

Tapes For Growing Christians

Study Guide for
ACTS

Growing Christians Ministries
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Lesson 1

Our Risen Lord's Command to the Disciples to Remain in Jerusalem until the Coming of the Holy Spirit & Our Lord's Ascension Acts 1:1-11

background notes

1.

2.

3.

doctrinal points

1. The Lord ascended to heaven visibly and bodily.
2. The Lord will return from heaven visibly and bodily.

practical application

Start in your own backyard.

questions

1. How does the book of Acts fit into the New Testament?
2. Who wrote the book of Acts?
3. Of the New Testament authors, who wrote the most?
4. Why is it important that the Lord appeared to the disciples visibly and bodily?
5. Did the Lord answer the disciples question about the timing of His return?
6. Summarize the message of the angels to the apostles.

answers

1. It is a bridge from the Gospels to the Epistles, from the Life of Christ to the Life of the Church.
2. Luke was the author. Although his name is not mentioned, Acts 1:1 links the book to Luke 1:1-4.
3. Luke wrote the most in the New Testament! His two books are longer than all of Paul's epistles (unless Paul wrote the book of Hebrews).
4. The disciples need to be assured that they were not seeing a vision of the Lord – He had been resurrected bodily! And He appeared to them on numerous occasions in His resurrected body.
5. No, He told them to focus on preaching the gospel, and did not allow them to speculate on the timing of His return.
6. The Lord will definitely return to the earth – visibly, bodily, and personally. Until then the disciples need to get to work on the great commission!

discuss\ consider

1. During the forty days that the Lord was on earth following His resurrection, His primary topic of conversation with the disciples was “the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” The disciples certainly must have had questions about God's plan now! What questions do you think they had? What explanations would the Lord have given them?
2. The book of Acts contains many principles for missionary strategy. One principle from this chapter is “Start in your own backyard.” The disciples were to begin right where they were sharing the gospel, and spread from there. How can you live out this principle in your life?

challenge

Some Christians spend great time and energy speculating about the timing of the Lord's return. We can be confident and joyful that He will return! But let's not get caught up trying to calculate “when”.

memorize

“It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:7-8

“This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.” Acts 1:11

Lesson 2

The Early Christians Gather Together in Jerusalem Waiting for the Coming of the Holy Spirit & The Choice of Matthias to Take the Place of Judas Iscariot as One of the Twelve Acts 1:12-26

background notes

1.

2.

3.

doctrinal points

1. The betrayal of Judas was according to Scripture.
2. The selection of Matthias was according to Scripture.

practical application

You can't go wrong if you continue in unity and prayer.

questions

1. From which mountain did the Lord ascend?
2. What should we notice about Mary in Acts 1:14?
3. Is the account of the death of Judas in Acts 1:18 in contradiction to Matthew 27:5?
4. The betrayal of the Lord Jesus was predetermined and predicted in Scripture. Was Judas responsible for his evil deed?
5. What qualifications did someone have to meet to be eligible to take Judas' place as an apostle?

answers

1. The Mount of Olives, which overlooks the town of Bethany
2. The disciples prayed with Mary, not to her. Mary is referred to as the “mother of Jesus,” not the “Mother of God.”
3. No, most likely Judas hanged himself over a rocky precipice and the rope broke and his body burst open on the rocks below.
4. Yes, we see here the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man working together. See Luke 22:22.
5. He must have been a follower of the faith throughout the Lord’s public ministry, from the time of John’s baptism until the resurrection and ascension.

discuss\ consider

1. Discuss the casting of lots used to determine Judas’ replacement. Keep in mind these three points:
 1. This was an accepted method in the Old Testament.
 2. This was a non-moral decision.
 3. They prayed that the Lord would show them in this way whom He had chosen.
2. The Lord blessed the early church as they continued in unity and prayer. Read Psalm 133:1. It takes work for a church to be in unity and time must be sacrificed for prayer, but God will bless and guide a fellowship of His people who prioritize this. How is your fellowship doing with unity and prayer? Are there areas in which you could improve?

challenge

As you make major and daily decisions this week, be sure to pray that the Lord will guide your decisions. If you ask Him, He will!

memorize

“These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication.” Acts 1:14

“You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell.” Acts 1:24-25

Lesson 3

The Coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost Acts 2:1-13

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. The birth of the Church was at Pentecost.
2. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was at Pentecost.

practical application

Expect mixed reactions to your godly lifestyle.

questions

1. What is the history of Pentecost?
2. How long after our Lord's resurrection was Pentecost?
3. How could so many Jews have gathered to hear the disciples?
4. What is a "mystery" in the Bible?
5. Does the Holy Spirit indwell believers as individuals or as a group?

answers

1. Pentecost was one of the annual Jewish feasts. It was called Pentecost because it came fifty days after the Feast of the Firstfruits.
2. Our Lord was crucified on the Jewish feast of Passover as the true Passover Lamb. He arose on the Feast of Firstfruits. Now fifty days have gone by till Pentecost.
3. A multitude of Jews from all over the Roman Empire were gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost at the Temple.
4. A biblical mystery is something that was concealed in the Old Testament, but is revealed in the New Testament.
5. Both! The Holy Spirit indwells each individual believer and He also dwells in the midst of believers united together as the Church.

discuss\ consider

1. Discuss the beginning of the Church at Pentecost. Many complications and misinterpretations would be avoided if believers clearly distinguished between Israel and the Church.
2. Discuss three wonderful works of the Holy Spirit: indwelling, baptism, and filling. Every believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit from the moment of conversion and is baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body, the Church. There can be fillings of the Spirit after salvation. In fact, Ephesians 5:18 exhorts all believers to be continually filled with the Spirit.

challenge

When the early Christians were filled with the Spirit, some believed and some thought they were drunk! Expect mixed reactions to your godly lifestyle.

memorize

“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”
Acts 2:4

“And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language.” Acts 2:6

Lesson 4

Peter's Sermon on the Day of Pentecost Acts 2:14-35

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. The return of Christ was predicted in Joel 2.
2. The resurrection of Christ was predicted in Psalm 16.
3. The ascension of Christ was predicted in Psalm 110.

practical application

Get comfortable with the doctrines of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility.

questions

1. Describe the events on the day of Pentecost.
2. How could Peter's Pentecost sermon be outlined?
3. Which three Old Testament prophetic passages did Peter quote?
4. What was the logic behind Peter quoting Psalms 16 and 110?
5. What should we notice in Acts 2:33?

answers

1. The Holy Spirit came upon the early Christians at the feast of Pentecost. They began praising the Lord in the temple courts in different known languages.
2.
 - This event is a fulfillment of prophecy.
 - Jesus is the Messiah and is alive.
 - The Holy Spirit has been poured forth.
3. Joel 2, Psalm 16, and Psalm 110
4. Since David did not fulfill these prophecies, He must have looked ahead to Someone else who would.
5. All three members of the Trinity are mentioned in this verse.

discuss\ consider

1. Discuss whether Joel's prophecy from Joel 2:28-32 was completely fulfilled at Pentecost. Part certainly sounds like Pentecost, but the rest sounds like the events surrounding the Lord's return.
2. If the crucifixion was the predetermined plan of God, how can God hold man accountable for putting Christ on the cross? Here we see the doctrines of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. It is beyond our comprehension to see exactly how these doctrines work together, but we know they are both taught as truth in the Bible.

challenge

Imagine yourself at the Jewish temple on the day of Pentecost. What would have been your reaction to these believers speaking in your native tongue and calling Jesus the Messiah?

memorize

"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know-- Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it." Acts 2:22-24

Lesson 5

The Results of Pentecost Acts 2:36-47

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. The early Christians lived a balanced Christian life.
2. The early Christians lived a communal Christian lifestyle.

practical application

Have you asked the question yet, "What shall I do?"

questions

1. Review the events of the day of Pentecost.
2. Where were these 3,000 new believers baptized?
3. The early Christians' communal lifestyle should not be confused with communism. How is it distinct?
4. Should Christians live a communal lifestyle today? Maybe even live in Christian communes?
5. What principle should we learn from the Christian communal lifestyle?

answers

1. Thousands of Jews from throughout the Roman Empire were gathered at the Temple in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit came upon the early Christians, and they began speaking in the native tongues of the worshippers. Then Peter stood and explained what was happening and gave his powerful sermon.
2. Biblical archeology reveals that a great number of small pools (mikvaot) used for Jewish ritualistic cleansing have been excavated in the temple area. These pools were perfect for Christian baptism.
3. None of the early believers were forced to give up their property or possessions. It was completely voluntary. The aim of this communal lifestyle was not to make everyone equal, but rather to meet the needs of anyone who had a need.
4. If some Christians want to live this way, it is fine. The Bible is not against it. But the Bible is not teaching that Christians must live in a Christian commune.
5. As believers we should look around to see who is in need and do what we can to meet those needs.

discuss\ consider

1. Peter's instructions in Acts 2:38 have often been used by those who say that you must be baptized in order to be saved. Review these four points in contrast:
 1. It would contradict other clear Scriptures, which teach that salvation is by grace through faith alone. (Romans 10:9;13; John 3:16)
 2. The Lord Jesus Christ never told His converts to be baptized.
 3. The thief on the cross who believed was not baptized and yet the Lord said He would be with Him in Paradise.
 4. The apostle Paul could never have written 1 Corinthians 1:14-17 if baptism was necessary for salvation.
2. Acts 2:42. Review the "big four" practices which characterized the early church:
 1. The apostles' doctrine (teaching)
 2. Christian fellowship
 3. The breaking of bread (communion)
 4. Prayer

A good church should emphasize these four practices. Is your church a balanced church? Are you as an individual believer living a balanced Christian life?

challenge

When the Jewish worshippers on the day of Pentecost realized they were sinners they asked, "What shall we do?" Peter's response could be summarized, "Get saved!" If you are not a believer, God gives you the same response today, "Get saved!"

memorize

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." Acts 2:36

"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." Acts 2:42

"And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." Acts 2:47

Lesson 6

The Healing of the Lame Man Through the Ministry of Peter and John & Peter's Second Sermon Acts 3

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. A period of miracles for Israel was included in the early days of Christianity.
2. An extension of grace for Israel was included in the early days of Christianity.

practical application

Let's do what we can and let God do the rest.

questions

1. Why did the new Jewish believers continue to go to the Temple?
2. Where was Solomon's Portico located? Where was the Beautiful Gate?
3. Why is it significant that the healing of the lame man took place in the Temple area?
4. When the lame man was given the ability to walk, did he have to go through the learning process as a child would?
5. In Peter's sermon he speaks of a time of refreshing and restoration. When will this time come?

answers

1. To share the gospel of Jesus Christ with their fellow Jews
2. The Temple complex consisted of the Temple itself and a series of outer and inner courts. Solomon's Portico was one of the colonnaded porches on the east side of the Court of the Gentiles. The Beautiful Gate led from the outer Court of the Gentiles to the Court of Women.
3. This was a specific witness to Israel that Jesus, the one they had rejected, was indeed the Messiah.
4. No, he was able to jump and leap right away.
5. This will be during the kingdom age, when Christ will return and set up His glorious earthly kingdom. At that time Israel will be restored and they will receive the Messiah the nation once rejected.

discuss\ consider

1. The miracles in the early days of the Church had a specific purpose toward the Jewish people. Discuss this focus and refer to this chapter and Acts 5:12-17. What purpose did miracles serve in the ministry of the apostle Paul?
2. Discuss Peter's attitude toward the Jews in his sermon. He begins with a scathing condemnation of the Jews for their role in the death of Christ. Then his tone graciously changes as he speaks of God's willing forgiveness and their restoration to come. How should this teaching affect your mindset toward the Jewish people? Have you had wrong thinking about the nation in the past, which needs to be re-evaluated?

challenge

Peter told the lame man to be healed in the name of Jesus Christ – then he helped him stand up. Are you in a situation right now where you need to have faith and simply act? Let's do what we can and let God do the rest.

memorize

"Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk... So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them -- walking, leaping, and praising God." Acts 3:6-8

"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." Acts 3:19

"To you [Jews] first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities." Acts 3:26

Lesson 7

The Beginnings of Persecution upon the Church from the Jewish Authorities Acts 4:1-22

background notes

1.

2.

3.

doctrinal points

1. Unbelievers will be saved even though there is great opposition.
2. Believers will be persecuted even though there is great evidence.

practical application

Don't think you have to go to seminary to be greatly used of God.

questions

1. Review the events leading up to Acts 4.
2. When did persecution of the early church begin?
3. When did Roman persecution of the Church begin?
4. How is Peter a great example for all believers?
5. Did the religious leaders believe the lame man had been truly healed?
6. What was Peter and John's response to persecution from the religious leaders?

answers

1. In Acts 3 a lame man was healed in the Temple courts through the ministry of Peter and John. As a result, Peter had another opportunity to preach the truth to the crowds who were gathered in the Temple area watching the miracle. Many people believed the message that Peter preached and were saved.
2. When the Jewish religious authorities saw the crowd's response to Peter and John, they reacted in unbelief and jealousy and arrested the men, putting them in jail overnight so they could put them on trial in the morning. These were the first persecutions of the Church.
3. The Roman persecutions of the early church did not begin until after the fire in Rome in AD 64.
4. He took advantage of every opportunity to preach the gospel. He preached the gospel when he was on trial by the Jewish religious authorities who wanted to know by what power the lame man had been healed!
5. Yes, they called it a notable miracle, which could not be denied (verse 16).
6. "They all glorified God for what had been done" Acts 4:21. Why would this be?

discuss\ consider

1. In the face of great opposition, Peter clearly preached the gospel in Acts 4:10-12. Despite the opposition, many people responded and believed. Discuss the countries in the world today that are under great religious persecution. Oftentimes these countries are seeing many people come to Christ, in the face of opposition. Discuss why this occurs.
2. Persecution in the United States today may not be as obvious as in the days of the early church, but it is present. Refer to 2 Timothy 3:12. Have you ever faced persecution because of your faith? What should your reaction be when this occurs?

challenge

Peter and John were greatly used by God, despite their lack of formal training. They had training in the School of God, by walking with the Lord. Do you desire to be used by God? Be a good student in the School of God.

memorize

"Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole." Acts 4:10

"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Acts 4:12

"Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Acts 4:19-20

Lesson 8

The Continued Record of God's Power and Blessing in the Early Church Acts 4:23-37

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. Essential Christian doctrine includes divine sovereignty and human responsibility.
2. Efficient Christian living includes dedicated prayer and spiritual power.
3. Effective Christian testimony includes apologetic talk and consistent walk.

practical application

Learn some Christian Evidences.

questions

1. When did persecutions of the early church begin?
2. What did Peter and John do when they were released from custody?
3. Who was responsible for the death of Christ?
4. Name two keys to efficient Christian living.
5. What is Apologetics?
6. In what ways did the early believers live a consistent walk?

answers

1. The first persecutions of the Church were from the Jewish religious authorities because they did not and would not recognize and receive Jesus as their promised Messiah.
2. They joined their fellow believers and prayed together that they would have continued boldness to preach.
3. Herod and Pilate and the Gentiles and the Jews. Yet Peter says that all of this was under the hand and sovereign purpose of God.
4. Dedicated prayer and spiritual power
5. Apologetics is an area of study concerned with defending the Christian faith.
6. They gave sacrificially to meet the needs of their fellow believers. They loved one another in Christ.

discuss\ consider

1. When Peter and John met with fellow believers to pray, they prayed on the basis of Scripture. Have you ever prayed using Scripture? This is an excellent way to pray, recalling the promises God has made in His word.
2. Discuss why the resurrection of Christ is crucial to the Christian faith. See Acts 1:3, 4:33 and 1 Corinthians 15:12-19. How would you use apologetics to defend the empty tomb? (Be sure your apologetic talk is backed up by a consistent walk.)

challenge

Do you know the evidence available to defend the Christian faith? Learn some Christian Evidences, so that you can follow 1 Peter 3:15. Check out the Christian Evidences section on www.growingchristians.org!

memorize

“For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.” Acts 4:27-28

“Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word.” Acts 4:29

“And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.” Acts 4:33

Lesson 9

The Death of Ananias and Sapphira for Lying to the Holy Spirit Acts 5:1-11

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. The Holy Spirit is God.
2. There is a sin unto death.

practical application

Don't test the Holy Spirit.

questions

1. What sort of problems did the early church face?
2. Who was Barnabas?
3. Did Ananias and Sapphira sin by not giving all of their money to the church?
4. How does 1 John 5:16 relate to this passage?
5. True or False. When a believer dies young we can assume it is because they committed a "sin unto death."

answers

1. Externally the Church faced persecution. Internally they faced the problems of dishonesty and complaining. (The Church today faces these same sorts of problems.)
2. Barnabas was one of the early believers who generously sold some land to benefit other believers. Later he traveled with the apostle Paul on Paul's first missionary journey.
3. No, their sin was that they pretended that they were giving the whole price of the land to the Lord. They wanted the praise that comes with giving everything, without giving everything.
4. John speaks of a "sin unto death" for the believer. Ananias and Sapphira committed such a sin, so that God had to discipline these believers with death. (See also 1 Corinthians 11:30.)
5. False. Just because a fellow believer is sick or dies, don't assume that this is God's discipline. Christians get sick or die for all kinds of reasons.

discuss\ consider

1. Review Acts 5:3-4, the proof-text for the deity of the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the Trinity is so important, yet many believers are careless in the way they describe the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Discuss what you know about the tri-unity of God. How can you better communicate this relationship in the way you talk about the Godhead?
2. Is the Holy Spirit an "it" or a "He"? The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is another important doctrine, one that has been challenged in recent decades. It is important to remember that the Person of the Holy Spirit is not a "power" or a "thing." Review these verses: Ephesians 4:30, John 14:26, John 16:13-15, Romans 8:14, 26.

challenge

To test the Holy Spirit means to see how much you can get away with before God judges you. Sometimes believers presume upon God and stretch Him to the limits of His longsuffering and patience. Dishonesty and hypocrisy are certain examples of testing the Holy Spirit. Don't test the Holy Spirit.

memorize

"Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit...? You have not lied to men but to God." Acts 5:3-4

"How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord?" Acts 5:9

Lesson 10

The Record of the Ongoing Ministry of the Apostles in the Early Days of the Church Acts 5:12-42

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. There was a period of extraordinary miracles in the early church.
2. Believers must obey God rather than men.
3. Reaction to the gospel ranges from Saul-type to Gamaliel-type.

practical application

Keep right on teaching and preaching!

questions

1. What was Ananias and Sapphira's sin?
2. Describe the clusters of miracles throughout history.
3. What was the purpose of the miracles during the early church period?
4. Did Peter's shadow have a mystical power to heal (verse 15)?
5. What was the rabbi Gamaliel's attitude toward Christianity?

answers

1. They lied to the Holy Spirit by pretending to give all the money from a piece of land to the church, when in actuality they only gave part.
2. There have been clusters of miracles throughout history, such as at:
 - Creation
 - Exodus and the Conquest
 - Elijah and Elisha
 - Daniel
 - The Lord and the Apostles
 - End Times
3. They were to demonstrate the power of God and give divine authority to the apostles and confirm the Word of God that the apostles were preaching.
4. No, it was God who did the healing.
5. Let Christianity run its course. If it is not of God, it will die out like other sects. If it is of God, let's not fight it, because we'll be fighting God.

discuss\ consider

1. This passage brings up the important issue of civil disobedience. Here it was appropriate for the apostles to disobey the lower authority in order to obey God, the higher authority. Discuss when you must choose to disobey the lower authorities in order to obey God. Discuss how you can do this while also remaining subject to those authorities.
2. Gamaliel's passive response to the gospel is more like what we see in our culture today than Paul's aggressive response, yet it is just as damaging. Have you had people respond to you with this "well that's fine for you" attitude, when you approach them with the gospel? How can this attitude be confronted?

challenge

Despite the external persecution and internal problems, the apostles kept on teaching and preaching. We will face these same problems throughout our ministry, yet we too should keep on keeping on.

memorize

"And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people." Acts 5:12

"We ought to obey God rather than men." Acts 5:29

"So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name." Acts 5:41

Lesson 11

The Recognition of Seven Deacons by the Early Church & The Introduction of Stephen, the First Christian Martyr Acts 6

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. Good churches need good deacons.
2. Evil people use evil tactics.

practical application

Remember, there is one interpretation, but many applications.

questions

1. What problem arose in the early church?
2. What should the attitude of the church be toward widows?
3. What does the word “deacon” mean?
4. Name the two distinct offices of church administration. How do they differ?
5. List the three qualifications for good deacons.

answers

1. The Hellenistic Christian Jews – that is the Greek-speaking Jews – complained that their widows were not being cared for as well as the native Hebrew widows.
2. It is the responsibility of every church to care for widows in their body. The widows should meet the qualifications of 1 Timothy 5.
3. Deacon means “to serve.”
4.
 - Elders – the spiritual shepherds of the church (see 1 Timothy 3)
 - Deacons – care for the temporal needs of the church
5.
 1. They should be spiritual.
 2. They should be wise.
 3. They should have a good reputation.

discuss\ consider

1. Discuss the New Testament pattern for church administration. Why is it important for a church to have both elders and deacons? Does your church recognize these offices?
2. Evil people use evil tactics. In the days of the early church and today, unbelievers who hate the gospel will do whatever it takes to suppress the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18). Have you seen this occur? Praise the Lord that we have a just and victorious God, and one day every knee shall bow to Jesus Christ.

challenge

Review the qualifications for deacons in Acts 2 and 1 Timothy 3. Does your character line up with these qualifications?

memorize

“Seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.” Acts 6:3

“Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.” Acts 6:7

“And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.” Acts 6:8

Lesson 12

The First Part of Stephen's Testimony before the Jewish Council Acts 7:1-43

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. Israel's rejection of Joseph foreshadowed Israel's rejection of Christ.
2. Israel's rejection of Moses foreshadowed Israel's rejection of Christ.

practical application

Trust God to use your rejection as a testimony.

questions

1. Why were so many Jewish priests becoming Christians?
2. What was the Sanhedrin?
3. Describe the major theme of Stephen's sermon to the Sanhedrin.
4. What parallel did Stephen draw between Joseph and Christ?
5. How did Stephen draw a parallel between Moses and Christ?

answers

1. They knew the truth of the resurrection of Christ. They knew that there was no natural explanation for the empty tomb. They knew that the story of the disciples stealing the body was made up. And they knew about the veil in the temple being ripped in two.
2. The Sanhedrin was the ruling council of the Jews.
3. Stephen recounted Israel's mistreatment of God's messengers, including Joseph and Moses. He was drawing a parallel between Israel's past rejection of these messengers and Israel's present rejection of Christ, God's greatest Messenger.
4. Just as Joseph was rejected by his own brothers, so Christ was rejected by His own people.
5. He quoted the messianic prophecy of Deuteronomy 18:15.

discuss\ consider

1. Can you imagine being arrested like Stephen and taken before a council and having the presence of mind to preach a powerful sermon such as this? Stephen obviously has a comprehensive understanding of God's word and His work throughout history. Could you summarize God's plan of redemption, given the opportunity?
2. Discuss the numerous ways in which Joseph is a great type, or spiritual picture, of Christ.

challenge

Moses never knew that Stephen would use his rejection by the Israelites to argue with the Sanhedrin 1500 years later. But God knew! Likewise, we may not understand how God is going to use our disappointments and rejections in His overall good plan. Remember that your response to disappointment, rejection, and adversity can be a powerful testimony to others.

memorize

"And he said, 'Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia.'" Acts 7:2

"But when the time of the promise drew near which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt." Acts 7:17

"This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, 'The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear.'" Acts 7:37

Lesson 13

The Final Portion of Stephen's Testimony before the Sanhedrin & The Record of the Stoning of Stephen – the First Martyr of the Christian Church Acts 7:44-60

background notes

1.

2.

3.

doctrinal points

1. Stephen's sermon was God's final testimony to Israel.
2. Stephen's stoning was Israel's final rejection of Christ.

practical application

Expect a great welcome in Heaven!

questions

1. Review the context of Acts 7.
2. Why was the Sanhedrin intent on bringing Stephen to trial?
3. What is the major theme of this part of Stephen's sermon?
4. What was the purpose of the Old Testament rituals, including the Temple and the message of the prophets?
5. What was the Sanhedrin's response to Stephen's sermon?
6. Which significant New Testament person was present at the stoning of Stephen?

answers

1. Acts 6 records Stephen's outstanding preaching and miracles, which led many people to be saved. As a result, Stephen was brought to trial before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish council. Stephen gives a powerful sermon summarizing God's work throughout the history of the nation of Israel.
2. They wanted to stop the spread of Christianity, even if it meant removing its leaders by force.
3. Israel's continued focus on the Law and the Temple was not in line with God's program.
4. All of those things pointed forward to the coming of the Messiah, the Righteous One! The Old Testament system was not the goal, now God's program was moving on, and the Jews were again rejecting Him.
5. They had a violent and furious reaction, and they took Stephen to be stoned.
6. Saul of Tarsus, who would become the Apostle Paul was there.

discuss\ consider

1. Discuss: "Stephen's sermon was God's final testimony to Israel." Review the extension of grace Peter presented in Acts 3. The stoning of Stephen seems to be the last straw. What was the consequence for Israel's continual rejection of the Messiah?
2. Stephen had shown conclusively that the Jews were guilty before God, that the Law as a way of life was temporary, and that the Temple must be removed. Jesus was the Messiah and He and His Church were the focus of God's program for the future. Discuss your reaction to this powerful sermon.

challenge

The way Stephen died as a martyr is a model for all believers. Stephen had a great welcome into heaven, and as a believer, you will too!

memorize

"You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you." Acts 7:51

"But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." Acts 7:55

"And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.'" Acts 7:59

Lesson 14

The Preaching of the Gospel in Samaria by the Evangelist Philip & The Case of Simon the Sorcerer Acts 8:1-25

background notes

1.

2.

3.

doctrinal points

1. The profession of Simon is typical of many preachers today.
2. The conversion of the Samaritans is not typical of the process today.

practical application

Don't think you can buy spiritual gifts or power.

questions

1. What happened as a result of Stephen being stoned?
2. Who were the Samaritans?
3. Who was Philip?
4. What was the process of conversion for the Samaritans?
5. What is the typical process of conversion today?
6. Why was the process of conversion different for the Samaritans?

answers

1. "At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles." Acts 8:1
2. The Samaritans were not full-blooded Jews. In fact, the Jews despised the Samaritans and had no dealings with Samaritans (John 4:9).
3. This Philip was appointed as one of the first deacons in Acts 6. He is a different man than Philip the apostle.
4.
 1. They believed – v.12
 2. They were baptized – v. 12
 3. They still did not have the Holy Spirit – v. 16
 4. They received the Holy Spirit when Peter and John laid hands on them – v.17
5. Today, as with the household of Cornelius in Acts 10, believers receive the Holy Spirit when they believe and then they are baptized. See Ephesians 1:3.
6. Most likely their unique process was to insure that there would be no questions that the Samaritan believers would be received and included in the same body of Christ as the Jewish believers.

discuss\ consider

God was using the persecution of the early Christians to accomplish His will of spreading the good news. See Acts 1:8 and 8:1,4. God took what seemed like a terrible situation and used it for His glory. How often our Lord works this way! Can you give an example from your life?

challenge

Many people today, including some preachers, make professions of salvation, but do not truly believe. Only God can judge the hearts of these people. Just make sure your faith is sincere.

memorize

"At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria... Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word." Acts 8:1,4

"When the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them." Acts 8:14

Lesson 15

The Salvation and Baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch Acts 8:26-40

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. The conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch followed the norm for Christian conversion.
2. The baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch followed the norm for Christian baptism.

practical application

Be willing to leave a successful ministry.

questions

1. Who was the Ethiopian Eunuch?
2. What portion of Scripture was the Ethiopian Eunuch reading?
3. How was the Holy Spirit working in the life of the Ethiopian Eunuch before he was saved?
4. Outline the normal way in which people become Christians.
5. What is the purpose of baptism? What does it symbolize?

answers

1. Ethiopia at the time was the region south of Egypt. This man had the high position of treasurer to the queen of Ethiopia. Apparently, he was a proselyte of Judaism and had been to Jerusalem to worship at the Temple.
2. He was reading the messianic passage from Isaiah 53.
3.
 - The Ethiopian Eunuch recognized that the God of Israel was the one true God.
 - He was brought into contact with the Bible and he heard the Word of God.
 - Then Philip came along to explain the Scripture to him.
4.
 - They are brought under the sound Word of God.
 - Someone explains the Word to them.
 - Having heard the Word, they understand, and come to faith in Christ.
5. Baptism is a testimony to the world that you have become a Christian and have identified with Christ. By being immersed in baptism you symbolize that you have identified with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6).

discuss\ consider

1. Review how you could use the messianic passage in Isaiah 53 to witness to your Jewish friend. What should you especially note about verse 8? “Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.” Acts 8:35
2. What is your testimony of conversion and baptism? Does it follow the norm which we saw in the Ethiopian Eunuch?

challenge

The Lord called Philip away from his successful ministry in Samaria to go preach to the Ethiopian Eunuch in the wilderness. Philip did not argue with God’s plan for his life and his ministry. You can trust God’s plan for your life too!

memorize

“So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ And he said, ‘How can I, unless someone guides me?’” Acts 8:30-31

“Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.” Acts 8:35

“I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” Acts 8:37

Lesson 16

The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus Who Became Paul, the
Great Apostle of Jesus Christ
Acts 9:1-28

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. The conversion of Saul was a turning point in the spread of Christianity.
2. The conversion of Saul is a turning point in the book of Acts.

practical application

Be willing to be an Ananias or a Barnabas.

questions

1. What do we know about Saul of Tarsus?
2. How do critics of the Bible try to explain away the conversion of Saul?
3. What was Paul's special mission, as told to Ananias in verse 15?
4. How was Saul persecuting Jesus Christ (verse 4)?
5. What role does Barnabas play in the life of Paul?

answers

1. He was a zealous young leader in Judaism who mercilessly persecuted Christians. He was present at the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7).
2. They say it was a natural experience, such as Saul being struck by lightning, suffering sunstroke, or having an epileptic seizure. Paul states again and again in his writings that this was a supernatural event.
3. He would have the important task of spreading the gospel to the Gentile world.
4. He was violently persecuting Christians, who are the body of Christ on earth.
5. Barnabas, whose name means “son of encouragement,” paved the way for Paul to be accepted by the apostles and other believers in Jerusalem.

discuss\ consider

1. The Apostle Paul was the first one to preach the great doctrine of the Church as the body of Christ, composed of all believers, both Jews and Gentiles. Discuss this radical change in theology and how it must have shocked Saul.
2. We read of no jealousy on the part of Peter and the other apostles when Paul, their former enemy, stepped into the limelight. This was quite a step of faith for them to accept this young man’s new position. Discuss how you would have reacted in a situation such as this.

challenge

Despite Paul’s soiled past as a chief persecutor of the early Christians, God used Paul to accomplish mighty things for His kingdom. Have you given the Lord your shame over your past and trusted that He can use you in His work?

memorize

“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” Acts 9:4

“Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.” Acts 9:15-16

“But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ.” Acts 9:22

Lesson 17

Two Further Miracles in the Ministry of the Apostle Peter Acts 9:29-43

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. The healing of Aeneas and raising of Dorcas illustrate the salvation and resurrection of the believer.
2. The healing of Aeneas and raising of Dorcas illustrate the restoration and rebirth of Israel.

practical application

Be remembered as a Dorcas and not as a Jehoram!

questions

1. When did Saul of Tarsus begin sharing his new-found faith in Jesus Christ?
2. How do we know that the apostles were having success in carrying out the Lord's charge from Acts 1:8?
3. Where are Lydda and Joppa?
4. How did Peter follow the Lord's pattern when he healed Aeneas?
5. How did Peter follow the Lord's pattern when he healed Lydia?

answers

1. Immediately after his conversion
2. Acts 9:31 speaks of plural churches in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria.
3. These two cities lie on the Mediterranean coast. Joppa is the modern city of Jaffa, which is part of Tel Aviv.
4. Peter followed Jesus example of healing the paralyzed man at the Pool of Bethesda by saying, "Arise, take up your bed and walk."
5. When Jesus raised Jarius' daughter to life he put the mourners out of the room. Peter did likewise, then prayed and gave Dorcas his hand and presented her alive to the mourners.

discuss\ consider

1. One purpose of miracles in the Bible is to illustrate spiritual truth. Discuss how the healing of Ananias illustrates salvation from sin. How does the raising of Dorcas illustrate the resurrection of the saint?
2. The healing of Aeneas and raising of Dorcas illustrate the restoration and rebirth of Israel. Review this doctrinal point, referring to Ezekiel 37. Bible believing evangelical Christians long for the restoration of Israel.

challenge

When wicked king Jehoram of Judah died, he "died with no one's regret" (2 Chronicles 21:20). On the other hand, many people mourned the death of Dorcas. Dorcas was a doer of good deeds behind the scenes and she touched many people's lives. How will you be remembered?

memorize

"Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied." Acts 9:31

"And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them." Acts 9:39

Lesson 18

The Visions of Peter and Cornelius which Prepared the Way for the Gentiles to be Brought into the Church Acts 10:1-23

background notes

1.

2.

3.

doctrinal points

1. The vision of Peter reveals God's concept of the Church.
2. The vision of Cornelius reveals God's concern for the lost.

practical application

Let's be glad that Peter was not like Jonah.

questions

1. Who was Cornelius?
2. When did the Church begin?
3. Describe Peter's vision.
4. Did Peter accept the Lord's revelation?
5. What background did Cornelius have from his Roman culture?

answers

1. He was a Roman centurion, a leader over 100 soldiers. Cornelius was also a semi-proselyte to Judaism, believing in the one true God of Israel.
2. The Church began on the Day of Pentecost as 3000 Jewish converts were baptized.
3. Peter saw a sheet coming down from heaven holding both clean and unclean animals, according to the Old Testament law.
4. Not right away. He had to be told three times that uncircumcised Gentiles were no longer to be considered unclean, but were on an equal footing with the Jews when brought together in the Christian church.
5. Cornelius came from the pagan Roman culture- a culture that had many gods and did not acknowledge the one true God.

discuss\ consider

1. Discuss the great truth of God's concept for the Church, which was revealed in Peter's vision. Refer especially to Acts 10:15 and Galatians 3:28.
2. Discuss how the story of Cornelius helps us answer the question, "What about people who have not heard the gospel?" With Cornelius we see God's concern for the lost. Discuss this in relation to Romans 1:18-20. Does God operate the same way today?

challenge

Aren't you glad that Peter obeyed the call of God to go to Cornelius' house? This opened the door of the gospel to the Gentile world.

memorize

"[Peter] saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air." Acts 10:11-12

"Rise, Peter; kill and eat... What God has cleansed you must not call common." Acts 10:13,15

"Cornelius the centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house." Acts 10:22

Lesson 19

The Conversion of Cornelius and other Gentiles as a Result of the Preaching of Peter Acts 10:24-48

background notes

1.

2.

3.

doctrinal points

1. God prepares the way for the walk of faith.

2. God directs the way for the walk of faith.

practical application

Just believe and you will be saved.

questions

1. Read Acts 1:8. Have we seen this fulfilled in the book of Acts?

2. How does Matthew 16:19 relate to this passage?

3. How did God prepare the way for Cornelius to come to faith?

4. How did God prepare the way for Peter to share with Cornelius?

5. How were Cornelius and his other gentile friends saved?

answers

1. In the first 9 chapters of Acts we saw the gospel spread beyond Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria. Now in Acts 10 the door will be opened for the gospel to spread to the whole world as Gentiles are brought into the Church.
2. Peter was given the keys of the kingdom of heaven. God used Peter to open the door for the Jews in Acts 2 and 3, the Samaritans in Acts 8, and now the Gentiles in Acts 10.
3. It was not by chance that Cornelius was stationed in Israel and came into contact with the Hebrew Scripture and the one true God. Neither was it by chance that Cornelius was in Caesarea where Philip the Evangelist lived, just 30 miles from where Peter was staying in Joppa.
4. God was softening Peter for his role with the Gentiles by having him work previously with the Samaritans. Also Peter had undoubtedly heard of the conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch. And by staying with Simon the Tanner, Peter was more prepared for the vision of the sheet with the clean and unclean animals.
5. By believing what Peter testified about who Jesus was, what He has done, and that He was now alive and would judge the living and the dead

discuss\ consider

1. We can see throughout the Bible how God prepares the way for the walk of faith. God prepared Moses, David, Paul, and Peter. How did God prepare the way for you to come to salvation? How has He worked in your life since to prepare you for the next step in your walk of faith?
2. God directs the way for the walk of faith, then and today. Discuss these two points:
 - The walk of faith is step by step.
 - The walk of faith is a walk of faith.

challenge

God does not show us His whole plan for our lives all at once. But He certainly does show us the next step if we'll look to Him. Do you need to look to God for His next step in your life?

memorize

"But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean." Acts 10:28

"In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality." Acts 10:34

"And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished... because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also." Acts 10:45

Lesson 20

Peter and Barnabas Help to Further the Expansion of the Church to the Gentiles Acts 11

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. Peter played a major role in God's expansion of the Church to the Gentiles.
2. Barnabas played a major role in God's expansion of the Church to the Gentiles.

practical application

Let's give like the Christians at Antioch.

questions

1. Review the events leading up to Acts 11.
2. What was the cause of contention in Jerusalem?
3. How did Peter refute the arguments of the Jewish believers?
4. How do verses 15-17 seal Peter's case?
5. What was the problem in Antioch, and how was it resolved?

answers

1. In the previous chapter Peter opened the door of the Church to the Gentiles when God sent him to the house of Cornelius, a Roman centurion.
2. Some of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem were not pleased that Gentiles were being brought into the Church without being circumcised.
3. He simply recounted the facts of his vision and Cornelius' conversion, emphasizing that this was not his idea, but God's.
4. Peter equated the Holy Spirit coming down upon the Gentile believers to what had happened at Pentecost to the Jewish believers. The Lord had promised this baptism of the Spirit. Who was Peter to argue with God?
5. Members of the church in Jerusalem heard that the gospel had come to the Gentiles in the large city of Antioch of Syria. They sent Barnabas, the "son of encouragement" to check things out. Barnabas saw the work of God there and brought Paul to further teach the young believers.

discuss\ consider

1. When the Jewish believers in Jerusalem contended with Peter about his evangelizing the Gentiles, Peter had an excellent response. He simply recounted the facts of what happened, emphasizing God's supervision of the situation. After hearing this, the believers responded excellently as well. Can we glean any tips here for dealing with disputes within our churches?
2. Every time we have seen Barnabas in the book of Acts he is giving, helping, or encouraging others. What character traits do you see in Barnabas that you would like to have in your life?

challenge

The Christians of Antioch gave money to help the churches of Judea who were hit by a famine. We should be like the Christians of Antioch and give early, spontaneously, and proportionately.

memorize

"Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life." Acts 11:18

"When [Barnabas] came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord." Acts 11:23

"And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." Acts 11:26

Lesson 21

The Martyrdom of James, the Apostle; The Miraculous Deliverance of Peter from Prison; & The Sudden Death of Herod Agrippa I Acts 12

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. Believers are not always delivered from physical danger.
2. Believers are sometimes dramatically delivered from physical danger.

practical application

Leave sad fallout for doing what's right in the hands of God.

questions

1. Review the Herods of the Bible.
2. Who was the first apostle martyred?
3. How do God's promises of protection harmonize with the martyrdom of believers?
4. Give another example of someone who was not delivered from physical danger.
5. Give examples from the Bible of believers who were dramatically delivered from physical danger.

answers

1. Herods of the Bible:

- Herod the Great who killed the male babies in Bethlehem
- Herod Antipas, a son of Herod the Great and ruler of Galilee during our Lord's public ministry
- Herod Agrippa I, a grandson of Herod the Great who was struck dead in Acts 12
- Herod Agrippa II, a son of Herod Agrippa I, who listened to Paul's defense at Caesarea

2. James, the brother of John (This was not James, the half-brother of Jesus, who wrote the New Testament epistle.)

3. These are general promises of God's care and protection for His people, which we can claim. But God may call a believer to some special situation for the glory of God.

4. The Lord Jesus Himself was not spared the cup of suffering. He endured to the point of death, because a higher plan and purpose for God's glory was being carried out.

5. Daniel in the lions den, the three men in the fiery furnace, and many more

discuss\ consider

1. We see from the Bible that some believers are delivered from physical danger while some are not. This continues to be true today. Have you ever struggled with this issue? What is the proper attitude?

2. It is ironic that the believers were gathered, praying for Peter's release from prison, but when they were told he was standing at the gate they did not believe. Have you ever disbelieved when God answered your prayers? We shouldn't be surprised because we have a God who answers prayers!

challenge

Have you ever done what is right and seen sad fallouts result? Leave this in the hands of God.

memorize

"Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword." Acts 12:2

"And when Peter had come to himself, he said, 'Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod.'" Acts 12:11

"Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck [Herod], because he did not give glory to God." Acts 12:23

Lesson 22

The Beginning of Paul's First Missionary Journey Acts 13:1-13

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. The work of the Lord should always be divinely directed.
2. The work of the Lord will sometimes be extremely difficult.

practical application

Don't forget the rest of the story about John Mark.

questions

1. What is the emphasis of the book of Acts from this point?
2. What is the key to being used by God in fruitful ministry?
3. Who decided that Paul and Barnabas should go on a missionary journey?
4. What are the advantages of teamwork in ministry?
5. What was the purpose fasting and laying on of hands in Acts 13:3?
6. What happened on the first stop of this missionary journey?

answers

1. The missionary travels of the apostle Paul
2. Humility
3. The Holy Spirit made the decision and communicated it to Paul and Barnabas.
4. When more than one person are working together in a ministry there is encouragement and accountability.
5. This was a symbolic gesture of identification, association, fellowship, and support in the work of the Lord.
6. Paul and Barnabas preached throughout the island of Cyprus. Their success was contrasted with extreme difficulty. They came upon a false prophet who tried to disrupt the ministry and keep people from turning to the Lord.

discuss\ consider

1. Review the ways you have become involved in the work of the Lord. How did the ministry begin? How was it decided who would be involved? The work of the Lord should always be divinely directed.
2. The ministry of Paul and Barnabas faced extreme difficulty both externally and internally. After they faced a false prophet, one of their own team decided to leave them. Ministries still face difficulties today. But with God's help these difficulties can be overcome and the work of the Lord can continue! Have you seen this to be true in your ministries?

challenge

If we stopped reading here, we could conclude John Mark was useless for ministry. But we know from the rest of the New Testament that Mark went on to be used mightily of the Lord! Are you working alongside any young and immature believers? Give them a chance! With time and training, they may be used mightily by the Lord!

memorize

"The Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'" Acts 13:2

Lesson 23

The Continuation of Paul's First Missionary Journey – Antioch of Pisidia Acts 13:14-52

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. There should always be an emphasis on Scripture when the Gospel is presented.
2. There will always be mixed reactions when the Gospel is presented.

practical application

Don't force people to accept the Gospel!

questions

1. When approximately was Paul's first missionary journey?
2. What missionary strategy can we glean from Paul's journey to Antioch of Pisidia?
3. What was the typical structure of a first century synagogue service?
4. Outline Paul's sermon in the synagogue.
5. List a few of the Old Testament references Paul uses in his sermon.
6. What was the mixed reaction to Paul's sermon?

answers

1. The late 40s A.D.
2. Paul preached in the big cities and let the gospel ripple down from there.
3. There were a couple of readings from Scripture, both the Law and the Prophets, and then commentary was made.
4.
 - Verses 16-25 – Israel’s history in which God was preparing the nation for the coming of the Messiah
 - Verses 26-37 – The rejection, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus, the true Messiah
 - Verses 38-41 – The application and appeal
5. Psalm 2, Isaiah 55, Psalm 16, Habakkuk 1
6. Some of them wanted to hear more on the next Sabbath, some believed right away, and others became jealous and contradicted the truth of the gospel.

discuss\ consider

1. Paul quotes multiple references from the Old Testament to preach that Jesus is the Messiah. What an effective way to reach his audience! We know that the Word of God is powerful and active. How well do you know God’s Word? How do you let it speak for itself in your ministry?
2. Accepting the good news of Jesus Christ is a matter of the will. We cannot force people to accept the gospel. Discuss what techniques we can use to introduce people to the Lord. Ultimately the decision is between them and the Holy Spirit.

challenge

There will always be mixed reactions to the gospel. Your responsibility is to preach, and the Holy Spirit will do the rest.

memorize

“Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent.” Acts 13:26

“So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.” Acts 13:42

“And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.” Acts 13:48

Lesson 24

The Conclusion of Paul's First Missionary Journey Acts 14

background notes

1.

2.

3.

doctrinal points

1. It is not wrong for believers to flee dangerous situations.
2. It is wrong for believers to receive worship.

practical applications

1. Don't forget to follow up!
2. Don't forget to report back!

questions

1. Where is Iconium?
2. Where did Paul and Barnabas go first in Iconium?
3. What is a proselyte?
4. What did Paul and Barnabas do when their opposition attempted to physically mistreat and stone them?
5. What happened when Paul and Barnabas arrived in Lystra?
6. How do Paul's experiences recorded in 2 Corinthians 12 relate to this passage?

answers

1. Iconium was a city in central Asia of the Roman Empire and would be in central Turkey today.
2. They went to the Jewish synagogue where they would have an audience of both the Jews and the Gentile proselytes.
3. A proselyte was a non-Jew who believed in the one true God of Israel and followed Judaism to one degree or another.
4. They left Iconium and fled to Lystra and Derbe.
5. After they healed a lame man they were looked on as Greek gods by the citizens of Lystra. But Paul and Barnabas would not receive their worship. Instead they pointed them to the true God.
6. It might have been following this severe stoning that Paul was “caught up to the third heaven.”

discuss\ consider

1. It is not wrong for believers to flee dangerous situations. Discuss this point and how it could combat wrong thinking some believers might have about “Christian courage.”
2. You might be surprised to learn how many people today are not familiar with the Christian story. When witnessing to people who have no knowledge of Scripture, we can always follow Paul and Barnabas’ example and start with the witness of Creation. Practice how you would actually do this.

challenge

Paul and Barnabas retraced the steps of their missionary journey to strengthen and encourage the new believers. Responsible evangelism not only shares the gospel with people, but also trains them on how to become disciples of Christ.

memorize

“Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.” Acts 14:3

“The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!” Acts 14:11

“You should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them.” Acts 14:15

Lesson 25

The First Church Council in Jerusalem and its Decisions Concerning Gentile Believers & The Beginning of Paul's Second Missionary Journey Acts 15

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. The First Church Council affirmed that salvation is by grace through faith alone.
2. The First Church Council advised that separation from certain things is proper for Christian living.

practical application

Don't quit because of a split!

questions

1. What teaching caused conflict in Acts 15?
2. What are Judaizers?
3. What was the topic of the first Church Council?
4. Why did Peter especially have credibility to speak on the issue of salvation for the Gentiles?
5. What was James' purpose in quoting this prophecy from Amos 9?
6. What was the conclusion of the first Church Council?

answers

1. Men came from Jerusalem to Antioch and began teaching, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” Acts 15:1
2. A Judaizer was a person who was persuasively influenced by Judaism. They claim you must adhere to Judaism to one degree or another to be saved.
3. What was required of the Gentiles in order for them to have equal status and full fellowship in the Church with the Jews.
4. It was through Peter’s ministry at the home of Cornelius that the Gentiles were brought into the Church. No one could deny that this was a work of God.
5. James was not saying that the prophecy of Amos was being fulfilled in the early church. His point was that Gentiles should be included in the Church as Gentiles, because God’s program for the future included Gentiles.
6. Gentiles do not have to be circumcised in order to be saved. However, they advised a list of activities for the Gentiles to abstain from.

discuss\ consider

1. We do not have many problems with Judaizers today, but there are certainly still people who threaten the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith alone. If there are any requirements added to salvation, then it is no longer a free gift by grace. Do you know the arguments to combat this bad theology?
2. It might strike us strangely that the Council added stipulations to their letter to the Gentiles, after defending salvation by grace through faith alone. But these instructions were not for salvation, but rather for proper Christian living. This addresses the important distinction between justification and sanctification. Discuss the difference between working for your salvation, and working as a believer to live a proper Christian life.

challenge

Christian splits are never pleasant, whether they involve individuals, ministries, or churches. But a split should not cause the believers to quit doing ministry. Let God pick up the pieces and continue His work in you and through you.

memorize

“Certain men...taught the brethren, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.’” Acts 15:1

“Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.” Acts 15:7

“Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God.” Acts 15:19

**The Continuation of Paul's Second Missionary Journey,
Timothy and Luke Joined the Team
Acts 16:1-10**

background notes

- 1.

- 2.

- 3.

doctrinal points

1. Sometimes it is right to do what is not required.
2. Sometimes it is not right to do what seems logical.

practical application

Thank the Lord for Paul's Macedonian vision.

questions

1. Did Barnabas accompany Paul on his second missionary journey?
2. When and how did Timothy become a believer?
3. What "decrees" were Paul and his team delivering to the churches?
4. Why did Paul circumcise Timothy, and yet insist that Titus should not be circumcised?
5. Why didn't the Spirit permit Paul to preach in Ephesus or Bithynia?

answers

1. No. Because of the controversy between Paul and Barnabas concerning John Mark who had quit the team during the first missionary journey, the two preachers split. Paul took Silas and Barnabas took John Mark.
2. We don't know for sure. But Paul himself possibly led Timothy to the Lord on his first missionary journey. Or Timothy's mother and grandmother may have led him to the Lord.
3. These decrees were the conclusions of the first Jerusalem council. Gentiles did not have to be circumcised before they could be saved, but now as Christians they should abstain from certain things for proper Christian living.
4. With Timothy his circumcision was a matter of not offending the Jewish community. With Titus, for him not to be circumcised was a doctrinal matter, arguing that Gentiles did not have to be circumcised in order to be saved.
5. We don't know for certain. The Lord did not permit them to go where they intended, but led them instead to Troas where Luke, the author, joined the team.

discuss\ consider

1. Paul circumcised Timothy so as not to offend the Jews that they were seeking to evangelize. Discuss the principle that it is sometimes right to do what is not required for the sake of the ministry. Refer to 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.
2. The Lord opens and closes doors in His sovereign ways and sometimes we don't understand all the reasons. Yet time and again we have seen that God's plan is better than the plan we made ourselves. Discuss examples of this from your life. Refer to Proverbs 16:9 and Romans 8:28.

challenge

We can follow the example of Paul and Timothy practicing on-the-job training for ministry. If you are a more mature believer, is there someone you could train to carry on your ministry? If you are a young believer, is there someone who could mentor you in the ministry?

memorize

"A certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek." Acts 16:1

"A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.'" Acts 16:9

Lesson 27

The Gospel Moving into the Continent of Europe Acts 16:11-40

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. The Lord can use the enemy's dual strategy to accomplish His purpose.
2. The Lord can use the believer's legal status to accomplish His purpose.

practical application

Would we sing in prison?

questions

1. What significant landmark in the spread of the gospel occurs in this chapter?
2. How did Paul and his team decide to go to Europe?
3. Where did Paul and his team first go in Philippi?
4. Who was Lydia?
5. What is our enemy Satan's dual strategy?
6. List some of the rights of Romans citizens.

answers

1. Paul brings the gospel to the continent of Europe.
2. They were led there by the Holy Spirit after He prevented them from preaching the Word in Asia and Bithynia.
3. They went down by the riverside because they heard about a Sabbath day prayer meeting there.
4. She was a well-to-do Gentile business woman who worshipped the true God. She heard the gospel from Paul by the riverside and believed.
5. One is the friendly alliance tactic. The other is the frontal assault tactic.
6. Roman citizens were not to be beaten with rods and they were to have a fair trial.

discuss\ consider

1. Discuss the ways in which our enemy Satan seeks to attack us. Refer to 2 Corinthians 11:14 and 1 Peter 5:8. How can being aware of these tactics help us have victory?
2. Notice Paul's bold response to the keeper of the prison in Acts 16:37. It was appropriate here for Paul to claim his rights as a Roman citizen. Can you think of a situation where it would be beneficial for you as a believer to claim your legal status and civil rights? The Lord can use this to accomplish His purpose.

challenge

If you were in prison would you have joyfulness in your heart to sing? This could only be possible if you were experiencing the faith and peace that God can bring in difficult times. Find a time this week to sing when difficulties come.

memorize

"And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there." Acts 16:13

"These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation." Acts 16:17

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." Acts 16:31

**The Continuation of Paul's Second Missionary Journey:
Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens
Acts 17:1-15**

background notes

1.

2.

3.

doctrinal points

1. The Scriptures predict the sufferings and resurrection of the Messiah.
2. The Scriptures prove the historicity and accuracy of the Gospel.

practical application

Let's turn the world upside down!

questions

1. Why do we think Luke stayed in Philippi and did not travel with Paul and the others to Thessalonica?
2. How long was Paul preaching in Thessalonica?
3. What was Paul's approach with the Jews in Thessalonica?
4. Why must the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 be distinguished from the nation of Israel?
5. How did some of the Jews in Thessalonica respond to Paul's preaching?

answers

1. Because Luke, the author of Acts, switches the pronouns from “we” and “us” to “they” and “them” in this section.
2. This chapter says he preached in the synagogue for three weeks. But he probably stayed there longer teaching the Gentiles as well. We know that the Philippian believers sent financial gifts to Paul more than once in Thessalonica.
3. Paul showed the Jews that the Old Testament Scriptures predicted the sufferings and resurrection of the Messiah. Then he showed them that Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled these prophecies and must be the Messiah.
4. Although modern Judaism tries to say that the Suffering Servant is the nation of Israel, the two are clearly distinguished in Isaiah 53:8.
5. They became jealous and formed a mob and tried to get Paul and the others arrested based on the lie that they were trying to undermine Caesar’s authority. Later they followed Paul to Berea and stirred up trouble there.

discuss\ consider

1. The entire Bible as God’s Story of Redemption fits together beautifully. The Old Testament sets out the promises about the Deliverer God would send. The New Testament shows step by step how Jesus Christ fulfilled these promises. List as many Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah and their New Testament fulfillments as you can.
2. The Jews in Berea set an excellent example to follow. When Paul came to them preaching that the Messiah had come, they compared his message with the Scripture, to see whether what he said was true. This is an excellent practice when we come upon new teachings in Christianity. Can you give an example of this which you have seen?

challenge

Preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ will turn the world upside down – in a good way! Want to make a difference in this world? Try Paul’s approach.

memorize

“Paul... reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, ‘This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.’” Acts 17:2-3

“These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.” Acts 17:6

“They received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.” Acts 17:11

Lesson 29

Paul's First Visit to Athens and His Address to the Council known as The Areopagus Acts 17:16-34

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. A good witness shares with everyone.
2. A good witness looks for common ground.
3. A good witness moves on to the gospel.

practical application

Are you willing to be called a babbler?

questions

1. What were the different reactions to the gospel in Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens?
2. Where did Paul witness in Athens?
3. Who were the Epicureans and Stoics?
4. What was the Areopagus?
5. What point of contact did Paul use to begin his witnessing to the Areopagus?

answers

1.

- Thessalonica – open hostility by the unbelieving Jews
- Berea – a more receptive attitude by the Jews
- Athens – indifference, skepticism, and ridicule

2. He went first to the Jews and God-fearing Gentiles in the synagogue. He also shared in the agora or marketplace to anyone who was present and would listen.
3. These were two groups of philosophers Paul encountered in Athens. The Epicureans taught that pleasure was the chief end of life. The Stoic philosophers were pantheistic and emphasized that one should have total control over the emotions- unmoved by pleasure or pain.
4. The Areopagus was a government council in charge of religious and educational matters. They met at the Hill of Ares (or Mars Hill) near the Acropolis.
5. He talked about an altar he had seen with the inscription “To the Unknown God.” From there he moved to the common ground of creation, then to the origin of different peoples and nations. He also used quotations from their own Greek poets.

discuss\ consider

1. In Acts 17, Paul shared the gospel in three different cities with different reactions. We will find these same different reactions to the gospel today: hostility, indifference, skepticism, ridicule, as well as openness and reception. What should our response be to these reactions? How do we continue to share the gospel?
2. Review the three ways in which Paul was a good witness in Athens. How could you use these steps to enhance the way you witness to others? It is too easy to stop before step #3. But don't! This is the most important step!

challenge

Paul was not ashamed to be ridiculed for his witness. He knew that he spoke the truth and so he preached the gospel boldly. Are you willing to stand up and preach the faith?

memorize

“I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the one whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you.” Acts 17:23

“...He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being...” Acts 17:27-28

“Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.” Acts 17:30

Lesson 30

**Paul's Ministry at Corinth, The Completion of His Second Missionary Journey,
& The Beginning of Paul's Third Missionary Journey
Acts 18**

background notes

1.

2.

3.

doctrinal points

1. The work of the Lord involves adapting to various situations.
2. The work of the Lord involves assisting various saints.

practical application

You can be a Priscilla and Aquila couple.

questions

1. How long was Paul in Corinth?
2. What epistles did Paul write from Corinth?
3. How did Paul support himself in Athens?
4. Who were Priscilla and Aquila?
5. How did Paul conclude his second missionary journey?
6. Who was Apollos?

answers

1. About a year and a half
2. 1 and 2 Thessalonians
3. He worked as a tentmaker until financial support was sent by other churches.
4. They were fellow tentmakers, who had recently fled to Corinth from Rome.
5. By returning to his commissioning church in Antioch of Syria. He spent some time there before heading out on his third missionary journey.
6. Apollos was a powerful preacher who came to preach in the synagogue in Ephesus. He knew the truth about Jesus as the Messiah, but did not know further revelation beyond that.

discuss\ consider

1. Crispus and Sosthenes were two unlikely believers. Yet because of Paul's faithful preaching and the Holy Spirit's work within them, they did believe! Do you know someone who you think will never believe the gospel? Don't give up on them. How can you continue to pray and share with them?
2. When Priscilla and Aquila realized that Apollos was not straight in his doctrine they took him aside and explained things more accurately. Discuss the excellent example of Priscilla, Aquila, and Apollos in this situation. Each person was wise and acted appropriately, causing great results from a potentially complicated situation.

challenge

Priscilla and Aquila served the Lord together as a couple. They were blessed together for their availability and service to the Lord.

memorize

"Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized." Acts 18:8

"Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city." Acts 18:9-10

"When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took [Apollos] aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately." Acts 18:26

Lesson 31

The Continuation of Paul's Third Missionary Journey & The Record of His Ministry at Ephesus Acts 19

background notes

1.

2.

3.

doctrinal points

1. The Word of the Lord is confirmed by signs.
2. The Word of the Lord is confirmed by revival.
3. The Word of the Lord is confirmed by opposition.

practical application

Let God use clerks and courts if He so chooses.

questions

1. When did the Apostle Paul first come to Ephesus?
2. Who did Paul encounter when he returned to Ephesus?
3. Why did God work such unusual miracles through Paul?
4. Tell the story of the seven sons of Seva.
5. What revival occurred in Ephesus?
6. How did the Lord intervene to protect Paul during the riot in Ephesus?

answers

1. He had visited Ephesus briefly during his second missionary journey. He left Priscilla and Aquila there to lay the groundwork for his promised return on his third missionary journey.
2. He met some disciples who, like Apollos, were only acquainted with the teaching of John the Baptist and had undergone John's baptism of repentance.
3. To show that the power of God was in him and to confirm his teaching.
4. These Jewish exorcists attempted to use the name of Jesus to cast out an evil spirit, because they saw that Paul was so successful. But the evil spirit drove the man to attack the sons instead!
5. Those who had been involved in occult practices brought their books and burned them.
6. By using the city clerk and his logic of the judicial court system to calm the people.

discuss\ consider

1. God confirms His Word by signs. These signs may or may not be extraordinary miracles, but there is evidence that God's Word is the truth. What sort of evidences have you seen?
2. Have you ever thought of opposition as confirmation that God's Word is powerful? Satan doesn't bother opposing unproductive ministries. How could this mindset be an encouragement for you to continue in your ministry?

challenge

Do you have ungodly possessions around that you need to get rid of? Don't just put them in a closet or sell them – get rid of them for good!

memorize

“Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul.” Acts 19:11

“And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all.” Acts 19:18-19

“And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way.” Acts 19:23

Lesson 32

The Last Major Stages of Paul's Third Missionary Journey Acts 20

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. Staying flexible is important in the work of the Lord.
2. Being efficient is important in the work of the Lord.
3. Encouraging elders is important in the work of the Lord.
4. Setting the example is important in the work of the Lord.

practical application

Pray a parting prayer.

questions

1. How do we see Paul's flexibility demonstrated in this chapter?
2. Why do we think Paul picked up Luke in Philippi?
3. What slightly humorous event occurred in Troas?
4. How did Paul show efficiency in his ministry?
5. In what areas did Paul exhort the Ephesian elders to follow his example?

answers

1. He changed his travel plans when he learned of a plot against him. He was available to preach all night in Troas.
2. Because Luke is the author of the book of Acts, and the pronouns change from “they\them” to “we\us” in Acts 20:6
3. While Paul was preaching a long sermon, a young man named Eutychus sank into a deep sleep (can’t we all relate to that!). He fell out of the window and was killed! Fortunately, since Paul was there, he was able to restore his life and continue preaching.
4. He sent his team ahead by boat, but hiked to their destination instead, so he could have more time ministering. He had the Ephesian elders meet him in Miletus, so he would not get held up in Ephesus.
5. He exhorted them not to be in the ministry for the money. He exhorted them to help the weak – the weak physically and the weak spiritually. He encouraged them to be examples themselves.

discuss\ consider

1. Review the important doctrine concerning elders in Acts 20. What is your church’s practice concerning elders? Does it match up with Scripture?
 - The Bible teaches the plurality of elders.
 - There is no difference between the office of elder, the office of bishop or overseer and the position of pastor in a church.
 - The Holy Spirit makes a man an elder. It is the church’s responsibility to recognize the elders that the Holy Spirit is calling to their great work.
2. Re-read Paul’s conversation with the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:17-35. He spoke with such confidence because he knew that he had done his job well. Discuss ways in which you can follow Paul’s example so you can have such confidence in your ministry.

challenge

Paul had a precious time of prayer before he departed from the Ephesian elders. Are you parting from someone this week? Pray a parting prayer.

memorize

“Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.” Acts 20:7

“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” Acts 20:28

“So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.” Acts 20:32

Lesson 33

The Completion of Paul's Third Missionary Journey & Paul's Arrest in Jerusalem Acts 21

background notes

1.

2.

3.

doctrinal points

1. Mature believers can make mistakes in determining God's will.
2. Mistakes of mature believers cannot cancel out God's will.

practical application

Try to make good decisions.

questions

1. Where was Paul traveling to in Acts 21?
2. Where have we seen Philip the Evangelist before?
3. How was Paul advised about his intended trip to Jerusalem?
4. What happened when Paul went to the Jerusalem church?
5. What happened when Paul was in the Temple?
6. What good result did God bring from Paul's arrest in Jerusalem?

answers

1. His intent was to get to Jerusalem in time for the feast of Pentecost and to deliver the monetary gifts that he had collected for the needy saints of the Jerusalem church.
2. This is the Philip who evangelized the Samaritans and also led the Ethiopian eunuch to the Lord in Acts 8.
3. The disciples in Tyre “told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem.” Acts 21:4. Also, in Acts 21:11, Agabus prophesied by the Holy Spirit that Paul would be arrested and bound in Jerusalem.
4. They told him that his teaching had been misinterpreted as teaching against the Jews, and they compelled him to take a Nazarite type vow.
5. Some Jews falsely accused Paul of bringing Trophimus, a Gentile, beyond the Court of the Gentiles in the Temple Complex. They slandered him and misinterpreted his teaching, starting a riot.
6. Paul was able to boldly witness before the Jewish Sanhedrin. And then Paul boldly witnessed to the governing authorities in Caesarea before he was shipped to Rome. There he was imprisoned, during which time he wrote four epistles of the New Testament.

discuss\ consider

1. As believers we are given many tools to help us determine God’s will. Discuss the few mentioned: common sense, circumstances, counsel of other believers, and the direct Word of the Lord by the Holy Spirit.
2. Aren’t you thankful that as believers, our mistakes can’t cancel out God’s will?! We have all made mistakes in our lives. Share how God has taken some of these mistakes and worked them out for good (Romans 8:28).

challenge

You will face many decisions this week – small and great. Seek God’s will with each of them and try to make good decisions.

memorize

“And finding disciples, we stayed there seven days. They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem.” Acts 21:4

“Then Paul answered... ‘For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.’” Acts 21:13

Lesson 34

Paul's defense before the Jewish Mob in the Temple Courts Acts 22

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. Believers are expected to witness faithfully.
2. Believers are not expected to suffer needlessly.

practical application

Don't run ahead of the Lord.

questions

1. Review the context of Acts 22.
2. How did the Roman soldiers get to the Temple courts so quickly to rescue Paul?
3. Explain Acts 21:2: "And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent."
4. Is Acts 22:16 saying that you are saved through baptism? "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."
5. Why was the Roman commander so startled to hear that Paul was a Roman?

answers

1. In the previous chapter we had the record of Paul's arrest in the Temple Courts in Jerusalem. Paul was falsely accused of bringing a Gentile into the inner courts of the Temple Complex. The Jewish mob had dragged Paul out of the inner courts and was beating him up and might have killed him if the Roman military forces hadn't intervened.
2. Along the northwest corner of the Temple platform was the Antonia Fortress. This was the barracks of Roman soldiers and commanders. There were stairs leading from the Temple Court of the Gentiles up into the Antonia Fortress.
3. Most of the Jews from around the Roman Empire spoke Greek, so him speaking Hebrew, the mother tongue of the people living in the Land, certainly caught the attention of his audience.
4. No, we know from other clear teachings in the New Testament that baptism does not save anyone. A better translation of this verse would be, "Having arisen, be baptized, and have your sins washed off by calling on the name of the Lord." Calling on the name of the Lord is how you have your sins removed. Baptism is symbolic of your identification with Christ who has washed away your sins.
5. It was unlawful to scourge or even bind a Roman citizen before he was proven guilty. To scourge Paul would have put this commander in danger of losing his rank and maybe even his life.

discuss\ consider

1. When Paul witnessed to the Jewish mob that had just beaten him, he started with his own personal testimony. This is an effective technique for evangelism, because no one can argue with your own personal experience. Review your testimony. How could you use it in an opportunity for witnessing?

challenge

When the Lord called Paul He only revealed to him the next step in his walk of faith. In the same way the Lord will guide us step by step. Don't run ahead of the Lord.

memorize

"I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia...taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today." Acts 22:3

"And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'... 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.'" Acts 22:7-8

"Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman." Acts 22:26

Lesson 35

Paul's Defense before the Jewish Sanhedrin and then his Transfer to the Roman Headquarters at Caesarea Acts 23

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. Believers should be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.
2. Believers should look for the way of escape.

practical application

Remember the Lord stands by you.

questions

1. Review the context of Acts 23.
2. Who were the Sanhedrin?
3. What was the difference between the Pharisees and the Sadducees?
4. What strategic move did Paul make in this chapter?
5. What important conversation did Paul's nephew overhear?
6. How did Paul use this information as a way of escape?

answers

1. In the previous chapter, Paul was given an opportunity to witness to the Jewish mob in the Temple courts. After he mentioned God's grace to the Gentiles, the mob rioted again, and the Roman military intervened. In order to determine why the Jews were so intent on Paul's death, the commander brought Paul before the Sanhedrin.
2. These members of the Jewish Council were the governing body of the Jewish people.
3. These two sects within the Sanhedrin had some differing theologies. The Sadducees did not believe in angels, spirits, or the resurrection of the body as the Pharisees did.
4. He used his knowledge of the difference between the Pharisees and the Sadducees to start an argument between the groups and distract them from persecuting him.
5. That more than forty men had bound themselves by oath to fast and eat nothing until they had killed the apostle Paul
6. He sent his nephew to tell the commander about the plot. As a result, the commander arranged to have Paul securely transferred to the Roman military headquarters in Caesarea.

discuss\ consider

1. Discuss the Lord's instructions in Matthew 10 to be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves." How did we see this modeled by the Apostle Paul? Give an example of an area of your life in which you should be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves."
2. In 1 Corinthians 10:13 God promises to provide a way of escape so that we will not have to sin or fail the test of faith. Review the ways of escape God provided for Paul. Have you seen the Lord provide ways for you to escape temptation or testing?

challenge

At a critical time in Paul's life, the Lord appeared, standing by his side. In times of crisis in your life, remember the Lord's promise to you in Hebrews 13:5, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

memorize

"A dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided." Acts 23:7

"Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome." Acts 23:11

"This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them. Coming with the troops I rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman." Acts 23:27

Lesson 36

Paul's Defense Before Felix, the Roman Governor of Judea and Samaria Acts 24

background notes

1.

2.

3.

doctrinal points

1. Believers should expect the opposition to manipulate the truth.
2. Believers should defend themselves, but not manipulate the truth.

practical application

Make your witness personal.

questions

1. Review the context of Acts 24.
2. What false accusations did Tertullus bring against Paul, on behalf of the Sanhedrin?
3. How did Paul defend himself against these accusations?
4. What was "The Way"?
5. Did Paul's defense result in his release?

answers

1. In the previous chapter, the Roman military commander, who had rescued Paul from the Jewish mob in the Temple courts, brought Paul before the Jewish Sanhedrin. After another great uproar, a plot was uncovered to ambush and kill Paul. The Roman commander, Lysius, decided to send Paul to Felix, the Roman governor in Caesarea.
2.
 1. Paul was a troublemaker and an insurrectionist.
 2. He was a ringleader of a new and unrecognized, and therefore illegal, religious sect known as the Nazarenes.
 3. He tried to desecrate the temple.
3. He simply stated the truth as facts.
4. This was the name the early believers had for themselves. They followed Jesus Christ who said Himself that He was the way, the truth, and the life.
5. No, Felix kept Paul in custody for over two years, as a favor to the Jews.

discuss\ consider

1. When Tertullus brought his accusations against Paul he skillfully manipulated the truth. Such manipulation of the truth is characteristic of many unbelievers today when it comes to Christians, the Christian faith, and what the Bible teaches. Gives examples of this that you have seen.
2. Are you equipped to defend the truth of the Bible and contend for the Christian faith? As believers we are to do this by simply stating the facts and leaving the results in the hands of God. Discuss different resources you know for Christian apologetics and Christian evidences. You can begin with growingchristians.org!

challenge

Paul made his witness to Felix personal, so he could no longer discuss the Christian faith on only an intellectual level. While personal discussions about repentance and sin may make unbelievers uncomfortable, this is the way people are saved. Make your witness personal.

memorize

“For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.” Acts 24:5

“So he commanded the centurion to keep Paul and to let him have liberty, and told him not to forbid any of his friends to provide for or visit him.” Acts 24:23

“Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, ‘Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.’” Acts 24:25

Lesson 37

Paul's Defense Before Governor Festus Acts 25

background notes

1.

2.

3.

doctrinal points

1. There is a time to appeal to Caesar.
2. There is a time to appear before Agrippa.

practical application

Always try to get the divine perspective.

questions

1. Review the historical context of Acts 25.
2. Under what conditions was Paul imprisoned in Caesarea?
3. What were Paul's fellow workers doing while Paul was imprisoned?
4. What happened when Festus arrived in Jerusalem?
5. Did Paul go to trial in Jerusalem?
6. Who is King Agrippa?

answers

1. After Paul had been imprisoned for two years, governor Felix was replaced with a new governor named Porcius Festus. This would have been around 58 A.D.
2. Paul was kept in Herod's Praetorium, which has been excavated in Caesarea today. He was free to have friends come who would provide for him and visit him.
3. Luke, the author of Acts, interviewed the disciples and probably made several trips up to Jerusalem collecting material for the gospel of Luke.
4. The Jewish leaders and chief priests requested that Paul be brought to Jerusalem to trial. They wanted to set up an ambush and kill Paul before he got to Jerusalem.
5. No, after Paul relayed his case to Festus, he refused to go to Jerusalem, but instead appealed to Caesar.
6. This was Herod Agrippa II, the great-grandson of Herod the Great.

discuss\ consider

1. There is a time to appeal to Caesar. How is this principle applicable to believers today?
2. Do you think Paul got tired of relaying his case to various Roman rulers? He always used the hearings as an opportunity to witness for Christ. Paul was always ready to share his faith. Are you?

challenge

The author Luke did not sit around doing nothing while Paul was imprisoned. He kept busy doing his own work for the Lord. Do you feel like you are in a holding pattern in your life? You can still use this time to minister!

memorize

"Let those who have authority among you go down with me and accuse this man, to see if there is any fault in him." Acts 25:5

"Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything at all." Acts 25:8

"You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!" Acts 25:12

Paul's Defense Before King Agrippa Acts 26

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. Christians should defend themselves with truth and logic.
2. Christians will be defamed as unstable and pushy.

practical application

Let's praise the Lord for the blessings of salvation.

questions

1. Where did the events of Acts 26 take place?
2. Review the context of Acts 26.
3. Why did Paul refer to Agrippa as an expert in Jewish customs?
4. Follow the logic of Paul's argument about resurrection.
5. In this scenario with Paul we see two typical responses of unbelievers to a believer's testimony. What are they?
6. What blessings of salvation does Paul lay out in Acts 26:18?

answers

1. These events occurred in Caesarea, the military headquarters for the Roman forces and rulers over the land of Israel during New Testament times.
2. Paul had been arrested in Jerusalem and taken to Caesarea as prisoner. Paul made his case before Festus, who, in order to appease the Jews, left Paul in prison. Under Festus, the new procurator, Paul appealed his case to Caesar. While Paul was waiting to travel to Rome, King Agrippa arrived in Caesarea and wanted to hear Paul.
3. Because Agrippa was part Jewish, being the great-grandson of Herod the Great and his Jewish wife Mariamne.
4. As a Pharisee, Paul believed in the prophetic promises made to the patriarchs. Since those promises were not yet fulfilled, they could only be fulfilled if the faithful were resurrected.
5. Believers are unstable. Believers are pushy.
6.
 - Our eyes are opened
 - We turn from darkness to light
 - We are transferred from the dominion of Satan to the kingdom of God
 - We are forgiven for our sins
 - We have a future eternal inheritance

discuss\ consider

1. Paul's argument in Acts 26:6-8 could be used today against those who teach that the Church is the "New Israel." God made distinct promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants. These unfilled promises await future fulfillment – to the Jews, not to the Church!
2. When you share your faith with others, you may encounter the two responses Paul faced. Look at Paul's reaction to each of these responses and discuss how you could follow his example.

challenge

Paul took every opportunity to share his faith. Are you excited about the truth of the gospel and the blessings of salvation? Find someone to share them with this week.

memorize

"Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?" Acts 26:8

"Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come -- that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles." Acts 26:22-23

"Then Agrippa said to Paul, 'You almost persuade me to become a Christian.'" Acts 26:28

Lesson 39

Paul's Voyage to Rome including the Shipwreck Acts 27

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal points

1. Unbelievers are not blessed when they follow the wisdom of this world.
2. Unbelievers are blessed when they follow the counsel of godly believers.

practical application

Watch out for favorable soft winds.

questions

1. Why did Paul board a ship in this chapter?
2. Where was this ship coming from? What kind of ship was it?
3. What went wrong on this voyage?
4. How do we know that Paul had established a good reputation with the centurion, Julius?
5. When did the sailors begin listening to Paul's advice?

answers

1. Paul had appealed to Caesar to defend himself against the accusations of the Jews. Now he was being sent by ship to Rome.
2. This was a grain ship coming from Alexandria, Egypt to Rome. Egypt was the breadbasket of Rome.
3. The ship was blown off course by a sudden, violent, and prolonged storm from the northeast. Fearing that they would be blown into the treacherous shallows off the coast of Africa, they dropped a sea anchor and let the ship be blown along at the mercy of the storm.
4. Luke and Aristarchus were permitted to accompany Paul as his servants. Paul was allowed to go ashore in Sidon to meet with believers there. Also the centurion allowed Paul to express his opinion concerning the voyage.
5. After the storm arose

discuss\ consider

1. The wisdom of this world may appear reasonable, but because it does not take God and His Word into account, it cannot result in blessing. Discuss the wisdom of the world and the damage you have seen it do.
2. Even unbelievers can receive a measure of blessing in their lives if they follow the counsel of godly believers. Give examples of this from the Bible and from history.

challenge

Because of the favorable soft wind, the sailors wanted to continue their voyage rather than winter where they were. They turned a deaf ear to common sense and godly counsel, and reaped the consequence of shipwreck. Are you making life decisions because of “favorable soft wind”? Check these things out and pray about them. God promises to guide you.

memorize

“When the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their desire, putting out to sea, they sailed close by Crete.” Acts 27:13

“Now when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest beat on us, all hope that we would be saved was finally given up.” Acts 27:20

“Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.” Acts 27:31

“And so it was that they all escaped safely to land.” Acts 27:44

Lesson 40

The Record of Paul's Three Month Stay on the Island of Malta & His Arrival in Rome Acts 28

background notes

1.

2.

3.

doctrinal points

1. Paul arrived in Rome a way he had not planned.
2. Paul accomplished in Rome a work he had not perceived.

practical application

Don't hide the bad news of the message.

questions

1. What is the context of Acts 28?
2. Recount the story of Paul with the snake.
3. How did Paul's ministry in Malta begin?
4. Why was Paul encouraged when he came to Rome?
5. What was Paul's condition in Rome?
6. Who were some of the first visitors to Paul's house in Rome?

answers

1. The previous chapter records Paul's ship voyage and shipwreck. All 276 passengers and crew of the ship survived the shipwreck and made it safely to an island.
2. While Paul was gathering wood for the fire, he was bitten by a snake. The islanders saw this as a bad omen that he was a murderer, and expected him to drop dead. But Paul survived, so then they thought he was a god!
3. A wealthy Roman official named Publius welcomed Paul and his team to the island. Paul healed Publius' sick father, and as a result, sick and diseased people from the whole island began coming to Paul.
4. Because he was greeted by believers there.
5. Although Paul was a prisoner, he enjoyed quite a bit of freedom. He lived in a rented house with a soldier who guarded him. Paul had many visitors who came to hear him preach and teach the gospel.
6. Paul invited the leading men of the Jews to his house and shared the gospel with them. There were mixed reactions when Paul testified that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

discuss\ consider

1. Paul had always intended to go to Rome, but not as a prisoner! Many of his circumstances were not as he planned, but God had planned all of this. Has God ever changed your plans in your ministry or in your life? How did this turn out better than your plans?
2. Discuss the work that Paul accomplished while imprisoned in Rome. He may have never imagined these opportunities, and may not have had them if he was not imprisoned. What can we learn from this?

challenge

Read Acts 1:8. The Lord gave this commission to His disciples before He ascended to heaven. Now we come to the end of the book and see this mission has been accomplished. What a great adventure!

memorize

"The rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed." Acts 28:9

"So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening." Acts 28:23

"Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him." Acts 28:30-31