Paul countered that we must take into account the fact that one day we are going to stand in judgment.

When Paul was done, his audience had the typical responses of an intellectual community. "Some of them sneered, but others said, 'We want to hear you again on this subject'" (Acts 17:32). They either ridiculed or said, "We'd like to talk more about this." Some did believe.

15 What were the names of some in Athens who believed?

16 Have you ever encountered a person with intellectual questions or issues you did not know how to answer? What did you do? What would you do differently now?

17 Contrast the response to the gospel in the cities of Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens.

The mighty sermon Paul preached on Mars Hill brought limited results. Only a few became followers. Some mocked the idea that anything could be so simple or true. How could the resurrection of Jesus be the basis for determining the falseness or validity of all philosophy and religion? When the nature and work of the one true God are preached, challenging the philosophies and religions of people, some may mock. But some may express interest in hearing more. Others will believe.

Christianity is not a philosophy. Paul's preaching to the intellectual community in intellectual terms, rebutting their philosophy, is consistent with his 1 Corinthians 9:20 statement of principles. Paul preached Christ at Athens by relating Him to their level of understanding and need. Some are saved by this approach.

Notice there was no persecution at Athens. The team was persecuted almost everywhere, but not at Athens. Why? Perhaps because intellectual people pride themselves on their tolerance. So how might they dismiss somebody's views? By laughing at them. You say, "No thinking person would believe that." The reaction of the Athenian intellectual community is similar to what goes on in university communities today. But wherever Christ is faithfully proclaimed, there will be results.

A well-known cartoon featured a young boy pushing with all his might against the door of a school building. He was trying hard to get it open, but he was ignoring the prominent sign on the door: PULL. The punch line is the name on the door: School for the Gifted.

Obviously this boy's superior intellect and education were not helping him master the simple but valuable things in life. Sometimes that is how it is with intellectuals. Their education is so great and their minds so strong that they rely too much on their own ability to reason. But the things of God are simple. The gospel is basic and easy enough for a child to understand and grasp. When people overanalyze or try to make it more difficult, they can trip over the stumbling block of their own minds.

## 11 LESSON 3

### Corinth: The Final Leg of the Journey

If Athens was the intellectual and cultural capital of the ancient world, then Corinth was the sensual center. Located some fifty miles west of Athens on a narrow neck of land (about four miles wide) between the Aegean and Adriatic Seas, Corinth was strategically situated. With several good harbors, Corinth had long been a great commercial city. Smaller ships were dragged over the Corinthian isthmus to avoid the much longer and dangerous voyage around Cape Melea more than two hundred miles to the south. Thus, Corinth had a good command of the maritime traffic of both the eastern and western seas. In 27 BC, the city became the capital of the Roman province of Achaia. Corinth was the kind of city Paul recognized as a strategic center for evangelism.

The temple of Aphrodite (goddess of sex) was the center of the city's worship. It was located on the Acrocorinth ("highest hill") and employed one thousand priestess-prostitutes for its worship.

In the Mediterranean world, Corinthians were regarded as either immoral or drunk. One was said to **Corinthianize** others when he or she sought to corrupt their morals.

## 11.3.1

## OBJECTIVE

*Understand the unique challenges to ministry in Corinth and three ways God helped Paul meet those challenges.*

## Support of Like-Minded Believers

Soon after he arrived in Corinth, Paul met Priscilla and Aquila. Their common trade (tent making) and race seem to have brought them together. Priscilla and Aquila had been expelled from Rome with other Jews by order of the Roman Emperor Claudius. This was one time Paul was without the support of the rest of the missionary team. Silas and Timothy had stayed behind to work with the churches. But God did not leave Paul to carry the burden alone. In Priscilla and Aquila, Paul found the support and comfort of like-minded believers. “Paul went to see them, and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks” (Acts 18:3–4).

Paul ministered at first in the synagogue on the Sabbath. During the workweek, he labored diligently at his trade. However, when Silas and Timothy arrived with a favorable report from the churches recently founded in Macedonia, plus a gift of money, Paul began to devote himself to preaching full-time.

When the Jews opposed the gospel and became abusive, Paul indicated that he had fulfilled his responsibility, and the Jews were responsible for their own blood (Acts 18:6). With this dramatic gesture, Paul redirected his emphasis in ministry from the Jewish synagogue to the Gentile population in Corinth.

The house of Titius Justus, a God-fearer who had formerly worshiped at the synagogue, was located next to the synagogue. Apparently he allowed Paul to use it, and his home became the gathering center for Christians at Corinth.

For the first time that we know of, the ruler of a synagogue had come to Christ. Crispus and his whole household believed. Many other Corinthians also believed and were baptized.

The salvation of people whose lives were marked by such manifestations of sin as listed in 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 shows that people’s lives were really changed by Jesus Christ. Had they not been, the close association of these character types with one another would have been a social and moral disaster. Christians like Titius Justus and Crispus would no doubt have been employed extensively in teaching and showing new believers, many from the dregs of society, how to become new creatures in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). Paul’s ministry to the people saved at Corinth is eloquently described in 1 Corinthians 2:1–5 and 2 Corinthians 5:16–19.

Sometimes the greatest results come among those who have the greatest sense of need. The Athenian intellectuals did not really feel a need for God. They were more interested in debating. The Church of Jesus Christ will always have its most fertile impact on those whose hearts have felt the pain of the world’s fleshly sins. They know firsthand that sin in the flesh does not satisfy. They know there is no future in alcoholism, no future in immorality. Those very people often reach out in great hunger and become the Church of God.

Of all the churches Paul founded, the church at Corinth seemed to have the most problems. But considering the sinful background of the Corinthians, it is a wonder they had as few problems as they did. The gospel does not make us free of problems. We often bring our pre-Christian experiences with us. We need to undergo continual sanctification. It is a credit to the power of the gospel that when Jesus is proclaimed and lifted up, He thoroughly changes people with deep layers of need. The church today still has an obligation and the privilege of being a dynamic witness to those who are most captive to bondage.

18 What did Paul have in common with Priscilla and Aquila?

19 What enabled Paul to start ministering full-time?

20 From 1 Corinthians 6:9–11, describe the type of people who were among those who believed in Christ at Corinth.

## Assurance from God

“One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: ‘Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city’” (Acts 18:9–10). Although there was no persecution or trouble mentioned at the time, the Lord gave Paul divine assurance and encouragement to strengthen him for the ministry to come and brace him against trouble that would also surely come.

Although 2 Corinthians was written near the end of Paul’s third missionary journey from Macedonia (about seven years after the events described in Acts 18:9–10), we may understand that many of the things Paul suffered had already occurred by the time he first arrived in Corinth.

The Lord’s opening words of encouragement in Acts 18:9, “Do not be afraid,” indicate Paul was facing fear. The prospect of another beating or stoning and concern about the days immediately ahead at Corinth may have stretched Paul’s endurance to the breaking point. So great was his need that Paul was given special encouragement by the Lord, whose grace is sufficient (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Twice on the second missionary journey Paul received guidance through a vision (Acts 16:9; 18:9–10). After each, Paul had great productivity in spreading the gospel. After the vision at Corinth, Paul remained another eighteen months in the city.

Sometimes God fortifies us for sorrow and trouble to come with a special revelation of His comfort and grace. A young couple was distraught. They did not know why their newborn son had stopped breathing. By the time doctors discovered it and revived him, it seemed likely it was too late. If the child lived, he would surely have brain damage. The couple, their family, and their church cried out to God in prayer for mercy. In the midst of this, the new mother had remarkable peace. She confided that she had seen a vision years earlier of herself with a healthy, beautiful little boy. Now the Spirit witnessed to her spirit that the child would indeed be okay. Today, this smart, healthy child has grown to manhood and is faithfully doing God’s work.

## Protection from the Law

Sometime after Paul’s vision, members of the Jewish community made an attack against him. The Jews brought Paul to the high judgment seat (*bema*—a term Paul used later to contrast the *bema* of the Roman judgment with the *bema* of Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:10) of the proconsul Gallio. However, they made the mistake of charging Paul with breaking Jewish law. The Sanhedrin had carefully avoided that mistake. When accusing Christ, the Sanhedrin changed the charge from a religious to a political one (compare Mark 14:61–64 with Mark 15:2).

Even though Paul was ready to declare the gospel before rulers and those in high places, he was set free before he could even begin his defense. Gallio, brother of the renowned Seneca, made a decision that would have far-reaching effects for believers in the Roman world over the next thirteen years (approximately AD 51 to Nero’s persecution in AD 64). His refusal to consider the case against Paul established that Christians were not seen as some new seditious force. They would have the same privileges of religion as those given the Jewish community. In fact, Gallio understood Christianity to be not a new religion but a faction within Judaism. This decision was very important for Paul, the Christians at Corinth, and Christians around the Roman Empire.

Since Claudius had recently expelled Jews from Rome, and since Gallio had so curtly dismissed the Jewish leaders of Corinth, the occasion was ripe for those

who wished to express anti-Jewish feelings (Acts 18:17). Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue who replaced Crispus, and probably the prosecutor of the charge against Paul, was beaten by the mob in front of Gallio's *bema*. Gallio ignored the incident. From 1 Corinthians 1:1, we are left with hope that perhaps this Sosthenes later had a change of heart and became a believer.

Paul was unable to retrace his steps and visit again the churches that had recently been founded as he had done on the first missionary journey. On the first trip, he had only Barnabas as a fellow missionary. After the second missionary journey, he implemented a new strategy. Paul left behind Luke, Silas, and Timothy with the churches, where they could give spiritual support and direction. They also served as couriers between Paul and the churches.

Paul ended nearly two years at Corinth by leaving Silas and Timothy and sailing for Syria with Priscilla and Aquila. At the Corinthian port city of Cenchrea on the east of the isthmus, Paul cut his hair because of a vow he had made. (See Numbers 6:1–21 for details on the Nazirite vow.)

Why did Paul make a vow of this nature, and when had he made it? We can only guess. Perhaps the vow was initiated before or immediately after the vision of the Lord. Perhaps Paul had told the Lord he would physically express his confidence in the assurance the Lord had given that He would bring him safely through the experience at Corinth. Therefore, he vowed to adhere to the Nazirite restrictions as an expression of his witness and thanksgiving to God for His protection.

Another suggestion is that Paul made the vow when he left Cenchrea. He intended to complete the vow at Jerusalem. He shaved his head so that the new growth of hair occurring during the journey might again be shaved and offered at Jerusalem in the temple. Perhaps Paul intended the vow to be an expression of thanksgiving in Jerusalem to the Lord who had answered his prayer for a safe trip from Cenchrea to Jerusalem.

From Cenchrea, Paul sailed to Ephesus. In Acts 16:6, we were told of Paul's desire to be at Ephesus. Paul preached for a brief time in the synagogue at Ephesus. Unlike his usual habit, Paul left the city even though he received an invitation from the Jews of the synagogue to stay and minister. It may have been God's will for him to be at Ephesus, but Paul sensed that it was not yet God's time for him to establish his base of operations in this city. Paul left Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus and sailed to Caesarea. He traveled up to Jerusalem to greet the church there, then went north to his home church, Antioch. The second missionary journey was finished.



## Test Yourself



Circle the letter of the *best* answer.

1. Whom did Paul decide to take on his second missionary journey instead of Barnabas?
  - a) Titus
  - b) Silas
  - c) John Mark
  - d) Apollos
2. In Philippi, who responded to Paul's message and opened up her house to Paul and his companions?
  - a) Dorcas
  - b) Priscilla
  - c) Anna
  - d) Lydia
3. Paul and Silas were thrown into prison at Philippi because
  - a) of Paul's preaching about Jesus.
  - b) the Jews stirred up the crowd against them.
  - c) Paul delivered a slave girl of an evil spirit.
  - d) Paul healed a crippled man on the Sabbath.
4. In Thessalonica, Paul went to the synagogue and preached
  - a) salvation through faith alone.
  - b) justification by faith alone.
  - c) that Christ fulfilled the law.
  - d) that Jesus had to suffer and be raised from the dead.
5. In Thessalonica, many believed, including
  - a) Gentile God-fearers.
  - b) leading women of the city.
  - c) a few Jews.
  - d) all of the above.
6. In Paul's sermon on Mars Hill, he addressed
  - a) Gnosticism.
  - b) atheism.
  - c) hedonism.
  - d) all of the above.
7. In Athens, Paul noticed an altar designated to
  - a) an unknown god.
  - b) Aphrodite.
  - c) Artemis.
  - d) Zeus.
8. Corinth was known
  - a) for its sensuality and corrupt morals.
  - b) as a great commercial city, with many good harbors.
  - c) for the goddess of sex, Aphrodite.
  - d) all of the above.
9. How many times did Paul receive guidance through a vision on his second missionary journey?
  - a) 1
  - b) 2
  - c) 3
  - d) 5
10. In Corinth, the Jewish community made an attack against Paul and brought him to
  - a) Mars Hill.
  - b) the synagogue.
  - c) the high judgment seat (*bema*).
  - d) Sanhedrin.

# Responses to Interactive Questions

## Chapter 11

Some of these responses may include information that is supplemental to the IST. These questions are intended to produce reflective thinking beyond the course content and your responses may vary from these examples.

**1** How did the second missionary journey get started?

It was Paul's idea, a logical next step to follow up on the churches started on the first journey.

**2** What were some unexpected benefits of the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas?

Paul chose a new companion, Silas. Silas' Roman citizenship would prove an important asset on this trip (Acts 16:37). If Barnabas and Mark had been on the team, there might not have been room for Timothy (Acts 16:3) and Luke (Acts 16:10). Under the son of encouragement (Barnabas), Mark would recover from his earlier failure (Acts 13:13). He would be a living example that God could use a person who had failed at first. Because of Barnabas' faith in his cousin, we have Mark's Gospel. Paul later realized that Mark was no longer a quitter and found him useful. In fact, he asked Mark to come to Rome at a time when Christian leaders feared for their lives (2 Timothy 4:11).

**3** How did the Holy Spirit keep Paul from going to Asia or Bithynia?

We do not know for sure, but we do know Paul was sensitive. When his rationality and the Spirit's checking were in conflict, he listened to the Spirit.

**4** Where did Paul start ministering in Philippi since there was no synagogue?

Paul went to a small group of Jewish women and God-fearers who met outside the city gate by the river Gangites.

**5** Who was the first recorded convert in Europe?

Lydia

**6** How will you relate to God when faced with disaster?

Answers will vary.

**7** Who might be watching your life, your response to trouble? What will they learn about God from what they see in you?

Answers will vary.

**8** What does the diversity of the Philippian converts tell us about the power of God and the chance for unity in our own varied churches today?

Answers will vary. In Christ, the things that unite us are greater than the things that divide us.

**9** Summarize Paul's approach to ministry in Thessalonica.

Paul went first to the synagogue, where he debated and answered questions. He pointed them to the truth in the Word of God.

**10** What spurred the Thessalonians to reject the gospel?

Jealousy

**11** Have you ever been rejected by others when trying to share the gospel? Why do you believe you were rejected?

Answers will vary.

**12** In what two places did Paul first minister in Athens?

He spoke at the synagogue and in the marketplace.

**13** What two philosophical groups did Paul meet in Athens, and what was their opinion of him?

He met the (1) Epicureans and the (2) Stoics. They said, “What is this babbling about?” and “He seems to be advocating foreign gods.”

**14** How did Paul’s sermon to intellectuals differ from his sermons to Jews?

Paul used God’s Word as His text when speaking to Jews. But when he spoke to the intellectuals, he did not quote the Bible, but Greek poets. His text was the statue to an unknown God. He connected with them on their own wavelength.

**15** What were the names of some in Athens who believed?

“Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others” (Acts 17:34).

**16** Have you ever encountered a person with intellectual questions or issues you didn’t know how to answer? What did you do? What would you do differently now?

Answers will vary.

**17** Contrast the response to the gospel in the cities of Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens.

In Thessalonica, some responded positively, but others were jealous and stirred up a riot forcing Paul to leave. They even sent people to Berea to stir up people there against the missionaries. In Berea, the Jews nobly received the word with great eagerness. They tested what Paul said against the Scriptures. Many believed. In Athens, some mocked and others wanted to hear more, but a few believed.

**18** What did Paul have in common with Priscilla and Aquila?

Their nationality (Jewish), occupation, (tent makers), and their faith in Jesus.

**19** What enabled Paul to start ministering full-time?

Silas and Timothy arrived with a favorable report from the churches in Macedonia and a gift of money.

**20** From 1 Corinthians 6:9–11, describe the type of people who were among those who believed in Christ at Corinth.

Those who were sexually immoral (*pornoi*—refers to sexual immorality of all kinds), idolators, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexuals, thieves, greedy, drunkards, slanderers, swindlers.

# CHAPTER 12

## Paul's Third Missionary Journey

“She was dead. Really, really dead,” Pastor Singh said.

He and several other pastors went to evangelize among an unreached people group in northern India. After driving as far as possible, they walked to a tribal area to preach the gospel. As they entered a village, they found an anti-Christian political group staging a rally. The pastors tried to go on with their mission, but the political group harassed them.

The pastors decided it would be wise for them to leave. Their persecutors chased them.

As the pastors fled, they encountered a funeral procession. A young woman had died at about 5:00 a.m. It was now about 5:00 p.m. Her body, draped in a cloth strewn with flowers, was being carried on a stretcher to the cremation site. Her Hindu family, crying loudly, followed.

Seizing the opportunity to divert their pursuers, the pastors asked the family if they could pray for the corpse. Bewildered, the family consented. The men prayed in Jesus' name. Much to the surprise of all the onlookers, the young lady sat up, very much alive!

Of the men who pursued the pastors, four died in the next three weeks. Awed by a God with power over life and death, the tribal people asked for a church (Booze and Ketcher 1998, 17).

Chapter 12 studies Paul's third missionary journey. Its focus is the battle for a city (Ephesus) against the powers of darkness. As in the story above, God's power is always far greater than the forces of darkness—even death. The greatest results come in areas of great darkness when Christians are not afraid to take up the battle through the Lord's power.

### Lesson 12.1 Ephesus: Battle for a City

Objective

*12.1.1 List and explain ten key elements for winning the spiritual battle for a city.*

### Lesson 12.2 From Ephesus to Jerusalem: The Rest of the Journey

Objective

*12.2.1 Summarize Paul's review of his own ministry: accomplishments, personal example for ministry, and warnings for the future.*

# 12.1

LESSON 1

## Ephesus: Battle for a City

Ephesus was the focal point of much of the third missionary journey. Apparently Paul had longed to preach the gospel in this city early in the second journey. Then the Holy Spirit had indicated that the time was not yet ripe. Now, however, the gem of western Asia Minor was an open door. The city of Ephesus was one of the world's greatest cities. It was the capital of the Roman province of Asia. Its temple of Artemis (or Diana) is one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. The temple had been built to house the stone image of Artemis (perhaps a meteorite). This image was said to have fallen from the sky in a time so ancient that no one knew of its true origin. Sexual license and the practice of the occult were associated with the worship of Artemis.

In Ephesus the gospel confronted the most sordid and rotten conditions. Yet a strong and thriving work was established. Those who confront similar circumstances in their life and ministry can take courage when they recall the victories God gave Paul and his fellow workers.

Perhaps no subject is more sensationalized or misunderstood among Pentecostals today than the subject of spiritual warfare. While we engage in a struggle with the flesh (Romans 7, James 1) and with adverse circumstances (Mark 4:35–41), and sometimes with other believers (2 Corinthians 12), our underlying opponent is always the evil one and his forces.

The old Nazarene evangelist Bud Robinson told of a man who said, "I do not believe in a personal devil because I have never met him." The evangelist replied, "You never will meet him because you are walking in the same direction he is. It is only when you are going in an opposite direction that you meet anyone."

In Ephesians 6:11 Paul warned against the devil's schemes. In Ephesians 6:12 he warned against the devil's struggle. The evil one plays both the beguiler and the bully. Before we look at the steps to winning a city for God from the clutches of the powers of darkness, it is important to look at what we are up against. Ephesians 6:12 tells us, "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

Who are these powers today? They are any presence of evil that acts to hinder or prevent people from coming to and living in the light of the gospel. Who is behind the abortion industry, the gay rights movement, or the illegal drug industry? Who is fueling the culture of violence, terrorism, alcoholism, gambling, pornography, child abuse, racism, and ethnic cleansing? What is the root of secularism, materialism, apathy, lethargy, and division in the church? Any force, idea, or person that is opposed to the gospel has evil power working behind the scenes—whether that person is aware of it or not. The apostle Paul and the early church never considered that their true opponent was heathen temples or Roman imperial power. They were aware of the evil and satanic forces behind such powers. In this study, we will look at what it takes to win the battle for a city.

### 12.1.1 OBJECTIVE

*List and explain ten key elements for winning the spiritual battle for a city.*

### Timing

"Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Mysia" (Acts 16:6).

"When they [the Ephesians] asked him to spend more time with them, he declined. But as he left, he promised, 'I will come back if it is God's will.' Then he set sail from Ephesus" (Acts 18:20–21).

Apparently, at the start of the second missionary journey, Paul had wanted to go to Asia (where Ephesus was the leading city). The Holy Spirit had forbidden him. At the end of the second missionary journey, Paul went to Ephesus but declined to stay for a longer period of time. He told them he would return later if God willed it (Acts 18:19–21). The Holy Spirit’s timing was superior to Paul’s. Paul would have moved progressively in a westerly direction. But from Pisidian Antioch, the Holy Spirit moved him far away to the west side of the Aegean Sea to plant a series of strong European churches. It seems the Holy Spirit’s purpose was for Paul to be in the center, directing the spiritual affairs of the churches that had been established on the flanks of Ephesus. At the same time, Paul was engaged in building, with unusual supernatural power, the largest church he ever pioneered. In terms of the Gentile mission, that church was destined to be second only to Syrian Antioch.

The Lord brought Paul to Ephesus when he had completed founding churches to the east and west. God wanted to use Paul at Ephesus for an extended period of time. Prior to Corinth, Paul had never stayed long as a missionary in one place. His growing experience in church planting surely had prepared him for a longer period of ministry in Ephesus. At the end of the second missionary journey, when Paul stopped at Ephesus, he may have been too exhausted to stay for three years. He needed rest and renewal. Now, after the early phases of the Spirit’s plan, Paul was allowed to begin the attack on the fortress of darkness in Ephesus.

For God to be at work, the laborer must have an inner sense of the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Ephesus held the greatest challenge and opportunity of Paul’s ministry. It had always been God’s will for him. Only now did God’s way and time line up with His will.

That is why it is critical that we attend with prayer all decisions about where to minister or spend time. At Ephesus Paul was perfectly positioned. He had the experience he needed and had been tested in earlier battles on the missionary journeys. Also, Ephesus was now centered between the thriving churches Paul had founded on the first and second missionary journeys.

## Template

1 What did Apollos’ teaching and personal life lack?

A **template** is a pattern or mold used as a guide to form a piece being made. The template for winning a city is found in Paul’s encounter with the twelve Ephesian disciples in Acts 19:1–7. In Acts 18 we learn that Apollos had been at Ephesus. He was a Jew, a native of Alexandria, Egypt. Apollos was a learned man with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. “He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue” (Acts 18:25–26). Priscilla and Aquila had taken Apollos aside privately and “explained to him the way of God more adequately” (Acts 18:26).

2 How did Priscilla and Aquila help Apollos? What was good about the way they handled the situation?

The twelve disciples Paul encountered in Ephesus were possibly the fruit of Apollos’ ministry before he met Priscilla and Aquila. They seemed to share his incomplete knowledge about Jesus and the gospel. When Paul asked, “‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when [or after] you believed?’” (Acts 19:2), the disciples said they had not. They had not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit. They had only received John’s baptism of repentance. Paul accepted that they had believed, but he laid his finger on the problem—they had not received.

The key to reaching any place is starting with a fired-up core. Paul knew that if the church was to grow at Ephesus, it had to start as the Jerusalem church had—with the template of Spirit-baptized believers.

Notice Paul's tact. He did not tell the twelve that they had nothing. Nor did he leave them with the status quo. As Pentecostals, we cannot become afraid to ask this question: "Having believed, did you receive the Holy Spirit?" "On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied" (Acts 19:5–6).

If you are going to have a powerful church, begin with a powerful core. Do not wait for the church to get big to expect something powerful to happen. Start with the template of a core of Spirit-filled believers. Many pastors are searching for an approach, a template on which to model their church. The best advice is to use Paul's timeless example.

## Teaching

Paul's method of ministry was a content-based apologetic dialectic. In Acts 19:8 we are told he argued persuasively. He dialogued and persuaded. He had answers for people's questions. He presented those answers knowledgeably and passionately. In some circles today, Christians do almost anything to reach people except to present answers to head and heart questions. Paul said, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman . . . who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). Peter urges believers to be ready to give an answer for the hope that lies within us (1 Peter 3:15). If you are going to build a solid church, you must do it with content. Too many rely too much on music, experience, and external things. Paul's message was interactive and apologetic. He answered people's real questions.

3 What types of real questions are people around you asking? What answers can you provide from God's Word?

Paul taught in three locations in Ephesus. First, he taught for three months in the synagogue. Next, he spoke for two years in the hall of Tyrannus. The Western text says that Paul spoke daily from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. during the five hours of siesta. If Paul taught for five hours a day, five days a week for forty-eight weeks, that adds up to 1,200 hours of teaching in one year. That is 2,400 hours for Paul's full two-year stay. If the church is going to have a significant impact on its community, it must commit significant time to learning. You cannot build a church on a one- or two-hour Sunday-morning service. Finally, Paul taught from house to house (Acts 20:20).

Learning is important for anyone who would minister. You cannot give out what you do not take in.

## Team

4 In what three locations did Paul teach in Ephesus?

"He [Paul] took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord" (Acts 19:9–10). How was Asia hearing the gospel? Through disciples. Paul had helpers, two of whom were Timothy and Erastus (Acts 19:22). Those he mentored became elders (Acts 20:17). He had supplied his own needs and those of his companions (Acts 20:34).

Look through the letters associated with the Ephesian period. In addition to Timothy and Erastus, we read about others:

- Sosthenes, our brother (1 Corinthians 1:1)
- Stephanas, Fortunatas, and Achaicus who arrived from the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 16:17)
- Our brother Apollos (1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 8:18–19)
- Priscilla and Aquila (1 Corinthians 16:19)
- Titus (2 Corinthians 8:16–17)

A vital lesson from Paul is the importance of mentoring future leaders. Staff for growth. Minister alongside. Remember that the ministry is all about people. Be careful not to let yourself become insulated or hard to reach.

## Toil

5 Who has been a mentor to you? What effect has it had on your life and ministry?

We already know what Paul was doing with his afternoons and evenings. That was work enough. What was he doing in the morning? Acts 19:12 refers to Paul's handkerchiefs and aprons. A handkerchief was a sweat rag. It was often tied around the head to keep sweat from pouring down into the worker's eyes. An apron was a waist covering for working. For Paul, the ministry meant working much harder than he would have had to were he not ministering.

6 Whom are you mentoring (or whom can you mentor)? What skills, attitudes, and wisdom can you impart to another growing believer?

Paul said of himself in Acts 20:33–35,

I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

7 What type of work did Paul do? How do we know he worked hard for the cause of the gospel?

In a city where financial gain was the inspiration of most religious service (note the riot over the loss of religious business), Paul chose not to take money from anyone, even other Christians. In this review of his ministry, Paul did not focus on the miracles but on the mundane. He was more concerned that leaders imitate his selfless lifestyle than chase after the spectacular. Paul never converted money into miracles. His money came not from the miracles but from hard work. He invested his money not in himself but in others. In 2 Corinthians 11:27–28 Paul said, "I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches."

## Tears

8 What kind of reward are you working for, spiritual or financial? What is the evidence of that priority?

"I served the Lord with great humility and with tears, although I was severely tested by the plots of the Jews" (Acts 20:19). In spite of Paul's hard work, he never ceased to have a tender heart. Perhaps this is the most neglected aspect of the church's emphasis on spiritual warfare today: love. From Ephesus, Paul wrote about the importance of love in 1 Corinthians 13. "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:1–3).

## Tinder

Tinder is a flammable substance that can be used as kindling. It is something that incites or inflames. The sweat rags and aprons leaving Paul's workshop were tinder for what God was doing in Ephesus. "God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them" (Acts 19:11–12).

Paul was doing all the right things—the human things. If the church is to go beyond normal growth, there must be *God things*. A watershed moment occurred with an incident involving seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest (probably self-appointed). It seems they had taken up the lifestyle of Ephesus, with its magical

incantations, and added Jesus as an **incantation**. The real Jewish high priest could only say God's name once a year at **Yom Kippur**. These seven occultists experienced the power of Jesus' name like a weapon exploding in their hands. "In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out" (Acts 19:13), the sons of Sceva commanded the demons. "One day the evil spirit answered them, 'Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?' Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding" (Acts 19:15–16).

This was the most publicly effective miracle of Paul's nearly three years at Ephesus, yet he did not have a thing to do with it. Paul did not waste time finding or condemning the sons of Sceva. Believers do not have to spend time identifying and chasing down all the counterfeits.

This incident had two effects. It affected the general public, who now held the name of Jesus in high honor. They were seized with fear. They learned not to treat the name of Jesus lightly. Second, it affected the believers. "Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds. A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly" (Acts 19:18–19). Here were believers with one foot in the occult and another in the church. One of the great problems in the church today is the lack of difference between the lives of believers and unbelievers.

This is the third instance in the Ephesian story that shows incomplete discipleship: Apollos, the twelve, and these believers with secret sin. A demon's attack on the seven sons of Sceva was the tinderbox that set off the whole town.

## Thorn

9 What were two positive effects of the incident with the seven sons of Sceva?

To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. (2 Corinthians 12:7–9)

It is likely that Paul wrote 2 Corinthians from Macedonia at the close of the third missionary journey. The thorn Paul spoke of was not a rose thorn but a stake capable of impaling flesh. We are given no specifics about this physical thorn. Its purpose was to humble, not humiliate him. A thorn is something we cannot pull out on our own. It is painful and invasive. It may involve the body, emotions, will, or intellect—any harmful invasion of life. Such thorns are messengers from Satan. They have the power to destroy our trust in God and render our service ineffective. They have power to embitter, to cause us to be unforgiving, resentful, and ungrateful. Thorns torment and buffet believers. This is a strong word that means being boxed around or beaten with fists.

Like Jesus in Gethsemane, Paul prayed three times that God would take away this painful thorn. He received two answers. First, "My grace is sufficient." Paul's suffering was neither over, nor would it be short. Second, "My power is made perfect in weakness." In *My Utmost for His Highest*, Oswald Chambers wrote, "If we are ever going to be made into wine, we will have to be crushed—you cannot drink grapes. Grapes become wine only when they have been squeezed" (Chambers 1992, Sept. 30).

Paul told the Ephesian elders: "In every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me" (Acts 20:23). Have we rejected the idea that the perfect will of God for our lives may involve hardship?

## Transparency

Paul told the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:18, “You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia.” Paul had no secrets, time-outs for seasons of sin, laziness, or self-indulgence. He was on duty all the time. He had been with them the whole time. Who he was and what he did was transparent—open for all to see. He was no fair-weather pastor.

Paul told the Corinthians that believers, unlike Moses, do not wear a veil to conceal the fading glory of God’s presence in their lives. If we want God to work through us to win our city, we must guard against artificiality in our lives and ministries—even our conduct in the pulpit or in other aspects of ministry.

## Threat

Paul warned the Ephesian elders of threats they would face as they fought to bring light to the darkness of the city. “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). Paul pointed out two great dangers to the flock. First are the “savage wolves” who come among them and ravage the flock (Acts 20:29). How can you tell a wolf is in the flock? *Wolves* bring havoc to the church. They tear people up. Their true nature is to cause division due to their insatiable quest for self-promotion.

Second, Paul warned, “Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:30). Leaders must look out for the well-being of the church. Before we are to watch the flock, we are to watch ourselves. The *watch* is personal and ministry-oriented. We must watch over ourselves before we watch over others. We are overseers, but not bosses or masters. We are protectors and defenders, remembering the high cost of the possession we guard.

Acts 19:20 tells us, “In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.” The Word of the Lord is the embodiment of His person and teaching. That is what must grow.

The effectiveness of Paul’s battle for the city can be seen most clearly through the crippling effect it had on idolatry. The result of the gospel proclamation was an economic slump caused by a greatly reduced demand for images and relics associated with the shrine of Artemis. Within a short time (slightly over two years), the Christian Way threatened to surpass the popularity of the centuries-old religion of Artemis.

# 12.2

LESSON

## From Ephesus to Jerusalem: The Rest of the Journey

Paul’s work at Ephesus was done. The church had been planted. Soon after the riot by the silversmiths, Paul left. Truly, at Ephesus it could be said, “These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here” (Acts 17:6).

## 12.2.1 OBJECTIVE

*Summarize Paul's review of his own ministry: accomplishments, personal example for ministry, and warnings for the future.*

## From Ephesus to Troas

“When the uproar had ended, Paul sent for the disciples and, after encouraging them, said goodbye and set out for Macedonia. He traveled through that area, speaking many words of encouragement to the people, and finally arrived in Greece” (Acts 20:1–2).



10 Look at the map. If Paul left Ephesus and traveled through Macedonia to Greece encouraging believers, what places and churches is it likely he visited?

When Paul returned to Greece, he stayed there three months before setting out for Jerusalem. We know from 1 Corinthians 16 and 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 that his purpose for going to Jerusalem was to take an offering (collected from the Gentile churches founded on his three missionary journeys) to the needy saints in Jerusalem. Following the pattern set by the church of Antioch nearly fifteen years earlier, the offering for the needy was sent through an official delegation from the churches.

When Paul was about to sail from Corinth, he learned of a plot on his life. So he headed north to Philippi. There he again linked up with Luke, who had been left there about seven years earlier.

Since Luke accompanied Paul on this trip, he was able to remain close by through the Caesarean imprisonment and journey with Paul to Rome (Acts 27:1). We do not meet Luke until he joined Paul at Troas (Acts 16:10), and the *we* narrative sections do not occur earlier in Acts. It is therefore reasonable to assume that Luke had not been present in Jerusalem or Palestine during the ministry of Jesus or the growth of the church in Jerusalem. If that were the case, when would he have had the opportunity to talk with eyewitnesses and read other firsthand accounts of the life of Jesus and the birth of the church (Luke 1:1–4)?

Perhaps Luke had the opportunity during Paul's two-year imprisonment at Caesarea. If this were the case, we owe the writing of Luke-Acts to an incredible coincidence, a plot on Paul's life that caused him to turn north to Philippi. Had Paul not gone to Philippi, Luke would not have made the trip.

The trip from Philippi to Troas took more than twice as long (Acts 20:6) as Paul and Luke's earlier trip had from Troas to Philippi (Acts 16:11). The wind seemed to portend that more than elements would conspire against Paul from here on through the end of Acts.

At Troas, Luke and Paul met up with the rest of the relief delegation (Acts 20:5). They were undoubtedly representatives of the churches that were contributing money for the relief of the needy Jerusalem Christians.

Paul's final day in Troas was a Sunday. This is the first clear reference in Acts to Christians meeting on the first day of the week. The breaking of bread would be a reference to communion. That the first day of the week, rather than the Sabbath, was becoming the meeting day of believers may be further seen from Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 16:2, which had already been written by the time of Acts 20:7.

Paul's message to the believers on the eve of his leaving Troas was long. He preached through the night. The sermon was interrupted by an incident involving a young man named Eutychus. Likely the air was thin in the room where many believers had gathered for so long in the light of burning lamps. Perched in a small opening, probably because the room was packed and it was a good place to get fresh air, Eutychus fell asleep and fell to the ground. He fell three stories. Luke recorded that Eutychus was "taken up dead" (Acts 20:9, KJV). This was no way for Paul and his company to leave Troas. Paul, like Peter, believed Jesus for the resurrection of the dead. God answered *yes* to a request to which, for the most part, He answers *no*.

Following the breaking of bread and the common meal, Paul continued speaking until daybreak. Perhaps he then wanted to sleep, for we read that he did not sail with the others from Troas to Assos. Instead he took the shorter route by foot, a distance of twenty miles. Once Paul got on board, the ship sailed thirty miles farther south to Mitylene, the most important city on the island of Lesbos. From Luke's record we gather that the ship anchored there for the night and the next day reached Chios. Chios is an island of the Greek archipelago, between Samos and Lesbos. On the third day of the journey from Assos, the ship reached Samos, an important Greek commercial city to the southwest of Ephesus.

Paul's determination to arrive at Jerusalem by Pentecost prevented him from stopping at Ephesus. On the fourth day from Assos, the ship sailed from Samos to Miletus, some forty miles south of Ephesus. Paul's heart likely yearned for the Ephesians as he sailed past their town.

### Paul's Farewell to the Ephesian Elders

It would seem logical for Paul to have sent word to the Ephesians while he was at Samos that they should meet him at Miletus. Since Paul was in a hurry, that would have seemed to make the best use of time. Paul's failure to do this may have been for one of two reasons. While sailing past Ephesus, he may have been overcome by a strong desire to see them once more. Or perhaps, upon reaching Miletus, he had to secure passage on another ship, a change that would cause a delay of several days. Whatever the reason, Paul's desire to speak to the Ephesian elders provides us with rich insight into his life as a pastor.

11 Note Luke's careful detail in giving a summary ship log of the journey from Philippi to Miletus. How many days were involved in that leg of the trip (Acts 20:6–15)?

12 Paul's life motto could be summed up as, "Follow me as I follow Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). What would your motto be as a Christian and minister for Christ?

In his address to the Ephesian elders, Paul reviewed his work among them, looked at prospects for his own future, and gave warnings to the elders and the Ephesian church. Paul reminded the elders of the example he had set in his walk with the Lord in the midst of danger. He also reminded them of the example he had set in the breadth of his ministry to believers and unbelievers (Acts 20:17–21). He reviewed the example he had set in giving himself to others (Acts 20:33–35). And he reminded them of the example of the Christ-life he taught in word and deed that gave no evidence of omission or error (Acts 20:26–27).

Paul declared to the elders that the Holy Spirit had made them overseers of the flock of God. As such, they were to guard the flock.

The word *overseer* is translated from the Greek word *episcopos*. The church recognized and appointed among themselves elders (*presbuteros*). The Holy Spirit made them overseers (*episcopos*) so that they could guard the flock. Paul knew forces would come against the flock to lead it astray. He was concerned about their spiritual welfare. However, he directed their attention to God and His grace for stability during times of opposition.

13 In sharing his prospects for the future, what two statements did Paul make that show he anticipated difficult days ahead?

Paul warned of two sources of attacks he foresaw as dangers to the Ephesian church. Fierce wolves (false teachers), who would come in to prey on the flock, and members of the flock itself who would arise with false teaching.

In the 1940s, evangelists Billy Graham and Charles Templeton were considered the dynamic duo of Youth for Christ. Many considered the handsome, bright, charismatic Templeton to be the better preacher. When Templeton enrolled at Princeton Theological Seminary to seek more education, Graham warned him about the school's liberal reputation. Templeton ignored his friend's warning. By the end of the first semester, Templeton had started to question his faith. He left his first love and gave in to the doubts the school raised about miracles, salvation, and God's Word. Before long, Templeton left the ministry for good. Shortly before he died in 2001, he wrote *Farewell to God: My Reasons for Rejecting the Christian Faith*. Those who ignore godly warnings do so at peril of their spiritual lives (Hansen 2004, 46–47).

14 About what two sources of attack did Paul warn the Ephesian elders?

When Paul wrote to Timothy at Ephesus some years after this, we see evidence that Paul's words had come to pass (1 Timothy 1:3–7; 6:3–10; 2 Timothy 1:15; 2:14–18; 3:6–9). Decades later the Ephesian church had successfully resisted heresy, but in doing so had lost its first love (Revelation 2:1–7).

The church will always be the soil in which the enemy attempts to plant weeds (Matthew 13:36–43). His efforts must be resisted by church leaders with the twin responses of love and truth.

15 Have you ever seen the enemy plant weeds in the soil of the church? Explain. What did you or others do to resist such attacks by Satan?

Finally, Paul closed his address. His fellowship with the Ephesians on earth was at an end. Luke's description of their prayer (Acts 20:36), their affection (Acts 20:37), their sorrow (Acts 20:38), and their final parting is moving and sorrowful.

When Jesus dictated His letters to the seven churches through the apostle John in the book of Revelation, He said to the Ephesian church, "I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love" (Revelation 2:4). What was this first love, and how was it manifested? All true Christian love develops and flows out of a love of Christ. God has so created our minds that one cannot see the love of Christ in a person or in a church. However, it is possible to see a manifestation of that love. The Ephesian church had lost its first love of Christ, but how was this observable?

In Revelation, Jesus praised the Ephesian church for their deeds, hard work, and perseverance (Revelation 2:2). These deeds and hard work included helping people within the church who had needs or Christian visitors who were traveling

through Ephesus. For example, Paul wrote to the Ephesians about thirty years before the book of Revelation was written. In that letter he praised them for their “love for all the saints” (Ephesians 1:15). Clement wrote to the Ephesians about twenty years after the book of Revelation was written, and he praised them for their love of Christian visitors passing through Ephesus. Could the manifestation of the first love of Christ that the Ephesian church had forsaken have included something beyond an in-group love of other Christians?

In Revelation, Jesus praised the Ephesian church for perseverance and endurance of hardships for His name (Revelation 2:3). Many Ephesian Christians lost their lives as martyrs rather than deny their Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus praised the Ephesians because they had tested and rejected false apostles (Revelation 2:2). In the early centuries of the Christian church, the Ephesian church was known as a defender of doctrinal truths of the gospel.

In spite of these accomplishments, the Ephesian church had still lost its first love. Had the Ephesian church lost the burden of the Holy Spirit for worldwide missions and evangelism? Was the love of Christ no longer being revealed in winning and discipling people who were enslaved by the powers of darkness?

Acts 19:10 reads, “This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.” At the time of Paul, Asia had an estimated population of 4.6 million and an estimated geographical area of 50,000 square miles (130,000 square kilometers). This is about the size of New York state in the United States.

Paul started a Bible school in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. After being taught by Paul, his students went all over Asia to evangelize and start new churches. Acts 19:10 indicates that at the end of two years, about 4.6 million people in an area of about 50,000 square miles had heard the Word of God. So powerful was the evangelistic witness that the idol manufacturers started going bankrupt. Some **missiologists** claim that this was the most successful missionary effort in two thousand years of church history.

Forty years later, it appears that evangelistic zeal was gone. The Ephesians had forsaken their first love. Was the love of Christ no longer being revealed through the aggressive evangelization of the lost where the gospel had not been preached? By that time, the Ephesian church could have sent out missionaries to the provinces north of Asia, which are now the Balkans. It was several centuries later before Christian missionaries went to the Balkans.

A church that has the first love of Christ is aggressively reaching out to the lost in places where the gospel has not been preached. It is training, supporting, and sending out missionaries. It is sending out its best in leadership to evangelize and start new churches.



## Test Yourself



Circle the letter of the *best* answer.

1. A vital lesson from Paul regarding team ministry is
  - a) mentoring future leaders.
  - b) the importance of group synergy.
  - c) effective communication.
  - d) encouraging the weaker member.
2. Ephesus was the capital of the Roman province of
  - a) Galatia.
  - b) Asia.
  - c) Macedonia.
  - d) Achaia.
3. Whom did Priscilla and Aquila meet in Ephesus, who had a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures, but only knew of John's baptism?
  - a) Timothy
  - b) Titus
  - c) Apollos
  - d) Demas
4. According to Acts 19, the twelve disciples that Paul met in Ephesus received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and
  - a) prophesied.
  - b) spoke the word of God boldly.
  - c) fell to the ground.
  - d) spoke in tongues and prophesied.
5. In Ephesus, Paul taught
  - a) in the synagogue.
  - b) in the hall of Tyrannus.
  - c) from house to house.
  - d) in all of the above locations.
6. In Acts 19, many people were healed and delivered as
  - a) Paul breathed on people.
  - b) Paul laid hands on people.
  - c) handkerchiefs and aprons that were touched by Paul were placed on the sick and demon possessed.
  - d) Paul's shadow fell upon them.
7. What book of the Bible did Paul most likely write during his three-year stay at Ephesus?
  - a) Galatians
  - b) Ephesians
  - c) Thessalonians
  - d) 1 Corinthians
8. A public riot developed in Ephesus because
  - a) Paul cast out a demon from a slave girl.
  - b) of the influence of the gospel leading to a decline of idolatry.
  - c) the Jews were jealous of all the people following Paul's ministry.
  - d) of the seven sons of Sceva.
9. Paul sent for the Ephesian elders at Miletus to
  - a) say farewell.
  - b) warn them to guard against false teachers outside the church.
  - c) warn them to guard against false teachers within the church.
  - d) do all of the above.
10. The Greek word *episcopos* is translated as
  - a) "shepherd."
  - b) "overseer."
  - c) "priest."
  - d) "deacon."

# Responses to Interactive Questions

## Chapter 12

Some of these responses may include information that is supplemental to the IST. These questions are intended to produce reflective thinking beyond the course content and your responses may vary from these examples.

**1** What did Apollos' teaching and personal life lack?

He knew only about the baptism of John, not of baptism in the name of Jesus or in the Holy Spirit.

**2** How did Priscilla and Aquila help Apollos? What was good about the way they handled the situation?

They took him aside privately and explained the gospel more fully. This was good because they corrected the problem so Apollos could teach more fully, yet it did not publicly embarrass or demean his ministry.

**3** What types of real questions are people around you asking? What answers can you provide from God's Word?

Answers will vary.

**4** In what three locations did Paul teach in Ephesus?

In the synagogue, in the lecture hall of Tyrannus, and from house to house.

**5** Who has been a mentor to you? What effect has it had on your life and ministry?

Answers will vary.

**6** Whom are you mentoring (or whom can you mentor)? What skills, attitudes, and wisdom can you impart to another growing believer?

Answers will vary.

**7** What type of work did Paul do? How do we know he worked hard for the cause of the gospel?

Paul was a tent maker. He worked (probably mornings) to support himself and the missionary team. Then he taught for hours each day in the Hall of Tyrannus. He also oversaw the work in all the churches in the surrounding areas, wrote letters, prayed, and taught from house to house. Paul was busy.

**8** What kind of reward are you working for, spiritual or financial? What is the evidence of that priority?

Answers will vary.

**9** What were two positive effects of the incident with the seven sons of Sceva?

(1) The public was seized with fear and held the name of Jesus in high honor. (2) "Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds. A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly" (Acts 19:18–19).

**10** Look at the map. If Paul left Ephesus and traveled through Macedonia to Greece encouraging believers, what places and churches is it likely he visited?

The churches he founded on his second missionary journey—Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and Corinth.

**11** Note Luke's careful detail in giving a summary ship log of the journey from Philippi to Miletus. How many days were involved in that leg of the trip (Acts 20:6–15)?

Seventeen days—from Philippi to Troas, five days; seven days at Troas; one day from Troas to Assos; four days from Assos to Miletus.

**12** Paul's life motto could be summed up as, "Follow me as I follow Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). What would your motto be as a Christian and minister for Christ?

Answers will vary.

**13** In sharing his prospects for the future, what two statements did Paul make that show he anticipated difficult days ahead?

“And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me” (Acts 20:22–23).

“Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again” (Acts 20:25).

**14** About what two sources of attack did Paul warn the Ephesian elders?

He warned of (1) “savage wolves,” as in false teachers, who would come in to prey on the flock and (2) members of the flock itself who would arise with false teaching.

**15** Have you ever seen the enemy plant weeds in the soil of the church? Explain. What did you or others do to resist such attacks by Satan?

Answers will vary.

# CHAPTER 13

## Paul's Journey to Rome

Once a foul-mouthed, uneducated scoundrel who delighted in breaking Puritan laws, John Bunyan had become a powerful preacher. It was common for people who wanted to hear him preach at noon to arrive early in the morning to be sure to find a spot. But preaching outside of the sanctioned church was illegal in England in the 1600s. Leaders worried that preachers would stir up feelings against the government. For this reason, John Bunyan was constantly at risk.

He was warned that he would be arrested if he preached to a group at a friend's house. But Bunyan would not flinch. He went anyway and was arrested.

If Bunyan would just agree not to preach publicly, he would be released. But Bunyan boldly replied: "If I was out of prison today, I would preach the gospel again tomorrow by the help of God" (Curtis).

Offered the same deal after three months in the squalid prison, Bunyan again refused. He kept a good attitude, knowing he suffered for the cause of Christ. While in prison, Bunyan spent his time reading the Bible, preaching, and singing hymns. Perhaps most notably, he wrote. Many of the sixty books he wrote were written while in prison, including his most popular, *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

In many ways, John Bunyan's life parallels Paul's. Chapter 13 deals with Paul on trial and in prison for preaching the gospel. The accusations of crimes against him were unfair and untrue. Paul suffered much in prison and on his way to the various trials. But God brought much lasting good out of Paul's imprisonment. Like Bunyan, Paul was able to preach, pray, and write. When we submit to God's will and allow Him to use us, even those things that seem bad work out for our good and God's glory.

### Lesson 13.1 Paul's Imprisonment in Jerusalem

#### Objectives

- 13.1.1 *Explain the issues surrounding the Jews' assault on Paul in the temple and his incarceration by the Roman military.*
- 13.1.2 *Identify principles from Paul's experiences related to God's calling Christians into ministry.*

### Lesson 13.2 Paul's Imprisonment in Caesarea

#### Objective

- 13.2.1 *Recount key events and issues related to Paul's imprisonment and trials in Caesarea.*

### Lesson 13.3 Paul's Imprisonment in Rome

#### Objectives

- 13.3.1 *Explain the purpose that Luke may have had in recording Paul's speeches in these chapters and for documenting so many details of Paul's journey to Rome.*
- 13.3.2 *Describe Paul's journey by sea from Caesarea to Rome and recount significant events from this journey.*
- 13.3.3 *Describe what these examples of hardship might teach us about evangelism in our world today.*

# 13.1

LESSON .1

## Paul's Imprisonment in Jerusalem

Paul's farewell address at Ephesus closes a phase of his ministry. It also serves as a literary bridge in the narrative of Acts. Luke uses Paul's farewell speech to end the missionary focus and introduce a new focus. The missionary focus of Acts 11–20 documented the spread of the gospel among the populations of several regions. People of every social class and nationality heard about and responded to the saving grace of God in Jesus. The widespread declaration of the gospel and its effect are primary themes of these chapters in Luke's historical narrative.

There is no narrative record in the New Testament of Paul planting churches after his departure from Ephesus. The remaining chapters of Acts recount the events that led to Paul's arrest, trials, and journey to Rome. These events are full of intrigue and violence. They include a riot in Jerusalem, a secret murder plot, military intervention, and strong presentations of the gospel. As with the entire narrative of Acts, the presence and power of the Holy Spirit are evident. The Holy Spirit continued to guide the church leaders in spite of the intense resistance to the gospel. The Spirit caused God's will to be accomplished in the face of violent attacks on Paul and on the truth of Jesus. What glorious evidence of the power of the Holy Spirit! What wonderful confidence we can possess, knowing that God's Spirit lives in us, guiding us and bringing God's eternal plans to pass.

In these lessons, our study will again discuss the conflict that is prominent throughout the book of Acts—that between traditional Judaism and the followers of Christ. This conflict was a key factor in the life of the early church in Jerusalem. All of the persecution and suffering of the early Christians resulted from Jewish hostility to Jesus and His followers. Although it was originally focused in the temple and its rulers, the aggression was not confined to Jerusalem. Jewish opposition to Christianity arose in almost every city visited by Paul and his associates. Christianity's primary enemy during its first thirty years was traditional Judaism. Although many devout Jews accepted Jesus, the majority did not. Jewish failure to accept Jesus as the fulfillment of God's promised Messiah resulted in violent antagonism toward His followers.

Luke's historical record brings us full circle, back to the setting of Christianity's beginning. These chapters in Acts record Paul's final visit to Jerusalem. Jewish hostility toward the gospel finally reached a climax in Jerusalem shortly after Paul's arrival. God directed Paul to enter a situation that was to be very difficult and included violent hostility. Under the guidance and preparation of the Holy Spirit, Paul was eager to be used by God, regardless of the personal cost. This willingness to serve and suffer was made possible by God's anointing, a supernatural appointment and enablement through the Holy Spirit.

### 13.1.1

OBJECTIVE

*Explain the issues surrounding the Jews' assault on Paul in the temple and his incarceration by the Roman military.*

### A Jewish Mob Attacks Paul

We need to understand Jewish prejudice to appreciate the reaction to Paul's activities in Jerusalem that led to his arrest. Ancient Jews were controlled by a powerful purity system. Everything in life was classified as clean or unclean, pure or impure, holy or unholy. This included objects, animals, people, and activities. This purity system was founded in being God's chosen people. This special status in creation convinced the Jews that they were responsible before God to remain as pure as humanly possible. This extraordinary purity was maintained through complicated laws and rituals. Being God's chosen people was a rigorous responsibility. It required separation from everything that was inferior to or contrary to the purity defined by God through creation and

revelation. Every object, being, or activity that was outside the boundaries of cleanness must be avoided. If contact was made with something unclean, a Jew was required to follow strict procedures to cleanse him- or herself, both literally and ceremonially. This **worldview**, based on the Jewish identity as God's special people, controlled Jews' concept of the world and how they lived in it.

Judaism identified Gentiles as beings who were unclean. They were not chosen by God, nor were they participants in His covenant relationship. Therefore, they could only defile what God had chosen to make clean. Gentiles must be avoided and prevented from defiling the holy status of Jewish people and their worship of God. The belief that Gentiles were outside the boundaries of God's purity was more than a prejudice. This belief was deeply embedded in Jewish consciousness and national identity. The most powerful and graphic illustration of this is the Jerusalem temple. The temple system was a series of boundaries between clean and unclean. The various courts illustrated the hierarchy of purity that controlled Judaism. Gentiles were not allowed beyond the Court of Gentiles, the outermost area surrounding the temple. Women were allowed into the Court of Women, closer to the Holy Place than Gentiles, but still removed from God's presence. Healthy Jewish men were allowed into the inner court. Only priests, without physical defect, were allowed to enter the Holy Place, the presence of God.

The temple was a perfect illustration of the Jewish worldview. Gentiles must be kept at a distance from anything considered pure and holy. Gentiles were not compatible with the presence of God. In fact, devout Jews considered Jews who had physical contact with Gentiles to be unclean and unworthy to enter God's presence.

1 What issues provoked the Jews into assaulting Paul?

The final conflict between Paul and the Jerusalem Jews was the result of that worldview. Traditional Jews, passionately dedicated to the concepts of purity defined by the Old Testament covenants, could not accept any violation of that purity system. Violating God's prescribed order of purity was the essence of evil. (Cleanness, sacredness, holiness, and righteousness are all synonymous or parallel ideas.) To tolerate or condone such violation was to participate in the evil. Tolerating such evil would eventually destroy the God-created world order. Many zealous Jews viewed the struggle to maintain their customs as a life-and-death struggle. They viewed themselves as commissioned defenders of God's holiness.

2 Why would rumors about Paul be so offensive, even threatening, to devoted Jews?

Many Jews scattered throughout the world held this same worldview in varying degrees. Since the country of Judea, the city of Jerusalem, and the temple were considered holy (and increasingly holy in the order listed, with the temple being the most holy place on earth), Jews living in Jerusalem sensed an increased responsibility to guard the purity of Judaism and the temple. Therefore, although Paul encountered hostility from Jews in various cities of the world, it would be most intense in Jerusalem, specifically when related to the temple.

3 Summarize the two-part public accusation against Paul that created a citywide uproar.

Rumors concerning Paul's teaching were circulating in Jerusalem, even among Jews who were disciples of Jesus. These rumors accused Paul of teaching Jews who were dispersed around the world, not to circumcise their sons and to disobey Moses' law. Jerusalem Jews were convinced by these rumors that Paul encouraged Jews throughout the world to abandon the customs of Judaism.

The gist of the accusations against Paul related to his teaching and his activities in the temple. He was accused of teaching that undermined Jewish tradition and belief. He was also accused of defiling the presence of God in the temple by bringing Gentiles inside. The accusations resulted in Paul's arrest by the Roman military. This arrest led to imprisonment that would last several years and include miracles, life-threatening adventures, and extraordinary opportunities to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

### 13.1.2 OBJECTIVE

*Identify principles from Paul's experiences related to God's calling Christians into ministry.*

4 Would heeding the prophetic warnings given during his journey to Jerusalem have caused Paul to miss God's will?

5 Describe a time when God's grace or strength was sufficient in difficulty when your own power was inadequate.

## God's Call May Be Challenging

You will remember from reading Acts 21:1–14 that Paul was warned repeatedly not to continue his journey to Jerusalem. Friends and ministry colleagues predicted the suffering that waited for him there. Paul was aware, having informed the leaders at Ephesus that he would not see them again, indicating that he knew he was heading toward danger. The call of God in Paul's spirit compelled him to continue, even though it meant risking his very life. We must never assume that God calls us only to ministries of ease, convenience, affluence, and prosperity. Paul's example clearly demonstrates the possibility of God sending us into very trying, even miserable circumstances. The rewards, however, are more than sufficient to compensate for any suffering. Knowing we are obeying God, being used by Him, and playing a significant role in His eternal kingdom makes suffering more than acceptable.

We must carefully weigh Paul's example of following God's call into a situation of suffering. This example does not mean that obeying God will always result in suffering or hardship. Nor should we conclude that it is wise to always disregard the counsel of friends and associates. We must, however, accept the possibility that God will call some believers into situations of service that will include suffering. It is wrong to label suffering as an indication of disobedience or weak faith.

God is sovereign. He allows some to suffer and die. Unbelieving Jews stoned Stephen in Jerusalem (Acts 7:57–60). King Herod had James killed with a sword (Acts 12:2). But on rare occasions, God breaks forth into history. In Acts 12, Luke recorded how God protected Peter from death. In Acts 23, we see that God also protected Paul from death. Forty men could not kill him. Imagine it—forty killers possessed by hatred. Each one had taken a vow not to eat or drink until Paul was dead. But they could not kill him. Those God protects will pass safely through every trial.

## 13 LESSON 2

### 13.2.1 OBJECTIVE

*Recount key events and issues related to Paul's imprisonment and trials in Caesarea.*

## Paul's Imprisonment in Caesarea

### Paul's Extended Imprisonment Begins in Jerusalem

The following list summarizes the key events surrounding Paul's arrest and imprisonment:

- Paul agreed to participate in a purification ritual in order to reassure Jewish Christians of his support of Jewish customs.
- Paul goes into the temple to complete the requirements for purification.
- Paul was seized by Asian Jews in the Jerusalem temple.
- Paul was accused of teaching against Judaism and of desecrating the temple.
- Lysias is made aware of a riot in the temple area and moves quickly to intervene.
- Paul speaks to the mob in Aramaic, presenting the testimony of his conversion and his appointment to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.
- Thinking Paul is a common troublemaker, Lysias arranges to torture a confession from him.

The Roman military actually saved Paul's life. The Jewish mob, inflamed by an erroneous threat to their traditional passions, intended to kill Paul. Roman intervention prevented Paul's death but left Paul imprisoned. This imprisonment would last for approximately five years or more. The remaining material in Acts is Luke's account of significant events in Paul's life during this extended imprisonment. We should not picture Paul imprisoned in a dungeon or primitive jail cell, such as was his experience in Philippi. Rather, this imprisonment was more of a detainment. He was not free to leave Caesarea. Paul lived in Herod's palace under a Roman military guard. It seems this was the nature of his imprisonment during the two years he was detained in Caesarea.

6 List the person or group before whom Paul was tried on each of these occasions.

Paul stood trial five times during his imprisonment: twice in Jerusalem—before the crowd and the Sanhedrin; and three times in Caesarea—before Governor Felix, Governor Festus, and King Agrippa. Not one of these trials resulted in condemnation of Paul. The accusations were false and the evidence clearly exonerated the apostle. Each trial became an occasion for Paul to share the gospel of Jesus with those present. The highest ranking government officials and religious leaders in the entire region were exposed to the message of Jesus, God's Son. This would never have happened had Paul not been arrested.

7 Which charges, if any, was Paul guilty of and during which trial was he found guilty?

Chapters 24–26 of Acts record events in Caesarea. Paul was tried three times during this period. Luke's account of the Caesarea imprisonment focuses on these trials and Paul's defense against the Jews' accusations. During Paul's final trial in Caesarea before King Agrippa, he could have been released. However, Paul had exercised his right as a Roman citizen to be tried before Caesar. This appeal to Caesar had to be honored. Paul could not be released now until this appeal was heard in Rome.

Acts 24–28 represent a significant portion of the book of Acts. All the events recorded in this section of Acts resulted from a single cause—intense Jewish hostility toward Paul and his Gentile mission. Luke, inspired by the Holy Spirit, recognized the significance of this conflict. He also recognized how God used this hostility to accomplish His plans for Paul and the church. If we study these chapters in light of this single theme, our appreciation for God's power and wisdom will increase. God used the hostility of the Jews toward Paul to proclaim the message of Jesus in unique ways and places. God destined the gospel to be preached in Rome by Paul. What a fascinating series of events transpired to accomplish this evangelistic goal!

# 13

## LESSON

### 3

## Paul's Imprisonment in Rome

### The Journey to Rome

Luke produced this historical narrative under the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He carefully chose which events to record and how to place proper emphasis where it was needed. Countless events occurred during the first three decades of the church that Luke was aware of but did not have space to write about. The events he did document must have stood out to him. They must have been important to Luke's purpose for writing. His original audience needed this information and Luke supplied it. What questions troubled that original audience? What does Luke's writing tell us about those first readers? How did

**13.3.1**

## OBJECTIVE

*Explain the purpose that Luke may have had in recording Paul's speeches in these chapters and for documenting so many details of Paul's journey to Rome.*

Paul's speeches at Caesarea meet the needs of that audience? How were the events of Paul's voyage significant to Luke's response to that audience? These are all questions that need to be asked by careful interpreters of the Bible. Attempting to answer these questions can assist us in understanding the meaning of the text.

Luke uses Paul's trial speeches to confirm Paul's innocence and to demonstrate that Paul was a chosen servant to God. The character of the messenger can often invalidate a message. The news stories written by a reporter who is known to be dishonest are not taken seriously. If Paul was indeed guilty of disobeying civil and religious laws, his preaching should not be respected. Luke records the trial events and speeches in such a way as to confirm Paul's innocence and the purity of his motives in preaching the gospel. This would have been key to Luke's original audience. Everything Paul preached was true and trustworthy, because Paul was of noble character and under divine commission.

Read carefully Luke's record of Paul's voyage to Rome (Acts 27:1–28:15). Why did Luke write so many details about a single voyage? Could it be that this account clearly establishes that God was supernaturally moving Paul to Rome? Luke records several miraculous interventions by God that protected Paul on his mission. Readers of this account are immediately struck with God's direct participation in the journey. There would be no lingering doubts that Paul was placed in Rome by God himself and was appointed to declare the good news of Jesus in that region.

In Paul's day, Rome was the largest city. It was the capital and the symbol of the Roman Empire. To a Roman, that city was the center of the world. Its roads and government extended to the entire known world. But Rome was also famous for its sin. The apostle John referred to Rome as a prostitute and the mother of all harlots (Revelation 17:1–18).

For at least three years, Paul had wanted to reach Rome. No doubt, he wanted to help make Rome a great center for spreading the gospel. He had written to the Roman believers in about AD 57, but he finally arrived there around AD 60. The final third of Acts describes his journey from Jerusalem to Rome.

We do not know when the Roman church began. Luke recorded that visitors from Rome were in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:10). Perhaps they were converted and returned to Rome with the gospel. We do know that nearly thirty years after Pentecost, Roman believers traveled on the Appian Way to meet Paul (Acts 28:15).

Three truths stand out in Paul's journey to Rome and during his time in Rome.

### **Faith Enables Us to Survive the Storms of Life**

It took three ships to get Paul from Caesarea to Rome. First, he sailed from Caesarea to Myra on a ship from Adramyttium, a city just south of Troas. The second ship was from Alexandria, Egypt. The winds were strong, so they sailed to the lee (the side protected from the wind) of Cyprus and Crete.

Acts 27:9 tells us they traveled "after the Fast"—after the Jewish Day of Atonement in late September or October. This was a dangerous time for sea travel, and Paul warned that they should not sail. How did he know more than the pilot and the owner of the ship? Some think his knowledge came from experience. They note that Paul had been on eleven voyages at sea before his trip to Rome (Haenchen 1971, 702–703). Also, he had been in three shipwrecks already (Horton 1994, 249). But the pilot and sailors had probably sailed much more than Paul had. Some think Paul's knowledge of the storm was from the Holy Spirit (Wagner 1995, 237).

8 When and how was the church in Rome started?

**13.3.2**

## OBJECTIVE

*Describe Paul's journey by sea from Caesarea to Rome and recount significant events from this journey.*

9 Which would seem to make more sense when considering whether it was safe to sail, to listen to the pilot and owner or to a prisoner?

The centurion listened to the pilot and the owner instead of to the man of God (Acts 27:11–12). A gentle wind lured them out to sea, but this gentle wind was deceiving. A hurricane-force wind drove them out to sea (Acts 27:14). They were in danger.

Luke described the scene in detail. The wind was so strong that men had to hold on to the ship. The ropes stretched as the wind tore through the sails. The waves beat against the boat and splashed into it. Those on board feared the violent storm would tear the ship into pieces, so they tied strong ropes around it to help hold it together (Acts 27:17).

10 Why did that not turn out to be the wisest choice?

In those days, sailors used the stars for guidance. But the fierce storm made it so dark that they did not see the sun, moon, or stars for fourteen days. They were lost.

11 How well do you listen to God's direction when it seems to contradict common sense or human logic? Give an example.

The sailors threw some of their cargo into the sea (Acts 27:18). Maybe the ship would not sink if they lightened the load, but even this did not help. Later, they threw all of the grain they were transporting into the sea as well (Acts 27:38). This was like throwing away money, but in a deadly storm, people do not care about money—only about staying alive. After many days of darkness and fasting, they lost hope (Acts 27:20).

12 Describe a storm in your own life that faith in God helped you survive.

Faith in God is the only thing that helps during great trouble. The storms of life often cause people's hearts to fail from fear and discouragement. These storms may be social, political, financial, national, moral, physical, or spiritual. But those with faith in God can stand fast in the darkest trials. Our faith is built on the promises of God. Like Paul, we can say, "Keep up your courage . . . for I have faith in God" (Acts 27:25).

A believer sat crying in a dark room. His father and mother had recently died. He himself had been sick for several weeks. His body was thin and weak. Doctors had not been able to help him. Had God forgotten him? Why were there no answers to his prayers for help? This man was in a kind of storm. Darkness surrounded him. He was in an ocean of sorrow, and he was sinking. But the Holy Spirit helped him turn to the promises of God. He began to quote Bible verses. He did this each day and through the sleepless nights. After several days, a peace came over him. The strong wind stopped blowing. In time, the sun appeared—he was healthy again.

God is faithful in the storms of life. Do not throw away your hope in Him (Hebrews 10:35).

### People Lose What They Refuse to Use

After leaving the ship at Puteoli, Paul walked on the Appian Way to reach Rome. In the city, he lived in a house that he rented (Acts 28:16, 30). A Roman soldier guarded him at all times. Some think the soldier was chained to him (Acts 28:16; Ephesians 6:20; Philippians 1:13–14, 17; Colossians 4:3, 18; Philemon 10, 13). The Jewish leaders and many other Jews came to Paul's house. From morning until evening he explained and declared the kingdom of God to them. He tried to convince them about Jesus by using Moses and the Prophets (Acts 28:23). Some were persuaded. Others refused to believe. The rejection of the gospel by the Jews brought a strong word from Paul.

"The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers when he said through Isaiah the prophet: "Go to this people and say, "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving." For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them" (Acts 28:25–27).

13 What happens to those who refuse to listen to and obey God?

Note the reason the Jews did not understand. Their hearts had become calloused (Acts 28:27). This happened as they rebelled against God. They could not see the truth, for they had closed their eyes (Acts 28:27). Here, then, is a solemn warning to us. We lose what we refuse to use (Matthew 13:11–15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:39–40; Romans 11:8). If we refuse to listen to God's voice, we will lose our ability to hear it. If we refuse to obey the truth, we will lose our ability to discern it.

### 13.3.3

#### OBJECTIVE

*Describe what these examples of hardship might teach us about evangelism in our world today.*

### Hardship as Apprenticeship

Imagine you are living in Rome in the first century and reading for the first time Luke's writing about Paul's arrest and trials in Judea and his journey to Rome. This is a current event to you. The main character is a well-known prisoner whose life and teaching many people talk about. After reading this account, what would you conclude is the reason Paul is in Rome awaiting trial before Caesar? Would you conclude that God specifically wanted him in Rome under these conditions and carefully managed the events to bring it about? Would you interpret Paul's suffering and humiliation as a prisoner as proof that his message was not true? It seems unlikely that anyone would fail to sense God's supernatural guidance and provision in the affairs of Paul's long journey to Rome. Perceiving that Paul was indeed sent by God, his message would be all the more compelling and authentic. What does this teach us about our impact on nonbelievers? Do we depend too much on persuasive words or impressive presentations? Do we think perhaps that people are more convinced by our techniques and personalities than by God's power? Now that you have studied Paul's approach to serving God and evangelizing the lost, what do you think he would say about modern approaches to missions and evangelism?

Throughout these years of imprisonment, God used Paul to preach the gospel. The most powerful people in the Roman Empire heard Paul speak of salvation through faith in Christ. Luke documents that God carefully planned Paul's experiences. These experiences teach us something about how God uses events and experiences to further His kingdom plans for the world. For each statement related to Paul's experience, reflect on ways God may use us in a similar way to introduce people to Jesus.

- Paul was misunderstood and falsely accused, leading to his unjust imprisonment for years.
- Paul was so hated by the Jewish rulers, they plotted to murder him in order to maintain the purity of their religious traditions.
- Paul and all his shipmates were miraculously preserved through a usually deadly storm at sea.
- Paul lived in Rome under the restrictions of house arrest and with his reputation somewhat affected by the pending trial.

Take a few minutes to review Acts. Look at the chart below and recall some of the things we studied. Learn to recall something from each chapter in Acts. Practice by writing numbers from 1–28. Then try to describe something from each chapter. Refer to the chart as needed.

<b>Matching people and events with places in Acts 1–28</b>			
<b>Acts</b>	<b>Person or Event</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Date (AD)</b>
1	Jesus ascended to heaven.	Jerusalem	30
2	The 120 were filled with the Spirit.	Jerusalem	30
2	Peter preached his first sermon.	Jerusalem	30
3–4	Peter healed the crippled beggar.	Jerusalem	
5	Ananias and Sapphira died suddenly.	Jerusalem	
6–7	Stephen preached his last message.	Jerusalem	31–32
8	Philip had a great revival.	Samaria	31–32
8	An Ethiopian turned to Christ.	Road to Gaza	31–32
9	Saul was converted and baptized in water.	Damascus	31–32
9	Peter healed Aeneas.	Lydda	
9	Peter healed Dorcas.	Joppa	
10	Cornelius turned to Christ.	Caesarea	39–40
11	Barnabas and Saul taught for a year.	Antioch, Syria	39–40
12	Believers prayed for Peter at Mary's house.	Jerusalem	
12	Worms ate King Herod.	Caesarea	44
13	Paul and Barnabas began their first trip.	Antioch, Syria	46–47
13	Paul blinded Elymas.	Cyprus	46–47
13	John Mark left Paul and Barnabas.	Perga	46–47
13–14	Paul and Barnabas planted churches on their first missionary trip.	Galatia	46–47
15	The first big church council took place.	Jerusalem	49
15	Paul and Silas began the second trip.	Antioch, Syria	49–52
16	Timothy joined Paul and Silas.	Lystra	50
16	Paul received the Macedonian vision.	Troas	
16	Lydia and a jailer turned to Christ.	Philippi	
16	A slave girl was set free from a demon.	Philippi	
17	Jason put up a sum of money.	Thessalonica	
17	Noble Jews searched the Scriptures.	Berea	
17	Paul preached to the Areopagus.	Athens	
18	Gallio threw Paul's accusers out of court.	Corinth	53
18	Paul and Silas began the third trip.	Antioch, Syria	53
18	Aquila and Priscilla taught Apollos.	Ephesus	53
19	Twelve men were baptized; seven others fled.	Ephesus	56
19	The city clerk quieted a riot.	Ephesus	57

<b>Matching people and events with places in Acts 1–28 (continued)</b>			
20	Eutychus was raised from the dead.	Troas	57
20	Paul said farewell to the Ephesian elders.	Miletus	57
21	Paul was beaten, arrested, and protected.	Jerusalem	57
22	Paul gave his testimony to an angry crowd.	Jerusalem	57
23	Forty Jews took a vow to murder Paul.	Jerusalem	57
24–26	Paul stood trial before Felix, Festus, and King Agrippa.	Caesarea	58–60
27–28	Paul and others sailed on toward Rome. His faith in God enabled them to survive a storm and a shipwreck. Finally, he arrived in Rome and stayed there 2 years.	Rome	60–62



## Test Yourself



Circle the letter of the *best* answer.

1. A citywide uproar resulted when Asian Jews accused Paul of
  - a) teaching against the Jewish people, their law, and the temple and of defiling the temple by bringing Gentiles inside.
  - b) entering the Holy Place in an impure condition and of teaching Jews that Jesus was greater than Moses.
  - c) convincing Diaspora Jews to believe in Jesus and of eating and drinking with Gentiles.
  - d) persecuting Jews who rejected Jesus and of failing to observe the traditional feasts in Jerusalem.
2. Which statement best describes Paul's experience with God as he made his final journey to Jerusalem?
  - a) Paul was unsure whether God was truly leading him to Jerusalem.
  - b) Paul would have avoided the long imprisonment if he had obeyed the Holy Spirit.
  - c) God directed Paul to go to Jerusalem and intended for him to endure the imprisonment.
  - d) Paul expected God to shield him from any inconvenience or suffering.
3. According to Jewish worldview,
  - a) Gentiles must be kept at a distance from anything considered pure and holy.
  - b) Gentiles were considered compatible with the presence of God..
  - c) Parents were encouraged not to circumcise their sons.
  - d) Gentiles were allowed into the Inner Court of the temple.
4. Luke's record of Paul's trials in Jerusalem and Caesarea, including his defense speeches, clearly establishes that Paul
  - a) viewed Jewish and Roman law as a conflict with his loyalty to Jesus.
  - b) frequently ignored Roman law because it was based on a pagan belief system.
  - c) was guilty of violating Jewish temple law but not Roman law.
  - d) was absolutely innocent of violating any law, Jewish or Roman.
5. While on trial before King Agrippa, Paul could have been released except he had
  - a) condemned the king for his injustice.
  - b) appealed to Caesar.
  - c) violated Roman Law while in Jerusalem.
  - d) praised the king for his kindness and wisdom.
6. While Paul and other prisoners were being transported to Rome, they were shipwrecked on the island of
  - a) Crete.
  - b) Cyprus.
  - c) Malta.
  - d) Sardinia.
7. The largest and most influential city in Paul's day was
  - a) Constantinople.
  - b) Alexandria.
  - c) Ephesus.
  - d) Rome.
8. What was Paul's attitude toward the storm at sea and the certain shipwreck?
  - a) He advised the crew based on his assumption that God would protect him until he arrived in Rome.
  - b) An angel sent from God promised Paul that all onboard the ship would be saved.
  - c) Paul wanted to witness to the crew as his last act of obedience to God.
  - d) Paul was angry with the crew for insisting on sailing during the winter.
9. Luke's accounts of Paul's trials establish all the following EXCEPT that
  - a) Paul was innocent beyond any doubt.
  - b) Paul remained imprisoned and was sent to Rome because he failed to obey God.
  - c) Paul was given the opportunity to present the gospel to the most powerful men in the Roman Empire.
  - d) Paul had remained loyal to Jewish customs and traditions following his conversion to faith in Jesus Christ.

**10.** The principles illustrated in Paul's imprisonment experience teach us that

- a) God may expect us to endure severe hardship in order to accomplish His purposes.
- b) God promises to deliver us from all suffering to prove His power over the world.
- c) we are not apostles and should not expect God to lead us through such intense suffering.
- d) those who agree to share the gospel will experience less suffering than those who refuse.

# Responses to Interactive Questions

## Chapter 13

Some of these responses may include information that is supplemental to the IST. These questions are intended to produce reflective thinking beyond the course content and your responses may vary from these examples.

### 1 What issues provoked the Jews into assaulting Paul?

The deep-seated commitment to purity and holiness made the Jews very sensitive to perceived defilement of anything holy and threats to traditions and customs. The Jews were convinced that Paul represented a clear threat to purity and Jewish traditions.

### 2 Why would rumors about Paul be so offensive, even threatening, to devoted Jews?

They would have been the same as teaching against God himself. They would have been the same as trying to destroy the holiness that God had established in the world through His covenants and laws.

### 3 Summarize the two-part public accusation against Paul that created a citywide uproar.

Paul was accused of teaching against the Jewish people, their law, and the temple and of defiling the presence of God in the temple by bringing Gentiles inside.

### 4 Would heeding the prophetic warnings given during his journey to Jerusalem have caused Paul to miss God's will?

We can only conclude that, yes, listening to the warnings and staying away from Jerusalem would have caused Paul to disobey God and fail to fulfill His plans for Paul and Christianity.

### 5 Describe a time when God's grace or strength was sufficient in difficulty when your own power was inadequate.

Answers will vary.

### 6 List the person or group before whom Paul was tried on each of these occasions.

Paul was tried before the crowd, the Sanhedrin, Governor Felix, Governor Festus, and King Agrippa.

### 7 Which charges, if any, was Paul guilty of and during which trial was he found guilty?

Paul was never found guilty of any charge during any of the five trials he endured.

### 8 When and how was the church in Rome started?

We are not told and so do not know.

### 9 Which would seem to make more sense when considering whether it was safe to sail, to listen to the pilot and owner or to a prisoner?

It seemed logical to listen to those with experience at sea and with the most at stake materially.

### 10 Why did that not turn out to be the wisest choice?

Answers will vary, but should indicate that God knows more than the wisest people. When God directs His servant as He directed Paul, it is always best to listen to Him.

### 11 How well do you listen to God's direction when it seems to contradict common sense or human logic? Give an example.

Answers will vary.

### 12 Describe a storm in your own life that faith in God helped you survive.

Answers will vary.

### 13 What happens to those who refuse to listen to and obey God?

Those who refuse to listen to and obey will lose their ability to hear it or see it.

#### UNIT PROGRESS EVALUATION 4 AND FINAL EXAMINATION

You have now concluded all of the work in this independent-study textbook. Review the lessons in this unit carefully, and then answer the questions in the last unit progress evaluation (UPE). When you have completed the UPE, check your answers with the answer key provided in Essential Course Materials at the back of this IST. Review any items you may have answered incorrectly. Review for the final examination by studying the course objectives, lesson objectives, self-tests, and UPEs. Review any lesson content necessary to refresh your memory. If you review carefully and are able to fulfill the objectives, you should have no difficulty passing the closed-book final examination.

#### Taking the Final Examination

1. **All final exams must be taken closed book.** You are not allowed to use any materials or outside help while taking a final exam. You will take the final examination online at [www.globaluniversity.edu](http://www.globaluniversity.edu). If the online option is not available to you, you may request a printed final exam. If you did not request a printed final exam when you ordered your course, you must submit this request a few weeks before you are ready to take the exam. The Request for a Printed Final Examination is in the Forms section of Essential Course Materials at the back of this IST.
2. Review for the final examination in the same manner in which you prepared for the UPEs. Refer to the form Checklist of Study Methods in the front part of the IST for further helpful review hints.
3. After you complete and submit the online final examination, the results will be immediately available to you. Your final course grade report will be e-mailed to your Global University student e-mail account after your Service Learning Requirement (SLR) report has been processed.
4. If you complete the exam in printed form, you will send your final examination, your answer sheets, and your SLR report to Berean School of the Bible for grading. Your final course grade report will be sent to your GU student e-mail account. If you do not have access to the Internet, your grade will be sent to your mailing address.





# Glossary

	Chapter
<b>agnostic</b>	11
— a person who believes that it is not possible to know if God exists	
<b>Ananias and Sapphira</b>	6
— husband and wife who lied to the Holy Spirit	
<b>apologetics</b>	1
— a reasoned explanation or defense of an idea set or system of beliefs	
<b>apology</b>	7
— a formal defense or justification of one's beliefs	
<b>apostle</b>	1
— the Greek word, <i>apostolos</i> , literally means “sent one,” “ambassador,” or “delegate.” It was used in the New Testament to refer specifically to those close associates of Jesus who became His authorized representatives to the world.	
<b>Aramaic</b>	4
— Semitic language related to Hebrew; the language of Christ and the apostles	
<b>ascension</b>	2
— the going up of Jesus to heaven forty days after His resurrection	
<b>baptism in the Holy Spirit</b>	2
— the event, usually after conversion, in which a believer is first filled with the Holy Spirit with the initial, physical evidence of speaking in tongues (in a new language)	
<b>Barnabas</b>	6
— nickname, meaning “son of encouragement,” given to Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus	
<b>Beautiful Gate</b>	5
— most popular entrance to the temple court; it likely led from the court of the Gentiles to the court of women.	
<b>bema</b>	11
— high judgment seat	
<b>blasphemous</b>	9
— disrespectful to God	
<b>Caesar</b>	1
— the title given to a Roman emperor	
<b>circumcision party</b>	9
— those believers who felt Gentiles must convert to Judaism and be circumcised before they could be saved	
<b>Corinthianize</b>	11
— to corrupt another person's morals; coined because of the low morals of the population of ancient Corinth	
<b>edifies</b>	3
— builds up	
<b>Egnatian Way</b>	11
— key Roman road that crossed all of present-day northern Greece from east to west	
<b>Epicurean</b>	11
— philosophy that denied gods existed, or if they did, they lived for pleasure; their creed was “eat, drink, and be merry”	
<b>epistle</b>	1
— a letter written by early Christian writers and included as books of the Bible	

		Chapter
<b>eunuch</b>	— a man whose sex organs have been removed or do not function	8
<b>evangelist</b>	— someone who tries to persuade others to become Christians	8
<b>exhortation</b>	— giving advice or encouragement	9
<b>exorcisms</b>	— the expelling of an evil spirit by an earnest calling on God	8
<b>Feast of Unleavened Bread</b>	— seven-day feast in which Jews were to eat bread made without yeast	3
<b>Feast of Weeks</b>	— another name for the Feast of Pentecost	3
<b>Firstfruits</b>	— feast that marked the start of the barley harvest	3
<b>Gamaliel</b>	— highly respected Pharisee and doctor of the Law, member of the Jewish Sanhedrin. According to the Talmud, Gamaliel was grandson of Rabbi Hillel. Paul was trained by Gamaliel.	6
<b>Grecian Jews</b>	— Jews who had been scattered to other lands who spoke Greek and adopted much from Greek culture	7
<b>Hebraic Jews</b>	— Jews who had stayed behind in the area of Jerusalem and had been influenced very little by Greek culture; these Jews spoke Hebrew	7
<b>Hellenist</b>	— a person who spoke Greek and adopted Greek culture; see also <b>Grecian Jew</b>	8
<b>Hillel school of the Pharisees</b>	— Hillel was the most influential teacher of the Pharisees. Those who followed his teachings were said to be of his school.	6
<b>incantation</b>	— words spoken or chanted as a magic spell	12
<b>initial physical evidence</b>	— speaking in tongues; the first evidence of being baptized in the Holy Spirit	3
<b>Judaizer</b>	— those who insisted that all converts first adhere to Jewish cultural and religious practices	9
<b>kerygma</b>	— the proclamation or announcement of God's saving activity in calling and sustaining His chosen people	10
<b>last days</b>	— the time between the Day of Pentecost and the Day of the Lord	4
<b>Levite</b>	— a person from the tribe of Levi who was assigned to care for the sanctuary.	6
<b>Lycaonia</b>	— a region of Galatia that included the cities Lystra and Derbe	10
<b>missiologists</b>	— those who study Christian missionary work	12
<b>Mount of Olives</b>	— the place from which Jesus ascended to heaven	2
<b>Pantheist</b>	— one who believes that there is no difference between God and the material world, and that God is present in everything	11
<b>Passover</b>	— yearly feast to commemorate God's delivering Israel from Egypt and death	3
<b>Pentecost</b>	— means fiftieth, Old Testament harvest festival, New Testament birthday of the church	3
<b>Phrygia</b>	— a region of Galatia that included the cities Pisidian Antioch and Iconium	10
<b>proselyte</b>	— one who converts from one religion or belief to another; especially a convert to Judaism	8

## Chapter

<b>reconciliation</b>	— ending a conflict or renewing a friendly relationship between people at odds	4
<b>repentance</b>	— changing your mind and turning away from a previous sinful way of life	4
<b>Sadducees</b>	— sect of Jewish priests and aristocrats who rejected Oral Law and belief in life after death	5
<b>Samaritans</b>	— residents of Samaria; during the Exile, their ethnic and religious identity as Jews was mixed with pagan nations that settled their lands	1
<b>Sanhedrin</b>	— supreme Jewish legal, religious, and political council; this council determined that Jesus should die	3
<b>simony</b>	— to buy or sell a church office for money	8
<b>Solomon's Colonnade</b>	— a row of columns on the east side of the temple area, said to have been built by Solomon.	6
<b>sovereign</b>	— a ruler with absolute power and authority; God is our sovereign Lord	5
<b>Stoic</b>	— one who believes everything is controlled by fate; therefore apathy, being without emotion or feeling, is the most desirable trait one can possess	11
<b>synagogue</b>	— Jewish place of worship and communal center	7
<b>template</b>	— a master or pattern which guides the shaping of other like things or circumstances	12
<b>the Eleven</b>	— here referring to the eleven apostles including Matthias but not Peter (who was speaking)	4
<b>tongues</b>	— speaking in other languages as the Spirit enables	3
<b>Trinity</b>	— term to describe the nature of God in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit	2
<b>worldview</b>	— the overall perspective from which one sees and interprets the world; the collection of beliefs about life and the universe held by an individual or a group	13
<b>Yom Kippur</b>	— the holiest day of the Jewish year, also called the <i>Day of Atonement</i>	12





# Reference List

---

- Barrett, D. 2000. International Bulletin of Missionary Research.
- Blum, D. 2002. "Deconstructing Harry," On Wisconsin magazine, Winter.
- Booze, J. W. and C. Ketcher, eds. 2003. *Sacrifice and Triumph: A Timeless Treasury of Missions Stories*. Springfield, MO: Assemblies of God World Missions.
- Booze, J. W. and C. J. Ketcher. 1998. How a Dead Woman Opened a Church. *Faces of Eurasia*.
- Chambers, Oswald. 1992. *My Utmost for His Highest: An Updated Edition in Today's Language*. Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House.
- Cruz, N. [www.nickycruz.org](http://www.nickycruz.org). Links: About, The Man, Testimony.
- Curtis, Ken. Obstinate Preacher. Glimpses, Issue #86. [www.gospelcom.net/chi/GLIMPSEF/Glimpses/glmps086.shtml](http://www.gospelcom.net/chi/GLIMPSEF/Glimpses/glmps086.shtml). Worcester, PA: Christian History Institute.
- Fee, G. 1987. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians, New International Commentary on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Foxe, J. 1981. *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*. Springdale, PA: Whitaker House.
- Haenchen, E. 1971. *The Acts of the Apostles, a Commentary*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.
- Hansen, C. 2004. "Billy Graham's Bible Dilemma," *Christian History and Biography*.
- Harris, R. 1995. *Acts Today, Signs and Wonders of the Holy Spirit*. Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House.
- Harris, R. W., ed. 1991. vol. 6. *The Complete Biblical Library: The New Testament Study Bible: Acts*. Springfield, MO: The Complete Biblical Library.
- Harrison, E. F. 1975. *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Holdcroft, L. T. 1971. *The Holy Spirit*. Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House.
- Horton, S. M. 1994. *The Book of Acts*. Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House.
- Larson, C. B. ed. 1993. *Illustrations for Preaching and Teaching: From Leadership Journal*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
- Lindsell, H. 1970. *My Daily Quiet Time*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Rumph, J. 1996. *Stories from the Front Lines*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Seymour, W. J., ed. 1906–1908. *The Azusa Street Papers: A Reprint of the Apostolic Faith Mission Publications*. Foley, AL: Together in the Harvest Publications.
- Stamps, D. 1992. *Full Life Study Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Stronstad, R. 1995. *Spirit, Scripture, and Theology*. Baguio City, Philippines: Asia Pacific Theological Seminary Press.
- Wagner, C. P. 1995. *Blazing the Way, A New Look at Acts—Sharing God's Power Throughout the World, Acts*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books.
- Wimber, J. and K. Springer. 1986. *Power Evangelism*. San Francisco: Harper and Row.



# Essential Course Materials

## CONTENTS

Service Learning Requirement Assignment and Report Form .....	243
Unit Progress Evaluation Instructions.....	247
Unit Progress Evaluations .....	249
Answer Keys .....	259
Test Yourself Quizzes.....	261
Unit Progress Evaluations.....	262
Forms.....	263
Round-Tripper.....	265
Request for Printed Final Examination.....	267

## **CHECKLIST OF MATERIALS TO BE SUBMITTED TO BEREAN SCHOOL OF THE BIBLE** at Global University; 1211 South Glenstone Avenue; Springfield, Missouri, 65804; USA:

- Service Learning Requirement Report (required)
- Round-Tripper Forms (as needed)
- Request for a Printed Final Examination (if needed)



# Service Learning Requirement Assignment

## BEREAN SCHOOL OF THE BIBLE SLR INSTRUCTIONS

This Service Learning Requirement (SLR) assignment requires you to apply something you have learned from this course in a ministry activity. Although this assignment does not receive a grade, it is required. You will not receive credit for this course until you submit the satisfactorily completed SLR Report Form. This form will not be returned to you.

Seriously consider how you can design and complete a meaningful ministry\* activity as an investment in preparing to fulfill God's calling on your life. If you are already involved in active ministry, plan how you can incorporate and apply something from this course in your ongoing ministry activity. Whether or not full-time ministry is your goal, this assignment is required and designed to bring personal enrichment to all students. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your planning and completion of this ministry exercise.

\* Meaningful ministry is defined as an act whereby you give of yourself in such a way as to meet the needs of another or to enhance the well-being of another (or others) in a way that exalts Christ and His kingdom.

### **You will complete the SLR by following these instructions:**

1. Complete a ministry activity of your choice that you develop according to the following criteria:
  - a. Your ministry activity must occur during your enrollment in this course. Do not report on activities or experiences in which you were involved prior to enrolling in this course.
  - b. Your ministry activity must apply something you learned in this course, or it must incorporate something from this course's content in some way. Provide chapter, lesson, or page number(s) from the independent-study textbook on which the activity is based.
  - c. Your ministry activity must include interacting with at least one other person. You may choose to interact with an individual or a group.
  - d. The activity you complete must represent meaningful ministry\*. You may develop your own ministry activity or choose from the list of suggestions provided in these instructions.
  - e. Consider a ministry activity outside your comfort zone such as sharing the message of salvation with unbelievers or offering loving assistance to someone you do not know well.
2. Then fill out the SLR Report Form following these instructions OR online by accessing the online course. Students who will take the final exam online are encouraged to complete the online report form.
3. Sincere reflection is a key ingredient in valid ministry and especially in the growth and development of your ministry knowledge and effectiveness.
4. Global University faculty will evaluate your report. Although the SLR does not receive a grade, it must be completed to the faculty's satisfaction before a final grade for the course is released. The faculty may require you to resubmit an SLR Report Form for several reasons, including an incomplete form, apparent insincerity, failing to interact with others, and failure to incorporate course content.

Do NOT submit your SLR notes, essays, or other documents; only submit your completed SLR Report Form. No prior approval is needed as long as the activity fulfills the criteria from number one above.

## Suggested SLR Ministry Activities

You may choose to engage in any valid and meaningful ministry experience that incorporates this specific course's content and interacts with other people. The following list of suggestions is provided to help you understand the possible activities that will fulfill this requirement. Choose an idea that will connect well with your course material. You may also develop a ministry activity that is not on this list or incorporate content from this course in ministry activity in which you are actively involved at this time:

- Teach a class or small group of any size.
- Preach a sermon to any size group.
- Share the gospel with non-believers; be prepared to develop new relationships to open doors to this ministry. We strongly encourage you to engage in ministry that may be outside your comfort zone.
- Lead a prayer group experience or pray with individual(s) in need, perhaps over an extended period.
- Disciple new believers in their walk with Jesus.
- Interview pastors, missionaries, or other leaders on a topic related to something in your course (do not post or publish interview content).
- Intervene to help resolve personal conflicts.
- Personally share encouragement and resources with those in need.
- Organize and/or administer a church program such as youth ministry, feeding homeless people, transporting people, visiting hospitals or shut-ins, nursing home services, etc.
- Assist with starting a new church.
- Publish an online blog or an article in a church newsletter (include a link in your report to the content of your article or blog).
- For MIN327 only: present a summary of risk management to a church board or other leadership group; interview community business people regarding their opinion of church business practices.

To review sample SLR Reports and to access an online report form, go to this Web address: [library.globaluniversity.edu](http://library.globaluniversity.edu). Navigate to the Berean School of the Bible Students link under "Quick Link." Another helpful resource is our GlobalReach Web site: [www.globalreach.org](http://www.globalreach.org). From that site you can download materials free of charge from Global University's School for Evangelism and Discipleship. These proven evangelism tools are available in many languages.

# BSB SERVICE LEARNING REQUIREMENT (SLR) REPORT

Please print or type your responses on this form, and submit the form to Berean School of the Bible.  
Do not submit other documents. This report will not be returned to you.

## BIB115 Acts: The Holy Spirit at Work in Believers, Third Edition

Your Name..... Student Number ..... Date .....

**1. Ministry activity date** ..... **Description of ministry activity and its content:** Briefly describe your ministry activity in the space provided. (You are encouraged to engage in ministry such as sharing your faith with unbelievers, or other activities that may be outside your comfort zone.)

.....  
.....  
.....

**Identify related course content by chapter, lesson, or page number.** .....

.....

**2. Results:** What resulted from your own participation in this activity? Include descriptions of people’s reactions, decisions to accept Christ, confirmed miracles, Spirit and water baptisms, life changes, etc. Describe the individuals or group who benefited from or participated in your ministry activity. Use numbers to describe results when appropriate (approximate when unsure).

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**Record numbers here:** Unbelievers witnessed to?..... New decisions for Jesus?.....  
Holy Spirit baptisms?..... Other?.....

**3. Reflection:** Answer the following questions based on your experience in completing this assignment:

Did this activity satisfy an evident need in others? How so? .....

.....

Were you adequately prepared to engage in this activity? Why or why not? .....

.....

What positive or negative feelings were you aware of while you were completing this activity? .....

.....

In what ways were you aware of the Holy Spirit’s help during your ministry activity? .....

.....

What would you change if you did this ministry activity again? .....

.....

What strengths or weaknesses within yourself did this assignment reveal to you?.....

.....

Did you receive feedback about this activity? If so, describe: .....

.....

.....





# Unit Progress Evaluations

The unit progress evaluations (UPEs) are designed to indicate how well you learned the material in each unit. This may indicate how well prepared you are to take the closed-book final examination.

## **Taking Your Unit Progress Evaluations**

1. Review the lessons of each unit before you take its unit progress evaluation (UPE). Refer to the form Checklist of Study Methods in the How to Use Berean Courses section at the front of the IST.
2. Answer the questions in each UPE without referring to your course materials, Bible, or notes.
3. Look over your answers carefully to avoid errors.
4. Check your answers with the answer keys provided in this section. Review lesson sections pertaining to questions you may have missed. Please note that the UPE scores do not count toward your course grade. They may indicate how well you are prepared to take the closed-book final examination.
5. Enter the date you completed each UPE on the Student Planner and Record form, located in the How to Use Berean Courses section in the front of this IST.
6. Request a printed final examination **if** you cannot take the final examination online. You should do this a few weeks before you take the last unit progress evaluation so that you will be able to take the final examination without delay when you complete the course.



# UNIT PROGRESS EVALUATION 1

## Acts: The Holy Spirit at Work in Believers, Third Edition (Unit 1—Chapter 1–2)

### MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Select the best answer to each question.

- The best title for the Acts is
  - The Acts of the Apostles.
  - The Acts of the Early Church.
  - The Acts of the Holy Spirit.
  - The Acts of Peter and Paul.
- The book of Acts was written by
  - Paul.
  - Luke.
  - Barnabas.
  - Mark.
- Key factors in determining when the book of Acts was written are
  - Paul's shipwreck, his imprisonment in Rome, and Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70.
  - Paul's Roman imprisonment, the burning of Rome, and Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70.
  - Paul's conversion, his shipwreck, and the burning of Rome.
  - Paul's Roman imprisonment, the Jerusalem Council, and the burning of Rome.
- Acts was written around
  - AD 50.
  - AD 59.
  - AD 63.
  - AD 75.
- The name Theophilus means
  - God loves us.
  - known by God.
  - one who loves God.
  - esteemed by God.
- The Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts
  - were written by different authors.
  - both declare that Luke was a healed leper.
  - were both written from prison cells.
  - are organized alike.
- According to the IST, the early church grew in
  - numbers, geography, mission, and theology.
  - mission, giving, theology, and influence.
  - popularity, geography, theology, and mission.
  - acceptance, numbers, mission, and influence.
- The book of Acts
  - explains and defends the church.
  - serves as a guide for faith and practice.
  - emphasizes that the Holy Spirit is key to be a witness for Christ.
  - all the above.
- The book of Acts can be divided into three parts based upon the gospel's spread to
  - Jerusalem, Antioch, and Rome.
  - Jerusalem, Samaria, and Judea.
  - Judea, Samaria, and Rome.
  - Jerusalem, Samaria and Judea, and the whole world.
- Acts can be organized according to
  - its great messages, the ministry of Peter and the apostles, and Acts 1:8.
  - the ministry of Paul and Barnabas, geography, and its great messages.
  - geography, the ministry of Peter and Paul, and its great messages.
  - Acts 1:8, the ministry of Paul and the early church, and its great messages.
- According to Acts 1:4, what was the gift the Father promised?
  - The Holy Spirit
  - The second coming of Christ
  - Deliverance from political oppression
  - A great revival
- After the resurrection, Jesus appeared to the disciples over a period of
  - 30 days.
  - 40 days.
  - 50 days.
  - 75 days.
- The book of Acts is addressed to
  - Apollos.
  - Priscilla.
  - Theophilus.
  - Tychicus.

14. According to Acts 1:5, Jesus would baptize believers with
- water.
  - oil.
  - judgment.
  - the Holy Spirit.
15. The book of Acts most often refers to the baptism of the Holy Spirit as
- a gift.
  - a promise.
  - an experience.
  - tongues.
16. The baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs
- before conversion.
  - at conversion.
  - at water baptism.
  - after conversion.
17. It was important for the believers to wait for the baptism of the Holy Spirit because
- the task is too big.
  - the task is too hard.
  - the task is not finished.
  - all the above are true.
18. Concerning the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer, John emphasizes the Spirit's help in
- service and salvation.
  - sanctification.
  - salvation and sanctification.
  - salvation.
19. To be an effective witness for Christ believers must
- be silent.
  - be submissive to unbelievers.
  - speak the right words at the right times.
  - do all of the above.
20. Believers are to reach their own "Jerusalem," which means
- the state/province in which they live.
  - the country in which they live.
  - the city in which they live.
  - people of their own race.
21. According to the IST, how many stages of growth did the church experience in the book of Acts?
- 3
  - 5
  - 7
  - 10
22. The Mount of Olives was a
- burial ground.
  - amphitheater.
  - pasture.
  - olive orchard.
23. The term apostle means
- student.
  - anointed to serve.
  - set apart.
  - sent out.
24. According to Acts 1:21–22, an apostle had to be
- a Jew.
  - from Galilee.
  - a follower of Jesus, witnessing his baptism, resurrection, and ascension.
  - all of the above.
25. The four steps individuals or a church can take to prepare for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit are
- obedience, patience, prayer, and diligence.
  - prayer, unity, obedience, and the study and application of God's Word.
  - unity, prayer, patience, and obedience.
  - obedience, unity, diligence, and the study and application of God's Word.

After answering all of the questions in this UPE, check your answers with the answer key. Review material related to questions you may have missed, and then proceed to the next unit.

## UNIT PROGRESS EVALUATION 2

### Acts: The Holy Spirit at Work in Believers, Third Edition (Unit 2—Chapter 3–7)

#### MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

*Select the best answer to each question.*

1. The Feast of Pentecost marked the beginning of the
  - a) barley harvest.
  - b) olive harvest.
  - c) grape harvest.
  - d) wheat harvest.
2. In the Bible, yeast is often a symbol of
  - a) sin.
  - b) righteousness.
  - c) mourning.
  - d) joy.
3. The idea that God would work through believers in a powerful and unseen manner is symbolized on the Day of Pentecost by
  - a) the tongues of fire.
  - b) the believers speaking in tongues.
  - c) a violent earthquake.
  - d) a mighty rushing wind.
4. How many times does the book of Acts record the initial baptism of believers with the Holy Spirit?
  - a) 3
  - b) 5
  - c) 7
  - d) 10
5. Praying in tongues
  - a) edifies the believer.
  - b) releases the human spirit to fully express itself to God.
  - c) edifies the believer and releases the human spirit to fully express itself to God.
  - d) is forbidden in a corporate setting.
6. On the Day of Pentecost, the crowd responded with
  - a) hostility, mocking, and bewilderment.
  - b) bewilderment, utter amazement, and mocking.
  - c) gladness, utter amazement, and bewilderment.
  - d) hostility, bewilderment, and gladness.
7. Peter’s methods on the Day of Pentecost included
  - a) compromise, treating listeners with respect, and being prepared.
  - b) speaking with authority, compromise, being prepared, and treating listeners with respect.
  - c) intellectual debate, treating listeners with respect, and being prepared.
  - d) treating listeners with respect, meeting them where they are, speaking with authority, and being prepared.
8. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter preached about
  - a) what was happening on the Day of Pentecost.
  - b) why Pentecost happened.
  - c) how Pentecost could come to each person.
  - d) all of the above.
9. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter addressed his listeners concerns by saying,
  - a) “And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”
  - b) “The sun will be turned to darkness and moon to blood.”
  - c) “These men are not drunk, as you suppose.”
  - d) “I saw the Lord always before me.”
10. According to the IST, marks of a biblical church include
  - a) love, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.
  - b) love, self-control, and perseverance.
  - c) repentance, baptism, and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.
  - d) repentance, love, and joy in the Holy Spirit.
11. The healing of a lame beggar in Acts 3 took place at the
  - a) Mount of Olives.
  - b) temple.
  - c) Gate Beautiful.
  - d) pool of Bethesda.
12. The lame man healed in Acts 3 was healed as Peter
  - a) called him to stand up.
  - b) anointed him with oil.
  - c) preached to the surrounding crowd.
  - d) reached to him and took him by the hand.

13. Peter's message to the Jews and their leaders, following the healing of the lame man in Acts 3, indicated that God had chosen to view their active role in Jesus' crucifixion as a sin of
- omission.
  - ignorance.
  - death.
  - hatred.
14. Peter's message to the crowd and religious leaders in Acts 4 resulted in
- imprisonment.
  - suffering.
  - two thousand more believers being added to the church.
  - all of the above.
15. According to the IST, two common reasons religious people resist a work of God are
- pride and selfishness.
  - pre-conceived notions and selfishness.
  - pet beliefs and pre-conceived notions.
  - pride and pet beliefs.
16. Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead by God because they
- had taken money from the church.
  - rebelled against the leadership of the church.
  - were preaching false doctrine.
  - lied and secretly kept some money for themselves.
17. The early church showed concern for others by demonstrating
- unity and selflessness.
  - a powerful testimony.
  - generosity.
  - all of the above.
18. Earmarks of a powerful church are
- publicly meeting together and supernatural events.
  - generosity and strong attendance.
  - honesty and trust.
  - signs and wonders and peace.
19. According to the IST, Satan tries to defeat the church through
- despair, prosperity, and peace.
  - fear, division, and persecution.
  - seduction, peace, and success.
  - seduction, apathy, and sickness.
20. In Acts 5, after the apostles were released from prison by an angel, they
- returned to their homes and hid.
  - fled for their lives.
  - were found teaching in the temple courts.
  - gathered for prayer in the upper room.
21. The first problem recorded in Acts that the early church had to face was between
- Peter and John.
  - Jewish and Gentile believers.
  - Grecian and Hebraic Jewish believers.
  - Jewish and Samaritan believers.
22. The apostles addressed the first church conflict in Acts 6 by
- recognizing the problem and taking intelligent steps to solve it.
  - honestly facing their own limitations.
  - delegating authority to others that were qualified and capable.
  - all the above.
23. The Greek *martus* is translated as
- "witness."
  - "rock."
  - "persecution."
  - "overcomer."
24. In Stephen's speech to the Sanhedrin he addressed
- God's relationship with the Patriarchs.
  - Solomon's Temple and God's presence.
  - the Jewish leaders pattern of rejection towards men of faith.
  - all of the above.
25. As the Jewish leaders approached Stephen to kill him, Stephen looked up to heaven and saw Jesus
- sitting at the right hand of God.
  - standing at the right hand of God.
  - bowing before God.
  - interceding for the him.

After answering all of the questions in this UPE, check your answers with the answer key. Review material related to questions you may have missed, and then proceed to the next unit.

## UNIT PROGRESS EVALUATION 3

### Acts: The Holy Spirit at Work in Believers, Third Edition (Unit 3—Chapter 8–9)

#### MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Select the best answer to each question.

- According to Acts 8, the church began evangelism efforts outside of Jerusalem due to
  - vision of the apostles.
  - the persecution that followed Stephen's death.
  - openness of the Gentiles to hear the Gospel.
  - the preaching of Peter and John.
- The Samaritans worshiped at a temple located on
  - Mount Sinai.
  - Mount Nebo.
  - Mount Gerazim.
  - Mount Moriah.
- The believers in Samaria received the baptism of the Holy Spirit when Peter and John
  - blew on them.
  - preached to them.
  - laid hands on them.
  - anointed them.
- The Samaritan people were people who
  - descended from the northern tribes.
  - had intermarried with non-Jews.
  - mixed their culture and religion with Assyrian people.
  - all of the above.
- Who was the popular convert in Samaria who had previously practiced sorcery and later wanted to buy the gift of God?
  - Demas
  - Simon
  - Elymas
  - Bar-Jesus
- Simony* means "to"
  - preach false doctrine."
  - buy or sell a church office for money."
  - show favoritism."
  - practice sorcery."
- Philip's preaching and ministry in Samaria was followed by
  - the sick and paralytics being healed.
  - demons being cast out of people.
  - many people believing in Jesus and following the Lord in water baptism.
  - all of the above.
- When Philip approached the Ethiopian eunuch, he was reading from
  - Jeremiah 40:1–9.
  - Isaiah 6:1–6.
  - Psalms 22.
  - Isaiah 52:13–53:12.
- The Ethiopian eunuch demonstrated his faith in Christ by
  - leaping for joy.
  - giving generously to the church.
  - tearing his clothes and repenting of his sins to God.
  - being baptized in water.
- Saul was the apostle Paul's
  - Jewish name.
  - Roman name.
  - Greek name.
  - Aramaic name.
- On the road to Damascus, Saul
  - saw a bright light.
  - fell to the ground.
  - heard a voice.
  - experienced all of the above.
- God revealed to Ananias that Saul would be His chosen instrument to bear His name before
  - kings, the poor, and the Gentiles.
  - the Gentiles, the sons of Israel, and the wealthy.
  - the Gentiles, the sons of Israel, and kings.
  - princes, kings, and governors.
- A few days after Saul's conversion, he
  - went into hiding.
  - began to preach in the synagogue.
  - reported his conversion experience to the Jewish leaders.
  - started on his first missionary journey.
- Whose name means "son of encouragement?"
  - Barnabas
  - Ananias
  - Luke
  - Peter

- 15.** Tabitha (Dorcas) was known for her
- beautiful looks.
  - good works and helping the poor.
  - purple garments she sold.
  - good cooking.
- 16.** Cornelius was a
- centurion.
  - Gentile.
  - God-fearer.
  - all of the above.
- 17.** God prepared Peter to go to Cornelius' home by
- sending an angel to speak to Peter.
  - giving Peter a vision while he was waiting for the noon meal.
  - giving Peter a dream at night.
  - sending Barnabas to talk to him.
- 18.** When the gathering of people at Cornelius' home began to speak in tongues it was a sign that
- they had been saved.
  - they had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
  - God had extended salvation to all people, even Gentiles.
  - all of the above.
- 19.** The church in Antioch became a missionary center for church growth because of its new
- building, leaders, and mission.
  - methods, leaders, and mission.
  - methods, building, and doctrine.
  - methods, leaders, and doctrine.
- 20.** According to the IST, the two distinguished leaders of the church in Antioch were
- Peter and John.
  - Peter and Paul.
  - Barnabas and Luke.
  - Paul and Barnabas.
- 21.** What city became the church's base for missionary activity to the Gentile world?
- Tarsus
  - Antioch
  - Jerusalem
  - Ephesus
- 22.** According to the IST, a new method that the church in Antioch used was
- preaching to Gentiles in Aramaic.
  - sharing the Gospel by going door to door.
  - speaking to the Greeks in their own tongue.
  - all of the above.
- 23.** According to the IST, God can use suffering
- to provide discipline in the life of a believer.
  - to change a believer's ministry direction.
  - for reasons unknown to believers.
  - all of the above.
- 24.** According to Acts 12, whom did Herod have arrested and then executed?
- Stephen
  - James
  - John
  - Peter
- 25.** In Acts 12, Peter's miraculous release from prison was because of
- a violent earthquake.
  - Herod's change of heart.
  - the Jewish leaders change of heart.
  - an angel.

After answering all of the questions in this UPE, check your answers with the answer key. Review material related to questions you may have missed, and then proceed to the next unit.

## UNIT PROGRESS EVALUATION 4

### Acts: The Holy Spirit at Work in Believers, Third Edition (Unit 4—Chapter 10-13)

#### MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

*Select the best answer to each question.*

- Obeying the direction of the Holy Spirit, the church in Antioch set apart and commissioned
  - Peter and John.
  - Paul and Barnabas.
  - Peter and Paul.
  - Paul and Silas.
- The seven principles of missionary work that are described in Chapter 10 of the IST are still relevant today and have their origin in
  - a prayer meeting of Antioch church leaders who had been praying together for missionary direction
  - the teachings of Jesus to His disciples in the upper room.
  - the lessons Paul and Barnabas learned after their encounter with Elymas the sorcerer.
  - the examples from Acts 13:4–12 that describe the activities of Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey.
- The IST lists six keys to overcoming difficulties, three of them are
  - keep a good attitude, be adaptable, and rejoice in the Lord at all times.
  - be adaptable, fight the good fight, and keep a good attitude.
  - fight the good fight, be prepared for the worst, and rejoice in the Lord at all times.
  - keep a good attitude, be adaptable, and glory in your accomplishments.
- According to the course author, which of the following is NOT a key to overcoming difficulty in ministry?
  - Be adaptable.
  - Keep a good attitude.
  - Prepare for the worst and expect the best.
  - Fight the good fight.
- At the conclusion of the Jerusalem Council, it was decided that Gentile believers should avoid
  - food offered to idols, ungodly people, unclean animals, and sexual immorality.
  - food offered to idols, blood, things strangled, and sexual immorality.
  - idols, blood, unclean animals, and sexual immorality.
  - food offered to idols, blood, unclean animals, and sexual immorality.
- The Jerusalem Council took place because
  - many Gentiles were being converted.
  - some Jews felt Gentiles needed to be circumcised in order to be saved.
  - of a dispute between the church of Antioch and brothers from Jerusalem.
  - of all of the events listed above.
- Before Paul's second missionary journey, he and Barnabas had a sharp disagreement concerning
  - when they should leave.
  - what route they should take.
  - how much money and provisions to take on their journey.
  - whether they should take Mark.
- From what city did Paul have a vision of a man from Macedonia begging them to come over to them?
  - Ephesus
  - Philippi
  - Athens
  - Troas
- Paul and Silas were flogged and thrown into prison at
  - Athens.
  - Ephesus.
  - Philippi.
  - Berea.

- 10.** Universalism believes
- all will be saved.
  - life is senseless and useless.
  - that there is no God.
  - that God can only be known through secret knowledge.
- 11.** The people of Berea were more noble in character than the Thessalonians because they
- accepted Paul's message without rejection.
  - eagerly received Paul's message and examined the Scriptures.
  - provided for Paul's physical needs while he was there.
  - were more intelligent and reasonable.
- 12.** An agnostic believes
- there is no God.
  - that if there is a God, He is unknowable.
  - God can only be known through secret knowledge.
  - that there are many gods.
- 13.** In Corinth, Paul met
- Titus.
  - Timothy.
  - Priscilla and Aquila.
  - Lydia.
- 14.** At Corinth, Paul was encouraged by the Lord in a vision to
- return to Antioch a different way.
  - remain faithful, for God would protect him.
  - flee by night to Athens.
  - sail to Ephesus.
- 15.** On Paul's third missionary journey, Paul spent most of his time in the city of
- Corinth.
  - Philippi.
  - Thessalonica.
  - Ephesus.
- 16.** What had prevented Paul from going to Ephesus on his second missionary journey?
- Weather
  - Finances
  - Political unrest
  - The nudge of the Holy Spirit
- 17.** A watershed event in the city of Ephesus that led to the spread of the gospel was
- the incident involving the seven sons of Sceva.
  - Paul casting out a demon from a slave girl.
  - the healing of a man crippled from birth.
  - the conversion of Lydia.
- 18.** Who fell from a third story window as Paul preached through the night at Troas?
- Apollos
  - Eutychus
  - Tychicus
  - Artistarchus
- 19.** Toward the end of Paul's third missionary journey, he was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem by
- Pentecost.
  - winter.
  - the Day of Atonement.
  - spring.
- 20.** A citywide uproar resulted when Paul was accused of
- teaching against the Jewish people, their law, and the temple, and of defiling God's presence by bringing Gentiles into the temple.
  - entering the Holy Place without first being purified and of teaching Jews that Jesus was greater than Moses.
  - convincing Jews around the world to believe in Jesus and of eating and drinking with Gentiles.
  - persecuting Jews who rejected Jesus and of failing to observe the feasts in Jerusalem.
- 21.** Which statement best describes Paul's experience with God as he made his final journey to Jerusalem?
- Paul was unsure whether God was truly leading him to Jerusalem.
  - Paul could have avoided the suffering in Jerusalem if he had listened to the Holy Spirit.
  - God directed Paul to go to Jerusalem and intended for him to endure the hardship and suffering.
  - Paul was promised happiness, prosperity, and success if he would first go to Jerusalem and suffer temporarily.
- 22.** Luke's record of Paul's trials in Jerusalem and Caesarea, including his accounts of Paul's defense speeches, clearly establishes that Paul
- was absolutely innocent of violating any law, Jewish or Roman.
  - frequently violated Roman law, but there was not enough evidence to execute him.
  - was guilty of violating Jewish temple law but not Roman law.
  - had no intention of honoring either Jewish or Roman law because it conflicted with his faith in Jesus.

23. What was Paul's attitude toward the storm at sea and the certain shipwreck?
- Paul advised the crew based on his assumption that God would protect him until he arrived in Rome.
  - An angel sent from God promised Paul that all onboard the ship would be saved.
  - Paul wanted to witness to the crew as his last act of obedience to God.
  - Paul was angry with the crew for insisting on sailing during the winter.
24. Luke's accounts of Paul's trials establish all the following EXCEPT that Paul
- was innocent beyond any doubt.
  - could have been released immediately if he had obeyed the Holy Spirit's prompting.
  - had the opportunity to present the gospel to the most powerful men in the Roman Empire.
  - had remained loyal to Jewish customs and traditions following his conversion to faith in Jesus Christ.
25. The principles illustrated in Paul's imprisonment experience teach us that
- God may expect us to endure severe hardship to accomplish His purposes.
  - God promises to deliver us from all suffering to prove His power over the world.
  - we are not apostles and should not expect God to lead us through such intense suffering.
  - those who are willing to share the gospel will experience less suffering than those who refuse.

After answering all of the questions in this UPE, check your answers with the answer key. Review material related to questions you may have missed. Review all materials in preparation for the closed-book final exam. Complete and submit your SLR assignment and take the final examination.

### Taking the Final Examination

- All final exams must be taken closed book.** You are not allowed to use any materials or outside help while taking a final exam. You will take the final examination online at [www.globaluniversity.edu](http://www.globaluniversity.edu). If the online option is not available to you, you may request a printed final exam. If you did not request a printed final exam when you ordered your course, you must submit this request a few weeks before you are ready to take the exam. The Request for a Printed Final Examination is in the Forms section of Essential Course Materials at the back of this IST.
- Review for the final examination in the same manner in which you prepared for the UPEs. Refer to the form Checklist of Study Methods in the front part of the IST for further helpful review hints.
- After you complete and submit the online final examination, the results will be immediately available to you. Your final course grade report will be e-mailed to your Global University student e-mail account after your Service Learning Requirement (SLR) report has been processed.
- If you complete the exam in printed form, you will send your final examination, your answer sheets, and your SLR report to Berean School of the Bible for grading. Your final course grade report will be sent to your GU student e-mail account. If you do not have access to the Internet, your grade will be sent to your mailing address.



# Answer Keys

- **Compare your answers to the Test Yourself quizzes against those given in this section.**
- **Compare your answers to the UPE questions against the answer keys located in this section.**
- **Review the course content identified by your incorrect answers.**



# ANSWERS TO TEST YOURSELF

## BIB115 Acts: The Holy Spirit at Work in Believers, Third Edition

Answers below are followed by the number of the objective being tested. For any questions you answered incorrectly, review the lesson content in preparation for your final exam.

### Chapter 1

1. B 1.1.1
2. A 1.1.1
3. C 1.2.1
4. D 1.2.2
5. D 1.2.2
6. C 1.2.4
7. B 1.2.4
8. B 1.3.1
9. A 1.3.1
10. B 1.3.1

### Chapter 2

1. D 2.1.1
2. C 2.1.1
3. B 2.2.1
4. D 2.2.1
5. B 2.2.1
6. A 2.2.1
7. B 2.2.1
8. B 2.2.1
9. A 2.3.1
10. D 2.3.1

### Chapter 3

1. C 3.1.1
2. B 3.1.1
3. C 3.1.1
4. C 3.2.1
5. C 3.2.1
6. D 3.2.1
7. A 3.2.1
8. C 3.3.1
9. B 3.3.1
10. D 3.3.1

### Chapter 4

1. C 4.1.1
2. A 4.1.1
3. B 4.1.1
4. C 4.2.1
5. B 4.2.1
6. B 4.2.1
7. B 4.2.1
8. A 4.2.1
9. D 4.3.1
10. D 4.3.1

### Chapter 5

1. B 5.1.1
2. A 5.1.1
3. D 5.1.1
4. A 5.1.1
5. B 5.2.1
6. C 5.2.1
7. B 5.2.1
8. B 5.3.1
9. D 5.3.1
10. A 5.3.1

### Chapter 6

1. B 6.1.1
2. A 6.1.1
3. D 6.1.1
4. B 6.1.2
5. A 6.2.1
6. C 6.2.1
7. D 6.3.1
8. A 6.3.1
9. B 6.3.1
10. B 6.3.1

### Chapter 7

1. D 7.1.1
2. A 7.1.1
3. C 7.1.2
4. A 7.1.2
5. C 7.2.1
6. B 7.2.1
7. D 7.2.1
8. C 7.2.1
9. D 7.3.1
10. B 7.3.1

### Chapter 8

1. A 8.1.1
2. D 8.1.1
3. B 8.1.1
4. A 8.1.1
5. B 8.2.1
6. A 8.2.1
7. B 8.2.1
8. D 8.3.1
9. B 8.3.1
10. D 8.3.1

### Chapter 9

1. C 9.1.1
2. B 9.1.1
3. A 9.1.1
4. A 9.1.1
5. D 9.2.1
6. D 9.2.1
7. B 9.2.1
8. D 9.3.1
9. A 9.3.1
10. D 9.3.1

### Chapter 10

1. D 10.1.1
2. B 10.1.1
3. C 10.1.1
4. B 10.1.1
5. B 10.2.1
6. D 10.2.1
7. B 10.2.1
8. B 10.3.1
9. C 10.3.1
10. D 10.3.1

### Chapter 11

1. B 11.1.1
2. D 11.1.1
3. C 11.1.1
4. D 11.2.1
5. D 11.2.1
6. D 11.2.1
7. A 11.2.1
8. D 11.3.1
9. B 11.3.1
10. C 11.3.1

### Chapter 12

1. A 12.1.1
2. B 12.1.1
3. C 12.1.1
4. D 12.1.1
5. D 12.1.1
6. C 12.1.1
7. D 12.1.1
8. B 12.1.1
9. D 12.2.1
10. B 12.2.1

### Chapter 13

1. A 13.2.1
2. C 13.1.2
3. A 13.2.1
4. D 13.2.1
5. B 13.2.1
6. C 13.3.2
7. D 13.3.1
8. B 13.3.2
9. B 13.3.1
10. A 13.3.3

# UNIT PROGRESS EVALUATION ANSWER KEYS

## BIB115 Acts: The Holy Spirit at Work in Believers, Third Edition

Answers below are followed by the number of the objective being tested. For any questions you answered incorrectly, review the lesson content in preparation for your final exam.

### UNIT PROGRESS EVALUATION 1

1 C 1.1.1	14 D 2.1.1
2 B 1.1.1	15 A 2.1.1
3 B 1.1.1	16 D 2.1.1
4 C 1.1.1	17 D 2.1.1
5 C 1.1.1	18 A 2.2.1
6 D 1.1.1	19 C 2.2.1
7 A 1.2.1	20 C 2.2.1
8 D 1.2.3	21 B 2.2.1
9 D 1.3.1	22 A 2.2.1
10 C 1.3.1	23 D 1.1.1
11 A 2.1.1	24 C 2.3.1
12 B 2.1.1	25 B 2.3.1
13 C 2.1.1	

### UNIT PROGRESS EVALUATION 2

1 D 3.1.1	14 D 5.3.1
2 A 3.1.1	15 C 5.3.1
3 D 3.2.1	16 D 6.1.1
4 B 3.2.1	17 D 6.1.1
5 C 3.3.1	18 A 6.2.1
6 B 4.1.1	19 B 6.3.1
7 D 4.2.1	20 C 6.3.1
8 D 4.2.1	21 C 7.1.2
9 C 4.2.1	22 D 7.1.2
10 C 4.3.1	23 A 7.2.1
11 C 5.1.1	24 D 7.2.1
12 D 5.1.1	25 B 7.3.1
13 B 5.2.1	

### UNIT PROGRESS EVALUATION 3

1 B 8.1.1	14 A 8.3.1
2 C 8.1.1	15 B 9.1.1
3 C 8.1.1	16 D 9.1.1
4 D 8.1.1	17 B 9.1.1
5 B 8.1.1	18 D 9.1.1
6 B 8.1.1	19 B 9.2.1
7 D 8.1.1	20 D 9.2.1
8 D 8.2.1	21 B 9.2.1
9 D 8.2.1	22 C 9.2.1
10 A 8.3.1	23 D 9.3.1
11 D 8.3.1	24 B 9.3.1
12 C 8.3.1	25 D 9.3.1
13 B 8.3.1	

### UNIT PROGRESS EVALUATION 4

1 B 10.1.1	14 B 11.3.1
2 D 10.1.1	15 D 12.1.1
3 B 10.2.1	16 D 12.1.1
4 C 10.2.1	17 A 12.1.1
5 B 10.3.1	18 B 12.2.1
6 D 10.3.1	19 A 12.2.1
7 D 11.1.1	20 A 13.1.1
8 D 11.1.1	21 C 13.1.2
9 C 11.1.1	22 A 13.2.1
10 A 11.2.1	23 B 13.3.1
11 B 11.2.1	24 B 13.3.2
12 B 11.2.1	25 A 13.3.3
13 C 11.3.1	

# Forms

**The following pages contain two course forms: the Round-Tripper and the Request for a Printed Final Examination.**

1. For students who do not have access to e-mail, we are including one **Round-Tripper** for your use if you have a question or comment related to your studies. If you do not have access to the Internet, you will want to make several photocopies of the Round-Tripper before you write on it. Retain the copies for submitting additional questions as needed. Students who have access to e-mail can submit questions at any time to [bsbcontent@globaluniversity.edu](mailto:bsbcontent@globaluniversity.edu).
2. Students who do not have access to the Internet-based tests may request a printed final examination. For faster service, please call Enrollment Services at 1-800-443-1083 or fax your **Request for a Printed Final Examination** to 417-862-0863.



# ROUND-TRIPPER

**BIB115 Acts: The Holy Spirit at Work in Believers,  
Third Edition**

Date .....

Your Name ..... Your Student Number .....

---

Send questions and comments by e-mail to [bsbcontent@globaluniversity.edu](mailto:bsbcontent@globaluniversity.edu). If you do not have access to e-mail, use this form to write to Berean School of the Bible with questions or comments related to your studies. Write your question in the space provided. Send this form to Berean School of the Bible. The form will make its return, or round-trip, as Berean School of the Bible responds.

---

YOUR QUESTION:

---

FOR BEREAN SCHOOL OF THE BIBLE'S RESPONSE:







1211 South Glenstone Springfield, MO 65804  
 1-800-443-1083 \* Fax 1-417-862-0863  
 www.globaluniversity.edu

## BEREAN SCHOOL OF THE BIBLE REQUEST FOR A PRINTED FINAL EXAMINATION

**NOTE: All final exams are to be taken closed-book.**

Final examinations are available online at [www.globaluniversity.edu](http://www.globaluniversity.edu).

Taking the test online gives immediate results and feedback. You will know your test grade and which learning objectives you may have missed.

Students who do not have access to the Internet-based tests may request a printed final examination. For faster service, please call Enrollment Services at **1-800-443-1083** or fax this form to **417-862-0863**.

If preferred, mail this form to:

Berean School of the Bible, Global University  
 Attn: Enrollment Services  
 1211 South Glenstone  
 Springfield, MO 65804

Please allow 7–10 business days for delivery of your final examination. **You may only request an exam for the course or courses in which you are currently enrolled.**

Student Number

Name

Address

City, State, Zip Code

Phone

E-mail

### Certified Minister

- BIB114 Christ in the Synoptic Gospels
- BIB115 Acts: The Holy Spirit at Work in Believers
- BIB117 Prison Epistles: Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, and Philippians
- BIB121 Introduction to Hermeneutics: How to Interpret the Bible
- THE114 Introduction to Pentecostal Doctrine
- THE142 Assemblies of God History, Missions, and Governance
- MIN123 The Local Church in Evangelism
- MIN181 Relationships and Ethics in Ministry
- MIN191 Beginning Ministerial Internship

### Licensed Minister

- BIB212 New Testament Survey
- BIB214 Old Testament Survey
- BIB215 Romans: Justification by Faith
- THE211 Introduction to Theology: A Pentecostal Perspective
- THE245 Eschatology: A Study of Things to Come
- MIN223 Introduction to Homiletics
- MIN251 Effective Leadership
- MIN261 Introduction to Assemblies of God Missions
- MIN281 Conflict Management for Church Leaders
- MIN291 Intermediate Ministerial Internship

### Ordained Minister

- BIB313 Corinthian Correspondence
- BIB318 Pentateuch
- BIB322 Poetic Books
- THE311 Prayer and Worship
- MIN325 Preaching in the Contemporary World
- MIN327 Church Administration, Finance, and Law
- MIN381 Pastoral Ministry
- MIN391 Advanced Ministerial Internship

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_