

The Book of acts

Cliffdale Community Church Winter Life Group Study Guide

February 1, 2021

Author: Pastor Morris Barnett

7763 Cliffdale Rd Fayetteville, NC 28314

Text

Description automatically generated

SYLLABUS

THE BOOK OF ACTS – A STUDY OF THE EARLY CHURCH

WINTER-SPRING SESSION LIFE GROUPS 2021

Week One February 7

Meet and Greet, Sign Covenants, determine if your group will have food and if so what will be the menu. Make plans as to when you will try to have a social for the group. Pass out workbooks. Take prayer requests. Homework will be to do Lesson One for next week.

Week Two February 14

Fellowship Time

Discuss Lesson 1

Prayer Request

Homework: Lesson 2

Week Three February 21

Fellowship Time

Discuss Lesson 2

Prayer Request

Homework: Lesson 3

Week Four February 28

Fellowship Time

Discuss Lesson 3

Prayer Request

Homework: Lesson 4

Week Five March 7

Fellowship Time

Discuss Lesson 4

Prayer Request

Homework: Lesson 5

Week Six March 14

Fellowship Time

Discuss Lesson 5

Prayer Request

Homework: Lesson 6

Week Seven March 21

Fellowship Time

Discuss Lesson 6

Prayer Request

Homework: Lesson 7

Week Eight March 28

Fellowship Time

Discuss Lesson 7

Prayer Request

Homework: Lesson 8

Week Nine April 4 (Easter)

Fellowship Time

Discuss Lesson 8

Prayer Request

Homework: Lesson 9

Week 10 April 11

Fellowship Time

Discuss Lesson 9

Prayer Request

Homework: Lesson 10

Week 11 April 18

Fellowship Time

Discuss Lesson 10

Prayer Request

Homework: Lesson 11

Week 12 April 25

Fellowship Time

Discuss Lesson 11

Prayer Request

Homework: Lesson 12

Week 13 April 28

Fellowship Time

Discuss Lesson 12

Prayer Request

Homework: Lesson 13

Week 14 May 2

Fellowship Time

Discuss Lesson 13

Prayer Request

Homework: Lesson 14

Week 15 May 9 (Mother’s Day)

Fellowship Time

Discuss Lesson 14

Prayer Request

Homework: Lesson 15

Week 16 May 16

Fellowship Time

Discuss Lesson 15

Plan End of Study Get Together

Prayer Request

Homework: Lesson 16

Week 17 May 23

Fellowship Time

Discuss Lesson 16

Prayer Request

Homework: Lesson 17

Week 18 May 30

Fellowship Time

Discuss Lesson 17

Prayer Request

Homework: Lesson 18

Week 19 June 6

Fellowship Time

Discuss Lesson 18

Prayer Request

Homework: Lesson 19

Week 20 June 13

Fellowship Time

Discuss Lesson 19

Prayer Request

**LESSON ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF ACTS**

The Holy Spirit has given us in the New Testament four accounts of Jesus' ministry but only one book on the early years of the Church. It is called the Acts of the Apostles, but in fact it tells us only selected things about a few of the apostles. What about John, who gave us five of the New Testament books? What about Matthew, who wrote one Gospel? What about Andrew, Thomas, Bartholemew, James the Younger, Simon the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Matthias? Acts is even silent on the last fifteen years or so of Peter's ministry. Clearly, just as God has not chosen to give us a complete biography of Jesus, so He has determined not to inspire a thorough history of the Church's beginnings.

**What is Acts?**

If Acts is not a complete history of the Church's first three decades, then what is it? Our first clue is that it is the second of a two-volume work. An early convert to Christianity named Luke wrote a Gospel and Acts for a Roman aristocrat named Theophilus ([Luke 1:1-4](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lk+1%3A1-4); [Acts 1:1](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+1%3A1)). Luke was the "beloved physician" ([Col. 4:14](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Col+4%3A14)) of the Apostle Paul. He traveled with Paul on part of his second missionary journey. Some years later, Luke went from Philippi to Jerusalem with Paul, and when Paul was arrested there, Luke accompanied him on his harrowing journey to Rome. We surmise these facts from the way Luke changed from the third person ("they") to the first ("we") in parts of Acts ([16:10-17](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+16%3A10-17); [20:5-21:18](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+20%3A5-21%3A18); [27:1-28:16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+27%3A1-28%3A16)).

We don't know whether Luke was a Gentile, a Gentile convert to Judaism, or a Jew before he became a Christian. His writings show that he was steeped in the urban, Gentile, Greek-speaking culture of the Roman Empire; [Luke 1:1-4](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lk+1%3A1-4) is written in the literary Greek of the educated elite, and Acts describes Gentile kings, philosophers, and legal details accurately. On the other hand, Luke was also well versed in the *Septuagint*, the Greek translation of the Old Testament that Jews all over the Empire used.

About Theophilus we can only speculate. His name means "lover of God," but it was a common Greek name and was probably not made up by Luke. In Luke's day, people often wrote for and dedicated their works to wealthy patrons, who helped pay for publishing the books. Theophilus was probably an educated Gentile aristocrat, either a new convert or an interested pagan. Luke may have wanted to help confirm this man and others like him in the faith by showing that it rested on firm historical foundations and the power of God.

When was Acts written? The earliest would be about 62 ad, where [chapter 28](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+28) leaves off abruptly. However, Luke seems to be looking back on those events from at least some distance. On the other hand, the book gives no hint of the deaths of Paul, Peter, or James, nor of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 ad, nor even of Paul's letters. Would a book written after 90 ad partly about Paul have ignored his letters, which were so influential by then? Most scholars who think Acts is an accurate account by Luke (as opposed to fiction) guess that the book was written over some time and finished "towards ad 70."

1.  Look at Luke's prologue to his whole work ([Luke 1:1-4](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lk+1%3A1-4)). What does he say Luke-Acts is meant to be?

2.  In [Acts 1:1-2](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+1%3A1-2), Luke summarizes volume 1 (Luke's Gospel) as an introduction to volume 2 (Acts). He says the Gospel is about "all that Jesus began to do and to teach" until His ascension into Heaven forty days after the Resurrection. If Luke's Gospel is about what Jesus began to do and to teach, what is Acts probably about?

3.  What does [Acts 1:8](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+1%3A8) tell you about the purpose of the book?

4.  Read [1:15](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+1%3A15); [2:41](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A41); [4:4](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+4%3A4); [5:14](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+5%3A14); [6:7](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+6%3A7); [9:31](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+9%3A31); [12:24](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+12%3A24); [16:5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+16%3A5); [19:20](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+19%3A20); and [28:31](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+28%3A31).

a. What do these verses have in common, and what progression do you see?

b. What does this pattern tell you about Acts?

**LESSON TWO**

[**Acts 1:1-26**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+1%3A1-26)

**Preparation**

Luke was a master of many styles of writing. He wrote [Luke 1:1-4](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lk+1%3A1-4) in formal, classical Greek, but in the rest of his Gospel and all of Acts, Luke used a style reminiscent of the *Septuagint*, the Greek version of the Old Testament.

*Septuagint* Greek was a unique style. It was almost as different from the Greek spoken in Luke's day as the English of the King James Bible is different from what is spoken today. Why did Luke use the style of the Jewish Bible? Perhaps he knew he was writing "sacred history," a continuation of God's dealings with man that began in Genesis and reached its culmination in the ministry of Jesus. By using the *Septuagint*'s style and quoting it often, Luke stressed that Acts recounted the continuation and fulfillment of the Scripture's story.

Before you begin the questions in this lesson read [1:1-26](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+1%3A1-26) all the way through. You might find it helpful to compare two versions of the Bible. Ask God to show you the important truths of this opening chapter of Acts.

1.  For each of the following sections, write a title that expresses what the section is about.

[1:1-11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+1%3A1-11)

[1:12-26](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+1%3A12-26)

2.  If Acts tells how the Church began to fulfill its mission through the Holy Spirit, how does [1:1-26](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+1%3A1-26) relate to this theme?

**Commission ([1:1-11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+1%3A1-11))**

***Apostles*** ([1:2](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+1%3A2)). An apostle is literally "one who is sent"—a messenger, proxy, ambassador. In Jewish law, an *apostolos* (Greek) or *shaliach* (Aramaic) was "a person acting with full authority for another" in a business or legal transaction. [John 13:16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+13%3A16), [20](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+13%3A20) and [20:21](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+20%3A21) reflect the Jewish idea of the *shaliach*.

During His earthly life, Jesus appointed twelve of His disciples to be His apostles ([Luke 6:12-16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lk+6%3A12-16)). To these twelve He gave the most intensive training and intimate friendship.

The early Church eventually recognized other believers as apostles in some sense: Paul ([Acts 14:14](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+14%3A14)), Barnabas ([Acts 14:14](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+14%3A14)), James the brother of Jesus ([Galatians 1:19](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Gal+1%3A19)), and perhaps Andronicus and Junias ([Romans 16:7](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ro+16%3A7)). However, it is not clear that all these people held the Church's highest authority regarding doctrine and policy, as the Twelve did. Paul does seem to have eventually attained this status ([Galatians 1:1-2:10](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Gal+1%3A1-2%3A10)). Nevertheless, in these early chapters of Acts, Luke uses the term "the Twelve" as equivalent to "the apostles."

***Kingdom of God*** ([1:3](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+1%3A3)). Jesus called His message "the good news of the kingdom of God" ([Luke 4:43](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lk+4%3A43)) and He spoke about the Kingdom constantly. The Old Testament had promised that God would restore His own kingship over the earth, and Jesus proclaimed that the Kingdom was present in the person of the King, Jesus Himself. The early Church spoke of the Kingdom to refer to "the saving, sovereign action of God through" Jesus ([Acts 8:12](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+8%3A12); [Acts 19:8](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+19%3A8); [Acts 20:25](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+20%3A25); [Acts 28:23](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+28%3A23), [31](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+28%3A31)).

The Jews believed that when the Messiah (God's "Anointed One") came, He would inaugurate God's Kingdom on earth by delivering Israel from its oppressors. One of the prophesied signs of the Kingdom was that God would pour out His Spirit ([Isaiah 44:3](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Isa+44%3A3); [Joel 2:28-32](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Joel+2%3A28-32)). Jesus' disciples knew He was the Messiah (Greek: *Christ*), so they supposed that by promising the Spirit, Jesus was saying He would soon *restore the kingdom to Israel* ([Acts 1:6](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+1%3A6)). Despite Jesus' teaching, they still thought He was going to establish a political kingdom at once.

3.  From [Acts 1:2-5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+1%3A2-5), what was apparently the purpose of the forty days Jesus spent with His disciples after the Resurrection?

***Baptized*** ([1:5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+1%3A5)). Literally, "to immerse a person in water or to deluge him with it, usually as a means of cleansing." The Old Testament often describes the Holy Spirit figuratively as a liquid that can be "poured out" ([Isaiah 44:3](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Isa+44%3A3); [Joel 2:28](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Joel+2%3A28)). However, Scripture also speaks of the Spirit filling and coming upon people. We should remember that these terms are figurative; the Spirit is a Person, not a fluid or a force like electricity.

4.  Consider what Jesus said to the apostles when they asked whether His reign in power was about to begin ([1:6-8](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+1%3A6-8)). Why wasn't it important for the apostles to know precisely when Jesus would finish bringing God's reign to earth?

5.  Why was it necessary for Jesus to stop giving direct instructions to His disciples and ascend to be with His Father ([Acts 1:9](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+1%3A9))? See [John 16:5-15](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+16%3A5-15).

6.  a. What conviction was going to sustain the apostles as they fulfilled their mission while Jesus was physically absent ([1:11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+1%3A11))?

b. Why would this have been encouraging?

7.  How did Peter describe the chief function of an apostle ([1:22](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+1%3A22))? What were the qualifications of such a person ([1:21-22](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+1%3A21-22))?

8.  a. What role did prayer have among the believers between the Ascension and Pentecost ([1:14](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+1%3A14), [24-25](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+1%3A24-25))?

b. How is this a model for us?

**LESSON THREE**

[**Acts 2:1-41**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A1-41)

**Pentecost**

Forty days after the Resurrection, Jesus left His disciples with a mission and a promise. For ten more days the believers prayed together and prepared. Then came the Jewish feast of Pentecost.

Read [2:1-41](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A1-41) before you begin the questions. Imagine yourself as one of the believers gathered to celebrate the feast with no idea of what was coming. Or, put yourself in the crowd of Jews witnessing the bizarre events and Peter's speech. Ask God to bring this scene alive for you.

**The Spirit descends ([2:1-13](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A1-13))**

***Pentecost*** ([2:1](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A1)). The fiftieth day after the Sabbath of Passover week (*pente* *koste* is Greek for "fiftieth day"). *Pentecost* is the name Greek-speaking Jews used for the Feast of Weeks ([Leviticus 23:15-21](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lev+23%3A15-21); [Deut. 16:9-12](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Dt+16%3A9-12)), the Feast of Harvest ([Exodus 23:16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ex+23%3A16)), or the Day of Firstfruits ([Numbers 28:26-31](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Nu+28%3A26-31)). On Pentecost, the Jews brought offerings of the firstfruits of the wheat harvest to the Temple to thank the Lord for it. In Jesus' time, Pentecost "was associated with the renewal of the covenant made with Noah and then with Moses...; in second-century Judaism Pentecost was regarded as the day when the law was given at Sinai."

1.  Why was it appropriate that the events of [Acts 2](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2) occurred on Pentecost, the day when Jews celebrated the giving of the covenant under the Law of Moses? (*Optional:* See [Jeremiah 31:31-34](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jer+31%3A31-34); [Romans 7:6](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ro+7%3A6); [2 Cor. 3:6](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Co+3%3A6).)

***God-fearing Jews from every nation*** ([2:5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A5)). Devout Jews tried to get to Jerusalem for the three main feasts of the year: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles ([Deut. 16:16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Dt+16%3A16)). Also, Jews who came from other parts of the world often moved to Judea in their old age in order to die in the promised land. Therefore, at Pentecost Jerusalem was full of Jews and *proselytes* (converts to Judaism) from all over the Mediterranean world and the Middle East.

Most of them would have understood the Aramaic language (similar to Hebrew) spoken in Palestine and the Greek spoken all over the known world. However, each Jew also had a native language which almost no one from elsewhere was likely to know.

2.  What were the "other tongues" ([2:4](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A4)) that the Holy Spirit enabled the disciples to speak ([2:6](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A6), [11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A11))?

***Too much wine*** ([2:13](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A13)). A Jew from Phrygia, for instance, may have heard one or two of the disciples speaking Phrygian. However, the disciples speaking Mede or Cyrenian would have been unintelligible and may have seemed to be babbling drunkenly.

**Peter speaks (**[**2:14-41**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A14-41)**)**

Peter realizes that the promise of [Acts 1:8](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+1%3A8) is being fulfilled, so he seizes the chance to begin fulfilling his mission. Notice the points he makes in his speech.

3.  Peter says that the babble of languages is a sign of something greater than drunkenness. What does the sign demonstrate ([2:15-21](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A15-21))?

4.  Next Peter recounts the key facts of Jesus' life ([2:22-24](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A22-24)).

a. How could the Jews have known that Jesus was a special person sent by God ([2:22](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A22))?

b. How did Israel respond to Jesus ([2:23](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A23))?

c. What was the crucial event of Jesus' career, and what did it prove ([2:24](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A24), [36](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A36))? (Notice that the word *therefore* in [2:36](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A36) points to the conclusion of Peter's reasoning in [2:22-36](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A22-36).)

5.  How did the Resurrection prove that Jesus is...

Christ ([2:25-33](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A25-33))?

Lord ([2:34-35](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A34-35))?

6.  According to Peter, what does Jesus have to do with the miraculous speaking the Jews have heard ([2:16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A16), [33](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A33))?

7.  Hearing all this, the Jews are "cut to the heart" ([2:37](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A37)). Why would Peter's message (

8.  What will God do for the person who makes the inner commitment of repentance and the outer declaration of baptism ([Acts 2:38](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A38))?

***With many other words*** ([2:40](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A40)). Luke explains that [2:14-39](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lk+2%3A14-39) is only a summary of Peter's speech. He probably spoke much longer than the few minutes it would have taken to say these verses. Many of the speeches in Acts are probably summaries like this one.

***Three thousand*** ([2:41](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A41)). Many of those new believers may have returned the next day to other parts of the Roman world, taking the gospel with them.

**Your response**

9.  The sermons in Acts suggest outlines we can follow in explaining the good news to others. Summarize what Peter asks the Jews to believe and *do*, and *why* they should do these things.

truths to believe ([2:21-24](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A21-24), [31-33](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A31-33), [36](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A36), [39](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A39))

actions to do ([2:21](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A21), [38](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A38))

reasons why ([2:20-21](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A20-21), [38](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A38), [40](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A40))

10. What one insight from [2:1-41](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A1-41) would you most like to take to heart?

11. How does this insight apply to you? (For instance, is there some promise or command addressed to all believers that you can act on more fully than you are? Does some truth about Jesus have implications for your attitudes and actions? How do you fall short with regard to your insight?)

**LESSON FOUR**

[**Acts 3:1-26**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+3%3A1-26)

**Miracle**

As Jesus promised ([John 14:26](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+14%3A26); [Acts 1:8](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+1%3A8)), the Father sent the Holy Spirit to empower the apostles to witness. As you read [3:1-26](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+3%3A1-26), consider what aspects of the story are unique to that time, and what aspects are relevant to our lives today.

**Healing ([3:1-10](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+3%3A1-10))**

1.  How does [Acts 3:1-10](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+3%3A1-10) reflect Jesus' words in [John 14:12-14](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+14%3A12-14)?

2.  The beggar asked for money ([3:3](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+3%3A3)), but Peter and John met quite a different need.

a. What was the relationship between physical healing and spiritual salvation in Jesus' work and teaching? (*Optional:* See [Luke 4:18-19](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lk+4%3A18-19); [5:17-26](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lk+5%3A17-26); [7:20-23](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lk+7%3A20-23); [9:1-2](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lk+9%3A1-2).)

b. What purposes did the physical healing serve in [Acts 3](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+3)? (See [Acts 3:8-13](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+3%3A8-13), [16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+3%3A16); [4:4-14](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+4%3A4-14).)

c. Why do you think Peter and John healed the beggar physically instead of just either giving him money or offering him spiritual salvation?

3.  Does [3:1-10](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+3%3A1-10) set any example for our priorities or mission today? If so, how? If not, why not?

**Peter speaks ([3:11-26](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+3%3A11-26))**

4.  According to Peter, how was this healing possible ([3:16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+3%3A16))?

5.  Why is it important for us that the apostles did not need their own power or exceptional godliness to heal the beggar ([3:12](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+3%3A12))?

6.  How did Peter describe Jesus in this speech ([3:13-15](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+3%3A13-15), [22](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+3%3A22))?

7.  In what senses is Jesus "the author of life" ([Acts 3:15](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+3%3A15)) or "the Prince of life"

8.  What does it mean that Jesus is God's Servant ([Isaiah 52:13-53:12](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Isa+52%3A13-53%3A12))?

9.  Because the Jews "acted in ignorance" when they disowned and killed Jesus, God will give them a second chance to repent ([3:17](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+3%3A17)). What will happen if they repent ([3:19-21](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+3%3A19-21))?

***Repent... turn*** ([3:19](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+3%3A19)). In Hebrew, these come from the same root word. Repentance is turning the mind, will, and emotions *away* from sin; the turning that follows is therefore *toward* obedience, knowledge, and love of God.

**Your response**

10. Peter tailored his speech for his fellow Jews, who had personally supported Jesus' execution, knew the Old Testament prophecies about the servant and the prophet like Moses, and had inherited the covenant.

However, what parts of Peter's sermon could you include in explaining the gospel to unbelievers you know?

11. What truth in [3:1-26](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+3%3A1-26) seems most significant to you?

**LESSON FIVE**

[**Acts 4:1-31**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+4%3A1-31)**;** [**5:12-42**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+5%3A12-42)

**Confrontation**

The Holy Spirit empowered the apostles to preach the gospel, speak in unknown languages, and even heal a lame man. Was this new Spirit-filled life all carefree fun? Read [4:1-31](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+4%3A1-31) and [5:12-42](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+5%3A12-42) prayerfully.

1.  What happens in [4:1-31](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+4%3A1-31), and how is the passage connected to [3:1-26](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+3%3A1-26)?

2.  Briefly summarize [5:12-42](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+5%3A12-42).

**The Sanhedrin's first warning ([4:1-22](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+4%3A1-22))**

3.  The Sanhedrin did not doubt that a healing had occurred; they only demanded to know by what authority (power or name, [4:7](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+4%3A7)) the apostles were preaching and healing. Peter responded that his authority came from Jesus. Specifically what did Peter claim about Jesus ([4:8-12](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+4%3A8-12))?

4.  So far, Peter and John had done nothing wrong, and the Sanhedrin couldn't deny the miracle, so at this point they could only issue a command and a warning ([4:13-18](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+4%3A13-18)). How did Peter respond ([4:19-20](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+4%3A19-20))?

5.  What principles for Christian behavior before authorities do Peter and John exemplify ([4:5-13](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+4%3A5-13), [18-20](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+4%3A18-20))? (See also [5:29-32](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+5%3A29-32).)

**The believer's prayer (**[**4:23-31**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+4%3A23-31)**)**

6.  How do the believers respond to the Sanhedrin's threats ([4:23-31](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+4%3A23-31))?

7.  What do they confess about God? Write down as many observations as you can ([4:24-30](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+4%3A24-30)).

8.  What do they ask God to do ([4:29-30](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+4%3A29-30))?

9.  What attitudes, priorities, and feelings does the prayer in [4:24-30](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+4%3A24-30) reflect?

**Gamaliel's counsel (**[**5:12-42**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+5%3A12-42)**)**

10. Peter said that the apostles and the Holy Spirit were both witnesses to Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection, and exaltation ([5:30-32](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+5%3A30-32)). The apostles were testifying to these facts through preaching and miracles ([5:12-16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+5%3A12-16), [21](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+5%3A21)). How was the Holy Spirit witnessing to Jesus' identity?

***Gamaliel*** ([5:34](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+5%3A34)). The leader of the more moderate of the two schools of Pharisees. He was the most renowned rabbi of his day for both his learning and his piety. One of his students was Saul (Paul; see [22:3](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+22%3A3)).

11. Dozens of movements and revolts had arisen and dissolved in the last few decades; what lesson did Gamaliel draw from his two examples ([5:35-39](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+5%3A35-39))?

***Flogged*** ([5:40](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+5%3A40)). The lawful Jewish penalty was forty lashes ([Deut. 25:3](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Dt+25%3A3)), but the rabbis required this to be reduced by one ([2 Cor. 11:24](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Co+11%3A24)) to prevent anyone from accidentally exceeding the limit. Although the Jewish law was more humane than the Roman, people did sometimes die from thirty-nine lashes with a whip, and even a healthy person was left in agony for days.

The Sanhedrin accepted Gamaliel's counsel to release the apostles, but the flogging was a severe warning against flouting the council's authority.

12. How did the apostles respond to their sufferings ([5:41-42](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+5%3A41-42))?

13. What lessons can we draw from [5:12-42](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+5%3A12-42) that are relevant to our lives?

**LESSON SIX**

[**Acts 2:42-47**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A42-47)**;** [**4:32-5:11**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+4%3A32-5%3A11)**;** [**6:1-7**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+6%3A1-7)

**Fellowship ([2:42-47](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A42-47))**

***Apostles' teaching*** ([2:42](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A42)). Everything the apostles had learned from Jesus ([Matthew 28:20](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Mt+28%3A20)), as well as the facts and meaning of His death, burial, and resurrection ([Acts 2:23-24](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A23-24); [Acts 3:15](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+3%3A15); [Acts 4:10](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+4%3A10)). That is, the facts of the gospel, the truths about the Father, Jesus, and the Spirit, and the implications for Christian life.

***Fellowship*** ([2:42](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A42)). The Greek word *koinonia* had rich meaning: sharing, participation, communion, partnership. It could mean the sharing of goods as a family, partnership in a business or other enterprise, and shared religious or other experiences. It implied a degree of community, intimacy, and interdependence.

***Breaking of bread*** ([2:42](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A42)). Here this phrase means the Lord's Supper, the commemoration of the Last Supper ([Luke 22:14-23](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lk+22%3A14-23)). In [Acts 2:46](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A46), it means the sharing of ordinary meals as a sign of fellowship ([Luke 24:30](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lk+24%3A30), [35](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lk+24%3A35)).

1.  How can we devote ourselves to "the apostles' teaching" today?

2.  Why is it important to do this together? (*Optional:* See [Romans 12:3-8](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ro+12%3A3-8); [Ephes. 4:1-16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Eph+4%3A1-16); [2 Tim. 3:16-17](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Ti+3%3A16-17).)

3.  How can you devote yourself to "the fellowship"? How can you share and participate with other Christians as partners? Think of some specific ways.

4.  Why is the Lord's Supper important ([Luke 22:14-23](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lk+22%3A14-23); [1 Cor. 10:16-17](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Co+10%3A16-17); [1 Cor. 11:23-26](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Co+11%3A23-26))?

5.  Why should you devote yourself to prayer with other Christians?

6.  What other significant details of the early life of the Church do you observe in [2:42-47](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A42-47)?

**True sharing ([4:32-37](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+4%3A32-37))**

Luke noted in [2:44-45](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A44-45) that the believers felt such unity that each spent his own possessions when others were in need. He expands on this theme in [4:32-5:11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+4%3A32-5%3A11) with a positive and a negative example.

7.  Why did the believers sell their goods to support others who were in want ([4:32](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+4%3A32))?

8.  How was this generosity related to [4:33](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+4%3A33)?

9.  These early believers expressed their oneness—their fellowship—by taking responsibility for each other's needs. To what extent do you believe this is a model we should follow? Explain why your view is consistent with Scripture and sensible. (*Optional:* See [2 Thes. 3:6-15](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Th+3%3A6-15); [1 Tim. 5:3-16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Ti+5%3A3-16); [1 John 3:16-18](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Jn+3%3A16-18).)

**False sharing ([5:1-11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+5%3A1-11))**

10. Examine [5:1-4](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+5%3A1-4) carefully. Exactly what was Ananias's sin? (For instance, was it wrong in itself not to sell all his property and give it to the church?)

11. What do you think might have motivated him to do this?

12. What did God teach the early believers by striking Ananias and Sapphira dead ([5:1-11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+5%3A1-11))?

13. Is there a lesson here for us? If so, what is it?

***Church*** ([5:11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+5%3A11)). Luke uses this word for the first time here. The Greek word *ekklesia* was used in the *Septuagint* to render the Hebrew word for "the assembly or congregation of God's people." Gentiles used *ekklesia* to denote political and other assemblies. The other *Septuagint* word for the congregation of God's people—*synagoge*—was already being used for Jewish places of worship, so the early Christians chose *ekklesia* to name both the local congregation ([8:1](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+8%3A1); [11:22](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+11%3A22); [13:1](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+13%3A1)) and the universal Church ([20:28](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+20%3A28)).

**The seven Hellenists ([6:1-7](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+6%3A1-7))**

This scene serves as a bridge between [1:1-5:42](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+1%3A1-5%3A42) and [6:8-8:40](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+6%3A8-8%3A40). It wraps up Luke's snapshots of life in the Jerusalem church with an example of internal problem solving, a practical working out of fellowship. At the same time, it introduces us to a group within the church that will be pivotal in [6:8-8:40](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+6%3A8-8%3A40)—the Hellenists. In [6:1-7](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+6%3A1-7) we see those Hellenists emerge who will take the next step on the road to fulfilling the commission in [1:8](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+1%3A8).

***Grecian Jews... Hebraic Jews*** ([6:1](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+6%3A1)). The church was still entirely composed of Jews, but there were two somewhat distinct kinds of Jews in the Roman world. On the one hand were Hellenists or Grecian Jews; these spoke Greek as their primary language and displayed Greek customs and attitudes more than their Hebraic brethren. On the other hand were the Hebraists, these spoke Aramaic and/or Hebrew as their first language (though almost all could speak Greek as well), and they were more (though not entirely) resistant to Greek culture. There were devout law-practicing Jews among both Hellenists and Hebraists, although their customs differed. For the most part, Hebraists were natives of Palestine and Hellenists of other parts of the Roman Empire, but even this distinction was not absolute. The chief distinction was that Jerusalem had Hellenistic synagogues that worshiped in Greek and Hebraic ones that worshiped in Hebrew, Hebraists tended to consider Hellenists too liberal, and Hellenists regarded Hebraists as narrow-minded and self-satisfied.

14. It's risky to decide that because something is done in Acts, we should do it today. However, does [6:1-7](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+6%3A1-7) have any lessons relevant to us?

15. From [2:42-47](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A42-47); [4:32-5:11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+4%3A32-5%3A11); and [6:1-7](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+6%3A1-7), summarize the things that mattered to the early believers.

**LESSON SEVEN**

[**Acts 6:8-8:3**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+6%3A8-8%3A3)

**First Martyr**

1.   Who was Stephen?

2.  The Hellenistic Jews accused Stephen of speaking against the Temple and the Law. Were these accusations true ([6:11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+6%3A11), [13-14](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+6%3A13-14))? What does Luke say?

3.  Stephen answered the charges and gave his testimony in [7:2-53](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+7%3A2-53). What pattern in Jewish history did Stephen trace through Joseph ([7:9-16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+7%3A9-16)), Moses ([7:17-39](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+7%3A17-39)), and Jesus ([7:51-52](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+7%3A51-52))? What was similar about these men and their experiences with the Jews (see [7:9-10](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+7%3A9-10), [25-29](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+7%3A25-29), [35-39](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+7%3A35-39), [51-52](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+7%3A51-52))?

4.  What did Stephen imply was wrong with the Jews' attitude toward the Temple ([7:48-50](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+7%3A48-50))?

5.  The Jews thought their Temple in the Holy City was *the* holiest place on earth, the center of God's dealings with His people. How did Stephen's account of Israel's history subtly explode that myth? (See [7:2](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+7%3A2), [9](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+7%3A9), [30-34](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+7%3A30-34), [36](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+7%3A36), [38](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+7%3A38).)

6.  Stephen also repeatedly mentioned God's promises to Abraham ([7:2-8](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+7%3A2-8), [17](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+7%3A17), [32](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+7%3A32), [34-37](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+7%3A34-37)). How was God's promise relevant to Stephen's view of the Jewish laws?

7.  Now that you've looked at Stephen's speech in some detail, answer the high priest's question ([7:1](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+7%3A1)). What were Stephen's beliefs about...?

Moses and the Law ([7:22](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+7%3A22), [35-39](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+7%3A35-39), [53](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+7%3A53))?

the Temple ([7:41-50](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+7%3A41-50))?

8.  Stephen did not just answer the charges against him; he responded with charges of his own ([7:51-53](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+7%3A51-53)). What were his accusations and assertions that roused the Jews to fury?

9.  Stephen's words in [7:55-56](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+7%3A55-56) moved his audience to riot and stone him for blasphemy ([7:57-58](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+7%3A57-58)). Why?

10. Stoning is an agonizing death. What is significant about Stephen's response to it ([7:59-60](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+7%3A59-60))?

**LESSON EIGHT**

[**Acts 8:4-40**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+8%3A4-40)

**Philip's Journeys**

The persecution of Hellenistic believers had at least one good effect: it got people like Philip out of Jerusalem and into the rest of Palestine. [Acts 8:4-40](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+8%3A4-40) gives a few examples of what one man did in Samaria and Judea; Luke probably heard these stories when he visited Philip twenty-five years later ([21:8](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+21%3A8)). We shouldn't imagine that Philip was the only evangelist at work ([8:4](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+8%3A4)); he was simply the one with whom Luke was later able to speak.

As you read [8:4-40](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+8%3A4-40), consider how it fits into the overall plan of Acts and what it reveals about the Christian mission.

**The Samaritans ([8:4-25](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+8%3A4-25))**

***Philip*** ([8:5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+8%3A5)). He was one of the Seven chosen from the Greek-speaking Jewish branch of the church in Jerusalem to manage the daily distribution ([6:5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+6%3A5)). Saul's persecution focused on the Hellenists because Stephen had been one of their leaders.

***Samaria*** ([8:5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+8%3A5)). There was a longstanding feud between Jews and Samaritans. When Solomon died back in 930 bc, his kingdom split in two: the northern tribes of Israel rejected the southern Judah. The northerners chose the city of Samaria as their capital, and they set up a temple and a cult to rival those in Jerusalem. The two nations were at war off and on until Assyria overran Israel in 723 bc, destroyed Samaria, and deported most of the Israelite population. Thereafter, the whole territory of Israel was known as Samaria.

1.  Questions 1 and 5 will help you compare the two episodes in [8:4-25](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+8%3A4-25) and [8:26-40](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+8%3A26-40).

a. In [8:4-25](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+8%3A4-25), who is evangelized, convinced, and baptized?

b. What do the Jews think of these people ([John 4:9](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+4%3A9))?

c. How is this group's conversion significant to the progress of the gospel? (Recall who has been converted up to now.)

d. What convinces this group to become believers ([8:6-8](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+8%3A6-8), [12](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+8%3A12))?

e. What is the apostles' role in bringing this group into the Church ([8:14-17](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+8%3A14-17))

The apostles' role in [8:14-17](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+8%3A14-17) has created much confusion for later Christians. [Romans 8:1-17](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ro+8%3A1-17) asserts that no one who does not have the Holy Spirit is a Christian. Hence, [Acts 8:14-17](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+8%3A14-17) needs an explanation.

This suggests that neither the order "water baptism then Spirit reception" nor the order "apostolic laying on hands then Spirit reception" is a rule or norm. Instead, the experience varies according to what God wants to do in the particular situation. The principle illustrated is that when Acts records variety, none of the patterns is probably a norm, *when Acts records uniformity, the pattern is more probably a norm.* Baptism and spirit reception are norms for Christians, the manner and order of these events are not.

2.  Why do you think it was important for God to use the apostles to demonstrate officially that Samaritans were true participants in the Church ([John 4:9](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+4%3A9), [21-24](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+4%3A21-24))? Why wasn't Philip's confirmation enough in this case?

3.  What was so terrible about Simon's request in [8:18-19](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+8%3A18-19)?

4.  Why do you think Luke recorded the episode with Simon? What does it add to the story of Acts?

**The Ethiopian eunuch ([8:26-40](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+8%3A26-40))**

5.  Keep question 1 in mind as you answer these questions.

a. Who accepted the gospel in [8:26-40](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+8%3A26-40)?

b. What status did this kind of person have with the Jews ([Deut. 23:1](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Dt+23%3A1))?

c. How was this person's conversion significant to the progress of the gospel ([Psalm 68:31](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ps+68%3A31); [Isaiah 56:3-5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Isa+56%3A3-5); [Ephes. 2:11-18](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Eph+2%3A11-18))?

d. What was the apostles' role in taking the step to permit such a person into the Church? Why is this important?

e. What convinced this person to be baptized ([8:35](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+8%3A35))?

6.  Summarize what [8:4-40](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+8%3A4-40) contributes to the overall message of Acts.

**LESSON NINE**

[**Acts 9:1-31**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+9%3A1-31)**;** [**11:19-30**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+11%3A19-30)

**Saul Appointed**

Philip disappears from the stage of Acts except for a walk-on twenty-five years later ([21:8](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+21%3A8)). Luke's camera shifts back to the young Pharisee Saul, whom we left in [8:3](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+8%3A3) arresting Christians on a house-to-house search. One of the momentous events in Church history is about to happen.

As you read [9:1-31](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+9%3A1-31) and [11:19-30](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+11%3A19-30), try to put yourself in Paul's, Ananias', the Jews', and the Jerusalem believers' places. Ask God to help you identify with these people.

**Saul's conversion ([9:1-31](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+9%3A1-31))**

***The Way*** ([9:2](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+9%3A2)). Believers apparently called their movement this. It referred to "the way to be saved" ([16:17](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+16%3A17)) or "*the* way of the Lord/God" ([18:25-26](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+18%3A25-26)); that is, the only way of life that God established by which people could be saved.

***After many days... a basket*** ([Acts 9:23-25](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+9%3A23-25)). Saul spent a brief time in Damascus, then went into the neighboring kingdom of Arabia. While he was there, his preaching evidently aroused the ire of Aretas IV, king of the Nabatean Arabs, so Saul returned to Damascus. Both Aretas's governor and the Damascene Jews wanted to kill Saul, so he had to escape the city in a basket ([2 Cor. 11:30-33](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Co+11%3A30-33); [Galatians 1:13-18](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Gal+1%3A13-18)).

In [Acts 22](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+22) and [26](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+26), Saul/Paul retells the story of his conversion in speeches to the residents of Jerusalem and to King Agrippa. Since Paul adds details there that Luke omits in [chapter 9](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+9), we'll look at parts of the later retellings here.

1.  The episode on the Damascus road was a profound learning experience for Saul. What did he learn about...

who Jesus is ([9:4-5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+9%3A4-5), [20](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+9%3A20), [22](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+9%3A22); [22:14](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+22%3A14))?

what his own mission was going to be ([9:15-16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+9%3A15-16), [20-30](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+9%3A20-30); [22:14-16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+22%3A14-16); [26:16-18](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+26%3A16-18))?

2.  How else did his encounter with Jesus affect Saul?

[9:8-9](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+9%3A8-9)

[9:1-2](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+9%3A1-2), [20-30](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+9%3A20-30)

3.  Saul later emphasized that he saw Jesus Himself not just a vision of Him ([Acts 9:27](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+9%3A27); [22:14-15](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+22%3A14-15); [26:16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+26%3A16); [1 Cor. 9:1](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Co+9%3A1); [1 Cor. 15:7-10](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Co+15%3A7-10)). What did this mean for him ([1 Cor. 9:1](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Co+9%3A1))?

4.  What roles did Stephen, Ananias, and Barnabas have in Saul's reconciliation with God and His people?

Stephen ([Acts 7:60-8:1](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+7%3A60-8%3A1))

Ananias ([9:10-17](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+9%3A10-17))

Barnabas ([9:26-27](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+9%3A26-27))

5.  How do these men's examples apply to us?

6.  Why is it important for us to think about the early Christians' willingness to suffer for Jesus' name ([5:40-42](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+5%3A40-42); [7:59-60](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+7%3A59-60); [9:15-16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+9%3A15-16), [23-30](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+9%3A23-30))?

7.  Like [6:7](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+6%3A7); [9:31](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+9%3A31) is a summary or progress report.. What does [6:8-9:31](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+6%3A8-9%3A31) add to the story of Acts?

***Tarsus*** ([9:30](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+9%3A30); [11:25](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+11%3A25)). Saul's birthplace ([22:3](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+22%3A3)). He was born a citizen of that city as well as of Rome ([21:39](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+21%3A39); [22:25-29](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+22%3A25-29)), so his family probably owned property or a business. (Only people with rank and/or property were citizens in their provincial towns, and Roman citizenship was even harder for non-Italians to obtain.) Tarsus was a prosperous city on the trade route from Syria to Ephesus. It was known for its schools of philosophy and liberal arts. If Saul's family were Greek-speaking Jews, he may have had some contact with Gentile schools However, "Hebrew of Hebrews" in [Phil. 3:5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Php+3%3A5) may mean that Saul's people were Hebraists and kept away from Gentiles. Also, it's possible that Saul moved to Jerusalem at a young age ([22:3](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+22%3A3)).

**The church in Antioch ([11:19-30](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+11%3A19-30))**

8.  What was the relationship between the churches in Jerusalem and Antioch ([11:22](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+11%3A22), [27-29](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+11%3A27-29))?

**LESSON TEN**

[**Acts 9:32-11:18**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+9%3A32-11%3A18)

**Peter Moves Out**

The conversion of an Ethiopian Gentile ([8:26-40](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+8%3A26-40)) did not affect the policy of the Church because he returned immediately to his homeland and had no more contact with Jewish believers. However, two almost simultaneous events confronted the Jewish church with the issue of the Gentiles' place in their fellowship. One was the evangelism of Hellenistic Christians in Antioch ([11:19-30](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+11%3A19-30)). The other bore the authority of Peter himself, a leader of the Hebrew church in Jerusalem. Read [9:32-11:18](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+9%3A32-11%3A18), trying to see the episodes from Peter's point of view.

**The conversion of Cornelius ([10:1-11:18](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+10%3A1-11%3A18))**

***Caesarea*** ([10:1](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+10%3A1)). Herod the Great built this harbor city in the Greek style shortly before the birth of Jesus, and it became the headquarters for the Roman administration. From 6-41 ad, a Roman *procurator* (Pontius Pilate was one of them) lived in Caesarea, and his troops were garrisoned there. Caesarea was thirty miles from Joppa, so it would have taken a full day on horseback for each leg of the journey.

1.  What was the immediate lesson of Peter's trance vision in [10:9-16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+10%3A9-16)?

2.  After the messengers from Cornelius came and reported the angelic appearance, what further application of the vision was apparent to Peter ([10:23-29](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+10%3A23-29))?

3.  When Peter observed Cornelius' manner and heard his account of the angel's message, what did Peter realize ([10:34-35](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+10%3A34-35))?

4.  In what sense does God "not show favoritism" ([10:34](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+10%3A34))? From this story, what kinds of things don't influence God to love a person?

5.  Peter said God was willing to accept all those "who fear him and do what is right" ([10:35](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+10%3A35)). Did this mean that Cornelius' good deeds had earned him salvation? Why or why not, in light of the whole context of the story (especially [10:22](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+10%3A22), [33](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+10%3A33), [43-48](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+10%3A43-48))?

6.  Peter's speech to this Gentile household differed in several ways from what he said to Jewish audiences. What key points did he make in this instance ([10:36-43](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+10%3A36-43))? Peter's speeches to the Jews did not mention Jesus' earthly ministry as much as the Jews' rejection.

7.  What unprecedented thing happened in the middle of Peter's speech ([10:44-46](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+10%3A44-46))?

8.  What did this signify?

9.  Why were Peter's fellow Jewish believers astonished ([10:45](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+10%3A45))?

10. What shocked the Jerusalem church most about the rumors from Caesarea was not that Peter had baptized Gentiles. What shocked them most, and why ([11:1-3](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+11%3A1-3))?

11. Consider Peter's account of the events ([11:4-17](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+11%3A4-17)). What was the significance of this whole episode ([11:18](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+11%3A18)), and why was it so important?

12. It may be hard to imagine a time when the idea of a Gentile Christian was astonishing. Still, what is the most important insight about God, the gospel, the Church, or yourself that you have had from [9:32-11:18](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+9%3A32-11%3A18)?

**LESSON ELEVEN**

[**Acts 12:1-13:52**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+12%3A1-13%3A52)

The believers in Jerusalem have been forced by God's direct intervention to receive Gentiles into the Church on an equal basis with Jews ([10:1-11:18](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+10%3A1-11%3A18)). The believers in Antioch have been enthusiastically evangelizing Gentiles in their own city for some time ([11:19-26](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+11%3A19-26)). In [12:1-13:52](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+12%3A1-13%3A52), we see God at work among the Christians of both Jerusalem and Antioch, pushing the Church ever outward. As you read these chapters, try to imagine yourself in Peter's and Saul's shoes.

**Herod and the Church ([12:1-24](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+12%3A1-24))**

***King Herod*** ([12:1](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+12%3A1)). Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great ([Matthew 2:1-20](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Mt+2%3A1-20)) and nephew of Herod Antipas ([Luke 23:6-12](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lk+23%3A6-12)). Agrippa I was a boyhood friend of Gaius Caligula and Claudius. When Gaius became emperor in 37 ad, he awarded his friend a small tetrarchy in Palestine, and in 40 bc he deposed Antipas and gave his territory to Agrippa. When Gaius was assassinated in 41 bc, Agrippa was in Rome and helped to secure Claudius as emperor, Claudius rewarded him with the rest of Herod the Great's kingdom. Thus, Agrippa had friends in high Roman circles, and Judea had no Roman procurator or soldiers as long as Agrippa ruled.

Herod Agrippa was also popular with the Jews because he was a descendant of the rightful Jewish ruling house. He was more considerate of Jewish feelings than the Roman procurators like Pilate had been, and in Jerusalem he behaved like a devout Jewish king. In Caesarea however, he was a typical oriental despot with a taste for Greek and Roman culture; his Gentile subjects detested him. In [12:1-24](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+12%3A1-24) we see both sides of him: currying favor with the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem, and encouraging Gentiles to treat him as a god in Caesarea.

Agrippa lived in the palace of Caesarea, but as a good Jew he was in Jerusalem for Passover. (Jesus' crucifixion had also been scheduled not to overlap Passover.)

***Mary*** ([12:12](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+12%3A12)). She was Mark's mother and Barnabas' aunt ([Col. 4:10](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Col+4%3A10)).

***James*** ([12:17](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+12%3A17)). James the brother of John was dead ([12:2](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+12%3A2)), so this was "James, the Lord's brother" ([Galatians 1:19](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Gal+1%3A19)). He was converted when Jesus appeared to him after the Resurrection ([John 7:5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+7%3A5); [Acts 1:14](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+1%3A14); [1 Cor. 15:7](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Co+15%3A7)). James became a recognized leader of the Jerusalem church along with Peter ([Acts 15:6-21](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+15%3A6-21); [Galatians 2:9](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Gal+2%3A9)).

1.  What part did the believers in Jerusalem have in Peter's escape from Herod ([12:5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+12%3A5))?

2.  God saved Peter from being executed by Herod ([12:6-11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+12%3A6-11)), but He allowed James to die ([12:2](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+12%3A2)). What conclusions about persecution, prayer, and deliverance can we draw from these facts?

***Tyre and Sidon*** ([12:20](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+12%3A20)). The main cities of Phoenicia (modern Lebanon). Both were ports with mixed Gentile populations, and both depended on grain from Galilee for bread.

***The appointed day*** ([12:21](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+12%3A21)). Herod Agrippa I died in 44 bc. The Jewish historian Josephus wrote that Herod held Roman games (athletics, etc.) in Caesarea in honor of Emperor Claudius. On the second day of the games, Herod arrived in a robe of silver threads that glittered in the sun. Herod gave a speech, and some Gentiles offered him the stock flattery for a ruler: "henceforth we agree that you are more than mortal in your being." After he accepted that flattery, Herod was seized with internal pain, was carried out, and died five days later.

**Barnabas and Saul commissioned ([12:25-13:3](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+12%3A25-13%3A3))**

3.  In your judgment, why were "worshiping the Lord and fasting" ([13:2](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+13%3A2)) both important preparations for hearing the Holy Spirit speak?

4.  Once the Spirit had spoken and the missionaries were prepared to leave, the believers fasted, prayed, and laid their hands on the two men ([13:3](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+13%3A3)). What was apparently the point of these actions?

***Saul... called Paul*** ([13:9](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+13%3A9)). As a Roman citizen, Saul had three Latin names: a first name, a family name, and a surname. Like the proconsul of Cyprus, his surname happened to be Paullus (spelled "Paulus" in Greek). As a Jew, he also had a Hebrew name, Saul (spelled "Saulus" in Greek). Luke calls him by his Hebrew name when he is among Jews ([7:58-13:2](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+7%3A58-13%3A2)) but shifts to his Latin name when he goes among Gentiles. This was probably how Paul used his names.

Notice that until now Luke has written "Barnabas and Saul" because Barnabas has been the leader, but now he shifts to "Paul and Barnabas" to indicate that Paul takes the lead in evangelism. When the two return to Jerusalem, the order returns to "Barnabas and Paul" ([15:12](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+15%3A12)) because Barnabas is more recognized there. The order of names was a way of signifying seniority in ancient times.

5.  In the first part of his sermon, Paul traces Israelite history. What episodes does he mention?

[13:16-19](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+13%3A16-19)

[13:20-22](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+13%3A20-22)

[13:23-25](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+13%3A23-25)

[13:26-31](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+13%3A26-31)

6.  Next Paul explains the significance of these events. What has God promised the Jews that He has now fulfilled ([13:32-37](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+13%3A32-37))?

7.  What will happen if the Jews believe what Paul claims about Jesus ([13:38-39](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+13%3A38-39))?

8.  What happens when many of the Jews reject Paul's message ([13:41-51](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+13%3A41-51))?

9.  In [Acts 13:47](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+13%3A47), Paul quotes [Isaiah 49:6](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Isa+49%3A6), which was originally addressed to the Servant of the Lord (see [Acts 3:13](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+3%3A13); [Isaiah 49:1-7](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Isa+49%3A1-7)). Why can Paul apply the Servant's commission to himself and Barnabas?

**LESSON TWELVE**

[**Acts 14:1-15:35**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+14%3A1-15%3A35)

**Gentile Christians?**

Paul and Barnabas are still on their mission, acting as "a light for the Gentiles" to "bring salvation to the ends of the earth" ([13:47](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+13%3A47)). Their view of the Church's mission will soon prove decisive for the whole of history. As you read [14:1-15:35](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+14%3A1-15%3A35), think about how those events have affected your life.

**Iconium, Lystra, Derbe ([14:1-28](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+14%3A1-28))**

1.  The Lystrians reacted to the healing of the lame man like typical rural pagans of that time ([14:8-13](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+14%3A8-13)). What do you learn from this incident about the religious beliefs of those people—the assumptions that Paul and Barnabas had to overcome? (List as many observations as you can.)

2.  [Acts 14:15-17](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+14%3A15-17) gives us our first example of what Paul and Barnabas preached to purely Gentile audiences, as opposed to Jews, proselytes, and God-fearers. In addition to proclaiming Jesus, what did the apostles have to explain to pagans that they didn't have to say to Jews and God-fearers?

3.  What does [14:19-20](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+14%3A19-20) tell you about Paul's character?

4.  When the apostles returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch to strengthen and encourage the infant disciples, they warned them, "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God" ([14:22](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+14%3A22)). From [13:50](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+13%3A50); [14:4-6](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+14%3A4-6), [19-20](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+14%3A19-20) and from your own knowledge of bigotry, discrimination, and hostility, what hardships could the new Christians expect?

5.  Despite all the hardships on their trip, what was Paul and Barnabas' verdict when they reported back to the church in Antioch ([14:26-27](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+14%3A26-27))?

**Council at Jerusalem ([15:1-35](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+15%3A1-35))**

Paul had been a Pharisee, but when he recognized Jesus as the Christ, his attitude toward the Law began to change radically. However, there were Pharisees and other Jews who followed Jesus Christ but did not yet realize how His coming had affected the status of the Law. They continued to interpret God's Word in Scripture according to Jewish tradition. Also, it was ingrained in them from birth that the Law was the essence of moral good and holiness. Since God had commanded circumcision, the dietary laws, and the rest as "an everlasting covenant" ([Genesis 17:13](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ge+17%3A13); [Exodus 31:16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ex+31%3A16)), and since those laws were manifestations of holiness ([Leviticus 20:25-26](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lev+20%3A25-26)), these Jewish Christians could not imagine that God had set the laws aside. It followed that if the laws were God's desire for His people, then they were binding on Gentile as well as Jewish believers. What evidence was there that God had abandoned the laws?

Further, even if Gentile believers were exempt (these Jewish Christians reasoned), Jewish ones were not. Therefore, Jewish believers could not eat unclean food with Gentiles in fellowship meals. So some argued, Gentile Christians should keep the laws in order to maintain fellowship with Jewish ones. Thus, there were two issues at stake: 1) Does God still require His covenant people to keep the Law of Moses (and the oral tradition)? and 2) Even if the Law is just a cultural preference for Jewish Christians, should Gentile Christians keep it anyway in order to keep peaceful fellowship?

In all this, the Jewish believers were partly concerned not to put barriers in the way of converting fellow Jews. The Antiochenes, of course, were concerned not to hinder Gentiles.

6.  How did the Church handle this major dispute between some Jewish believers and the Antiochene Christians ([15:2](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+15%3A2), [6](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+15%3A6), [12](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+15%3A12), [22-30](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+15%3A22-30))?

7.  Why did Peter support the Antiochene position? List his key reasons in [15:6-11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+15%3A6-11).

8.  What evidence did Paul and Barnabas offer to defend their view that Gentiles could be saved without becoming Jews ([15:4](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+15%3A4), [12](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+15%3A12))?

9.  James was by now a leader of the Jerusalem congregation and known for his conservative Jewish practice ([Galatians 2:11-12](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Gal+2%3A11-12)). What convinced James that Paul was right about the Gentiles and the Law ([Acts 15:13-19](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+15%3A13-19))?

**LESSON THIRTEEN**

[**Acts 15:36-17:15**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+15%3A36-17%3A15)

**Paul and Silas**

Since winter travel was hazardous, Paul and Barnabas spent a few months after the Jerusalem council teaching and preaching in Antioch. But others in the church could fill that role; Paul and Barnabas were called to spread the gospel elsewhere. When spring brought calm seas, it was time for another mission. Read [15:36-17:15](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+15%3A36-17%3A15) prayerfully, asking yourself how you would have responded to various circumstances if you had been in Paul's place.

**Strengthening the churches ([15:36-16:5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+15%3A36-16%3A5))**

***Mark*** ([15:37](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+15%3A37)). We don't know why Mark left the team in Pamphylia ([13:13](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+13%3A13)), nor why Paul thought his desertion was so serious. We do know that Mark was blessed to have such a cousin as the Son of Encouragement, for after some years evangelizing with Barnabas, Mark proved himself a worthy saint. He worked with Peter in Rome and wrote his Gospel from Peter's memories ([1 Peter 5:13](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Pe+5%3A13)); he helped Paul during the apostle's first imprisonment in Rome ([Col. 4:10](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Col+4%3A10); [Philemon 24](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Phm+1%3A24)); he eventually impressed Paul so much that he asked Mark to come during his final days in prison ([2 Tim. 4:11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Ti+4%3A11)).

***Silas*** ([15:40](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+15%3A40)). He was the Silvanus mentioned as a partner in Paul's and Peter's letters ([1 Thes. 1:1](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Th+1%3A1); [2 Thes. 1:1](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Th+1%3A1); [1 Peter 5:12](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Pe+5%3A12)). He was a prophet ([Acts 15:32](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+15%3A32)), a leader in the Jerusalem church trusted to relay the decision about the Gentiles ([15:22](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+15%3A22), [27](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+15%3A27)), and a Roman citizen ([16:37-38](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+16%3A37-38)).

***Timothy*** ([16:1](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+16%3A1)). Since Paul called him a young man about fifteen years later ([1 Tim. 4:12](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Ti+4%3A12)), Timothy must have been a teenager at this point. Since both Luke and Paul mentioned his mother's faith but not his father's ([Acts 16:1](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+16%3A1); [2 Tim. 1:5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Ti+1%3A5)), his father was probably not converted either to Judaism or Christianity, and he may well have been dead. Apparently on Paul's first visit to Lystra about two years earlier, Timothy's whole household had become Christians, including his mother and grandmother ([2 Tim. 1:5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Ti+1%3A5)).

Jews were not supposed to marry Gentiles, so Timothy was a child of a mixed marriage in everyone's eyes. He was legally Jewish and raised Jewish ([2 Tim. 3:15](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Ti+3%3A15)), so he was probably somewhat excluded by his Gentile peers. However, perhaps because his father had forbidden a rite Greeks found disgusting, Timothy was not circumcised. Therefore, he was an outsider—illegitimate according to some schools—to Jews as well. Timothy would be a much more effective missionary if he were a full Jew rather than neither Jew nor Gentile, so Paul ***circumcised him*** ([16:3](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+16%3A3)). Earlier, Paul had refused to circumcise another colleague, Titus, because Titus was a Gentile ([Galatians 2:1-5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Gal+2%3A1-5)). In that case, the rite would have meant that Titus had to become Jewish in order to be Christian.

**Philippi ([16:6-40](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+16%3A6-40))**

1. Write how the Holy Spirit guided Paul and his team in [16:6-10](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+16%3A6-10). (Also, observe what Luke calls the Spirit in [16:6-7](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+16%3A6-7), [10](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+16%3A10).)

2.  What patterns do you see in the way the Spirit works in [Acts 1:1-16:10](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+1%3A1-16%3A10)? (What does He do? How does He make God's will known? What are His goals?)

3.  How are the Spirit's goals, activities, and methods in your life like and unlike those you have observed in Acts?

like

unlike

4.  Describe at least one way in which you think your observations of Acts should affect the way you expect the Spirit to act in your life or the way you respond to Him when He does act or speak.

5.  How can you grow more responsive to God's guidance, in whatever forms He chooses to give it? Think of some specific steps you can take.

6.  Bloody and battered in the stocks of a lightless prison, Paul and Silas spent the night "praying and singing hymns to God" ([16:23-25](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+16%3A23-25)). Why do you think they did this? (For instance, what attitudes toward self, God, circumstances, the other prisoners, or the jailer do these actions show?)

7.  How did Paul and Silas deal with Roman officials in Philippi ([16:35-39](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+16%3A35-39))?

8.  Why do you think they didn't just leave submissively? What principles for dealing with authority do their actions suggest? (You might make a note of this on your [Themes in Acts](http://www.crossbooks.com/book.asp?pub=0&book=355&sec=00020265#link788).)

**Thessalonica ([17:1-9](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+17%3A1-9))**

9.  In response to the gospel, Lydia and Jason both invited the missionaries to stay in their homes ([16:15](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+16%3A15); [17:7](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+17%3A7)). They welcomed at least four virtual strangers for indefinite periods of weeks or months. What kinds of trouble and expense were they risking by doing this (consider [16:20-22](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+16%3A20-22); [17:5-9](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+17%3A5-9))?

10. What can Lydia and Jason teach us about Christian fellowship/partnership?

**Berea (**[**17:10-15**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+17%3A10-15)**)**

11. How did the Berean Jews respond differently to Paul's message than the Thessalonian Jews did ([17:5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+17%3A5), [11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+17%3A11))?

12. Why was the Bereans' reaction the best way to deal with new and startling teaching?

**LESSON FOURTEEN**

[**Acts 17:16-18:23**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+17%3A16-18%3A23)

**Athens and Corinth**

Paul left Macedonia in a hurry when it became clear that the Jewish vigilantes there were not going to leave him alone. Silas and Timothy were able to go discreetly back to Philippi, leaving Paul to wait alone in Athens. But Paul was not one to sit idly, paralyzed by memories of persecution and prospects of ridicule, even in a sophisticated city like this one. So, despite or even because of the conflict in Macedonia, the gospel came to Greece, the cradle of the culture that dominated the known world. As you read about Paul's time in Athens and Corinth in [17:16-18:23](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+17%3A16-18%3A23), try to put yourself into those cities in Paul's place, or think of yourself as one of the people who heard Paul. Ask God to show you Himself at work.

**Athens ([17:16-34](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+17%3A16-34))**

***Athens*** ([17:16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+17%3A16)). The golden age of Athenian art, literature, philosophy, and democracy was five centuries earlier, and by Paul's time the city's pride rested on faded laurels. It had a major university and was the first home of the four chief philosophical schools, but the best students went to Alexandria and other centers. However, Athens was still a beautiful city and a free ally of Rome with at least the forms of democratic government, and the name of Athens retained a certain mystique.

1.  How does Luke describe Athens and its people ([17:16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+17%3A16), [21](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+17%3A21))?

2.  What did the cultured men think of Paul, and why ([17:18](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+17%3A18), [32](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+17%3A32))?

3.  Put yourself in Paul's place, addressing well-born, well-dressed intellectuals in an age where class distinctions were stone walls between people. Why was Paul able to face those men confidently?

4.  When invited to speak to the prestigious Areopagus ([17:24-31](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+17%3A24-31)), what did Paul say about...

the nature, character, and attributes of God?

the nature of man?

idols?

Jesus?

5.  How was this speech in Athens different from what Paul said to Jews ([9:20](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+9%3A20), [22](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+9%3A22); [13:16-41](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+13%3A16-41); [17:2-3](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+17%3A2-3))?

6.  Why do you think Paul addressed the Athenians differently than Jews? (What principle of evangelism was he practicing, and why is it important?)

7.  Is anything in [17:16-34](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+17%3A16-34) relevant to your life? If so, what is relevant and why?

**Corinth ([18:1-17](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+18%3A1-17))**

Situated on the Isthmus of Corinth, the city commanded both the land route through Greece and the sea trade from the Aegean Sea to the Adriatic Sea. From Cenchrea ([18:18](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+18%3A18)), the port east of Corinth, ships or cargoes were dragged three-and-a-half miles on a sort of wooden railroad track to Lechaeum, the port west of Corinth. In that way, sailors could avoid the time-consuming and hazardous trip around the Peloponese (the Greek peninsula). This system made Corinth a hub for traders, tourists, and business travelers.

The temple of Aphrodite was one of Corinth's chief attractions for sailors and tourists passing through. It housed "a Hellenized form of the Syrian cult of Astarte," a fertility goddess. At the temple were at least a thousand male and female slaves dedicated to holy prostitution for men of whatever taste. This institution and the general tenor of the town prompted the Greek verb "to Corinthianize," which meant "to practice sexual immorality."

Corinth's population of some 250,000 free persons plus 400,000 slaves included not only Roman colonists, but also Greeks, Jews, Syrians, and other nationalities crowded together into just a few bustling square miles.

8.  What did God promise Paul in Corinth ([18:9-10](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+18%3A9-10))?

9.  How did Paul respond to that promise ([18:11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+18%3A11))?

10. How did God keep His promise ([18:12-17](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+18%3A12-17))?

11. What do the events of [18:1-17](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+18%3A1-17) tell you about God?

**LESSON FIFTEEN**

[**Acts 18:24-19:41**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+18%3A24-19%3A41)

**Ephesus**

When Paul passed through Ephesus on his way to Jerusalem and Antioch, he left Priscilla and Aquila there to begin building a church. Ephesus was the queen of the rich Roman province of Asia. Through her port passed goods from China and the eastern provinces bound for Italy. Wide avenues, huge public buildings and squares, and luxurious private homes were designed to impress tourists.

A hundred local aristocrats owned most of the land around Ephesus and controlled the city government. However, the strength of the city was its large class of merchants, businessmen, and craftsmen. These people might be barely better fed than day laborers, nearly as wealthy as aristocrats, or somewhere in between, but none of them had any say in the government unless he was a "client" of one of the ruling hundred.

This working/business class was probably the group among whom Priscilla and Aquila began to explain their faith. God did not leave the couple to be the only missionaries in the city; they had first Apollos and later Paul as partners. As you read [18:24-19:41](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+18%3A24-19%3A41), ask the Holy Spirit to show you what He wants you to see.

**Apollos and the twelve disciples ([18:24-19:7](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+18%3A24-19%3A7))**

Here Luke records two separate incidents side by side, probably for comparison.

***The baptism of John*** ([18:25](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+18%3A25)). [Luke 3:1-18](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lk+3%3A1-18) portrays John's ministry. His was ***a baptism of repentance*** ([Acts 19:4](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+19%3A4)), signifying a recognition of one's sin and a desire to change and be forgiven, but John only pointed toward the fuller baptism into Jesus.

***Disciples*** ([19:1](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+19%3A1)). That is, Paul thought they were followers of Jesus (and perhaps they thought they were, too), but Paul soon found they believed in some form of the teaching of John the Baptist. They had faith that the Messiah was coming, but they didn't know the full story about Jesus and the Spirit.

1.  Both Apollos and the disciples Paul met had a similar gap in their information about the gospel. What did they not know ([18:25](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+18%3A25); [19:2-3](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+19%3A2-3))?

2.  Why was it essential to be baptized in the name of Jesus, not just for repentance as John had done? (See [Romans 6:3-11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ro+6%3A3-11).)

3.  Why was it necessary to receive the Holy Spirit? (See [John 3:5-6](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+3%3A5-6); [John 14:26](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+14%3A26); [Romans 8:1-17](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ro+8%3A1-17), [26-27](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ro+8%3A26-27).)

4.  What do you learn from [18:24-19:7](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+18%3A24-19%3A7) that is relevant to the Body of Christ today? (You might think about one of the optional questions that interests you.)

**Power in Ephesus ([19:8-22](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+19%3A8-22))**

***Three months... two years*** ([19:8](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+19%3A8), [10](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+19%3A10)). The longest Paul spent in any mission city that Luke records. Since Jews reckoned a part of a year as a year, Paul spoke of his time in Ephesus as three years ([20:31](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+20%3A31)). During these years, Paul wrote several letters to the church in Corinth, including the one we call 1 Corinthians ([1 Cor. 5:9](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Co+5%3A9); [1 Cor. 16:8](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Co+16%3A8); [2 Cor. 2:4](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Co+2%3A4), [9](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Co+2%3A9); [2 Cor. 7:8-12](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Co+7%3A8-12)).

5.  From what you know about the people of Ephesus ([19:17-20](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+19%3A17-20)), can you think of a reason why God worked healings and exorcisms through Paul ([19:11-12](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+19%3A11-12))? If so, explain.

6.  Why couldn't Jesus' name be invoked to magically cast out demons ([19:13-16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+19%3A13-16))? What else is necessary for the name to be effective?

7.  The power of Jesus' name convinced many Ephesians to abandon their vain ways of seeking what they wanted ([19:17-19](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+19%3A17-19)). How is Jesus' power still at work among us, convincing unbelievers to give up their useless strategies?

**A riot ([19:23-41](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+19%3A23-41))**

Of the dozens of vividly painted temples in Ephesus, the greatest was dedicated to ***Artemis of the Ephesians*** ([19:28](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+19%3A28)). It was known as one of the seven wonders of the world:

425 feet long, 220 wide, 60 high, with 127 pillars of Parian marble inlaid with gold, and woodwork of cypress and cedar; it was filled with works by the great artists of the Greek world. The priestesses were called bees, and were virgin, the priests or *megabyzi* were eunuchs, drones which 'die' in fertilizing the queen-bee [Artemis]... On 25 May the statues of the goddess were taken up the broad processional road with music, dancing and pageantry to the theatre where they were exhibited to a congregation which might reach 30,000; in Roman times a wealthy Roman paid for a roofed portico to shield the procession from the weather.

All year round, but especially in May tourists came to see the temple and its rites, and they bought little terra cotta or silver models of the temple as souvenirs ([19:24](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+19%3A24)). Ephesian Artemis was a fertility goddess, the Great Mother worshiped in Asia Minor centuries before Rome came. She was not the virgin huntress called Artemis in classical Greek myths. Her image in the temple was a black, squat, many-breasted object of some unknown material. It was said to have fallen from heaven ([19:35](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+19%3A35)); the description sounds like a meteorite.

8.  Why were the Ephesian silversmiths against Paul ([19:23-27](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+19%3A23-27))?

9.  How was this reason similar to the one that set some Philippians against Paul and Silas ([16:16-21](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+16%3A16-21))?

10. Do economic interests set any groups against the gospel today? If so, give an example.

11. What protected Paul from the violence of an outraged mob ([19:31](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+19%3A31), [35-41](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+19%3A35-41))?

12. In light of this episode ([19:37-40](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+19%3A37-40)) and the one in Corinth ([18:12-17](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+18%3A12-17)), explain why Paul and Peter considered it so important that Christians carefully obey the civil laws ([Romans 13:1-7](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ro+13%3A1-7); [1 Peter 2:13-17](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Pe+2%3A13-17)).

**LESSON SIXTEEN**

[**Acts 20:1-21:16**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+20%3A1-21%3A16)

**Paul's Farewells**

**Macedonia and Greece ([20:1-6](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+20%3A1-6))**

Luke tells us little of what Paul did after he left Ephesus and before he reached Greece ([20:2](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+20%3A2)), but Paul's letters fill in some details. While in Ephesus, Paul learned of a dispute in the Corinthian church. He sent two letters to settle the strife (one is lost; the other is 1 Corinthians), but neither the letters nor a visit by Timothy ([1 Cor. 4:17](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Co+4%3A17)) achieved peace. Paul even went to Corinth briefly himself but he was humiliated by the defiant factions; Paul called that visit "painful" ([2 Cor. 2:1](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Co+2%3A1)). Back in Ephesus, Paul wrote a severe letter "out of great distress and anguish of heart" ([2 Cor. 2:3-4](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Co+2%3A3-4)). That letter he sent by the hand of Titus, another of his young associates (like Timothy, but perhaps a more forceful personality). This anguished letter is also lost.

All this happened before Paul left Ephesus. Now, as he ***set out for Macedonia*** ([Acts 20:1](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+20%3A1)), he went first to Troas, hoping to meet Titus on his way back from Corinth with a response. Paul did some successful evangelism in Troas, but when Titus did not arrive, the apostle went on to Macedonia ([2 Cor. 2:12-13](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Co+2%3A12-13)). There Titus met him with good news: the Corinthians had repented of their rebellion. Paul quickly sent Titus back with a fourth letter full of affection—our 2 Corinthians.

Now that there was peace, Paul was free to visit Corinth after Macedonia. The ***three months*** ([20:3](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+20%3A3)) he spent in ***Greece*** ([20:2](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+20%3A2)) were probably a winter in Corinth while travel was difficult. Paul probably used this time to compose his letter to the Romans.

***Feast of Unleavened Bread*** ([20:6](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+20%3A6)). The eight-day Jewish festival that began with Passover.

**Miracle in Troas ([20:7-12](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+20%3A7-12))**

1.  In the events of [20:1-21:16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+20%3A1-21%3A16), how did the various believers show fellowship/partnership/communion with each other? What feelings did they express, and how?

[20:1-6](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+20%3A1-6)

[20:7-12](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+20%3A7-12)

[20:13-38](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+20%3A13-38)

[21:1-16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+21%3A1-16)

2.  What good examples do you see here for the way churches should function and the way believers should treat and feel about each other?

**Farewell to the Ephesian elders (**[**20:13-38**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+20%3A13-38)**)**

3.  What actions and attitudes had Paul practiced as a model for Christian leaders ([20:17-27](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+20%3A17-27), [33-35](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+20%3A33-35))?

4.  What warning and command did Paul repeat ([20:28-31](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+20%3A28-31))?

5.  What would protect the elders in the face of this danger ([20:32](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+20%3A32))?

**To Jerusalem (**[**21:1-16**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+21%3A1-16)**)**

6.  Why was Paul going to Jerusalem ([20:22](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+20%3A22); [24:17](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+24%3A17))?

7.  The Holy Spirit repeatedly warned Paul both internally and through prophets that danger waited in Jerusalem ([20:22-25](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+20%3A22-25); [21:4](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+21%3A4), [10-13](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+21%3A10-13)). With what attitude did Paul respond to these warnings ([20:24](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+20%3A24); [21:13](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+21%3A13))?

8.  Why do you think the Holy Spirit warned Paul repeatedly of his destiny in Jerusalem? (For instance, did He want Paul not to go? Why do you think so or not?)

9.  What does [20:1-21:16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+20%3A1-21%3A16) reveal about God, especially the Holy Spirit?

**LESSON SEVENTEEN**

[**Acts 21:17-23:11**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+21%3A17-23%3A11)

**Arrest in Jerusalem**

Just as Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem, knowing He would die there ([Luke 9:21-22](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lk+9%3A21-22), [44](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lk+9%3A44), [51](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lk+9%3A51)), so Paul went resolutely to the Holy City, prepared for the same fate ([Acts 21:13](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+21%3A13)). A new generation of Jews and Romans controlled the land since Jesus' death, but Paul knew that the passions which moved him to approve the stoning of Stephen still burned in his countrymen. He had so much in common with his Jewish brethren that his heart ached to draw them across the gulf which now separated them ([Romans 9:1-5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ro+9%3A1-5); [Romans 10:1](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ro+10%3A1); [Romans 11:13-16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ro+11%3A13-16)). As you read [Acts 21:17-23:11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+21%3A17-23%3A11), try to feel what Paul felt when he faced his people.

**Agreement with the elders ([21:17-26](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+21%3A17-26))**

1.  Why did the leaders of the Jerusalem church want Paul to participate in the vow ([21:20-25](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+21%3A20-25))? In their eyes, how would this act serve the gospel?

2.  What might have been some of Paul's reasons for doing as these believers asked? (Do [1 Cor. 9:19-23](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Co+9%3A19-23) and [Romans 14:13-15:3](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ro+14%3A13-15%3A3) shed light on his possible motives?)

3.  What can [21:17-26](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+21%3A17-26) teach us about dealing with differences within the Church today?

**Arrest ([21:27-39](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+21%3A27-39))**

**Paul's defense to the Jews ([21:40-22:29](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+21%3A40-22%3A29))**

***Aramaic*** ([21:40](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+21%3A40); [22:2](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+22%3A2)). The Greek word could mean Hebrew (nasb, kjv), but Aramaic was the common language of the people. The two languages were related, so the people could have understood Hebrew with some effort (like modern people hearing a man speak King James English). Because many Jews outside Palestine could not speak Aramaic or Hebrew, Paul was identifying himself with his audience of patriotic, conservative Palestinian Jews by using their ancestral tongue.

***Witness... martyr*** ([22:15](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+22%3A15), [20](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+22%3A20)). The Greek word *martys* meant "witness," but in Christian circles it gained the sense of "witness unto death" because of what so often happened to witnesses for Christ.

4.  Paul called his speech a "defense" ([22:1](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+22%3A1); Greek: *apologia*). Summarize what he said to the Jews in [22:1-21](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+22%3A1-21).

5.  How did Paul shape this speech to appeal to the Jews? Observe the details in [21:40-22:21](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+21%3A40-22%3A21).

6.  Why did [22:21](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+22%3A21) make the Jews interrupt with rage?

7.  What might make people of your country react as in [22:22](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+22%3A22) to an evangelist? What aspects of the gospel seem offensive or unethical to your people?

8.  Paul might have known that [22:21](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+22%3A21) would infuriate the Jews. Why do you think he risked his life to say [22:6-21](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+22%3A6-21), instead of just refuting the charge of defiling the Temple?

***Flogged*** ([22:24](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+22%3A24)). The tribune could not comprehend Paul's speech in Aramaic, full of religious terms, so he decided to have Paul tortured for the straight story. The *scourge* was a bundle of leather whips with pieces of lead or bone fixed to the ends. Scourging was far worse than a Jewish beating or the Roman beating with rods ([16:22](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+16%3A22)), victims often died from it. Therefore, it was legal to scourge slaves and non-Romans, but it was expressly forbidden to scourge a ***Roman citizen*** ([22:25](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+22%3A25)).

Roman citizenship was not very easy to obtain in Paul's day. A person could 1) receive it as a reward for military or other service to Rome; 2) receive it when freed from slavery to a citizen; 3) bribe key Roman officials; or 4) be born into a family of citizens. The fourth was the most prestigious way.

**Before the Sanhedrin ([22:30-23:11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+22%3A30-23%3A11))**

Since the tribune couldn't torture Paul to learn his crime, he summoned the Sanhedrin to hear Paul and explain why he was offensive to the Jews.

***I did not realize that he was the high priest*** ([23:5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+23%3A5)). Although many explanations for this extraordinary statement have been offered, including that Paul had poor eyesight or that Ananias was dressed in ordinary clothes, most modern commentators find it unlikely that Paul did not recognize the high priest. His words were ironical: "I did not think that a man who could give such an order could be the high priest.''

9.  What does [21:16-23:11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+21%3A16-23%3A11) contribute to the overall message of the book?

**LESSON EIGHTEEN**

[**Acts 23:11-26:32**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+23%3A11-26%3A32)

**Prisoner in Caesarea**

1.  The Lord discloses His plan in [23:11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+23%3A11). How do this verse and [9:15-16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+9%3A15-16) summarize what happens in the following sections of Acts?

[21:17-23:10](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+21%3A17-23%3A10)

[23:12-26:32](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+23%3A12-26%3A32)

[27:1-28:31](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+27%3A1-28%3A31)

**A plot thwarted ([23:12-35](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+23%3A12-35))**

2.  Consider the lengths to which the Jewish fanatics were willing to go to silence Paul ([23:12-15](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+23%3A12-15)). What human and divine factors prevented them ([23:16-30](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+23%3A16-30))?

**Trial before Felix ([24:1-27](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+24%3A1-27))**

3.  How did Paul refute each of Tertullus's charges against him?

making trouble, inciting dissension ([24:11-13](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+24%3A11-13), [17-18](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+24%3A17-18))

leading a new and unlawful sect ([24:14-16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+24%3A14-16))

desecrating the Temple ([24:11-13](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+24%3A11-13), [17-21](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+24%3A17-21))

4.  Why is it important to us that Paul claimed Christianity was not something new, but the true continuation of the faith recorded in the Law and the Prophets?

5.  a. How did his expectation of resurrection and possible judgment affect Paul ([24:15-16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+24%3A15-16))?

b. How did this idea affect Felix ([24:25](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+24%3A25))?

c. Why do you think the prospect of judgment affected these men so differently?

**Festus ([25:1-12](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+25%3A1-12))**

***I appeal to Caesar!*** ([25:11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+25%3A11)). If a Roman citizen had not broken a specific statute, he had the right to appeal for a trial before the emperor. An acquittal in Rome might protect Christians from prosecution for decades and Paul would have loved the chance to declare the gospel to the emperor himself. (Paul had no way of knowing it, but Nero usually delegated cases to other judges rather than sit through such tiresome business himself. )

Paul did not fear death ([25:11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+25%3A11)), but there was no sense in throwing his life away in Jerusalem when he might accomplish so much through a trial in Rome.

6.  Lysias, Felix, and Festus all knew that Paul had broken no Roman laws ([23:29](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+23%3A29); [24:22-27](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+24%3A22-27); [25:18-20](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+25%3A18-20)). Why didn't they free him?

**Agrippa ([25:13-26:32](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+25%3A13-26%3A32))**

Having appealed to Rome, Paul could not now be tried by Festus or his colleague Agrippa. But Festus could ask a well-informed neighboring king to advise him about what to write in the legal brief he had to send with Paul to Rome.

***Agrippa*** ([25:13](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+25%3A13)). Herod Agrippa II, the son of Herod Agrippa I who died in 44 bc ([12:23](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+12%3A23)). Agrippa II ruled some territory in northeast Palestine and tried constantly to make peace between the Jews and Rome. As official head of Judaism (Agrippa had the right to appoint the high priest, controlled who had the priest's sacred vestments, etc.), he was the logical man to advise Festus on a case like Paul's.

After the death of her husband, Agrippa's sister ***Bernice*** moved in with him; there were rumors of incest. Later, she became mistress to Emperor Vespasian and then Emperor Titus.

7.  What did Paul think was the issue for which he was being held prisoner ([26:6-8](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+26%3A6-8))?

8.  Summarize the gist of what Paul said to Agrippa ([26:2-23](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+26%3A2-23)).

9.  Agrippa could do nothing to free Paul since he had appealed to Caesar. Why did Paul gave this speech and the words in [26:25-27](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+26%3A25-27)? (See [26:29](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+26%3A29).)

10. How does Paul set an example for you as a Christian in [23:12-26:32](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+23%3A12-26%3A32)? (Consider especially [24:10-26](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+24%3A10-26); [25:8-11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+25%3A8-11); [26:1-29](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+26%3A1-29).)

**LESSON NINETEEN**

[**Acts 27:1-28:31**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+27%3A1-28%3A31)

**Journey to Rome**

The story of Acts does not end with the death of Paul, for he is not the only witness Jesus sent "to the ends of the earth" ([1:8](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+1%3A8)). But for Luke, who accompanied Paul on his voyage to face Caesar's court, Paul typifies the ambassador of Jesus representing his Lord in every circumstance. Paul has faced a king, governors, scornful philosophers, and lynch mobs; the next stage of his journey holds no more terror for him than those.

As you read [27:1-28:31](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+27%3A1-28%3A31), imagine how you would have felt and acted on board ship, on Malta, and in Rome with Paul.

**Storm at Sea ([27:1-28:16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+27%3A1-28%3A16))**

1.  Briefly summarize what happened on the voyage to Rome ([27:1-28:16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+27%3A1-28%3A16)).

2.  What did Paul say and do during the trip to Rome?

[27:9-10](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+27%3A9-10)

[27:21-26](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+27%3A21-26)

[27:30-32](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+27%3A30-32)

[27:33-36](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+27%3A33-36)

[28:1-6](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+28%3A1-6)

[28:7-10](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+28%3A7-10)

3.  Think about each of Paul's comments and actions. What do you learn about him (his gifts, character, beliefs, attitudes toward people, view of God, etc.)?

4.  Paul's life was saved several times on this trip: land was sighted, the crew did not abandon the passengers, the centurion kept the soldiers from killing the prisoners; nonswimmers could float ashore even though the ship ran aground; and the viper was somehow harmless.

a. What did the Maltese natives conclude from all this ([28:4-6](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+28%3A4-6))?

b. To what do you think Paul and Luke attributed these "lucky coincidences"?

5.  Should we conclude from these events that God will always protect His servants—if not from hardship, then at least from death? If so, why? If not, why not, and what should we conclude?

**Paul preaches in Rome ([28:17-31](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+28%3A17-31))**

Luke knew that Paul was not the first missionary to reach Rome ([18:2](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+18%3A2); [28:14-15](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+28%3A14-15)). However, he wrote almost nothing about other missionaries or Paul's relations with them, for he was trying to make a particular point in Acts by what he included and excluded.

6.  Why did Paul address the Jews when he got to Rome? (*Optional:* See [Acts 13:46](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+13%3A46); [Romans 1:16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ro+1%3A16); [Romans 9:1-5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ro+9%3A1-5); [Romans 10:1](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ro+10%3A1); [Romans 11:1-6](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ro+11%3A1-6), [11-16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ro+11%3A11-16).)

7.  What did he say to them first ([28:17-20](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+28%3A17-20))?

8.  When they courteously agreed to hear him further, what did Paul go on to discuss with the Jews ([28:23](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+28%3A23))? What specific methods did he use to appeal to them?

9.  What was the point of the prophecy from Isaiah that Paul quoted ([28:25-29](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+28%3A25-29))?

10. How did Paul spend his time awaiting trial ([28:30-31](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+28%3A30-31))?

11. What good examples does Paul set for all Christians in [28:17-31](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+28%3A17-31)?