

ACTS

ACTS 2:1-41

In 2:1-13, the Holy Spirit indwells the disciples of Jesus for the first time. They then start to speak in many different languages to the Jews who had come from various nations around to celebrate the Pentecost festival. Some were amazed, others thought this group was just partying too hard. Verse 14 is where Peter responds to the crowd and preaches the gospel for the first time.

1. The Holy Spirit brings about a pretty amazing thing in the speaking of different languages. Have you seen the Holy Spirit work miracles?
2. Why does Peter quote the Old Testament to talk about the Holy Spirit and why would Luke take the time to write out the full quotation?
3. Luke says (verse 37) that many in the crowd were “cut to the heart.” Share a story of when you were cut to the heart and led to repent before God.
4. We often declare that people can be forgiven of their sins, but it’s less common to talk about the gift of the Holy Spirit. What do we miss out on by not remembering the Spirit?
5. Who in your life needs to hear the gospel message?

ACTS 2:42-47

1. How many practices/habits can you identify this group doing?
2. What do you think the connection is between the devotion to certain practices (verse 42) and the awe (verse 43), gladness (verse 46), worship of God (verse 47), and favor with all people (verse 47) that this group experienced?
3. What about this group of Christians needs to be implemented more in your life and in our church? What feels unrealistic or too idealistic to accomplish in our day and age?
4. What impact would a growing sense of community have both on us as a church and on Mesa as a city?

ACTS 4:23-31

This passage of Scripture comes at the end of a story beginning in Acts 3:1, and, as always, it's important to know the context! Peter and John heal a man (3:1-10), preach the gospel to a crowd (3:11-26), and then are arrested and questioned by the Jewish ruling council (4:1-22). The meeting and prayer of the believers here is a response to the threats of those Jewish rulers to Peter and John specifically.

Read Acts 3:1-4:31 for the context.

1. It's significant that Peter and John went to their "friends" after being threatened by the Jewish leaders. Who do you go to in hard/confusing/amazing moments? Who comes to you?
2. Why would the group of believers be reflecting on Psalm 2 in this moment of difficulty? What do people often turn to when the "going gets tough"?
3. What is the main request of this group of believers? How do you typically pray in the midst of hard circumstances? Does it echo anything in this passage?
4. In verse 31, the filling of the Spirit leads to boldness. Let's pray this for our church and for those around the world facing intense persecution (two good online resources are <https://www.opendoorsusa.org> and <https://www.persecution.com>, which is voice of the martyrs).
- 5.

ACTS 4:32-5:11

1. What is challenging to you about 4:32-35? Do you see this kind of generosity happening in our church today? In your own life?
2. What was the actual sin of Ananias and Sapphira?
3. How do you react to hearing this account of Ananias and Sapphira dropping dead on the spot? What was different about what they had done compared to Joseph in 4:36-37?
4. Do you think you take God seriously? What would be the typical signs in someone's life that they take God seriously?

ACTS 7

In chapter 6, Stephen is chosen to help with distribution of help to certain widows within the church. As he ministers, a group of Jews have him arrested and make the (false) claim in 6:13-14 that he speaks against the temple and various Jewish customs. Basically, they are worried that “this Jesus” will upset their culture and way of life. Stephen attempts to show that life with Jesus does upset the current stream of Jewish life, but that’s because the current Jewish life is actually full of resistance to the things of God. Jesus is consistent with what is promised and expected in the Scriptures and is the promised one of God!

1. Why do you think Luke would include Stephen’s whole speech? What’s important about rehearsing this whole history?
2. Why is it that God’s people rebelled from the moment he rescued them (see 7:39-42)?
3. Stephen gives a bold accusation in verse 51. But anytime we read about the history of the Israelites, it’s important that we carefully examine our own tendencies to resist the Holy Spirit. In what specific areas are you resisting the Holy Spirit?
4. Jesus told his followers that the world would react this way to the gospel message (John 15:18-19, 16:2). Why does this resistance happen and what’s the best way for us to handle it?

ACTS 9:1-31

Think about your own conversion story and write it down. Share your story with family and friends. If you are able, specifically talk about the first time you encountered Jesus.

1. Does Jesus force Saul to convert or does He pursue Saul?
2. What sticks out to you most about Jesus' actions and words in this story?
3. Both Ananias and Barnabas play an important role in welcoming Saul into the community. What steps can you take to be more welcoming of new believers or new people into our church community?

ACTS 10:1-11:18

1. There were many stories of people converting to following Christ. Why did Luke put this story in the book? Why at this part of the book?
2. How was God at work in both Peter and Cornelius? What was he seeking to teach them?
3. What truths was Peter led to communicate to this group of Gentiles (verse 34-43)?
4. We often long for God to do miracles in our lives. Wouldn't it be great if God clearly gave us visions like he did to Peter? While that would be great, here is the question: if God did give you the vision, are you ready/equipped to speak the gospel clearly to those he would direct you to?
5. If someone says they believe in God, does it matter what they think about Jesus?

ACTS 13:1-12; 14:1-23

That the Holy Spirit is in US means He is always speaking and so always shaping US through one another. Here are seven marks of my interaction with this community of the Spirit.

1. "Fasting" seems to be gaining popularity, but mainly because it can be used as a "diet." Why does this church in Antioch fast? Is it wise for Christians today to fast? For what purpose?
2. Paul's encounter with the magician is a powerful demonstration of God's power against the powers of darkness. What powers of darkness do we face in our current culture? How do you see those powers manifesting themselves?
3. Notice that Luke contrasts the response of the Greek crowds and the Jews from Antioch and Iconium. How do you typically react to the work of God in your life? Do you react like the Greeks with a lack of recognition of God? Do you react like the Jews with hard-hearted resistance?
4. God's power is demonstrated as the believers speak with boldness (13:10-11; 14:3, 20). Are you truly convinced of his power? How do these demonstrations of power impact our trust in God today?

ACTS 15:1-35

1. What seems to be the nature of the problem that the Christians are dealing with? And who are the key “deciders”?
2. What were some of the expected “extra-biblical” rules you were supposed to follow in various churches you may have been a part of?
3. Often times we want to hear God “directly” when we have a tough decision. We would love to access him via some sort of crystal ball. But what things in verses 9-17 helped the group discern the will of God? How does this instruct our own discernment of his will?
4. In verse 31-32 the church was encouraged and strengthened (this is a key theme. See also 14:22 and 15:41). What specifically about the letter do you think brought encouragement? How can you encourage and strengthen the church today?

ACTS 16:4-40

1. What is one observation you have about this passage?
2. Why did Paul not claim his Roman citizenship earlier?
3. What does it look like for you to make this level of sacrifice for the sake of Jesus?
4. How are Lydia and the Philippian jailer converted? What does this say about our own evangelism “strategies”?

ACTS 17:16-34

Acts 17 is a story of how Paul engages a completely pagan culture and points it to Jesus. There is much to discuss and learn about how we can engage our own pagan culture around us. Because of the growing divide in our country and the upcoming election year, the opportunities for discussion about the problems in our culture are numerous. Yet there are many challenges for how to point our culture to Jesus (separation of church and state, negative perceptions of the church, growing secularism, etc.).

1. How can we wage the good warfare in front of us?
2. Out of all the other imaginable problems that one could see in first century Athens, as Paul walked around Athens his spirit was provoked because of all the idols (verse 16).
3. When you think about your specific neighborhood and our city, and our general culture, what problem provokes your spirit? Is that thing that provokes you related to a deeper spiritual problem? In our conversations with people about these issues, what challenges do we face in directing them towards the topic of religion?
4. In looking at Paul's example, how can you begin to lead the discussions toward the topic of Jesus?

ACTS 20:1-38

Paul has just left Ephesus, a city where he ministered for two years. Acts 19 recounts some of the amazing things happening there. He now begins a journey to Jerusalem.

1. Has there been a consistent lesson God has been teaching you in this Acts study?
2. Out of all the activity and traveling going on, why does Luke tell the story of Paul's speech to the Ephesian elders?
3. Do you think the words at the end of verse 35 are true? Is it really more of a blessing to give? Why do we not give more?
4. Paul says many inspiring things in verses 17-35. What challenges you the most about how Paul lived his life and how he thought about his life?

ACTS 28:1-31

1. Given how Luke focuses on the Islanders' perception of Paul and the snake in verses 4-6, why do you think the Holy Spirit kept Paul from harm by the snake? Is this to be used as a guarantee that snakes can't harm Christians who are "really following Jesus"?

2. Often times, stories that focus on a character or their journey end the book with the death of that person or at least some major achievement, but Luke doesn't end with Paul's death or any real major achievement. It actually seems anti-climactic. Why does Luke end the story this way? What does that tell us about who the main character of the story really is and what the story really is about?

3. As you read verse 30-31, how does it challenge you? What's our call as a church and as individuals as we conclude Acts?