



Leaders Booklet

What's coming up?

Weekly	Monday 1-2pm: Weekly Church Prayer Meeting Monday 3:30-4:15pm: QT's for teens (years 9-10) Wednesday 9:30-11:30am (term time): St Matt's Playgroup Wednesday 3:30-4:15pm: QT's for year 7-8's Thursday 9:30-11:30am: Women on Thursday (term time) Friday 4:30-6pm (term time): FISH Friday 7-9pm (term time): Youth Group
Fortnightly	Tuesday 11:30am-1pm: Midweek service and lunch Thursday 6-8:30pm: Friends of Jesus (term time)
Monthly	First Monday of the Month: Monthly Parish Prayer Second Tuesday of the Month: Prayer for Healing Service

Sun 2 Feb	Vision 2020 "Kick-Off" – all services followed by Connect Meals
Wed 5 Feb	Simply Christianity (first week of five)
Fri 7 Feb	Newish Coffee & Dessert Night (7pm)
Fri 14-Sat 15	CMS Canberra Mission Focus – "God revealed"
Sun 16 – Fri 21 Feb	CMS Link Missionary Deputation – Sarah & Robin Kinstead
Fri 21-Sat 22 Feb	24-hour Prayer Vigil 6pm Friday to 6pm Saturday
Sat 29 Feb	Weekend-IN with Andrew Lubbock
Sun Mar 8	Parenting Afternoon Tea
Sat 14 Mar	St Matt's AGM (2pm)
Sun 15 Mar	Picnic in the Park
Sun 29 Mar – Sun 5 Apr	SMBC Mission @ St Matt's
Thur 9 Apr	Maundy Thursday Service
Fri 10 Apr	Good Friday Service
Sun 12 Apr	Easter Sunday services
17-19 Apr	KYCK Youth Camp
Mon 20 Apr – Fri 24 Apr	Wanniassa Kids Club

Introduction to the Book of Acts¹

Author and date

Acts is a sequel to the Gospel of Luke. Both were written by Luke, a physician who travelled with the apostle Paul. Acts ends with Paul under house arrest, awaiting trial before Caesar, c. AD 62. Many scholars assume Acts was written then because it does not record Paul's defence, release, and further gospel preaching.

Message

Acts is the story of God's grace flooding out to the world, from the cross and resurrection of Jesus in Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. Nothing is more prominent in Acts than the spread of the gospel. Jesus promises a geographic expansion at the outset (1:8), and Acts follows the news of his death and resurrection as it spreads from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and the faraway capital of Rome.

The narrative centres around the movement of the gospel from:

1. Jerusalem and Judea – Chapters 1-7
2. Samaria – Chapters 8-12
3. Ends of the earth (first Asia & Europe, then Rome) – Chapters 13-28

The gospel draws people in, constitutes them as the church centred on the grace of Jesus, and then sends them out in mission to the world. The new group of believers is marked by the Holy Spirit, who creates such a distinctive community that others are drawn in, experiencing God's grace. At the same time, they take the gospel message to new people and new lands, making God's grace known to the ends of the earth.

The gospel's expansion is the culmination of what God has been doing since the beginning. Luke consistently grounds salvation in the ancient purpose of God, which comes to fruition at God's own initiative. Acts shows that the new Christian movement is not a fringe sect but the culmination of God's plan of

¹ Edited from Introduction to Acts, The Gospel Transformation Bible, Crossway Publishers, 2019

redemption. What was seen only as shadows in the Old Testament God reveals finally and fully through Jesus Christ. The book of Acts does not primarily provide human patterns to emulate or avoid. Instead, it repeatedly calls us to reflect upon the work of God, fulfilled in Jesus Christ, establishing the church by the power of the Holy Spirit. We are invited to enter and participate in a story that is much bigger than we are.

In Acts, the gospel expands not through human strength, but through weakness, opposition, and persecution. Demonic forces, worldly powers and authorities, governmental opposition, language and cultural barriers, intense suffering and bloody persecution, unjust imprisonment, unbelief, internal disunity, and even shipwrecks and snakes all threaten to slow down the gospel's advance. But opposition and suffering do not thwart the spread of Jesus' grace; rather, they fuel it.

The gospel spreads despite barriers of geography, ethnicity, culture, gender, and wealth. Many of these barriers appear so inviolable that when the gospel is preached to a new segment of society, riots ensue. But Luke makes clear that no one is beyond the scope of God's saving power, nor is anyone exempt from the need for God's redeeming grace.

All people receive the grace of God through one man, Jesus Christ. Jesus' gospel goes out to all places and all types of people, because Jesus is Lord of all.

Note about the following study

The following study questions were compiled by Steve Nation, Connect Pastor at St Matt's. The questions are a mix of his questions, and questions from *Teaching Acts* by David Cook (Christian Focus, 2007) & *Acts: Seeing the Spirit at Work* by John Stott (IVP Connect, 1998)

Intro to Acts – Overview (Jan 26)

Sermon notes

Study 1 – Acts 1:1-8; Luke 1:1-4; Luke 24:44-49

Kicking off: What do you know about the Book of Acts? How would you introduce it to someone who has never heard of it?

This first study in the book of Acts aims to help us put the book in its historical and biblical context and as well, reminds us that this is Luke's 2nd volume of one book. We will look at the introductions of both Luke's Gospel and Acts, seeking to establish his purpose in writing this 2nd volume and then examine the links between the end of Luke and the beginning of Acts.

Read Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-3

What reasoning does Luke give for writing? What specifically has Luke provided for Theophilus so that he might have certainty of the truth?

Luke records the outworking of God's plan: "things that have been fulfilled (v.1). He wants to assure Theophilus of the reliability of these things and so to have certainty (v.4)

His reliable sources are eyewitnesses and servants of the Word (v.2); he has 'carefully investigated everything' (v.3); and he provides a well-ordered chronological account (v.3)

Why do you think it is significant that Luke writes about 'things being fulfilled' (or accomplished) in Luke 1:1?

Those who witnessed the original events saw the culmination of all God's promises come true in and through Jesus. They saw that these promises and fulfilment changed people's lives. It changed their lives, it can change others too (like Theophilus).

How does Luke consider the book of Acts to be related to his Gospel (Acts 1:1-2)?

Some people think that Luke's Gospel is the story of Jesus, and then the Book of Acts is the story of the church. This separation is false. The two books are two stages in the ministry of Jesus. The change is the movement from Jesus' earthly ministry to His ministry conducted from the righthand side of God. The Book of Acts shouldn't be called The Acts of the Apostles, but the Acts of Jesus through His Spirit-filled apostles.

Having established that the book of Acts is meant to be understood as a continuation of the gospel of Luke, let's turn back to it now and see where Luke left off. In Luke 24, the final chapter of the gospel, Jesus has risen from the dead and has appeared to his frightened and struggling disciples. He has 'opened their minds so that they could understand the scriptures' (Luke 24:45).

Read Luke 24:44-49

What is significant about Jesus' use of the phrase, 'This is what is written...' in Luke 24:46? According to Luke 24:44-49, what must happen in order for the purposes of God to be fulfilled?

Christ and the new life are nothing new – the Old and New Testaments are one. And the OT ultimately spoke of one who would suffer (and die) and rise against as the sovereign ruler of the world. This sovereign ruler would offer peace with humanity – the offer delivered by His ambassadors, to all people, with repentance and faith as the response of those who hear it.

What role do you see yourself playing in this? How do you/can you do this?

➔ Read Acts 1:1-26 at home in preparation for next week

Changing, yet the same - Acts 1:1-26 (Feb 2)

Sermon notes

Study #2 - Acts 1:1-26

Kicking off: What is the loudest message you are hearing from those around you today? How is this message being communicated?

Read Acts 1:1-8

In Luke, Jesus spent a considerable amount of time teaching about the Kingdom: how we inherit it, who we inherit it through, and what it means for this life and for eternity.

Why is it so crucial for the disciples and us to understand what God's kingdom is like?

In common use, a kingdom is an area which is located on a map (eg the Kingdom of Thailand). But the kingdom of God is different. It's not located to one place – such as Israel (1:6). The kingdom of God is God's rule set up in the lives of His people by the Holy Spirit. It is spread by witnesses and not soldiers. It's a message of peace, not war. The rule is personal (transforming the minds, hearts and lives of its citizens), but not individualistic. The kingdom of God is to be international in its membership – it's open to all. And the kingdom of God is gradual in its expansion – it begins in one place and then spreads over time as more and more people enter it.

What does Jesus promise to his disciples in verses 4-8? What is this gift intended to help them do?

The Holy Spirit – the third member of the Holy Trinity. Jesus knew the disciples would be weak – so He gave them His Holy Spirit (the 'engine' to power our lives). The Spirit is irresistible, unstoppable, and strong in might. The Spirit is God in action - and this action achieves whatever God pleases.

The Holy Spirit is to be given to God's people so that the disciples can be Jesus' witnesses – witnesses to the kingdom of God.

Each person in the group can read one or more of the following Bible verses. For each reading, answer these questions:

- What is the promise of God in each verse?
- Who are the recipients of the promise/s?
- What role do people have in the fulfilment of the promises?

1. *Genesis 12:1-3*

The Promise is ultimately one of blessing – for Abraham to become a great, blessed nation, a nation that blesses all people on earth.

2. *Exodus 9:15-16*

Israel saved from death

Why, so that they may see God's power; and

So that God's name is proclaimed in all the earth – their responsibility

3. *Deuteronomy 4:5-6*

Live as God's people so that people will see they are special / different

Israel existed for the ultimate purpose of being the vehicle of God's blessing the nations.

4. *Isaiah 49:6*

Salvation not only for Jews but also Gentiles

How? A servant of God would accomplish this (Jesus)

5. *Jonah 3:1-10*

Jonah to preach God's message of salvation to the Ninevites – Israel (and God's) 'enemies' (v1-3)

They believed God, repented and called upon God for forgiveness (v4-9).
God saves the Ninevites from His coming judgement.

6. *Matthew 9:36-38*

Jesus cares for the non-believers because they are lost and helpless without Him
Jesus needs us, His followers to help bring these lost and helpless to Himself.
We need to pray to Jesus...

7. *John 20:21*

As Jesus was sent by the Father for a mission, we are sent
Jesus was sent to save, we are sent to declare Jesus' salvation

8. *Romans 10:14-15*

People can't be saved unless they hear the gospel. Someone needs to tell them
the gospel. We are to go

9. *Revelation 7:9*

The end result of mission – people from every tribe, tongue, nation in
heaven worshipping Jesus. Who are these – those saved by blood of Jesus

“God uses the mission of His people to fulfil His purpose, as first foreshadowed to Abraham, as accomplished in the Lord Jesus Christ, and as proclaimed by Paul and many others since, namely, to draw from every people of the earth worshippers of God and the Lamb, gathered together with Him in His eternal kingdom.” (Peter O’Brien)

What role do we at St Matt's have in the fulfilment of these promises?

What role do you have as an individual?

How are you, and how will you, play your role in the fulfilment of God's promises to the nations? Think concretely.

Pray together that God will transform you as you study this book.

Big idea: It's God's purpose that His gospel be preached to the ends of the earth by Holy Spirit-empowered witnesses.

➔ Read Acts 2:1-13 & 8:14-17 at home in preparation for next week

Fully equipped - Acts 2:1-13 & 8:14-17 (Feb 9)

Sermon notes

Study #3 - Acts 2:1-13 & 8:14-17

Kicking off: What difference do you think it would make if the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from your life and Christian community (church/Life Group)?

The Old Testament festival of Pentecost (Pentecost means ‘fifty days’) was a God-given celebration that Israel was to have at the end of the barley harvest. It also commemorated the rescue of God’s people from slavery in Egypt and the giving of God’s good and life-flourishing law to Moses on Mt. Sinai.

Read Exodus 19:16-19

What visible, physical events accompanied God’s act of giving the law?

Thunder and lightning, thick cloud, a very loud trumpet blast, covered with smoke, the LORD descended in fire, a violent trembling

Now read Acts 2:1-13.

What do you think the physical events that occurred in these verses were meant to signify to the apostles and the crowd?

What they heard (v.2). *See John 3:8.*

2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. Ezekiel 37 talks about a “wind” from God breathed into His people and filling them with new life. That’s what’s happening here.

What they saw (v.3). *See Exodus 3:2.*

3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. Fire in the OT was a symbol of God’s presence - the burning bush, the flame on Mt Sinai. Here is God making Himself present.

What happened (v.4). *See Ezekiel 36:25-27; Jeremiah 31:33 and Luke 3:16.* How are the events of Acts 2 a fulfillment of the promises God made through the prophets?

4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. God sends the Spirit and timid uneducated country folk can speak in a multitude of languages... that everyone can understand.

But here in the list in verses 8-11 we see people speaking to a multicultural group of individuals from both ancient kingdoms and current political entities – moving generally from east to west and then northern and southern nations. It's Acts 1:8 being fulfilled

What they said? (vv.5-12). What was the message and why was it in everyone's own language? (*see Luke 19:37-38*)

"we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" Heart language – personal, targeted, understood (both intellectually and emotionally)

The day of Pentecost has been called 'the Birthday of the church'. Why? Was it?

A new community has been formed - a multi-cultural people who have gone a deep and lasting identity change, heart changing transformative work.

Live it out

When have you seen and experienced the work of the Spirit in your life and Christian community?

What do you need to do in order to more effectively proclaim the truth about Jesus to those who may not yet know Him as the Lord and Christ? Write down two things.

Pray: Praise God for the work and power of His Holy Spirit. Ask Him to teach you to understand and rely on His ministry.

Big idea: The Holy Spirit comes upon the church, enabling those He baptises to speak His amazing message in languages people could hear and understand.

➔ Read Acts 2:14-47 at home in preparation for next week

All about Jesus - Acts 2:14-47 (Feb 16)

Sermon notes

Study #4 - Acts 2:14-47

Kicking off: What sorts of groups have you become a member of? What did it take to join?

In the beginning of chapter 2 Luke recorded the events of Pentecost, marked by the pouring out of the Holy Spirit and the birth of Christ's body on earth, the church. Peter now seeks to interpret the events in the light of the Old Testament Scriptures for those present.

Read Acts 2:1-40.

How would you describe Peter as he speaks these words? (also reflect on *John 13:38, 18:15-18 and 18:25-27*)

Peter was a guy who was afraid to tell people he knew Jesus, but now takes a stand. He is bold, clear, uncompromising.

How does Peter explain the amazing events that took place at Pentecost?

vv.17-21

The fulfilment of the long-promised gift of the Holy Spirit – who would lead those He fills into being vibrant messengers of God.

vv.22-23

Peter goes on to speak, not of the Holy Spirit, or the unique spiritual he and the other disciples just had, but of Jesus. Jesus was betrayed and killed by people, yet this was the plan of God.

vv.24-32

The death defeating resurrection of Jesus that was always going to take place.

vv.33-36

See verse 36. Jesus is King over all the world. No rivals. No equals.

What is the response of the crowd and what does Peter tell them to do? How is the promise to 'your children and for all who are far off' (vv. 37-39)?

The door of mercy stands open. To your children all who are far off. But not forever. Peter is calling the people to come to terms with the exalted Lord Jesus, get right with their Maker, receive the Spirit, be made new (from the inside out)

Read Acts 2:42-47.

What characterizes the early church?

It is a group of people who were actively engaged with God by listening to the apostles teaching, practicing communion and disciplined in prayer; they were a loving church in their use of time and resources, and they were actively evangelistic.

Overall, what has been the impact of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the church in Acts?

God with us, for us, for the world...

What does this say to us today about what our priorities should be as a church?

Big idea: Jesus is God's Messiah: crucified, raised, ascended. From heaven He has poured out the Holy Spirit. Through repentance towards this Jesus, we are set right with God and join the Spirit-filled, new covenant community.

➔ Read Acts 3 at home in preparation for next week

Triumphant Jesus - Acts 3 (Feb 23)

Sermon notes

Study #5 – Acts 3

Kicking off: What are the biggest needs people have today?

Read Acts 3:1-10.

Imagine that you are a newspaper reporter. How would you report the events of this passage?

Who were Peter and John? What were they doing in v.1?

Two of the apostles, one the disgraced yet restored Peter, and the other was self-described as the disciple Jesus loved.

They were on their way to pray

Who is the man introduced in verse 2 (see also 4:22)? What do we know about him?

He is unnamed – but he was lame (unable to use his legs). He was dependant on others to carry him around. He was a beggar – dependant on others for basic living. He was 40 years old.

What's the response of...

The man? Jumped to his feet, went with them to the temple, praising God

The onlookers? Saw him, recognised him, filled with wonder and amazement.

Peter explains the healing in vv.11-26.

How does he explain what happened? Like Pentecost before this, the healing became an opportunity to declare the mighty acts of Jesus as exalted Lord and Christ. Peter points away from John and himself to Jesus, by whose power the miracle had taken place.

How is the healing about Jesus?

Peter directed the crowd's attention away from both the healed man and the apostles because Jesus is the vindicated Lord and Christ – as the risen King, Jesus has authority to heal the man completely. Jesus was seen as a defeated man, humbled by the establishment, cursed in death (more hopeless than the crippled man!). That's what people saw. But the reality is much different in the present.

What response does Peter expect from people? What three blessings and what warning does he promise them in vv. 17-26?
Repent and turn to God

Blessings: 1. That your sins may be wiped out (v.19); 2. That times of refreshing may come from the Lord (v.19); and 3. That God may send the Christ who has been appointed for you (v.20).

Warning: anyone who does not listen to Him will be cut off from His people (v.23)

What has challenged your understanding the most in this study? How will it affect the way you live?

Big idea: Through the healing of a crippled man, God continues to accredit Jesus as the ascended Christ, the apostles as His representatives, and the apostolic message as His gospel.

➔ Read Acts 4:1-31 & 5:17-42 at home in preparation for next week

Speaking truth while Handling Hostility - Acts 4:1-31 & 5:17-42 (March 1)

Sermon notes

Study #6 - Acts 2:14-47 Acts 4:1-31 & 5:17-42

Kicking off: Have you ever been opposed, mocked or rejected for living for or talking about Jesus?

In these early days of the church Luke characterizes it as having dynamic growth, bold preaching, and miraculous signs and wonders done “in Jesus’ name”.

Read Acts 4:1-31

The opposition begins! Who were the opponents and why do you think Luke named them specifically (verses 1, 5 and 6)?

The same group of people that dealt with the case of Jesus.

Why were they so upset by Peter’s teaching in vv.1-4?

They saw themselves as guardians of religious orthodoxy, as well as responsible for maintaining healthy relationships with the Roman authorities. Peter’s message was a challenge to both. Theologically, the Sadducees didn’t believe in the resurrection (v.2)

Why was the question in v. 7 so ironic? (Recall that they asked Jesus a similar question in *Luke 20:1-2*)

The leaders of God’s people simply have no idea what the God they profess to worship is doing.

In his response, Peter stated at least three truths concerning Jesus. What are they? (vv. 8-14)

1. Jesus Christ of Nazareth is responsible for the healing (v.10)
2. Jesus is alive and in the place of authority (v.10-11)
3. Jesus is the unique Saviour (v.12). There is only one way to God and Jesus is that way. To reject Jesus is to reject God.

How did the church respond to these threats (vv. 23-31)?

The church prays. They remind themselves of the Spirit-inspired words of Scripture (vv.25-26). Prayer, focussing on the sovereignty of God, sustained by Scripture, is the church's response to hostility.

What do we learn from the way they prayed and what does it teach us about prayer?

In prayer, the believers show how they understand hostility in the light of the character of God and the evidence of Scripture (v.28). However bad things may look, nothing happens for the people of God outside of God's superintendence.

Prayer isn't the end point though. In prayer, the church asks for boldness to speak and for God to continue the onward press of His gospel of grace into the lives of those around them (vv.29-30). God's sovereignty doesn't mean we're inactive – it means that through prayer He will work and bless His people.

How does the early church's example challenge the way you face opposition to the gospel – whether real or perceived?

How will the truth from this passage equip you to face resistance?

Big idea: The church must face hostility with bold, Spirit-inspired proclamation, strengthened by the conviction that God will see His purposes triumph.

➔ Read Acts 4:32-5:11 at home in preparation for next week

Lying to God, death in church - Acts 4:32–5:11 (March 8)

Sermon notes

Study #7 – Acts 4:32-5:11

Kicking off: Do you think the church is under attack today? How, and by whom?

Read Acts 4:31-37.

In Acts 4:31 we see that prayer of the believers was answered and they were freshly filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. What evidence do you see of this filling of the Spirit in verses 32-37?

The Spirit led them to value people over possessions.

Read Acts 5:1-11.

What are your initial thoughts having read this passage?

According to Luke, who motivated Ananias and Sapphira? Why is this typical of his work (*see John 8:44*)?

Peter makes it clear that this act of hypocrisy was inspired by Satan (v.3) – the father of the fake, who loves to steal and destroy.

Why was God's judgment so instantaneous in this case? What parallels do you see to the accounts of:

It's a crucial time in the life of the church. The church has just been formed, is to live as a compelling community of grace and truth and love and light, and it needs to be the place where God rules and not the destructive power of Satan.

Adam and Eve expelled from the Garden of Eden in *Genesis 3:21-24*? To prevent people living forever in a sinful, destructive way.

Moses forbidden from entering the Promised Land in *Numbers 20:1-12*? To highlight the need to honour God all the way from leaders through the people of God. A new start needed a God-honouring attitude if they were to flourish.

In what ways can wealth be a wonderful servant of the gospel, but a dangerous master in our lives? *See Matthew 6:24.*

Money is a means to gaining something – for ourselves, others, God’s glory etc. Because it is a means to an end, it can contort us, pervert us, and expose our fakery as we use it for ourselves (to gain more things, reputation, relationships etc).

Although God might not strike us down for our greed today, we do dishonour the Spirit’s work in us when we are greedy. *Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-11.* What does Spirit-led generosity look like?

In our motivations: not out of obligation, drudgery or guilt, but out of a heart enamoured by God’s grace and keen to pass it on.

In our giving: to value people over possessions

In our work

Where do you need to grow as a Spirit-led believer? What will this look like?

Big idea: The unity and fellowship of believers is a result of the Holy Spirit’s work, but when it is mimicked for personal glory, it is a lie to God.

➔ Read Acts 6:1-7 at home in preparation for next week

The Word Spreads - Acts 6:1-7 (March 15)

Sermon notes

Study #8 – Acts 6:1-7

Kicking off: How have you seen churches respond to conflict in a positive way?

In the last chapter, Luke portrayed a picture of amazing unity and fellowship of the early church, a product of the work of the Holy Spirit. We were also given a clearer understanding of God's commitment to deal swiftly with sin in the foundational days of the church, ensuring His purposes to go forward with boldness.

Read Acts 6:1-7

What are the problems revealed in 6:1-6? How is this a new threat to the church?

The problem was social inequity in the church (Acts 6:1-7). Was it a deliberate oversight or was it accidental? We aren't told. The danger: the potential for a significant church split along racial lines (Acts 6:1). The response: a pivotal moment in church history.

How did the apostles set out to solve the problem?

The apostles delegate the practical matters to suitable men (see textbox on following page for more info)

What qualifications were important in the ones chosen for this particular task? Why?

Fullness of the Spirit and wisdom were necessary. On a side note, there are seven Greek names given, and no Hebrew-speaking believers selected. There was no party politics, not representation sought – just people who would do the job in the right way.

What is the result of prioritising the Word and prayer in church? (see 6:7). Is this guaranteed?

The apostles delegate the practical matters to suitable people. But before they do that, the apostles hear the church members' complaints. They actually listen. They don't get defensive. They listen to the complaint against the perceived failure of Christian standards. They listen, and they act.

People often think the church cannot change. A comment on a newspaper article about Christians in America having less power in the elections went like this:

Hahahahaha Christians! Your stupid, hate-filled and oppressive superstition is slowly but surely dying! Hahahahahahaha!!!!!!!

Really? Are we hate-filled and oppressive? Unfortunately, sometimes. Are we dying? No, Jesus is still on the throne overseeing His mission. Is change needed? Often! Is change possible? Thankfully, yes, change is possible:

'Churches can change. Bitterness can be put to death. Fear can be defeated. Compulsions can be broken. Stony hearts can be made soft, and soft words can come from an acid-tongue. People can have power without becoming corrupt. Churches can be places of safety, love and healing. Change is possible because the King has come, sent His Spirit, and is in the business of change' (Paul Tripp)

And that's what we see in Acts 6. The apostles stop, listen, and act.

Steve Nation, *A Call to Extraordinary Prayer*, pp.56-57

How could our church grow like Acts 6:1-7? What is/might be your role in this?

Big idea: God will see His Word triumph in the face of racial discrimination and church conflict through humble, attentive, other-people serving, Word and prayer prioritising churches.

➔ Read Acts 8:26-40 at home in preparation for next week

Expansion continues – How? - Acts 8:26-40 (March 22)

Sermon notes

Study #9 – Acts 8:26-40

Kicking off: Do you see yourself as an evangelist? Why/why not?

Luke, the historian, has been careful to give us numerical record of the astounding growth of the gospel in the thousands (3000 in 2:41, 5000+ in 4:4), but now focuses in on the conversion of just one man.

Read Acts 8:26-40.

Who was Philip?

6:5-6 – one of the deacons elected in 6:5

8:4-8 – preached in Samaria as a result of the scattering following Stephen's martyrdom

21:8-9 – is the father of four unmarried daughters who were prophets.

What do we know about the Ethiopian eunuch?

An important Ethiopian treasury official.

A eunuch - a castrated man placed in charge of a harem or employed in a palace; a man or boy deprived of the testes or external genitals

He was a worshipper of God, but due to him being a eunuch, he would not have been allowed into the temple assembly (Deut. 23:1)

He was a thoughtful man, reading Isaiah and seeking to know what it means.

List the factors that were involved in the Ethiopian eunuch becoming a Christian.

He was the right man, on the right road, at the right time, reading Isaiah (a wonderful passage), seeking the right understanding, who is given the message of the right gospel by a righteous man!

According to v. 35, Philip evangelized the Ethiopian from Isaiah 53:7-8. What points do you think Philip would have made from this passage to 'tell the good news' to this man? (*Read Isaiah 53:4-12*)

In what ways is this new conversion a significant step in the progress of the gospel and the fulfillment of Acts 1:8?

The gospel will now go beyond Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria. The Ethiopian eunuch will take the good news home, and the church in Ethiopia will be planted. Ethiopia was seen as the extreme boundary of the habitable world – in the hot south.

How has your view of God's acts in the world grown as a result of studying this passage?

What have you learned from this passage that might help you become a more effective witness?

Big idea: God is the sovereign evangelist bringing about the intersection of evangelist and seeker and ordaining the response to His message.

SMBC Mission week (March 29)

Sermon notes

SMBC Mission week (April 5)

Sermon notes

Good Friday (April 10)

Sermon notes

Resurrection Sunday (April 12)

Sermon notes

Unlikely Christians #1 - Acts 9:1-20 (April 19)

Sermon notes

Study #10 – Acts 9:1-20

Kicking off: It's good to reflect on the work of God in our lives. What was it like when you became a Christian?

Saul's 'Damascus Road experience' is the most famous conversion in church history. Luke is so definite about its importance that he repeats it three times in the Acts narrative. You may be helped to read all three accounts for a fuller perspective (9:1-20; 22:1-22; 26:1-32).

Read Acts 9:1-20

How would you describe Saul in vv. 1-2? What do we know about Saul already from Acts? (see Acts 7:58 and 8:1-3).

Murderous, single-minded.

We first met Saul present at Stephen's death and giving approval to it; he was actively seeking to destroy the church.

Given these details how likely is it (humanly speaking) that he would have become a Christian?

'Sovereign grace is gradual grace and gentle grace.' (John Stott) How do you see this statement illustrated from this passage?

Jesus meets with Saul, confronts Him with both word and action (blinding light). Jesus gives him clear instructions – not words of judgement but words that will lead Saul to redemption. Jesus, in keeping with His plan, doesn't share the gospel with Saul directly but uses Ananias (who Jesus had to persuade to be involved). It was the convinced and careful ministry of Ananias (calling him Brother Saul, placing his hands on him) that was the

direct means of Saul's conversion, which resulted in Paul's physical and spiritual blindness being reversed (I once was blind but now I see).

Can you illustrate it from your own experience?

What do we learn about Jesus from this passage?

Jesus accepts Saul's identification of Himself as the Lord. Jesus identifies Himself with the church – so much so, that to persecute the church is to persecute Jesus because of the solidarity between Christ and all those who are 'in Him' by faith. Jesus, the crucified one who Saul thought was a curse in fact lives as the reigning Messiah.

How did your conversion compare or contrast with Saul's?

How might you expect to see God working in the lives of people around you who are not Christians?

Big idea: God triumphs over the rage of His persecutor, converting Saul into His apostle to the Gentiles.

➔ Read Acts 10:1-11:18 at home in preparation for next week

Unlikely Christians #2 - Acts 10:1 – 11:18 (April 26)

Sermon notes

Study #11 – Acts 10:1-11:18

Kicking off: When have you felt separated from people because of cultural or racial differences?

Luke now turns briefly from Saul to focus on Peter and his role in the preparation for the gospel to be taken to the Gentiles. Note: it would be a good idea to read the whole account of the conversion of Cornelius in one sitting (10:1-11:18).

What do we learn about Cornelius and the reputation he had (10:1-2; 22)?

He was in the Gentile city of Caesarea, a centurion in the regiment originally made up of men from Italia. He was a man of steady mind and good reputation. He was a God-fearer (of the Jewish God), devout and generous.

In light of the above, why was it necessary for Cornelius to hear and respond to Peter's message? Are there people who you are tempted to believe may not need to hear the gospel?

Look at verses 39-44 in particular. God wants no one to perish, but all to come to repentance – Acts 4:12, 2 Peter 3:9

What evidence is there in this passage of the extent of the division between Jews and Gentiles at this time? (see also 11:1-3)

Though respected, he was ritually unclean because he was uncircumcised. Any serious Jew would not have entered his house.

You could say that the real thrust of this passage is not so much the conversion of Cornelius as the conversion of Peter and the apostles. Discuss.

God changes lives through His people sharing the gospel. But often, for a whole range of reasons, we don't. There is prejudice in all of us. But the gospel is for the circumcised and uncircumcised, for Africans and Europeans, for Jews, Gentiles and God-fearers. God's purpose is expansive. All of us need the peace that only Jesus can bring.

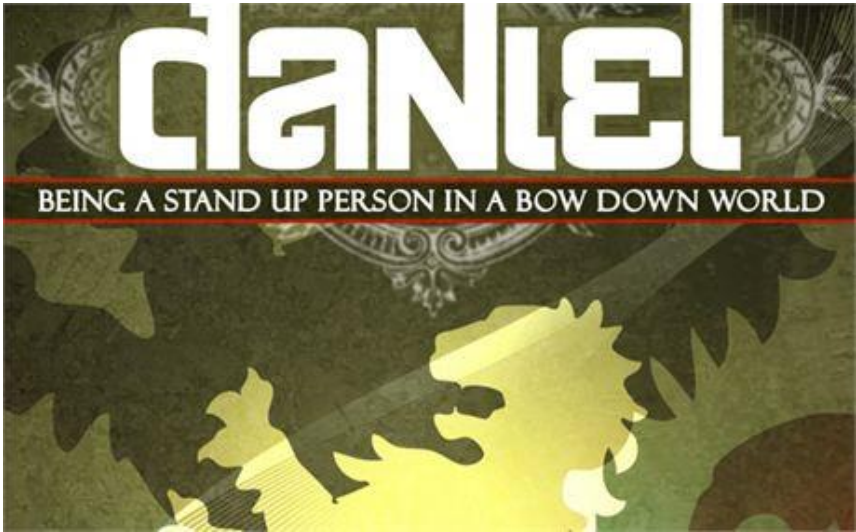
Who in your life or our local community needs to hear the message of Jesus? Don't just say 'everyone'. Identify them. How can we reach them with Jesus? Think concretely.

Big idea: God leads the church to reject its prejudices so that His gospel reaches all people.

For prayer

For prayer

Term Two: The Book of Daniel



Term Three: Hebrews continued

