



# ACTS

12:13-17

## From the Senior Minister

This term we have chosen to bring ourselves under the book of Acts. It recounts the movement of the gospel from the very first days of Christ's commission to the imprisonment of Paul, the great preacher of Christ to the Gentiles, in Rome.

If it were possible to distill a tone of Acts it is the tone of the irrepressibility of the gospel and its preachers. Christ will build his church and he will do this despite the most vehement opposition. He will do it even when his greatest preachers are cut off. He will do it because it is his work.

The book of Acts shows churches established all around the ancient world by 'jars of clay' until they fulfill Christ's call to witness to the very ends of the earth – in their day this was so wonderfully captured by Paul in Rome, preaching Christ there.

These witnesses to Christ were able to prevail because the Spirit of Christ was in them and working through them to bring glory to Christ all over his world.

As you may be aware, during this series we will also be putting out a challenge for everyone to join in funding the building of our new church building.

We considered putting together a more specific preaching series to compliment this giving campaign but felt we ought to honour the priority of the word and continue in our practice of taking a book of the Bible and letting it set the agenda. Of course, under God, the book of Acts sets for us a massive vision – that of taking the gospel to the ends of the earth; and giving ourselves as those early Christians did, to the all powerful gospel of Christ. In the end, this seemed a far better set of studies to do than one that we might make up!

Acts is a missionary book and it is our strong desire that this new building might not only be established because of a desire to be missionary minded but that it might be a centre of bringing the gospel to the part of the world Christ has put us in – the Central Coast.

Join us as we give ourselves to the very precious word of God and open ourselves to its ministry in our lives.

Andrew

**Building**  
for the *future*



**TERM 4 OUTLINE OF ACTS**

| <b>WEEK</b> | <b>Week Beginning</b> | <b>PASSAGE</b>   | <b>TITLE</b>                               |
|-------------|-----------------------|------------------|--|
| 1           | 13 <sup>th</sup> Oct  | Luke's Gospel    | Prelude to Acts                            |
| 2           | 20 <sup>th</sup> Oct  | Reading Acts     | Applying Acts Correctly                    |
| 3           | 27 <sup>th</sup> Oct  | Acts 1           | Witnesses into all the world               |
| 4           | 3 <sup>rd</sup> Nov   | Acts 2           | Christ is Lord                             |
| 5           | 10 <sup>th</sup> Nov  | Acts 3-8         | Nothing can stop them                      |
| 6           | 17 <sup>th</sup> Nov  | Acts 9-10        | Gospel to the nations                      |
| 7           | 24 <sup>th</sup> Nov  | Acts 13-15:35    | Only one gospel                            |
| 8           | 1 <sup>st</sup> Dec   | Acts 15:36-18:22 | Paul's 2 <sup>nd</sup> Missionary Campaign |
| 9           | 8 <sup>th</sup> Dec   | Acts 18:23-21:16 | Paul's 3 <sup>rd</sup> Missionary Campaign |
| 10          | 15 <sup>th</sup> Dec  | Acts 21:17-28:31 | To Rome & the ends of the earth            |

**We want to encourage each other to be on mission to our non-Christian friends, family and contacts.**

Who are you on mission to?  
 Make a list and start praying for them (and yourself)  
 Pray for 3 friends, 1 a week, for 1 minute.  
 List the name of your family/friends here.

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# Acts guide

## *How to use this book*

### **1. Personal Reading**

- Use this guide to help you read your bible everyday
- Start by reading Acts in one go if you can, then slowly work your way through
- Scribble down your thoughts and questions each day and remember to pray and ask God to speak to you by his Spirit through his word.

### **2. Growth Groups**

- Take this guide with you to your growth group each week so you can write down prayer points for those in your groups that come from the study that week.
- Let your group know who you are on mission to

### **3. Sundays**

- Keep this guide with your bible and bring it with you to church
- Scribble down sermon notes in the space provided

### **Appendix**

In this booklet at the back there is also some helpful discussion to issues that arise in Acts. You may find these beneficial to look through these during the series.

## **THE FIVE PURPOSES OF CHURCH**

God has saved us for a purpose - He is a purposeful God! What therefore does He purpose for us as a community of believers?

For the sake of simplicity we have identified five areas. As you and your growth group fellowship together over the scriptures this term, consider these five and how they bear on our lives together!

God has called us to:

### **MAGNIFICATION**

growth in our love and adoration of Christ expressed in all of life

### **MEMBERSHIP**

growth in the joy of living as a community of renewed people

### **MATURITY**

growth in our knowledge of him and in our godliness of life

### **MINISTRY**

growth in our service of others - especially of our Christian family

### **MISSION**

growth in our desire and ability to bring the gospel to others

## Week 1: Luke - Prelude to Acts

Luke is part of a two-volume work which deals with the very beginnings of Christianity. Luke explains in 1:1-4 that he is writing as one who has put together eyewitness reports of the things fulfilled among them. He explains that he does this so that the reader 'may know the certainty of the things you have been taught' (1:4). He wanted to show his readers that what the readers had heard about Jesus had a firm historical foundation.

Acts, the second half of the work, goes on to show the impact Jesus had on the world as we see the formation and spread of his church by the Holy Spirit.

### Day 1

Read Luke 1:1-4, 26-38

1. What do we discover about Luke & his purposes in writing this book?
2. What claims are made about Jesus by the angel & what were the implications if he was right?
3. How should we respond to Jesus as we see throughout Luke that the claims about him are proven to be true?

### Day 2

Read Luke 2:21-40

1. How does recording this event help Luke's mission to encourage people with the certainty of what they have heard?
2. What light do Simeon & Anna shed about who Jesus is and what he came to do?
3. Do you respond like Simeon to Jesus or in some other way?

Pray that you may be captured by the amazing salvation we have in the Lord's Christ. Pray that the coast will see this and be drawn to Jesus.

### Day 3

Read Luke 4:14-30

1. What amazes the people in Nazareth about Jesus and what makes them hate him?
2. How does Jesus eventually fulfill the claims in v18-19 & v23?
3. What would it look like today to be amazed by Jesus but hate him at the same time?

## **Day 4**

Read Luke 9:18-27

1. What was the confusion about Jesus identity & why do you think it was still there after all the teaching Jesus had done?
2. Knowing who Jesus is, is not enough. What does a true follower look like according to Jesus?
3. If someone asked you who Jesus was during your day tomorrow what would you say? Would your words match up with your actions?

Pray that we might take up our cross daily and follow Jesus, that we will not be ashamed of him.

## **Day 5**

Read Luke 24:13-53

1. How does this section bring resolution to everything predicted earlier by the angels, the scriptures, prophets & Jesus himself?
2. What titles is Jesus given & does he give himself in this section?
3. How is the way Luke has given his account help us “know the certainty” of the things that have been taught about Jesus?

Give thanks that we have the gospel based on the truth of the life, death & resurrection of Jesus. Pray that we will be confident & proactive in sharing this exciting news with our friends, family & our coast.

# Sermon Notes

# **Growth Group Prayer Points**

## Week 2: Applying Acts Correctly

As we look at Acts one issue usually always comes up - how much of what happened in the church of Acts should we expect to happen today? That is, should we do what they did? Should we see what happened in their churches happening in ours?

It's not hard to think of some specifics. Should we share everything in common (2:44)? Should we see people healed by touching handkerchiefs (19:12)? Should we be able to pronounce judgment on sinners and see them struck down dead (5:5, 9)?

Over five days we will explore what some have called a 'mode shift' in the ministry of Jesus and the apostles, and us.

It is too simplistic to suggest that just because Jesus did it we should, or even, "the apostles did it, so we should too". Let's see why.

### Day 1

***The way Jesus paid taxes.*** Read Matt 17:24-27

1. How did Jesus go about getting the money for his taxes?

There's no doubt we're called by God to pay taxes (see Matt 22:16-22) but should we do it the way Jesus did? There is no command NOT to, so perhaps we should...

2. However, look at:

1 Thess 4:11, 12;

2 Thess 3:6-13.

What shift does this suggest in the way we are to do things?

3. If Jesus didn't do what he did as a model for the way we're to do it, why did he do it?

4. How then should you respond to the Bible's teaching on taxes & working?

## Day 2

### ***How do we confront and deal with sin?*** Read Acts 5:1-11

1. How did the Apostles do it?
2. How does the rest of N.T. urge us to deal with sin within the community? Examine the following.

2 Tim 3:16

2 Thess 3:14, 15

3. If the Apostle's action wasn't a model for us, why did they do it that way?

There's no command NOT to deal with sin like the apostles. However, there's a loud silence about ever doing it this way and more importantly, an even louder instruction to do otherwise! The same may be said in the issue of paying taxes. Both these instances alert us to the fact that there's a significant shift between the way Jesus and the Apostle's did ministry and the way we are to do it. We cannot simply read what they did and say "do likewise".

4. How do you respond when other Christians sin against you? Pray for a Christ like attitude to sin & those who sin against you.

## Day 3

### **What about raising the dead?**

1. Jesus raised the dead several times (e.g. Jn 11:38-44) The Apostles also achieved similar results. Read Acts 20:7-12

How would you describe the way Paul did it?

2. There's another way to be involved in the ministry of raising the dead. Can you think what it is?

See John 11:25, 26 & 2 Tim 1:9b-10

3. If Jesus' & the Apostles' way of dealing with death was not a model for us, why did they do it that way?

4. Is the resurrection of the dead a comfort for you? Why/why not?

Give thanks that one day God's people will be raised to eternal life & pray for those you know who are not yet in his kingdom. Pray that God will help you see the urgency & give you a heart for the lost.

## Day 4 - What of healing the sick?

1. Describe the way Jesus and the Apostles healed?

John 9:1-12

Acts 14:8, 9

2. There is no command to do as they did (as there wasn't concerning paying taxes or dealing with sinners). What does James encourage the church to do when sickness comes upon a brother or sister in the church?

See James 5:13-19 How is this different?

3. When faced with illness how do you respond? Is it the way the Bible encourages you to?

## Day 5 - Why the differences?

Reflect on what we have seen this week.

1. Why are some events that are described as occurring for the disciples not prescriptive for how we should live?

See John 20:30, 31

2 Cor 12:12

2. What ought we look for to know if a particular historical incident is a model to follow or just a unique event? If an event is not a model for us to follow what are we to learn from it?

3. Pray for the people you have written in the front of this book that you might bring them know Jesus.

# Sermon Notes

# **Growth Group Prayer Points**



# *Day of Prayer*

Prayer is an incredible gift from God and as a church we recognise our total dependence on him and the importance of praying for the future of our church as we work hard to bring hope to the Coast – Jesus.

Because of this and because of the stage we're currently in as a church, we are organising the church-wide prayer event –

*Day of Prayer.*

On the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of November we are going to run identical hour long prayer meetings every hour on the hour between the hours of 5:00pm – 8:00pm Friday and 7:00am – 1:00pm Saturday. These 11 prayer meetings will be held at the church property and will be hosted by different leaders of our church. We are organising the prayer meetings in this way as we do not want anyone in our church family to miss out.

Please consider which hour block will suit you (and your family) best and come along ready to join in as we pray for our future and the future of gospel message of hope on the coast and the whole world.

## Week 3: Witnesses into all the world

### Acts 1

#### Day 1.

This first chapter of Acts sets the scene for the rest of the book! It's massively important. The main characters are introduced, the plot is revealed, and the conclusion to the whole book, hinted at! So let's read it!

#### **Read: Acts 1:1-11**

1. Who do you think are going to be the main characters of the book?
2. What clues can you find here about the likely storyline of the book?
3. The title "Acts" doesn't say enough. The "Acts of the Apostles" misses the point. Judging by this opening section, what title would you give the book? Why?

#### **Day 2. Luke 24:36-53; Acts 1:1-11**

It is important to see that Jesus' personal ministry continues after his departure, but in another way. The book of Luke tells us all what Jesus *began* to do. Acts tells us what he *continued* to do by his Spirit. It is not as if Jesus is absent. He is present in another way, by his Spirit, through his Apostles.

1. What were the two main topics of Jesus' conversation between the resurrection and his ascension?
2. What is the relationship between these two?
3. How have you thought of the role of the Holy Spirit in the past? Does it need to be shaped/changed by what we read here?

**Day 3. Acts 1:6-8**

1. Write verse 6 in your own words.
2. Jesus doesn't ignore their question. He answers it in v's 7-8. Try to summarize His answer.
3. How might the way Jesus speaks here about the coming kingdom impact your thinking about the kingdom of God?

**Day 4. Acts 1:9-11**

1. What is the importance of the ascension? (Hint: what would it mean if Jesus didn't ascend to the right hand of God?)
2. What task should the disciples have been doing when they were gently encouraged to not just stand there waiting for Jesus to return?
3. Do you ever find yourself in a similar situation to the disciples - eyes on Jesus' return but ignoring what Jesus is doing here & now? How can we as a church make sure we don't do the same?

**Day 5. Acts 1:12-26.**

Jesus' ascension takes him to the right hand of God where he rules the universe with all things under his feet (see Dan 7:13-14; and Eph 1:20-21; Phil 2:9-11; 1Peter 3:22). He is in charge, as the Sovereign Lord of History and what comfort this is! What assurance! What peace to know that nothing happens outside of his loving control. We can rest on him, knowing that all of history belongs to him. What a cure this is for our anxieties about our own futures!

1. Spend time now giving praise to our risen Lord, our King and deliverer.
2. Christ is risen but there is still work on earth to be done. What responsibility does our Lord give to his disciples? (see 1:8; 1:22-26)
3. In what ways does this responsibility extend to you?

# Sermon Notes

# **Growth Group Prayer Points**

## Week 4: Christ is Lord

### Acts 2

#### Day 1.

Chapter 2 falls nicely into four sections. In 2:1-4 the event of Pentecost is described. In 2:5-13 the reactions to the event, and in 2:14-41 the interpretation of the event. The chapter ends with the effects of the event on the Church. It is an important passage to come to grips with.

Read: Acts 2:1-13

1. What is the importance of:
  - the sound like the blowing of a wind (see Eze 37:9-14; Job 38:1)
  
  - the tongues of fire (see Ex 3:2f; 19:18; Luke 3:16)
2. Why are the God-fearing Jews perplexed?
3. What questions does this account raise for you?

#### Day 2. Acts 2:14-21

Yesterday should have left us with the question; "What does it all mean?" The whole point of v's 14 to 41 is to answer that very question!. This is important because there are many possible interpretations to this Pentecost event (eg 2:13) but we need to allow Peter the Apostle to provide God's interpretation. Peter initially explains it by referring to Joel 2:28-32.

1. What significance do you think quoting Joel gives to the event? (if you need a clue, check appendix 1)
2. What are the key aspects of this prophecy being fulfilled for us?

#### Day 3. Acts 2:22-36

1. What do we learn about Jesus in each of the following verses?
  - v22
  - v23
  - v24-32
  - v33-35
2. What is it about each of them that makes this such an amazing claim?

**Day 4. Acts 2:22-36**

There are a number of old Testament quotes in this section which can be a little confusing. Each quote has one point. Verses 24-32 deal with Jesus' resurrection and 33-35 with his ascension:

1. Jesus' resurrection (Psalm 16) proves that he is \_\_\_\_\_ (v 31)
2. Jesus' ascension (Psalm 110) proves that he is \_\_\_\_\_ (v 36)

By his resurrection and ascension Jesus is shown to be the sovereign Lord of history. He sits at the right hand of God and pours out the promised Holy Spirit (a task the O.T. attributed to God-2:17, 2:33). Jesus rules the universe and so we have great confidence where history and our lives are going. Furthermore he has not left us alone to fight by ourselves - he is with us by his Spirit. Such news demands a response!

3. Consider the significance of Jesus resurrection. What response does this news produce in you?

**Day 5. Acts 2:37-47**

1. Jesus is both Christ and Lord (verse 36). What response does Peter urge to this news? (v's 37-41)
2. What response was produced among the believing community? (v 42 ff.)
3. In what ways should/does their example prompt or encourage you?

Give thanks that the Lord saves those who are unworthy, like you & me. Pray that you will have the conviction and passion to tell others about our saviour Jesus.

# Sermon Notes

# Growth Group Prayer Points

**Building**  
for the

*future*

# Thanksgiving night

Coffee , dessert,  
video presentation  
keynote address  
Live Music

\$20 per head

7.30pm

November 29<sup>th</sup>

Richard Lornie Center

**Don't miss this historic event  
our biggest church gathering ever!**

## **Week 5: Nothing can stop them**

### **Acts 3-8**

Immediately following Peter's earth shattering sermon on the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, we find the disciples engaged in..... Well, what would you expect them to be doing? What is the normal response to knowing that we live in the last days and that Jesus is Lord of all?

#### **Day 1. Acts 3**

1. How would you describe what Peter does?

2. Peter explains the significance of the healing in his speech to the Israelites. What does he say about:

- i. Jesus
- ii. How they should respond
- iii. The result if they respond well.

3. Jesus was sent to wipe away our sins (3:19) and turn us from our wicked ways (3:26). Have you accepted his offer? What response has this offer produced in you?

#### **Day 2. Acts 4**

The healing of the blind makes a big impact and, sure enough, lands the apostles in some hot water. The rulers demand to know what is going on!

1. The Sanhedrin ask a question and give a command. Try to summarize the questions and the apostles response.

2. We have a great message of salvation (4:12). What things tempt you to keep quiet about it?

3. God gives them the Spirit in response to their prayer. What impact does the Holy Spirit produce in believers? (31-37)

### Day 3. Acts 5

Chapter 4:32-35 describes the pattern of life of the disciples, then two specific examples of what happened in practice - Barnabas the positive example(4:36-37) ; Ananias and Sapphira the negative (5:1-11).

1. What is at the heart of the sin of this couple? Why is it judged so heavily ?

There is a strong warning here. Their outward act appeared to indicate unity, but even within this Spirit-filled community hidden motives were at work, as they always are! Outwardly they were doing good but inwardly they were lying to the Holy Spirit, ie to God! (5:3,4). Pray that we might not be like that.

2. What are the different reactions to the apostles' work (12-42)?

3. How are similar reactions seen to God's work today?

Pray for a similar love for God & his people.

### Day 4. Acts 6-8:3

In the first 5 chapters Jerusalem has been the focus of all the preaching, conversions and increasing persecution. In chapter 6 with the stoning of Stephen, persecution intensifies and the Jerusalem church is scattered. However, in God's amazing compassion & sovereignty this persecution ends up allowing the gospel to spread to Samaria (8:4-25), to gentiles (8:26-40) and to an arch enemy - Saul (9:1-30).

These 2 chapters centre on Stephen, the attack that is made on him (6:6-15), his response (7:1-53) and his sentencing and punishment (7:54-60).

1. What are the charges against Stephen?

2. In Stephen's reply, what do you find out about:

- God
- Stephen
- the Jews (how they respond to God and His word)
- the law/temple

3. In the midst of terrible personal suffering Stephen lifts his eyes to the heavenly reality. How is what he sees a comfort to him? How is this relevant for us?

## **Day 5. Acts 8:3-40**

Persecution of the church followed Stephen's stoning and this moved Christians out of Jerusalem (8:1) and in the first instance into Samaria.

1. What can you find out about the content of Philip's preaching?
2. How is what happens here a fulfillment of 1:8?
3. Chapter 8 gives us two incidents of public and private evangelism. Is there anything we can learn from these incidents?

# Sermon Notes

# **Growth Group Prayer Points**

## **Week 6: Gospel to the nations**

### **Acts 9-12**

#### **Day 1. Acts 9**

On three occasions in Acts (chapters 9, 22, 26) the story is told of Paul's conversion.

1. Who are the main characters in this chapter? What do we learn about them?
2. Should we expect to be treated like Paul if we live for and preach the gospel like he did?
3. How does Paul's conversion & change encourage you?

#### **Day 2. Acts 10**

The next three chapters focus heavily on Peter's ministry and his activities over an 11 year time span. Dominating chapter 10 and 11 is the spread of the gospel to Cornelius and his household. It is a very important event because it records the 'conversion' of a Gentile God fearer (10:1-48) and shows the way the church in Jerusalem responds to the inclusion of the gentiles.(11:1-18)

1. What evidence is there of God's sovereignty in the events leading up to Cornelius' conversion?
2. What are the main points of Peter's sermon in verses 36-43?
3. How does this passage fire you up for mission?

Give thanks to God for His goodness to you in your salvation! Pray for the people you've named in the front of this book that they too would come to know Jesus.

### Day 3. Acts 11:1-18

The chapter divides into 2 clear sections: Chapter 11:1-18 records the *response* of the Jerusalem church to the Gentiles receiving the Spirit, and chapter 11:19-30 looks at the *result* of gospel preaching by those who were scattered during the outbreak of violence following Stephen's stoning. It is incredible to see the courage and commitment of these early disciples even in the midst of great suffering. What a challenge for us!. Ask God to give you courage to proclaim his name!

1. The people who criticise Peter are circumcised believers, i.e. Jews who have become Christians. How did they want Peter to respond to the Gentiles who wanted to become Christians?
  
2. What is Peter's main point in his reply? (see verse 15-17)
  
3. God's grace is His "kindness" or "generosity" poured out on us because of Jesus. In what way(s) are you a recipient of God's grace, just like the Gentiles & Jews who became Christians?

### Day 4. Acts 11:19-30

1. What do we learn about how our Lord uses persecution?
  
2. Those who are preaching are not named. They are not famous, but the results are tremendous (v21). How is their example an encouragement to you in your situation?
  
3. Pray again for the coast as a whole that it may be won for Christ as witnessed in Acts.

### Day 5. Acts 12

The chapter opens with James dead, Peter in prison, and Herod triumphant. But an enormous change comes about by the end of the chapter.

1. How does the chapter end? What does this teach us about God and the spread of his gospel?
  
2. How do the changes come about?
  - i. What is God's role
  - ii. What is man's role?

We see that the Christians' response is to meet and pray for God to intervene. When Rhoda announces the fulfilment of their prayers, they say she is crazy! Pray now that God will answer our prayers for the coast to come to him in a way which blows away *our* expectations.

# Sermon Notes

# **Growth Group Prayer Points**

**Building**

for the

*future*

**CELEBRATION**

**SUNDAY**

**PICNIC**

Picnic BBQ Games

Grammar School Oval

Starting at 12 noon

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2008

A fun day for the whole church as we  
celebrate together the great things  
God has done amongst us.

## Week 7: Only one gospel

### Acts 13-15:35

#### Day 1. Acts 13:1-12

Paul and Barnabas are given a special job. This job is spelled out in chapters 13 and 14, and summarised in 14:26-28 when they return to the same church and report what happened.

1. What do we learn about opposition to the gospel?
2. Should we expect opposition as we work hard to reach the coast with the gospel? What do you think it might look like?

#### Day 2. Acts 13:13-52

We now come to a detailed record of a sermon Paul preached in a synagogue while on his mission. It is a Sabbath day, it is in a synagogue, and the audience is mainly Jewish.

1. What is the main point of the sermon?
2. What are the similarities to the message we are taking to the coast?

This passage must drive us to pray for people, to plead with God for their conversion and to open our mouths and declare the gospel ourselves, even in the midst of opposition. Pray for your non Christian friends & family. What can you invite them to where they will hear the gospel?

#### Day 3. Acts 14:1-28

From Antioch Paul went to Pisidian Antioch, then Iconium, then Lystra and Derbe before returning back the same way. It's an amazing record of people responding to the gospel in all sorts of ways. It challenges us to not allow the cost - personal, financial, education etc - to stop us from proclaiming the gospel to the lost.

1. How do people respond?
2. How do you think Paul would respond to someone who said, "If God wants me to go and plant a church there, or live over there and evangelise people, then he will open the door and make it easy for me."
3. Is the Christian life about doing what is comfortable and enjoyable? (see 14:22)

Jesus is the king. He rules the universe, in him there is peace and forgiveness of sins if you put your trust in him, but if you don't there is condemnation and wrath. This must motivate us to live for him before anyone or anything else. Pray that this will be what your life looks like.

## Day 4. ACTS 15:1-21

Chapters 13 -14 describes the conversion of Gentiles. These conversions lead to conflicts between Jewish and Gentile Christians over some fundamental issues. These issues are discussed in chapter 15 - a very important chapter.

1. Why is the council needed? (verse 1-5)

2. What is the main underlying issue?

- i. Circumcision
- ii. Fellowship
- iii. Salvation

This account tells us about one supremely important issue addressed by the council. That fundamental issue is salvation. That is, how is a person saved? It's all about what a person needs to do to be right with God.

3. Are there laws or traditions that you cling to which may in fact take away from the key message of salvation through Christ alone?

## Day 5. Acts 15:22-35

1. What is the result of the council? (verse 22-35)

2. What can we learn about their concerns for their brothers & the way they respond to these concerns?

Pray that we will have a similar concern for the truth & for the salvation of others.

# Sermon Notes

# **Growth Group Prayer Points**

## Week 8: Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> Missionary Campaign

### ACTS 15:36 -18:22

It is worth pausing here for a minute to get our bearings. In chapters 13-14 (46-49AD) Paul went on his first missionary campaign from Antioch (North of Jerusalem) into Asia minor (Turkey) and back again.

The many Gentile conversions that resulted from this first missionary campaign meant that a council was called in Jerusalem (chapter 15). In chapters 15:36-18:22 we read of Paul's second missionary journey (49-52 AD). It was an massive journey from Antioch, through Asia minor, into Europe (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth) before returning to Jerusalem and Antioch.

#### Day 1. Acts 15:36-16:5

1. Is Paul inconsistent? One minute he says circumcision is of no value, the next he circumcises Timothy! Why would he do this?
2. From what happened on their would you say it was a good idea?
3. Would you make such drastic decisions to see the gospel go out unhindered?

Pray that God will help you to live out in practice what you say you believe.

#### Day 2. Acts 16:6-40

Lydia, the slave girl, and the Jailer were very different people from very different backgrounds all living in the one town, Philippi.

1. What similarities are there between the conversions of Lydia and the jailer?
2. Pray for your friends, that God may open their hearts to respond to the message you bring them.

#### Day 3. Acts 17:1-15

On arriving in Thessalonica Paul reasoned, explained and proved that the Christ had to suffer.

1. What does it mean for Jesus to be *the* Christ? (see Psalm 2:8ff).
2. How do various people in Thessalonica and Berea respond to Paul's reasoning?

3. What do we learn from this with regards our responsibilities in declaring the good news and the hearers responsibilities in receiving it? What can we do to understand the bible more clearly so we can explain it more clearly?

#### **Day 4 Acts 17:16-34**

Many followers of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism are very sincere and very committed to their religion. Many give their whole lives to the study of their religion, they are zealous and very passionate.

1. How would you answer someone who said “It doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you are sincere”?
2. How does Paul describe people who follow other gods (from this passage)?
3. Is the sincerity of your belief a good guide to the truth of your belief? (see also Romans 1:22-23, 25)

#### **Day 5. Acts 18:1-22**

From Athens (a university town) Paul moved to Corinth, a thriving commercial city well known for its wealth and sexual immorality.

1. How would you describe Paul’s efforts to convince the Corinthians that Jesus was the Christ?
2. How is this a challenge to us personally and as a church?

# Sermon Notes

# Growth Group Prayer Points

## Week 9: Paul's 3<sup>rd</sup> Missionary Campaign

### ACTS 18:23 – 21:16

In chapters 18:23 - 21:16 Paul goes on his third missionary campaign (52-57AD), similar in route to the second. He is then arrested in Jerusalem and taken to Rome (chapters 22-28). So, chapters 13-28 cover a period of 11 years, the events include 3 missionary journeys (often going back to the same places), an all important council in Jerusalem, and Paul's arrest in Jerusalem and transportation to Rome.

#### **Day 1. Acts 18:22-19:10**

Acts 19 presents us with three examples of non-genuine articles: disciples who are not really disciples, the seven sons of Sceva who try to pass as "apostles", and Artemis, who claims to be a god.

1. How would you describe the disciples in Ephesus:  
Christians?  
Non Christians?  
Other?
2. What seems to be the issue with the baptism they had received?

#### **Day 2. Acts 19:11-41**

1. Once again we see massively different responses to the message Paul brings about Jesus. How do the different people respond?
2. How are these responses similar to the response to Jesus & his followers today?

#### **Day 3. Acts 20:1-12**

1. What do we notice about the main purpose of this part of Paul's journey (1-6)?
2. Would the events during Paul's preaching that night have helped or hindered his mission?

## Day 4. Acts 20:13-38

1. What were the goals of Paul's ministry in Ephesus?
2. Is there any sense in which Paul is a model for Christian ministry today? If so what positive steps should I take to follow his example.

## Day 5. Acts 21:1-16

When you understand that Jesus is the true shepherd, the real pastor who truly fulfils his role in caring for us in the deepest and most profound way, it should be a great relief for us all! We have one who understands, leads, and serves us perfectly!

1. What implications does it have in *who* we look to truly care for us?
2. What then is the role of the elders, shepherds, oversees etc?
3. Is it desirable or even possible to have an attitude like Paul's to following Jesus (v13-14)?

Pray that you may be one who cares for the Lord above all else, evident in the sacrificial life you lead.

# Sermon Notes

# Growth Group Prayer Points

## Week 10: To Rome & the ends of the earth

### Acts 21:17-28:31

From 21:18-26:32 Luke goes into great detail when he describes the arrest and trials of Paul. All up there are 5 trials, each described in some detail. Why do you think Luke go into so much detail about the trials Paul went through?

#### **Day 1. Acts 21:1-22:29**

Following Paul's arrest he is given an opportunity to speak to the crowd.

1. What are the main points Paul makes?
2. Why were the Jews so opposed to what Paul said?
3. What do you find inspiring about Paul's speech?

#### **Day 2. Acts 22:30-23:35**

1. How would you describe Paul & his behaviour throughout this incredibly difficult time?
2. How do you think he was able to cope during it all?

Ask for Gods' strength to persevere & be faithful in the situations you find yourself.

#### **Day 3. Acts 24:1-25:22**

After causing the Jews to go into uproar Paul is now brought to trial. Three times he is brought before rulers for questioning, and three times he defends himself. There is much here for us to learn from.

1. What are the key accusations against Paul?
2. How does he answer them?

3. What can we learn from his response to these trials?

#### **Day 4. Acts 25:23-26:32**

Agrippa's full title is Herod Agrippa II. He was the son of Herod Agrippa I of Acts 12 (the one eaten by worms!), and the grandson of Herod the Great. Bernice was his sister, but there were rumours that their relationship was more intimate than it should have been!

1. Why is Paul on trial (what are his reasons)? (see also 23:6, 24:21; 25:19; 26:6-8; 28:20)

2. How does this challenge you in you conversations with people about Christ?

#### **Day 5. Acts 27-28**

The book opened with the Apostles seeing the resurrected and ascended Jesus. He commissioned them to witness in Jerusalem (chapters 1-5), in Judea and Samaria (chapters 6-11), and to the ends of the earth (12-28). The book closes with the Apostle in Rome proclaiming that Jesus Christ is the King, the Lord, the ruler of the universe. God has established his ruler on earth, and he know rules at the right hand of God.

1. How do the Jews respond to this message (chapter 28).

2. Why is this a hard message to proclaim?

Pray for boldness; pray that you may introduce your friends to Jesus and that under God we as a church may help win the Coast for Christ.

# Sermon Notes

# **Growth Group Prayer Points**

## Appendix 1: The Kingdom of God

It is important to understand what the disciples meant by their question in Acts 1:6. Briefly, the O.T. prophets envisioned a great future time of restoration where Israel would be triumphant and God's enemies destroyed. This would take place on *the Day of the Lord*, the day when God would personally intervene in history as the King (or Messiah which means the same as Christ - anointed one). This day would restore national Israel as the centre of God's rule over his people. Jerusalem and the temple would be rebuilt and Davidic rule re-established. Gentiles who wanted to be included would come running, seeking to be accepted because they saw the glory of God revealed in the redemption of Israel. That day is also the day on which the Holy Spirit is poured out on all people. It is the day on which salvation comes to all those who call on the name of the Lord. (See appendix 2)

## Appendix 2: The Holy Spirit

### The Old Testament and the Spirit

We shouldn't think that the Holy Spirit only *appears* at Pentecost. In the O.T. he is linked with creation (Genesis 1:2), the judges (Judges 11:29), kings (1Samuel 10:10) and prophets (2Kings 2:15-16). However their experience of the Spirit was very different from ours. They experienced the Spirit only as a temporary blessing to empower them for particular tasks. Furthermore only some of those under the old covenant received the Spirit. They longed for the time when there would be a permanent and complete experience of God's Spirit. Have a look quickly at the following passages, what do they look forward to?

1. Numbers 11:26-29; Deuteronomy 30:6
2. Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-28
3. Isaiah 11:1-3; 62:1
4. Joel 2:28-32

We see from this that the prophets longed for the pouring out of the Spirit on every Israelite, and they believed that a particular King would come who would have that Spirit permanently and thus lead them forever. Furthermore they saw that the coming of the Spirit on all Israel would signify the Day of the Lord, that is, the end time.

### The N.T. and the Spirit

Luke pointed out from the very beginning that Jesus is *the* Spirit-anointed one in fulfillment of the O.T. hopes (that's what his baptism is about, see Luke 3:22; 4:1; 4:14 and most importantly 4:18-21). He is the promised Spirit anointed leader who will be with his people and lead his people forever. Thus, at Pentecost, Jesus pours out the Spirit in fulfillment of all the prophets' expectations. Pentecost therefore marks the coming to fruition of the O.T. hopes of the new covenant, the creation of the new people of God, the beginning of the new age, it fulfills Jesus' promise to be with his people always (the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, He continues to be present with us but in a different way), and it marks the end of Israel as having exclusive claims on God. All people may now enter into his presence by faith in Christ, and faith in Him alone (see the Joel passage quoted in Acts 2).

Pentecost is therefore an enormously important occasion. It brought joy to those who were there for they understood the implications of what was happening. As an *event* it is hardly repeatable, but its *implications* flow down to each one of us as we too may have Christ with us by His Spirit as we put our faith in Him.

## Appendix 3: Baptism of the Holy Spirit

There are several key passages in Acts which describe the outpouring of the Spirit (Acts 2:1-13; 8:14-17; 10:34-48 and 19:1-7). They follow the basic order of the gospel going from the Jew to the Gentile which Jesus described in 1:8. Thus initially Jews and God-fearers in Jerusalem receive the gospel (Acts 2), then Samaritans in Samaria (8), then a Roman God-fearer in Caesarea Phillippi (Acts 10) and then converts of John the Baptist in Ephesus (Acts 19).

In each case it is very significant that the Apostles are called to witness the coming of the Spirit as the gospel spreads beyond Jerusalem. This is because up until now the Israelites had been God's chosen people. God had worked almost exclusively with them, and thus it was enormously difficult for Jewish Christians to accept that the gospel had cancelled their national privileges and put them and the Gentiles on equal footing. Each *stage* (1:8) that the gospel went out of Jerusalem was thus highly significant. The Apostles were there to witness at each stage God's outpouring of his Holy Spirit onto a previously rejected people, so that now Jew and Gentile became members of his family without favouritism.

This 'pattern' is not seen with later writings because the Apostles no longer needed to defend the presence of the Spirit within the Gentiles ( a previously difficult thing for the Jews to accept). The Gentiles had clearly been included as God's new people. Thus what we have here in Acts is not meant as a pattern for us to follow, but is the record of the unique and unrepeatable beginnings of the new people of God.

Spend time now comparing the four accounts of the Holy Spirits coming (Acts 2:1-13; 8:14-17; 10:34-48 and 11:1-18; and 19:1-7). . What are the differences and similarities?

What is the significance of the Spirits coming on these four groups?

## Appendix 4: Healings in Acts

The raising of Tabitha is meant to remind us of others in the bible (see 1 Kings 17:8-24 ; 2 Kings 4:18-37; Lk 7:11-17; 8:41-42, 49-56). We are meant to see that the power demonstrated by these three key characters (Elijah, Elisha and Jesus) at significant times in the history of God's people is continued on in the early life of the church. It tells us that this is another highly significant moment in God's history of salvation-for the first time the gospel was going out to the Gentiles. We are not meant to see the miracles as normative for us, just as we would not see Elijah's or Jesus' miracles as normative for us. They occurred at particular times in history for particular purposes (another cluster of signs and wonders occurred as Israel was about to leave Egypt. So there are four clusters of signs and wonders in the whole bible - during the time of Moses, Elijah and Elisha, Jesus and the Early Church).