



**Bethel Gospel Chapel
Home Bible Study Guide
Survey of the Book of Acts**

INTRODUCTION

For the next twelve weeks, we will be making a survey of Acts in our home Bible studies. In his Gospel, Luke 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). Now he continues to record how the apostles carried out the Lord's instructions, and what the results were.

1. Acts is a historical book

Luke is accurate in the information he gives to us. After doing research for many years in the region where the events described by Luke were enacted, Ramsey, the famous archaeologist, states unambiguously that:

"Luke's history is unsurpassed in respect to its trustworthiness. Luke is a historian of first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy, but he is possessed of the true historic sense In short, this author should be placed along with the greatest historians." N.I.C. on the Gospel of Luke, pp. 39-40

This assessment is confirmed by Harrison through his re-search into the times of which Luke writes. He states that Luke is accurate in the information he gives: *"Geographical notes are accurate, as are the references to Roman officials, who are always called by the title appropriate to their position."*
..... *"For Acts the confirmation of historicity is over-whelming."*
Acts, the Expanding Church, pp. 21 & 25

2. Acts is a transitional book

It is a bridge between the Gospels and the Epistles of the New Testament. It contains both historical and biographical information that is crucial to our understanding of how Christianity spread from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. Luke has combined careful research with firsthand knowledge to produce the book. Acts is not an exhaustive history, but is a carefully selected series of events that trace the first steps of the disciples toward fulfilling their responsibility *"to be witnesses for me"*. You will want to use both the chronological table and the maps of Paul's missionary journeys to integrate into your study at the appropriate time and place the epistles written to the churches whose establishment is recorded in Acts.

The book of Acts is sometimes referred to as the Acts of the Holy Spirit, but Harrison in his book *The Expanding Church* makes what is to me a striking statement which has important implications for us. He says:

"The title Acts of the Holy Spirit fails to convey any suggestion of the necessary human participation in the events recorded."

The fact is that God chooses to work through people. The history of Acts, the history of the church is the amazing story of men and women who participated and continue to participate in that work to the glory of God.

"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service ..." Ephesians 4:11-12 (N.I.V.)

"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men." 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 (N.I.V.)

To facilitate your obtaining an overall understanding of the book, we have included at the end of each lesson a section called Growth and Development in which we would ask you to keep a record of the people, examples of evangelism, the churches, and the problems which you encounter as you read the book. Not every study of course, will have all four of these features but keep a record of those you see. We would suggest that you briefly record:

- 1. The people involved, identifying the main characters
- 2. List examples of evangelism, noting what they have in common
- 3. What churches are mentioned; are you told how they are governed and what do they have in common?
- 4. Identify the problems which arose and note especially how they are resolved.

There are many excellent commentaries available on Acts. My favourite is the first one on the list below. It was the first Christian book I ever purchased and forty years ago it set me on the road to becoming a serious Christian. It is not necessary to have any of these books in order to do these studies since the questions are based on the information contained in the Bible itself. What they do is to provide informative and helpful information in regard to the cultural, social, religious, and political life of a world very different from our own; yet one in which the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ was, as it still is today, *"the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes"*.

- The Life and Epistles of St. Paul, Conybeare S Howson, Eerdmans
- Acts, the Expanding Church, Harrison, Moody Press
- Paul, Apostle of the Heart Set Free, Bruce, Eerdmans
- Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 8, John S Acts, Zondervan

There is also available from Navigators Life Changing Series of Bible Studies a book on Acts that is an excellent and concise source of background material along with many good study tips.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE FOR ACTS A.D. 30 - A.D. 62

- A.D. 30 - 37- Christ's Resurrection, Commission & Ascension
- Pentecost
 - The Martyrdom of Stephen
 - Persecution and Dispersion of the Disciples
 - Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus
 - Peter commissioned to take the Gospel to the Gentiles

PAUL'S ACTIVITIES AS RECORDED IN ACTS AND CONFIRMED BY REFERENCES TO PLACES AND EVENTS IN HIS EPISTLES:

- A.D. 38 - From Damascus to Jerusalem and from Jerusalem to Tarsus
- A.D. 44 - From Tarsus to Antioch
- A.D. 45 - Visits Jerusalem with Barnabas to provide famine relief
- A.D. 48 - First missionary journey from Antioch to Asia Minor
- A.D. 50 - Church Council at Jerusalem
- A.D. 51 - Second missionary journey from Antioch to Corinth
- A.D. 52 - Paul writes 1 Thessalonians from Corinth
- A.D. 53 - Paul writes 2 Thessalonians from Corinth
- A.D. 54 - Third missionary journey from Ephesus to Jerusalem
- A.D. 57 - Paul writes 1 Corinthians from Ephesus
- Paul writes 2 Corinthians from Macedonia
- Paul writes Galatians from Corinth
- A.D. 58 - Paul writes Romans from Corinth
- Travels to Jerusalem, arrested and sent to Caesarea
- A.D. 60 - Sent to Rome
- A.D. 61 - Arrives in Rome
- A.D. 62 - Paul writes Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, Philippians from Rome

HISTORY OF ACTS CONCLUDES AT THIS POINT

- A.D. 67 - Paul writes 1 Timothy from Macedonia
- Paul writes Titus from Ephesus
- A.D. 68 - Paul writes 2 Timothy from prison in Rome.

Tradition Says That Paul Was Executed by Nero in the Spring of A.D. 68.

Dates are approximate and are taken from The Life and Epistles of St. Paul by Conybeare and Howson, Eerdmans, 1950.



Survey of the Book of Acts Study # 1

READ: Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24 and John 20 & 21, Acts 1 & 2

1. In Acts, Luke says in 1:3 that Jesus gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. List those which seem most important to you as recorded in the above scriptures.
2. Why did Jesus ask His disciples to stay in Jerusalem?
3. Can you think of any reason why Jesus would not answer the question asked in verse 6?
4. What did the apostles do immediately following the ascension, vs. 12-14?

Why?
5. Why did Peter think that someone should be appointed to replace Judas, vs. 15-20?
6. What criteria is used to identify an apostle in vs. 21-22?
7. Describe the scene in vs. 1-12 in your own words.
8. Summarize Peter's explanation of the event in vs. 14-21.
9. According to vs. 22 what accreditation did Jesus Christ have?
10. What is the difference between Jesus and David as indicated in vs. 29-33?

11. Why are the people affected as recorded in vs. 37 by Peter's message?

12. What was the pattern of activity for the new believers, vs. 42?

RESPONSE

1. What do you learn from chapter 1 that is of practical value today?

2. Is there any parallel between the pattern of activity in Acts chapter 2 and our practices today?

SUMMARY OF GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Evangelism

Churches

Problems

Survey of the Book of Acts Study # 2

Read: Acts chapters 3 & 4

1. What effect did Peter's miracle have on the lame man, the witnesses, and on Peter's ministry?

2. Why does Peter use the phrase "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?"

What does it suggest to you about God?

3. Of what are the apostles witnesses as mentioned in vs. 15?

4. How do the references to Jesus in vs. 16 compare to the attitude of the Jews toward Him in their betrayal and crucifixion of Christ, vs. 17?

5. List four important points made by Peter in reference to Jesus Christ in vs. 18-23.

6. What does Peter mean when he says his listeners are "*heirs of the prophets and the covenants*" in vs. 25?

7. Why did the message of the resurrection disturb the Jews?

8. What major point is Peter making in vs. 8-13?

9. When would I be correct to disobey civil authority?

10. What requests are included in the apostles' prayer, vs. 24-30?

11. What is recorded in vs. 32-37 has been called Christian communism: how does it differ from what we know of communism today?

12. Note the references to the Holy Spirit in chapter 4. What part does He play in the apostles' lives?

RESPONSE

1 . What practical lesson is there for us in chapter 3?

2. What is the dilemma of the rulers of Israel as they are confronted with the miracle of healing?

What would you say is their basic problem?

SUMMARY OF GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

People

Evangelism

Churches

Problems

Survey of the Book of Acts Study #3

READ: Acts Chapters 5 & 6

1. Express the problem Peter discovers in Ananias and Sapphira in your own words, vs. 1-11.

2. What do we learn about the Holy Spirit in vs. 3-5?

3. Why do you suppose the incident affected the group as it did?

Note vs. 11.

4. How would you describe the attitude of the High Priest and his associates towards the apostles, vs. 17-28?

5. Explain Gamaliel's advice in your own words, vs. 33-39.

6. How would you describe the apostles' attitude toward the persecution, vs. 41-42?

7. What is the problem confronting the church in chapter 6:1?

8. Why do the apostles not accept responsibility for this problem, vs. 2?

9. How do the apostles and the church respond to the challenge, vs. 3-6?

10. What is the result, vs. 7?

11. Why is Stephen so successful in his ministry, vs. 8-10?

12. Can you see any similarity between the treatment of Stephen and the earlier treatment given to Jesus Christ, vs. 11-15?

If yes, explain.

RESPONSE

1. Of the events in chapter 5, which is the most significant to you and why?

2. Note that Stephen is one of those chosen to help in the food distribution, chapter 6:3. What kind of man was he?

What does this teach us about service?

SUMMARY OF GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

People

Evangelism

Survey of the Book of Acts Study #4

READ: Acts Chapters 7 & 8

1. List the main points of Israel's history as recounted in vs. 2 to 8.
2. What is Joseph's role in Israel's history, vs. 9-19?
3. List the highlights of Moses' life, vs. 20-38?
4. What do you learn about God from vs. 39-50?
5. Why does Stephen's defence include these details of Israel history?
6. Why do the Jews have such a violent reaction to Stephen's summation of their history, vs. 51-50?
7. Suggest one or more reasons why persecution broke out at this particular time, chapter 8, vs. 1-3.
8. Can you think of any advantage to persecution, vs. 4-8?
9. Do you think that Simon could be a Christian?
If not, why? (vs. 9-25)

10. What part do Peter and John play in the Samaritan mission?

Why are they involved? (vs. 14-25)

11. What lessons can be learned about witnessing for Christ in the story of Philip and the Ethiopian, vs. 25-40?

12. Baptism is referred to in both vs. 12 and 13 and in vs. 36-38. What part does this rite play in the incidents recorded?

RESPONSE

1. If you were called upon to defend your faith in Christ today what items would you include in it?

2. Why would your defence of necessity have to be different from that of Stephen?

SUMMARY OF GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

People

Evangelism

Churches

Problems

Survey of the Book of Acts Study #5

READ: Acts Chapters 9 & 10

1. Why does Saul behave as he does in 9:1 & 2? (See I Timothy 1:13)
2. Saul's actions are regarded as an offence against Jesus, vs. 3-4. Why?
3. Why does Saul have this dramatic encounter with Jesus, vs. 5-16?
4. Why do you think that Saul was so immediately effective in his witness, vs. 17-22?
5. What additional insights do you learn about Saul's experience in Damascus and Jerusalem from 2 Corinthians 11:32-33 and Acts 26:17-21?
6. What is the significance of the events recorded in vs. 32 - 43?
7. List the things you learn about Cornelius from chapter 10:1-8?
8. Why does Peter have this particular vision, vs. 9-29?
9. Why does the angel appear to Cornelius, vs. 30-33?

10. Summarize in your own words Peter's sermon, vs. 34-43.

11. Why were the believers who were with Peter surprised, vs. 44-46?

12. On what grounds does Peter authorize the baptism of the Gentiles, vs. 47-48?

RESPONSE

1. What do you learn about the Lord From chapter 9?

2. What do you learn about how the Lord works in chapter 10?

SUMMARY OF GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

People

Evangelism

Churches

Problems

Survey of the Book of Acts Study #6

READ: Acts Chapters 11 & 12

1. Who criticizes Peter's behaviour and why, vs. 1-3?
2. How does Peter defend his actions, vs. 4-14?
3. What important role do the brothers who went with Peter fulfill?
4. The key argument which Peter makes occurs in vs. 15-17. Put this argument in your own words.
5. What persuades Barnabas that the work at Antioch is of the Lord, and how does he contribute to it, vs. 19-25?
6. The First Fellowship between the churches at Jerusalem and Antioch takes what form, vs. 27-30?
7. What is Herod's motive in arresting some of the church members, chapter 12, 1-2?
8. Why does he arrest Peter, vs. 3-4?
9. What resource does the church employ on Peter's behalf, vs. 5?

10. Why do you think the disciples had the reaction they did to Peter's appearance at the house of Mark, vs. 6-17?

11. Why do you think Peter's guards were executed, vs. 18-19?

12. What do you learn about the Lord From vs. 20-24?

RESPONSE

1. If you are attempting to do a work for the Lord, why is it wise not to act independently of your fellow Christians?

2. What do you learn about prayer from chapter 12?

SUMMARY OF GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

People

Evangelism

Churches

Problems

Survey of the Book of Acts Study #7

READ: Acts Chapters 13 & 14

1. List the things you learn about the churches at Antioch in chapter 11:1-3.

Note: The map of Paul's missionary journey's will help you locate the places mentioned in these two chapters.

2. What do you learn about their methods of witnessing from vs 4-12?

Note: From this point in Acts, Luke uses Paul's Gentile name and he takes the place of leadership. This change may have had something to do with the decision of John Mark to return to Jerusalem. This decision later became the decisive factor in the breakup of the first missionary team. Acts 15:37-39 indicates that Barnabas and Paul had very different views in regard to Mark's behaviour.

3. Why do they begin this ministry in the synagogue, vs. 13-15?

4. What is the purpose of Paul's summary of Israel's history, vs. 16-25?

5. List the main points of Paul's message to the congregation, vs. 26-41.

6. What happens as a result of Paul & Barnabas' teaching and why, vs. 42-52?

7. This pattern of behaviour was repeated wherever the synagogues were used as places to introduce the gospel. Why do you think these early missionaries persisted in this approach which was so divisive, chapter 14:1-6?

8. What is the difference between the cities of Iconium and Lystra, chapter 14:1-6 & 14:8-13?

9. How do Barnabas and Paul adapt their message to this new situation, vs. 14-18?

10. What do you learn from vs. 19 & 20?

11. Why do they return to the cities in which they have already preached the gospel, vs. 21-25?

12. What do you learn about missionary work from vs. 26-28?

RESPONSE

1. Why is it necessary to vary or adapt the message of the gospel when witnessing and how do you determine when and how to do this?

2. Why do you think accountability is important in Christian service?

SUMMARY OF GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

People

Problems

Survey of the Book of Acts Study #8

READ: Acts Chapters 15 & 16

Note: The passage of time as indicated in Acts 14:28. The events recorded in chapter 15 take place approximately 20 years from the commencement of Luke's history (see the included chronological chart for details). In the church at Antioch, Jew and Gentile believers have been living in fellowship with one another since the church was established about 44 A.D..

1. Why does a disagreement break out within the fellowship, chapter 15:1 & 2?
2. What is the two-fold purpose of the trip to Jerusalem, vs. 2-4?

Note: If you are not familiar with the crucial issues involved in this dispute, please read Galatians 2:1-21, and answer the next two questions before proceeding with this study.

3. Summarize the results of this teaching on the church, who was involved and why?
4. Why is Peter in particular at fault?
5. What action was decisive in proving that the Gentiles do not need to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses to be saved, vs. 5-11?
6. What support for Peter's argument does James provide, vs. 15-21?
7. List the safeguards taken to ensure that there would be no grounds for misunderstanding the council in Jerusalem, vs 22-35.

Note: Use the map of Paul's second missionary journey to follow the events which take place in the balance of Study #8. Barnabas and Mark go to Cyprus while Paul and Silas travel overland through Syria and Cilicia.

8. Explain why Paul would circumcise Timothy when he had so vigorously apposed the practice both at Antioch and at Jerusalem, chapter 15:1-5.

9. What conclusions can be reached about the city of Philippi based on the information in vs. 11-13 and 19-21?

10. The slave girl was telling the truth. Why was Paul so troubled by her behaviour, vs. 16-18?

11. Describe Paul and Silas' reaction to their treatment and what was its result, vs. 22-34?

12. Why do you think Paul refused to leave Philippi quietly, vs. 35-40?

RESPONSE

1. Based on the information in chapter 15, how should a dispute threatening the fellowship of a church be resolved?

2. There are two examples of conversions in chapter 16. What do we learn about how the Lord works in the lives of people through them?

SUMMARY OF GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

People

Evangelism

Churches

Problems

Survey of the Book of Acts Study #9

READ: Acts Chapters 17 & 18

1. Why does Paul continue to begin his witness for Christ in the synagogue when the results are so predictable, vs. 1-9?
2. What distinguishes the behaviour of the people at Berea from that of those in Thessalonica, vs. 10-15?
3. List the things you are told about Athens and its people, vs. 16-21.
4. Identify the main points of Paul's sermon, vs. 22-31.
5. In what ways does the message differ from those he preached in Thessalonica and Berea?
6. Why do you think this change in approach was needed?
7. What new insight do you gain into Paul's approach to his missionary work from chapter 18:1-4 (see 1 Corinthians 9:1-23)?
8. Why does Paul turn to the Gentiles at this point in his ministry, vs. 5-6?
9. What are the results of that decision, vs. 7-11:

Note: The First & Second Letters to the Thessalonians were written during this time period.

10. In what ways does the appearance of Paul before the authorities in Corinth differ from his experiences in other cities, vs. 12-17?

11. Can you suggest why there was such a different reaction?

12. What do you learn about working with people from the lives of Apollos, Priscilla and Aquila, vs. 24-28?

RESPONSE

1. Can you provide some examples where it would be to your advantage to change your method of presenting the gospel today?

2. Using Paul's example in chapter 18, suggest ways in which missionary work can be consolidated to the long-term benefit of those reached with the gospel.

SUMMARY OF GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

People

Churches

Problems

Survey of the Book of Acts Study #10

READ: Acts Chapters 19 through 21

Note: From the information given in Acts 18:18-28, we see that an initial presentation of the gospel was made in the synagogue at Ephesus when Paul, Priscilla and Aquila arrived there. After Paul's departure, they continued to meet in the synagogue but used such opportunities as arose to personally welcome and further instruct people such as Apollos in their own home. It was following this transitional period that Paul returned to Ephesus.

1. Why had these disciples not received the Holy Spirit, chapters 19:1-7?
2. List the steps by which the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power, vs. 8-20.
3. What is the real reason for the complaints of Demetrius against Paul, vs. 23-27?
4. Explain why the Christians are vindicated in this case, vs. 32-41.

Note: The map of Paul's missionary journey's will help you locate the places referred to in the balance of Study #10. It is important again to notice the passage of time as indicated on the chronological chart. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians was written from Ephesus. His second letter to them, as well as his letters to the Galatians and the Romans were written in this next time period.

5. What do you learn about Paul's approach to missionary work from chapter 20:1-12?
6. Try to express in your own words the point Paul is making in his opening remarks to the elders from Ephesus, vs. 17-21.
7. What is his overall objective in life, vs. 22-24?

8. What specific responsibilities does he commit to the elders and how are they equipped to fulfill them, vs. 25-38?

9. What do you learn about the early church from the information given in chapter 21:1-16?

10. Why do the elders of the church at Jerusalem advise Paul to demonstrate his obedience to the law, vs. 17-26?

11. Why does the attempt to gain the Jews' favour fail, vs. 27-29?

12. From Romans 15:23-33, it is obvious that Paul was well aware of the danger of returning to Jerusalem. What reason does he give for doing so?

RESPONSE

1. Explain why the overall behaviour of each Christian is so crucial to success in any community witness for Christ.

2. What is the most important thing that the elders of the church do for you?

SUMMARY OF GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

People

Evangelism

Churches

Problems

Survey of the Book of Acts Study #11

READ: Acts Chapters 22 through 24

1. List the points which Paul makes in his defence, chapter 22 1-16.
2. For what reasons is Paul told to leave Jerusalem, vs. 17 21?
3. What do you learn about the Roman judicial system from v 22-29?
4. Why do you think that Paul raises the issue of the resurrection during his appearance before the Sanhedrin, chapter 23:1-10?
5. What assurance did he receive about his future, vs. 11?
6. How are the circumstances in which he finds himself overruled by God, vs. 12-22?
7. What are the advantages gained by Paul's transfer from Jerusalem to Caesarea, vs. 23-35?
8. What is the purpose of Tertullus' opening remarks, and what specific charges does he bring against Paul, chapter 24:1-3?
9. Summarize Paul's defence in your own words, vs. 10-16
10. How does Paul succeed in putting his accusers on the defensive, vs. 17-21?

11. What reason is given for the favourable treatment Paul receives, vs. 22-23?

12. What do you learn about speaking about your faith in Christ from Paul's example during his imprisonment at Caesarea, vs. 24-27?

RESPONSE

1. In what circumstances do you think Christians are justified in exercising their rights as citizens?

2. Suggest ways in which you can strengthen and help maintain the reputation of the Christian community against slander and misrepresentations.

SUMMARY OF GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

People

Evangelism

Churches

Problems

Survey of the Book of Acts Study #12

READ: Acts Chapters 25 through 28

1. Why do you think the chief priests and leaders continue to press charges against Paul which they have been unable to prove, chapter 25:1-7?
2. What are Paul's reasons for appealing to Caesar, vs. 8-12?
3. Explain the predicament in which Festus finds himself in his new position, vs. 13-27.
4. Why does Paul appreciate the opportunity to present his defence to Agrippa, chapter 25:1-32?
5. List the crucial issues on which Paul bases his witness for Christ in this chapter.
6. On what grounds does Paul appeal to Agrippa's conscience, vs. 24-39?
7. Why do you think we are given the details of the voyage to Rome, chapter 27?
8. What do you learn about the people of Malta from the information given in chapter 28:1-10?
9. How do you explain the privileges extended to Paul, the prisoner, on this part of his journey to Rome, vs. 11-16?

10. What immediate steps does Paul take to secure a favourable hearing for himself among the Jews and why are they initially receptive, vs. 17-22?

11. What do you think was the root cause why so many of them refused to accept the testimony of Scripture (see Romans 10:1-4)?

12. How would you describe Paul's circumstances during these two years in Rome?

Note: It was during this time that Paul wrote what we call his prison letters, Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians and Philippians)

RESPONSE

1. What have you learned about presenting the Gospel from the examples of evangelism in Acts?

2. What have you learned about the Lord from your study of the Book of Acts?