

ONE MORE

STUDY
JOURNAL AND
DISCIPLINE
JOURNEY

ONE MORE

STUDY
JOURNAL AND
DISCIPLESHIP
JOURNEY

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Published by
Riverview Church
3585 Willoughby Road
Holt, Michigan 48842

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First Printing 2025
Printed in the United States of America

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INTRODUCTION

When the sheer audacity of the Gospel of Jesus gets a grip on your heart, it changes everything.

Who are we to deserve the limitless grace of God? How is it that we can not only be forgiven for the hurt we have caused ourselves and others but also become the mouthpieces of that scandalous mercy to the broken world around us?

The invitation of the Gospel is nothing short of miraculous.

The New Testament book of Acts shows us what happens when this Good News grabs hold of everyday people. It turns them inside out and propels them on a Holy Spirit-fueled mission to invite everyone to join their ragtag band of misfits.

Men and women. Rich and poor. Military leaders and slaves. Paupers and kings. Business owners, artists, and blue-collar workers. This invitation is extended to religious people and those who have never given spiritual things a single serious thought.

The early church found the message of Jesus so compelling they couldn't help but talk about it, sing about it, and even suffer for it. Imprisonment was just part of following Jesus. As were beatings, rejection, and even death. Each wound just added fire to their mission and joy to their hearts.

The book of Acts has played out again and again as the Holy Spirit has gripped the hearts of new generations and pointed them to Jesus. Even the birth of our church was part of one such revival, the Jesus Movement in the 1970s.

And we are praying it will happen One More time.

In the fall of 2025, we are launching a two-year discipleship journey called One More. We'll start our journey by studying the New Testament book of Acts together and, following the lead of the early church, we're going to pray... a lot. We will pray that the same fire that ignited the early church will reignite ours. We will pray for nothing short of a revival in our little part of the world and all of the rest of the world, too.

The book you are holding in your hands will be your companion for the first leg of this journey. It's a place for you to take notes, journal your thoughts, and record answered prayers. It has a calendar of events and resources we will refer to frequently over the next year. You may want to take a few minutes to write your name and contact info on the first page and familiarize yourself with the structure. We encourage you to bring this journal (along with your Bible) to church each week, as well as to your RivCommunity and other gatherings.

We don't know what year two will look like because we haven't seen what God will do with our church yet! We will produce volume two toward the end of our first year, but our current plan is to continue with our churchwide theme of One More for at least two years.

We are eagerly anticipating God moving in a profound way through each of us over the next year, and we can't wait to see what He does.

Onward we stumble!

Pastor Noel

August, 2025





“What’s in it for me?”

Whether we like it or not, much (if not most) of what we think and do is motivated by that question. Our career and family choices, living situations, political affiliations, and social media posturing betray our desperate need to place ourselves at the center of our own story.

But the Bible paints a counter-reality for those who follow Jesus. When we are forgiven and set free, we are unleashed to place others first. To love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. (Mark 12:30-31)

The New Testament book of Acts chronicles the early church as they lived out this reality in the midst of a culture that was both fascinated and threatened by them. And God continually added “one more” to their numbers.

One more healed person.

One more disciple of Jesus.

One more church.

It is our hope and prayer that God will continue to do the same through us as we...

Invite ONE MORE

We will ask every person who is part of our church family to prayerfully consider who their “one more” is —the person they want to invite to follow Jesus along with them. We will offer training throughout the year, helping all of us learn how to have intentional spiritual conversations. We will provide in-person classes, tell stories of changed lives, and offer prayer meetings where we will pray for our family and friends.

Launch ONE MORE

We were so excited about this idea that we couldn’t wait! By the time this is published in August 2025, we will have already launched our new venue on the campus of Michigan State University. Our history is deeply rooted at MSU, and there are tens of thousands of people who Jesus loves walking the streets of East Lansing. We will invite them to follow Him as we launch a church service and conversations on campus tailored for the parachurched and unchurched.

Plant ONE MORE

From our early days, we have been all about church planting. There are at least 60 churches that can trace their lineage back to Riv and hundreds more across the world that Riverview has supported. Our ridiculous goal is to plant a new church (led by folks from Riv) in 2027. This may be our most audacious initiative because we don’t know where we want to plant or who will lead the new church. We just know that one of the best ways to reach new people for Jesus is new churches, and we want to invite everyone to consider going to a new community in His name.

HOW ARE WE GOING TO DO THIS

At Riv, we invite everyone to know and enjoy Jesus as we stumble together in our pursuit to love like Him.

This is our mission and the framework of our two-year discipleship journey.

We invite everyone.

As individuals and as a church, our posture must be invitational. We want to be intentional about our personal “one more,” inviting them to stumble along with us as we follow Jesus. All of our spaces, from our weekend services and RivCommunities, to our classes and social media, will be tailored with the new person in mind.

Following the example of the book of Acts, this invitation will be saturated in prayer. We will pray specifically for our “one mores.” We will pray for our families, our communities, and our world. To do this, we will all participate in intentional prayer rhythms:

- **Daily** - We will send out a text reminder to pray (with a verse, a prayer request, or a video prayer to help guide us).
- **Weekly** - We will pray in our weekend services, send out weekly prayer requests, and *Prayer Walk* in our neighborhoods and communities while looking for opportunities to talk with people about Jesus.
- **Monthly** - We will have 24 hours of prayer from 10 a.m. on Saturday to 10 a.m. on Sunday. We will offer in-person and online opportunities to pray, with specific prayer requests provided.
- **Quarterly** - We will hold a prayer and worship service at one of our venues where we can all participate together as a church family.

We invite everyone to know Jesus.

The invitation we offer isn’t just to community or personal fulfillment, as great as those things are. Instead, our invitation is to know our Savior and King Jesus—to not just know *about* Him but to *know Him* in a saving way. To turn away from our sins and turn toward the abundant life Jesus offers.

We will offer various Bible reading plans, classes, and Bible studies that coincide with our series through Acts. We will also tie our RivCommunity content to the series, as well. We will train our church family in how to share the Gospel and provide opportunities to do so in community.

We invite everyone to enjoy Jesus.

Enjoying Jesus is a team sport. To this end, we will prioritize gathering in corporate worship, where we can sing, tell stories, and hear about God's goodness. We will build celebration into our church calendar, with food and music playing a big part.

And, if we can find a way to pull it off, we will hold a huge service in the Spring of 2026 where we pull our whole church family together for a single event!

We stumble together in our pursuit to love like Him.

The Christian faith is not meant to be experienced alone. Understanding that the size and makeup of each group may vary based on the needs of the people we are reaching, we will become more flexible with our RivCommunities. We will highlight stories of the diversity of community expressed in these new groups. We will launch a new recovery ministry and continue to provide care ministries for those facing specific challenges and support for local strategic partners.

And we do it all again!

When we know and enjoy Jesus, when we stumble together in our pursuit to love like Him, we will find that He continually brings new people into our family, and we will be motivated to invite one more. Our prayer is that, in the spirit of the book of Acts, good things will run wild as Jesus' followers grab hold of His mission and fan out into our city, state, and world in His name.

CALENDAR

August 2025

- **23/24** - One More Series Launch
- **24** - MSU Venue Launch
- **27** - Prayer & Worship Night (Holt Venue)

September 2025

- **6/7** - 24 Hours of Prayer (10 a.m. to 10 a.m.)
- **13/14** - Baptisms
- **17, 24** - Women's Bible Study

October 2025

- **4/5** - 24 Hours of Prayer (10 a.m. to 10 a.m.)
- **19, 26** - Men's Bible Study
- **1, 8, 15, 22, 29** - Women's Bible Study

November 2025

- **1/2** - 24 Hours of Prayer (10 a.m. to 10 a.m.)
- **2, 9, 16, 23** - Men's Bible Study
- **21** - Prayer & Worship Night (MSU Venue)

December 2025

- **6/7** - 24 Hours of Prayer (10 a.m. to 10 a.m.)
- **24** - Christmas Eve Services

January 2026

- **3/4** - 24 Hours of Prayer (10 a.m. to 10 a.m.)
- **25** - Men's Bible Study
- **14, 21, 28** - Women's Bible Study

February 2026

- **7/8** - 24 Hours of Prayer (10 a.m. to 10 a.m.)
- **1, 8, 15, 22** - Men's Bible Study
- **4, 11, 18, 25** - Women's Bible Study
- **27** - Prayer & Worship Night (Westside Venue)

March 2026

- **7/8** - 24 Hours of Prayer (10 a.m. to 10 a.m.)
- **1** - Men's Bible Study
- **11, 18, 25** - Women's Bible Study

April 2026

- **3** - Good Friday Services
- **4/5** - 24 Hours of Prayer (10 a.m. to 10 a.m.)
- **5** - Easter Services
- **5** - Baptisms
- **1, 8, 15, 22** - Women's Bible Study

May 2026

- **2/3** - 24 Hours of Prayer (10 a.m. to 10 a.m.)
- **31** - Men's Bible Study

June 2026

- **3** - Prayer & Worship Night (REO Town Venue)
- **6/7** - 24 Hours of Prayer (10 a.m. to 10 a.m.)
- **7, 14, 21, 28** - Men's Bible Study

July 2026

- **4/5** - 24 Hours of Prayer (10 a.m. to 10 a.m.)

PRAYER WALKING

Prayer Walking is one of those beautifully simple practices that can have an outsized impact. Seriously, anyone can do this; you don't need special training or a fancy prayer vocabulary. You just walk around your neighborhood or community, alone or with family and friends, and quietly pray for each home, street, or person you see. It can be as subtle as silently praying for the needs you know about or as bold as kindly asking neighbors if there's something specific you can pray about for them. Either way, you're planting seeds of grace, and you'll find this simple step of faith can profoundly change lives, including your own.

We're asking everyone in our church family to take one Prayer Walk per week. Imagine the eternal impact and the thousands of people in our community who would be prayed for and with.

Check out the Holy Here app (hollyhere.com) if you'd like to track your walks and keep notes. Visit rivchurch.com/onemore for a short video with a step-by-step guide (get it?) and tips on making the most of your time.

BIBLE READING PLANS

One-Year Bible Reading Plan

Scan this QR code for a pdf version of a one-year bible reading plan



Two-Year Bible Reading Plan

Scan this QR code for a pdf version of a two-year bible reading plan



PRAYER RESOURCES

24-Hour Prayer Wheel

Scan this QR code for a pdf version of a prayer wheel.



Daily Prayer Text Signup

Sign up to receive daily prayer reminders by text by visiting rivchurch.com/onemore.

HOW TO HAVE INTENTIONAL SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS

Jesus' instruction to make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20) is both an invitation and a promise. He invites us to join Him in leading others toward eternal life, assuring us of His presence and support.

For many people, however, initiating spiritual conversations can often feel intimidating, especially in a culture that is resistant to talking about faith. The key is intentionality coupled with genuine relationship-building. A simple way to do this is to think about moving conversations through the framework of "Good, God, Gospel."

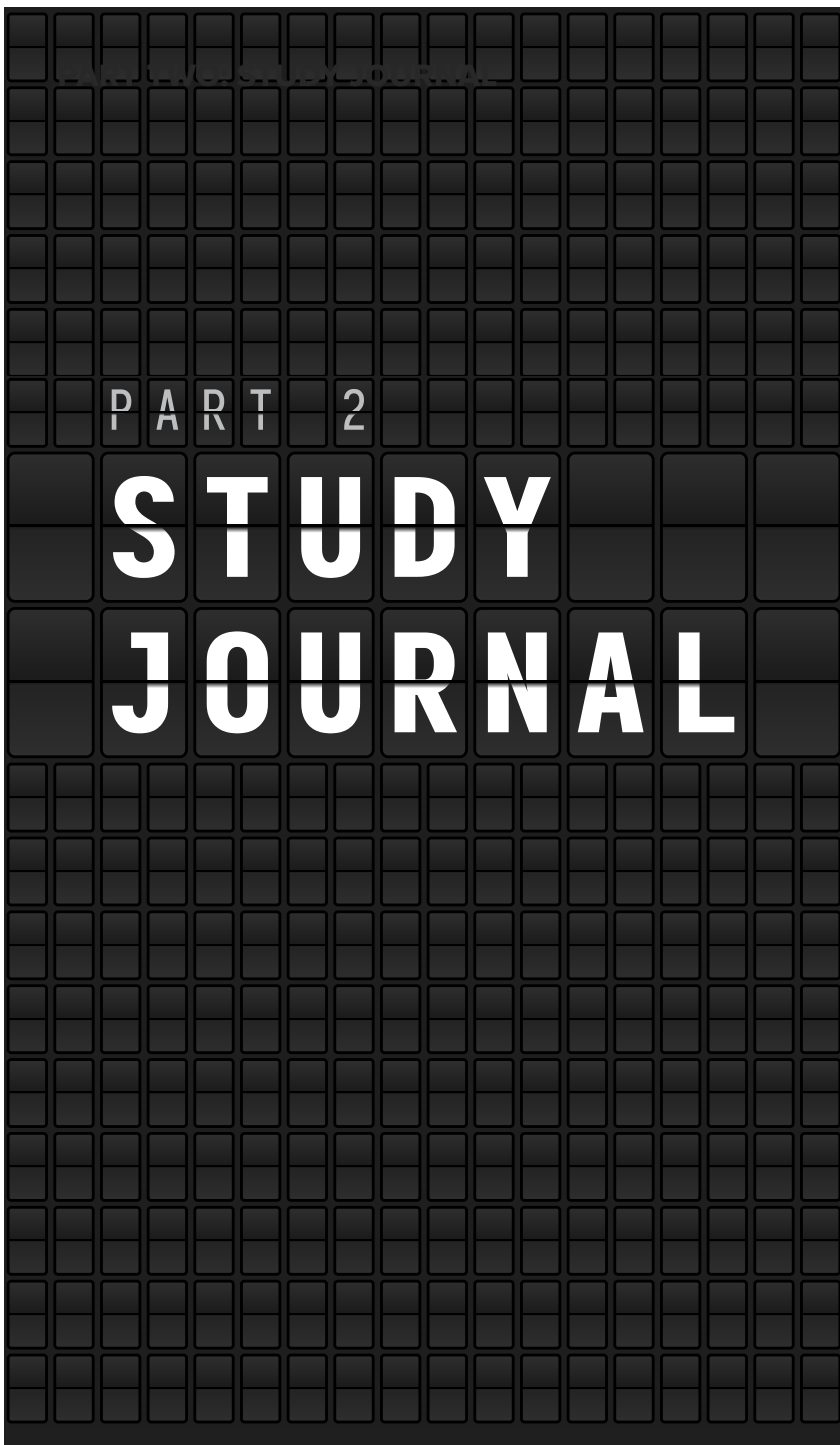
Here's what that looks like practically:

- **Good:** Begin by being open to natural, genuine conversations. You'd be surprised how far showing real interest in people's lives without immediately pushing a spiritual agenda can get you.
- **God:** Stay attentive for natural openings in conversations where spiritual topics arise, and be willing to step into these moments. An easy way to do this is to share stories about how your faith relates to similar situations and challenges.
- **Gospel:** As you share your story, it becomes easier to guide the conversation intentionally toward the Gospel, clearly sharing the transformative message of Jesus Christ.
- **Trust God with the Outcome:** Understand that your role may sometimes be just to plant or water seeds, trusting God for the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6-8).

Jesus exemplified this approach, intentionally placing Himself among those who needed Him most, earning the nickname "friend of sinners." He genuinely befriended tax collectors and sinners without ulterior motives, allowing authentic relationships to open doors for deeper spiritual truths.

It's crucial to remember people aren't projects or trophies; they're friends worth loving regardless of their response to the Gospel. Authentic friendships provide safe spaces for honest spiritual discussions. Sometimes a conversation might not progress beyond spiritual curiosity, and that's okay—trust God for growth.

Practicing intentional spiritual conversations requires stepping out of comfort zones. Engage with others naturally, remain sensitive to conversational openings, and courageously steer interactions towards Jesus. Our mission is simple yet profound: invite everyone to know and enjoy Jesus as we stumble together in our pursuit to love like Him.



INTRODUCTION

Friends,

The book of Acts is the story of how a group of young disciples, inspired by the risen Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit, devoted their lives to the singular purpose of bearing witness to Jesus “to the ends of the earth.” The initial movement was primarily carried out by a relatively small community of women and men who had been following in the footsteps of Jesus for years and were determined to make His name known to the world. Beginning in Jerusalem, they formed teams who were sent off in every direction, bringing the Gospel to Asia, Africa, Greece, and Italy, as well as to the Far East and other populated areas in the ancient world. These people were not chosen by Jesus for this task because of their vast experience, skill, or superior training. What they did bring was an intense passion, a simple plan, and an unending persistence that resulted in the rapid spread of the Gospel within the 100-150 years that followed the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

Our purpose in teaching through the book of Acts and creating this Study Guide is to inspire our community of disciples to recreate those ancient outcomes in our modern setting. We want to ignite the same passion that drove those first-century disciples. We need a clear and simple plan for our folks to embrace and execute. We are determined to persist in the call to share the truth of Jesus with the world, one person at a time. The book of Acts is the perfect platform to explore our commitments as disciples of Jesus. This Study Guide is designed, using the wisdom of God’s Word and empowered by God’s Spirit, to dig into these areas of our lives and challenge us to become more like Jesus.

To be a disciple of Jesus takes time and effort. It means we find, follow, and enjoy Jesus in the truth of His Word, the Bible. It means we go. We sacrifice. We pray. We listen. We care for people. We share Jesus. We baptize. Luke, the author of the book of Acts, said it clearly:

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:42, 46-47)

Our challenge is simple. Let’s devote ourselves fervently to Jesus, to one another, and to the world, and then trust the almighty Lord to add to our number daily those who are being saved.

For Christ,

Pastor James

August, 2025

¹I wrote the first narrative, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach ²until the day he was taken up, after he had given instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. ³After he had suffered, he also presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

⁴While he was with them, he commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the Father's promise. "Which," he said, "you have heard me speak about; ⁵for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit in a few days."

⁶So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, are you restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?"

⁷He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

⁹After he had said this, he was taken up as they were watching, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰While he was going, they were gazing into heaven, and suddenly two men in white clothes stood by them. ¹¹They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven."

THEMES: Baptism, gospel, Holy Spirit

VERSE TO REMEMBER:

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

IN COMMUNITY:

A big part of being a disciple of Jesus is helping others hear about Him. What part are you playing (or would you like to play) in bearing witness to Jesus "to the ends of the earth?"

NOTES



¹²Then they returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, which is near Jerusalem—a Sabbath day's journey away. ¹³When they arrived, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying: Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. ¹⁴They all were continually united in prayer, along with the women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

¹⁵In those days Peter stood up among the brothers and sisters—the number of people who were together was about a hundred twenty—and said, ¹⁶“Brothers and sisters, it was necessary that the Scripture be fulfilled that the Holy Spirit through the mouth of David foretold about Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. ¹⁷For he was one of our number and shared in this ministry.” ¹⁸Now this man acquired a field with his unrighteous wages. He fell headfirst, his body burst open and his intestines spilled out. ¹⁹This became known to all the residents of Jerusalem, so that in their own language that field is called Hakeldama (that is, “Field of Blood”). ²⁰“For it is written in the Book of Psalms:

**Let his dwelling become desolate; let no one live in it;
and Let someone else take his position.**

²¹“Therefore, from among the men who have accompanied us during the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us— ²²beginning from the baptism of John until the day he was taken up from us—from among these, it is necessary that one become a witness with us of his resurrection.”

²³So they proposed two: Joseph, called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. ²⁴Then they prayed, “You, Lord, know everyone’s hearts; show which of these two you have chosen ²⁵to take the place in this apostolic ministry that Judas left to go where he belongs.” ²⁶Then they cast lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias and he was added to the eleven apostles.

THEMES: Discipleship, prayer, witness

VERSE TO REMEMBER:

“They all were continually united in prayer...” (Acts 1:14a)

IN COMMUNITY:

Part of being a disciple of Jesus is unity with other followers. Are you walking in unity with others who know Jesus? What changes might you consider? How does prayer play a role?

NOTES



¹When the day of Pentecost had arrived, they were all together in one place. ²Suddenly a sound like that of a violent rushing wind came from heaven, and it filled the whole house where they were staying. ³They saw tongues like flames of fire that separated and rested on each one of them. ⁴Then they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them.

⁵Now there were Jews staying in Jerusalem, devout people from every nation under heaven. ⁶When this sound occurred, a crowd came together and was confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. ⁷They were astounded and amazed, saying, “Look, aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans?” ⁸How is it that each of us can hear them in our own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes, Elamites; those who live in Mesopotamia, in Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts), ¹¹Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the magnificent acts of God in our own tongues.” ¹²They were all astounded and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” ¹³But some sneered and said, “They’re drunk on new wine.”

¹⁴Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed to them, “Fellow Jews and all you residents of Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and pay attention to my words. ¹⁵For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it’s only nine in the morning. ¹⁶On the contrary, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷**And it will be in the last days, says God, that I will pour out my Spirit on all people; then your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. ¹⁸I will even pour out my Spirit on my servants in those days, both men and women and they will prophesy. ¹⁹I will display wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below: blood and fire and a cloud of smoke. ²⁰The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the great and glorious day of the Lord comes. ²¹Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.**

THEMES: Holy Spirit, diversity, prophesy

VERSE TO REMEMBER:

“Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (Acts 2:21)

IN COMMUNITY:

Being a disciple of Jesus means we don’t show partiality (see Romans 2:11 and James 2). Consider this diverse community of early converts. How are you being (or how can you be) intentional about building friendships and sharing Jesus with people who are not like you?

NOTES



²²"Fellow Israelites, listen to these words: This Jesus of Nazareth was a man attested to you by God with miracles, wonders, and signs that God did among you through him, just as you yourselves know. ²³Though he was delivered up according to God's determined plan and foreknowledge, you used lawless people to nail him to a cross and kill him. ²⁴God raised him up, ending the pains of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by death. ²⁵For David says of him:

I saw the Lord ever before me; because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

²⁶**Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices. Moreover, my flesh will rest in hope, ²⁷because you will not abandon me in Hades or allow your holy one to see decay. ²⁸You have revealed the paths of life to me; you will fill me with gladness in your presence.**

²⁹"Brothers and sisters, I can confidently speak to you about the patriarch David: He is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn an oath to him to seat one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹Seeing what was to come, he spoke concerning the resurrection of the Messiah: **He was not abandoned in Hades, and his flesh did not experience decay.**

³²"God has raised this Jesus; we are all witnesses of this. ³³Therefore, since he has been exalted to the right hand of God and has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, he has poured out what you both see and hear. ³⁴For it was not David who ascended into the heavens, but he himself says:

The Lord declared to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand ³⁵until I make your enemies your footstool.'

³⁶"Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."

³⁷"When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"

³⁸Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹For the promise is for you and for your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call." ⁴⁰With many other words he testified and strongly urged them, saying, "Be saved from this corrupt generation!" ⁴¹So those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand people were added to them.

THEMES: God's sovereign plan, preaching, gospel, repentance

VERSE TO REMEMBER:

"Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38)

IN COMMUNITY:

The first step toward becoming a disciple of Jesus is choosing to follow Him. Have you repented and turned from sin? Have you trusted Jesus? Been baptized? If not, perhaps today is the day! If you are already a follower of Jesus, are you walking by the Spirit?

NOTES

NOTES



⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.

⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles. ⁴⁴Now all the believers were together and held all things in common. ⁴⁵They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

THEMES: The Bible, prayer, joy, generosity, unity, gospel living, salvation

VERSE TO REMEMBER:

"They ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people." (Acts 2:46b-47a)

IN COMMUNITY:

As disciples of Jesus, our aim is to point others toward Him. Is the reputation of our community favorable? Do we live joyfully? Are we generous? How can we live in a manner that draws the watching world to Jesus?

NOTES



¹Now Peter and John were going up to the temple for the time of prayer at three in the afternoon. ²A man who was lame from birth was being carried there. He was placed each day at the temple gate called Beautiful, so that he could beg from those entering the temple. ³When he saw Peter and John about to enter the temple, he asked for money. ⁴Peter, along with John, looked straight at him and said, “Look at us.” ⁵So he turned to them, expecting to get something from them. ⁶But Peter said, “I don’t have silver or gold, but what I do have, I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!”

⁷Then, taking him by the right hand he raised him up, and at once his feet and ankles became strong. ⁸So he jumped up and started to walk, and he entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and praising God. ⁹All the people saw him walking and praising God, ¹⁰and they recognized that he was the one who used to sit and beg at the Beautiful Gate of the temple. So they were filled with awe and astonishment at what had happened to him.

¹¹While he was holding on to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astonished, ran toward them in what is called Solomon’s Colonnade. ¹²When Peter saw this, he addressed the people: “Fellow Israelites, why are you amazed at this? Why do you stare at us, as though we had made him walk by our own power or godliness?” ¹³The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our ancestors, has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and denied before Pilate, though he had decided to release him. ¹⁴You denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer released to you. ¹⁵You killed the source of life, whom God raised from the dead; we are witnesses of this. ¹⁶By faith in his name, his name has made this man strong, whom you see and know. So the faith that comes through Jesus has given him this perfect health in front of all of you.

¹⁷“And now, brothers and sisters, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your leaders also did. ¹⁸In this way God fulfilled what he had predicted through all the prophets—that his Messiah would suffer. ¹⁹Therefore repent and turn back, so that your sins may be wiped out, ²⁰that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send Jesus, who has been appointed for you as the Messiah. ²¹Heaven must receive him until the time of the restoration of all things, which God spoke about through his holy prophets from the beginning. ²²Moses said: **The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brothers. You must listen to everything he tells you.** ²³**And everyone who does not listen to that prophet will be completely cut off from the people.**

²⁴“In addition, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those after him, have also foretold these days. ²⁵You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your ancestors, saying to Abraham, **And all the families of the earth will be blessed through your offspring.** ²⁶God raised up his servant and sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your evil ways.”

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¹While they were speaking to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple police, and the Sadducees confronted them, ²because they were annoyed that they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. ³So they seized them and took them into custody until the next day since it was already evening. ⁴But many of those who heard the message believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.

⁵The next day, their rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem ⁶with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and all the members of the high-priestly family. ⁷After they had Peter and John stand before them, they began to question them: “By what power or in what name have you done this?”

⁸Then Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit and said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders: ⁹If we are being examined today about a good deed done to a disabled man, by what means he was healed, ¹⁰let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified and whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing here before you healthy. ¹¹This Jesus is

the stone rejected by you builders, which has become the cornerstone.

¹²There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved.”

¹³When they observed the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed and recognized that they had been with Jesus. ¹⁴And since they saw the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in opposition. ¹⁵ After they ordered them to leave the Sanhedrin, they conferred among themselves, ¹⁶saying, “What should we do with these men? For an obvious sign has been done through them, clear to everyone living in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. ¹⁷But so that this does not spread any further among the people, let’s threaten them against speaking to anyone in this name again.”

¹⁸So they called for them and ordered them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

¹⁹Peter and John answered them, “Whether it’s right in the sight of God for us to listen to you rather than to God, you decide; ²⁰for we are unable to stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

²¹After threatening them further, they released them. They found no way to punish them because the people were all giving glory to God over what had been done. ²²For this sign of healing had been performed on a man over forty years old.

THEMES: Boldness, resurrection, God’s power, the centrality of Christ

VERSE TO REMEMBER:

“There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

IN COMMUNITY:

What are some fears you have when it comes to telling others about Jesus? Consider the response Peter and John encountered as they boldly proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Some were “annoyed” and “threatening,” others (five thousand!) believed. As disciples of Jesus, when it comes to talking about Jesus, we must be “unable to stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

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²³After they were released, they went to their own people and reported everything the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴When they heard this, they raised their voices together to God and said, "Master, you are the one who made the heaven, the earth, and the sea, and everything in them. ²⁵You said through the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of our father David your servant:

Why do the Gentiles rage and the peoples plot futile things? ²⁶The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers assemble together against the Lord and against his Messiah.

²⁷"For, in fact, in this city both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, assembled together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, ²⁸to do whatever your hand and your will had predestined to take place. ²⁹And now, Lord, consider their threats, and grant that your servants may speak your word with all boldness, ³⁰while you stretch out your hand for healing, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." ³¹When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God boldly.

³²Now the entire group of those who believed were of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but instead they held everything in common. ³³With great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was on all of them. ³⁴For there was not a needy person among them because all those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the proceeds of what was sold, ³⁵and laid them at the apostles' feet. This was then distributed to each person as any had need.

³⁶Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus by birth, the one the apostles called Barnabas (which is translated Son of Encouragement), ³⁷sold a field he owned, brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

THEMES: Intercession, gratitude, Holy Spirit, miracles, unity, generosity

VERSE TO REMEMBER:

"When they heard this, they raised their voices together to God and said, "Master, you are the one who made the heaven, the earth, and the sea, and everything in them." (Acts 4:24)

IN COMMUNITY:

What has God done in your life, in your community, or in the world that compels you to raise your voice in praise to Him? Part of being a disciple of Jesus is developing the practice of gratitude, including taking the time to bless God for His "great grace" in our lives.

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¹But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property. ²However, he kept back part of the proceeds with his wife's knowledge and brought a portion of it and laid it at the apostles' feet.

³"Ananias," Peter asked, "why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the proceeds of the land? ⁴Wasn't it yours while you possessed it? And after it was sold, wasn't it at your disposal? Why is it that you planned this thing in your heart? You have not lied to people but to God." ⁵When he heard these words, Ananias dropped dead, and a great fear came on all who heard. ⁶The young men got up, wrapped his body, carried him out, and buried him.

⁷About three hours later, his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸"Tell me," Peter asked her, "did you sell the land for this price?"

"Yes," she said, "for that price."

⁹Then Peter said to her, "Why did you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out."

¹⁰Instantly she dropped dead at his feet. When the young men came in, they found her dead, carried her out, and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹Then great fear came on the whole church and on all who heard these things.

¹²Many signs and wonders were being done among the people through the hands of the apostles. They were all together in Solomon's Colonnade. ¹³No one else dared to join them, but the people spoke well of them. ¹⁴Believers were added to the Lord in increasing numbers—multitudes of both men and women. ¹⁵As a result, they would carry the sick out into the streets and lay them on cots and mats so that when Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on some of them. ¹⁶In addition, a multitude came together from the towns surrounding Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

THEMES: Judgement, testing God, healing, miracles

VERSE TO REMEMBER:

"You have not lied to people but to God." (Acts 5:4b)

IN COMMUNITY:

Being a disciple of Jesus means being part of a community of disciples who are accountable to God and to one another. What area(s) of your life have you been hiding from God and from those closest to you? What would it look like to shine the light of truth into those uncomfortable spaces?

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¹⁷Then the high priest rose up. He and all who were with him, who belonged to the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. ¹⁸So they arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. ¹⁹But an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail during the night, brought them out, and said, ²⁰“Go and stand in the temple, and tell the people all about this life.” ²¹Hearing this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach.

When the high priest and those who were with him arrived, they convened the Sanhedrin—the full council of the Israelites—and sent orders to the jail to have them brought. ²²But when the servants got there, they did not find them in the jail; so they returned and reported, ²³“We found the jail securely locked, with the guards standing in front of the doors, but when we opened them, we found no one inside.” ²⁴As the captain of the temple police and the chief priests heard these things, they were baffled about them, wondering what would come of this.

²⁵Someone came and reported to them, “Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple and teaching the people.” ²⁶Then the commander went with the servants and brought them in without force, because they were afraid the people might stone them. ²⁷After they brought them in, they had them stand before the Sanhedrin, and the high priest asked, ²⁸“Didn’t we strictly order you not to teach in this name? Look, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man’s blood.”

²⁹Peter and the apostles replied, “We must obey God rather than people. ³⁰The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had murdered by hanging him on a tree. ³¹God exalted this man to his right hand as ruler and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³²We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.”

³³When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. ³⁴But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law who was respected by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered the men to be taken outside for a little while. ³⁵He said to them, “Men of Israel, be careful about what you’re about to do to these men. ³⁶Some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a group of about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, and all his followers were dispersed and came to nothing. ³⁷After this man, Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and attracted a following. He also perished, and all his followers were scattered. ³⁸So in the present case, I tell you, stay away from these men and leave them alone. For if this plan or this work is of human origin, it will fail; ³⁹but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You may even be found fighting against God.” They were persuaded by him. ⁴⁰After they called in the apostles and had them flogged, they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus and released them. ⁴¹Then they went out from the presence of the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to be treated shamefully on behalf of the Name. ⁴²Every day in the temple, and in various homes, they continued teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.

NOTES



In those days, as the disciples were increasing in number, there arose a complaint by the Hellenistic Jews against the Hebraic Jews that their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution. ²The Twelve summoned the whole company of the disciples and said, "It would not be right for us to give up preaching the word of God to wait on tables. ³Brothers and sisters, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom, whom we can appoint to this duty. ⁴But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." ⁵This proposal pleased the whole company. So they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a convert from Antioch. ⁶They had them stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

⁷So the word of God spread, the disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly in number, and a large group of priests became obedient to the faith.

⁸Now Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people. ⁹Opposition arose, however, from some members of the Freedmen's Synagogue, composed of both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, and they began to argue with Stephen. ¹⁰But they were unable to stand up against his wisdom and the Spirit by whom he was speaking.

¹¹Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, "We heard him speaking blasphemous words against Moses and God." ¹²They stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; so they came, seized him, and took him to the Sanhedrin. ¹³They also presented false witnesses who said, "This man never stops speaking against this holy place and the law. ¹⁴For we heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs that Moses handed down to us." ¹⁵And all who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at him and saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

THEMES: Service, deacons, multiplication, false accusations

VERSE TO REMEMBER:

"So the word of God spread, the disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly in number, and a large group of priests became obedient to the faith." (Acts 6:7)

IN COMMUNITY:

As the community of disciples grew, they necessarily began to establish a variety of roles for different disciples to play. Why type of work do you think best suits you as you aim to serve and lead in your faith community? What are some steps you can take to explore and identify a role that fits how God has wired you and helps others grow toward Jesus?

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"Are these things true?" the high priest asked.

²"Brothers and fathers," he replied, "listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he settled in Haran, ³and said to him: **Leave your country and relatives, and come to the land that I will show you.**

⁴"Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. From there, after his father died, God had him move to this land in which you are now living. ⁵He didn't give him an inheritance in it—not even a foot of ground—but he promised to give it to him as a possession, and to his descendants after him, even though he was childless. ⁶God spoke in this way: His **descendants would be strangers in a foreign country, and they would enslave and oppress them for four hundred years.** ⁷**I will judge the nation that they will serve as slaves, God said. After this, they will come out and worship me in this place.** ⁸And so he gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision. After this, he fathered Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day. Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob became the father of the twelve patriarchs.

⁹"The patriarchs became jealous of Joseph and sold him into Egypt, but God was with him ¹⁰and rescued him out of all his troubles. He gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who appointed him ruler over Egypt and over his whole household. ¹¹Now a famine and great suffering came over all of Egypt and Canaan, and our ancestors could find no food. ¹²When Jacob heard there was grain in Egypt, he sent our ancestors there the first time. ¹³The second time, Joseph revealed himself to his brothers, and Joseph's family became known to Pharaoh. ¹⁴Joseph invited his father Jacob and all his relatives, seventy-five people in all, ¹⁵and Jacob went down to Egypt. He and our ancestors died there, ¹⁶were carried back to Shechem, and were placed in the tomb that Abraham had bought for a sum of silver from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.

¹⁷"As the time was approaching to fulfill the promise that God had made to Abraham, the people flourished and multiplied in Egypt ¹⁸until a different king who did not know Joseph ruled over Egypt. ¹⁹He dealt deceitfully with our race and oppressed our ancestors by making them abandon their infants outside so that they wouldn't survive. ²⁰At this time Moses was born, and he was beautiful in God's sight. He was cared for in his father's home for three months. ²¹When he was put outside, Pharaoh's daughter adopted and raised him as her own son. ²²So Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in his speech and actions.

²³"When he was forty years old, he decided to visit his own people, the Israelites.

²⁴"When he saw one of them being mistreated, he came to his rescue and avenged the oppressed man by striking down the Egyptian. ²⁵He assumed his people would understand that God would give them deliverance through him, but they did not understand. ²⁶The next day he showed up while they were fighting and tried to reconcile them peacefully, saying, 'Men, you are brothers. Why are you mistreating each other?'

²⁷“But the one who was mistreating his neighbor pushed Moses aside, saying: **Who appointed you a ruler and a judge over us?** ²⁸**Do you want to kill me, the same way you killed the Egyptian yesterday?**

²⁹“When he heard this, Moses fled and became an exile in the land of Midian, where he became the father of two sons. ³⁰After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in the flame of a burning bush. ³¹When Moses saw it, he was amazed at the sight. As he was approaching to look at it, the voice of the Lord came: ³²**I am the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob.** Moses began to tremble and did not dare to look.

³³“The Lord said to him: **Take off the sandals from your feet, because the place where you are standing is holy ground.** ³⁴**I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt; I have heard their groaning and have come down to set them free. And now, come, I will send you to Egypt.** ³⁵“This Moses, whom they rejected when they said, **Who appointed you a ruler and a judge?**—this one God sent as a ruler and a deliverer through the angel who appeared to him in the bush. ³⁶This man led them out and performed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness for forty years.

³⁷“This is the Moses who said to the Israelites: **God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brothers.** ³⁸He is the one who was in the assembly in the wilderness, with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our ancestors. He received living oracles to give to us. ³⁹Our ancestors were unwilling to obey him. Instead, they pushed him aside, and in their hearts turned back to Egypt. ⁴⁰They told Aaron: **Make us gods who will go before us. As for this Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we don't know what's happened to him.** ⁴¹They even made a calf in those days, offered sacrifice to the idol, and were celebrating what their hands had made. ⁴²God turned away and gave them up to worship the stars of heaven, as it is written in the book of the prophets:

House of Israel, did you bring me offerings and sacrifices for forty years in the wilderness? ⁴³You took up the tent of Moloch and the star of your god Rephan, the images that you made to worship. So I will send you into exile beyond Babylon.

⁴⁴“Our ancestors had the tabernacle of the testimony in the wilderness, just as he who spoke to Moses commanded him to make it according to the pattern he had seen. ⁴⁵Our ancestors in turn received it and with Joshua brought it in when they dispossessed the nations that God drove out before them, until the days of David. ⁴⁶He found favor in God's sight and asked that he might provide a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. ⁴⁷It was Solomon, rather, who built him a house, ⁴⁸but the Most High does not dwell in sanctuaries made with hands, as the prophet says:

⁴⁹Heaven is my throne, and the earth my footstool. What sort of house will you build for me? says the Lord, or what will be my resting place? ⁵⁰Did not my hand make all these things?

⁵¹“You stiff-necked people with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are always resisting the Holy Spirit. As your ancestors did, you do also. ⁵²Which of the prophets

did your ancestors not persecute? They even killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become. ⁵³You received the law under the direction of angels and yet have not kept it."

⁵⁴When they heard these things, they were enraged and gnashed their teeth at him.

⁵⁵Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven. He saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶He said, "Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"

⁵⁷They yelled at the top of their voices, covered their ears, and together rushed against him. ⁵⁸They dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. And the witnesses laid their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹While they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" ⁶⁰He knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" And after saying this, he fell asleep.

THEMES: The Old Testament points to Jesus, boldness, martyrs, forgiveness

VERSE TO REMEMBER:

“He knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them!’” (Acts 7:60a)

IN COMMUNITY:

As disciples of Jesus we are called to practice forgiveness. In Ephesians 4 it says we are to “forgive one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.” Who do you have an attitude of unforgiveness toward? Take some time to pray for God to help you forgive as Jesus has forgiven you.

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Saul agreed with putting him to death.

On that day a severe persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout the land of Judea and Samaria. ²Devout men buried Stephen and mourned deeply over him. ³Saul, however, was ravaging the church. He would enter house after house, drag off men and women, and put them in prison.

⁴So those who were scattered went on their way preaching the word. ⁵Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah to them. ⁶The crowds were all paying attention to what Philip said, as they listened and saw the signs he was performing. ⁷For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed, and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. ⁸So there was great joy in that city.

⁹A man named Simon had previously practiced sorcery in that city and amazed the Samaritan people, while claiming to be somebody great. ¹⁰They all paid attention to him, from the least of them to the greatest, and they said, "This man is called the Great Power of God." ¹¹They were attentive to him because he had amazed them with his sorceries for a long time. ¹²But when they believed Philip, as he proclaimed the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. ¹³Even Simon himself believed. And after he was baptized, he followed Philip everywhere and was amazed as he observed the signs and great miracles that were being performed.

¹⁴When the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. ¹⁵After they went down there, they prayed for them so that the Samaritans might receive the Holy Spirit because he had not yet come down on any of them. ¹⁶(They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) ¹⁷Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

¹⁸When Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, ¹⁹saying, "Give me this power also so that anyone I lay hands on may receive the Holy Spirit."

²⁰But Peter told him, "May your silver be destroyed with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! ²¹You have no part or share in this matter, because your heart is not right before God. ²²Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, your heart's intent may be forgiven. ²³For I see you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by wickedness."

²⁴"Pray to the Lord for me," Simon replied, "so that nothing you have said may happen to me."

²⁵So, after they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they traveled back to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

THEMES: Grief and loss, joy, baptism, Holy Spirit, witness

VERSE TO REMEMBER:

“Saul agreed with putting him to death.” (Acts 8:1)

IN COMMUNITY:

As disciples of Jesus, we are called to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. The Samaritans were the sworn enemy of the Jews, and yet the disciples, all of whom grew up in the Jewish tradition, rejoice in the salvation of the Samaritan people and began praying for them. Consider your own faith story. Was there a time when you were far from God? How did God respond? Who can you pray for and share the Gospel with that might be an unlikely candidate to consider Jesus?

NOTES

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An angel of the Lord spoke to Philip: "Get up and go south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is the desert road.).²⁷ So he got up and went. There was an Ethiopian man, a eunuch and high official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to worship in Jerusalem²⁸ and was sitting in his chariot on his way home, reading the prophet Isaiah aloud.

²⁹The Spirit told Philip, "Go and join that chariot."

³⁰When Philip ran up to it, he heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you're reading?"

³¹"How can I," he said, "unless someone guides me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. ³²Now the Scripture passage he was reading was this:

He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb is silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth. ³³In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who will describe his generation? For his life is taken from the earth.

³⁴The eunuch said to Philip, "I ask you, who is the prophet saying this about—himself or someone else?" ³⁵Philip proceeded to tell him the good news about Jesus, beginning with that Scripture.

³⁶As they were traveling down the road, they came to some water. The eunuch said, "Look, there's water. What would keep me from being baptized?" ³⁸So he ordered the chariot to stop, and both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. ³⁹When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him any longer but went on his way rejoicing.

⁴⁰Philip appeared in Azotus, and he was traveling and preaching the gospel in all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

THEMES: Angels, evangelism, no partiality, baptism,
Old Testament points to Jesus, miracles

VERSE TO REMEMBER:

"What would keep me from being baptized?" (Acts 8:37)

IN COMMUNITY:

It's interesting to note that each of the early disciples we've encountered in the book of Acts was actively telling others about Jesus. When was the last time you had a chance to share the gospel with someone? What was the result? What prevents you from doing this more often?

NOTES



Now Saul was still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord. He went to the high priest ²and requested letters from him to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any men or women who belonged to the Way, he might bring them as prisoners to Jerusalem. ³As he traveled and was nearing Damascus, a light from heaven suddenly flashed around him. ⁴Falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”

⁵“Who are you, Lord?” Saul said.

“I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting,” he replied. ⁶“But get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

⁷The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the sound but seeing no one. ⁸Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing. So they took him by the hand and led him into Damascus. ⁹He was unable to see for three days and did not eat or drink.

¹⁰There was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” “Here I am, Lord,” he replied,

¹¹“Get up and go to the street called Straight,” the Lord said to him, “to the house of Judas, and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, since he is praying there. ¹²In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and placing his hands on him so that he may regain his sight.” ¹³“Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard from many people about this man, how much harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. ¹⁴And he has authority here from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.”

¹⁵But the Lord said to him, “Go, for this man is my chosen instrument to take my name to Gentiles, kings, and Israelites. ¹⁶I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”

¹⁷Ananias went and entered the house. He placed his hands on him and said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road you were traveling, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

¹⁸At once something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized. ¹⁹And after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Saul was with the disciples in Damascus for some time. ²⁰Immediately he began proclaiming Jesus in the synagogues: “He is the Son of God.”

²¹All who heard him were astounded and said, “Isn’t this the man in Jerusalem who was causing havoc for those who called on this name and came here for the purpose of taking them as prisoners to the chief priests?”

²²But Saul grew stronger and kept confounding the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah.

²³After many days had passed, the Jews conspired to kill him, ²⁴but Saul learned of their plot. So they were watching the gates day and night intending to kill him, ²⁵but his disciples took him by night and lowered him in a large basket through an opening in the wall.

³¹So the church throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.

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As Peter was traveling from place to place, he also came down to the saints who lived in Lydda. ³³There he found a man named Aeneas, who was paralyzed and had been bedridden for eight years. ³⁴Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and make your bed," and immediately he got up. ³⁵So all who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

³⁶In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which is translated Dorcas). She was always doing good works and acts of charity. ³⁷About that time she became sick and died. After washing her, they placed her in a room upstairs. ³⁸Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples heard that Peter was there and sent two men to him who urged him, "Don't delay in coming with us." ³⁹Peter got up and went with them. When he arrived, they led him to the room upstairs. And all the widows approached him, weeping and showing him the robes and clothes that Dorcas had made while she was with them. ⁴⁰Peter sent them all out of the room. He knelt down, prayed, and turning toward the body said, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, saw Peter, and sat up. ⁴¹He gave her his hand and helped her stand up. He called the saints and widows and presented her alive. ⁴²This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. ⁴³Peter stayed for some time in Joppa with Simon, a leather tanner.

¹There was a man in Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment. ²He was a devout man and feared God along with his whole household. He did many charitable deeds for the Jewish people and always prayed to God. ³About three in the afternoon he distinctly saw in a vision an angel of God who came in and said to him, "Cornelius."

⁴Staring at him in awe, he said, "What is it, Lord?"

The angel told him, "Your prayers and your acts of charity have ascended as a memorial offering before God. ⁵Now send men to Joppa and call for Simon, who is also named Peter. ⁶He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea."

⁷When the angel who spoke to him had gone, he called two of his household servants and a devout soldier, who was one of those who attended him. ⁸After explaining everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

THEMES: Miracles, resurrection, ministry, angels, calling

VERSE TO REMEMBER:

"This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord." (Acts 9:42)

IN COMMUNITY:

It can be tempting to think it was "easier" for the first-century disciples to have faith and help others get saved because of visible miracles like the ones described in this passage. As disciples of Jesus, we must remember that any time a person gets saved, it's a miracle from God. How did the Lord work miraculously in your own journey to salvation? How have you seen Him do this in the lives of others?

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The next day, as they were traveling and nearing the city, Peter went up to pray on the roof about noon. ¹⁰He became hungry and wanted to eat, but while they were preparing something, he fell into a trance. ¹¹He saw heaven opened and an object that resembled a large sheet coming down, being lowered by its four corners to the earth. ¹²In it were all the four-footed animals and reptiles of the earth, and the birds of the sky. ¹³A voice said to him, “Get up, Peter; kill and eat.”

¹⁴“No, Lord!” Peter said. “For I have never eaten anything impure and ritually unclean.”

¹⁵Again, a second time, the voice said to him, “What God has made clean, do not call impure.” ¹⁶This happened three times, and suddenly the object was taken up into heaven.

¹⁷While Peter was deeply perplexed about what the vision he had seen might mean, right away the men who had been sent by Cornelius, having asked directions to Simon’s house, stood at the gate. ¹⁸They called out, asking if Simon, who was also named Peter, was lodging there.

¹⁹While Peter was thinking about the vision, the Spirit told him, “Three men are here looking for you. ²⁰Get up, go downstairs, and go with them with no doubts at all, because I have sent them.”

²¹Then Peter went down to the men and said, “Here I am, the one you’re looking for. What is the reason you’re here?”

²²They said, “Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who has a good reputation with the whole Jewish nation, was divinely directed by a holy angel to call you to his house and to hear a message from you.” ²³Peter then invited them in and gave them lodging.

The next day he got up and set out with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa went with him. ²⁴The following day he entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. ²⁵When Peter entered, Cornelius met him, fell at his feet, and worshiped him.

²⁶But Peter lifted him up and said, “Stand up. I myself am also a man.” ²⁷While talking with him, he went in and found a large gathering of people. ²⁸Peter said to them, “You know it’s forbidden for a Jewish man to associate with or visit a foreigner, but God has shown me that I must not call any person impure or unclean. ²⁹That’s why I came without any objection when I was sent for. So may I ask why you sent for me?”

³⁰Cornelius replied, “Four days ago at this hour, at three in the afternoon, I was praying in my house. Just then a man in dazzling clothing stood before me ³¹and said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your acts of charity have been remembered in God’s sight. ³²Therefore send someone to Joppa and invite Simon here, who is also named Peter. He is lodging in Simon the tanner’s house by the sea.’ ³³So I immediately sent for you, and it was good of you to come. So now we are all in the presence of God to hear everything you have been commanded by the Lord.”

³⁴Peter began to speak: “Now I truly understand that God doesn’t show favoritism,
³⁵but in every nation the person who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶He sent the message to the Israelites, proclaiming the good news of peace through Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. ³⁷You know the events that took place throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John preached: ³⁸how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how he went about doing good and healing all who were under the tyranny of the devil, because God was with him. ³⁹We ourselves are witnesses of everything he did in both the Judean country and in Jerusalem, and yet they killed him by hanging him on a tree. ⁴⁰God raised up this man on the third day and caused him to be seen, ⁴¹not by all the people, but by us whom God appointed as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴²He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be the judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³All the prophets testify about him that through his name everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins.”

⁴⁴While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came down on all those who heard the message. ⁴⁵The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. ⁴⁶For they heard them speaking in tongues and declaring the greatness of God.

Then Peter responded, ⁴⁷“Can anyone withhold water and prevent these people from being baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” ⁴⁸He commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay for a few days.

¹The apostles and the brothers and sisters who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. ²When Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, ³saying, “You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.”

⁴Peter began to explain to them step by step, ⁵“I was in the town of Joppa praying, and I saw, in a trance, an object that resembled a large sheet coming down, being lowered by its four corners from heaven, and it came to me. ⁶When I looked closely and considered it, I saw the four-footed animals of the earth, the wild beasts, the reptiles, and the birds of the sky. ⁷I also heard a voice telling me, ‘Get up, Peter; kill and eat.’

⁸“‘No, Lord!’ I said. ‘For nothing impure or ritually unclean has ever entered my mouth.’ ⁹But a voice answered from heaven a second time, ‘What God has made clean, you must not call impure.’

¹⁰“Now this happened three times, and everything was drawn up again into heaven.

¹¹At that very moment, three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea arrived at the house where we were. ¹²The Spirit told me to accompany them with no doubts at all. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we went into the man’s house. ¹³He reported to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, ‘Send to Joppa, and call for Simon, who is also named Peter. ¹⁴He will speak a message to you by which you and all your household will be saved.’

¹⁵“As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came down on them, just as on us at the beginning. ¹⁶I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, ‘John baptized with

¹⁸When they heard this they became silent. And they glorified God, saying, “So then, God has given repentance resulting in life even to the Gentiles.”

VERSE TO REMEMBER:

IN COMMUNITY:

Have you ever been convinced your way or your idea was the correct one, only to find out you were wrong? As disciples of Jesus, it's important to develop the practice of humility in community. Notice how the testimony and encouragement of the friends of Cornelius lead to a drastic change in Peter's mindset. What preferences or ideas might you be asked to lay down in order for God to use you to advance the Gospel?

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Now those who had been scattered as a result of the persecution that started because of Stephen made their way as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. ²⁰But there were some of them, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, proclaiming the good news about the Lord Jesus. ²¹The Lord's hand was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. ²²News about them reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to travel as far as Antioch. ²³When he arrived and saw the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged all of them to remain true to the Lord with devoted hearts, ²⁴for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And large numbers of people were added to the Lord.

²⁵Then he went to Tarsus to search for Saul, ²⁶and when he found him he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught large numbers. The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch.

²⁷In those days some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸One of them, named Agabus, stood up and predicted by the Spirit that there would be a severe famine throughout the Roman world. This took place during the reign of Claudius. ²⁹Each of the disciples, according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brothers and sisters who lived in Judea. ³⁰They did this, sending it to the elders by means of Barnabas and Saul.

¹About that time King Herod violently attacked some who belonged to the church, ²and he executed James, John's brother, with the sword. ³When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter too, during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. ⁴After the arrest, he put him in prison and assigned four squads of four soldiers each to guard him, intending to bring him out to the people after the Passover. ⁵So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was praying fervently to God for him.

⁶When Herod was about to bring him out for trial, that very night Peter, bound with two chains, was sleeping between two soldiers, while the sentries in front of the door guarded the prison. ⁷Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared, and a light shone in the cell. Striking Peter on the side, he woke him up and said, "Quick, get up!" And the chains fell off his wrists. ⁸"Get dressed," the angel told him, "and put on your sandals." And he did. "Wrap your cloak around you," he told him, "and follow me." ⁹So he went out and followed, and he did not know that what the angel did was really happening, but he thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰After they passed the first and second guards, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened to them by itself. They went outside and passed one street, and suddenly the angel left him.

¹¹When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's grasp and from all that the Jewish people expected." ¹²As soon as he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was called Mark, where many had assembled and were praying. ¹³He knocked at the door of the outer gate, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer. ¹⁴She recognized Peter's voice, and because of her joy, she did not open the gate but ran in and announced that Peter was standing at the outer gate.

¹⁵“You’re out of your mind!” they told her. But she kept insisting that it was true, and they said, “It’s his angel.” ¹⁶Peter, however, kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were amazed.

¹⁷Motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. “Tell these things to James and the brothers,” he said, and he left and went to another place.

¹⁸At daylight, there was a great commotion among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter. ¹⁹After Herod had searched and did not find him, he interrogated the guards and ordered their execution. Then Herod went down from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there.

²⁰Herod had been very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon. Together they presented themselves before him. After winning over Blastus, who was in charge of the king’s bedroom, they asked for peace, because their country was supplied with food from the king’s country. ²¹On an appointed day, dressed in royal robes and seated on the throne, Herod delivered a speech to them. ²²The assembled people began to shout, “It’s the voice of a god and not of a man!” ²³At once an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give the glory to God, and he was eaten by worms and died.

²⁴But the word of God spread and multiplied. ²⁵After they had completed their relief mission, Barnabas and Saul returned to Jerusalem, taking along John who was called Mark.

THEMES: God’s sovereign plan, generosity, evil people, angels, gospel multiplication

VERSE TO REMEMBER:

“Each of the disciples, according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brothers and sisters who lived in Judea.” (Acts 11:29)

IN COMMUNITY:

What has been your experience with generosity? Have you felt obligated to give, or have you been able to give freely? Notice that the early disciples were determined to provide funding to support gospel efforts. When financial need arose, each disciple made an assessment of their own capacity to give and then made their offering.

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Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen, a close friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

²As they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” ³Then after they had fasted, prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them off.

⁴So being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. ⁵Arriving in Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. They also had John as their assistant. ⁶When they had traveled the whole island as far as Paphos, they came across a sorcerer, a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus. ⁷He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man summoned Barnabas and Saul and wanted to hear the word of God. ⁸But Elymas the sorcerer (that is the meaning of his name) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul away from the faith.

⁹But Saul—also called Paul—filled with the Holy Spirit, stared straight at Elymas ¹⁰and said, “You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery, you son of the devil and enemy of all that is right. Won’t you ever stop perverting the straight paths of the Lord? ¹¹Now, look, the Lord’s hand is against you. You are going to be blind, and will not see the sun for a time.” Immediately a mist and darkness fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand.

¹²Then, when he saw what happened, the proconsul believed, because he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

¹³Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia, but John left them and went back to Jerusalem. ¹⁴They continued their journey from Perga and reached Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. ¹⁵After the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the leaders of the synagogue sent word to them, saying, “Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, you can speak.”

¹⁶Paul stood up and motioned with his hand and said, “Fellow Israelites, and you who fear God, listen! ¹⁷The God of this people Israel chose our ancestors, made the people prosper during their stay in the land of Egypt, and led them out of it with a mighty arm. ¹⁸And for about forty years he put up with them in the wilderness; ¹⁹and after destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance. ²⁰This all took about ⁴⁵⁰ years. After this, he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. ²¹Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. ²²After removing him, he raised up David as their king and testified about him, ‘**I have found David** the son of Jesse to be **a man after my own heart**, who will carry out all my will.’

²³“From this man’s descendants, as he promised, God brought to Israel the Savior, Jesus. ²⁴Before his coming to public attention, John had previously proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. ²⁵Now as John was completing his mission, he said, ‘Who do you think I am? I am not the one. But one is coming after me,

and I am not worthy to untie the sandals on his feet.’

²⁶“Brothers and sisters, children of Abraham’s race, and those among you who fear God, it is to us that the word of this salvation has been sent. ²⁷Since the residents of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize him or the sayings of the prophets that are read every Sabbath, they have fulfilled their words by condemning him. ²⁸Though they found no grounds for the death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him killed. ²⁹When they had carried out all that had been written about him, they took him down from the tree and put him in a tomb. ³⁰But God raised him from the dead, ³¹and he appeared for many days to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. ³²And we ourselves proclaim to you the good news of the promise that was made to our ancestors. ³³God has fulfilled this for us, their children, by raising up Jesus, as it is written in the second Psalm:

You are my Son; today I have become your Father.

³⁴As to his raising him from the dead, never to return to decay, he has spoken in this way, **I will give you the holy and sure promises of David.** ³⁵Therefore he also says in another passage, **You will not let your Holy One see decay.** ³⁶For David, after serving God’s purpose in his own generation, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and decayed, ³⁷but the one God raised up did not decay. ³⁸Therefore, let it be known to you, brothers and sisters, that through this man forgiveness of sins is being proclaimed to you. ³⁹Everyone who believes is justified through him from everything that you could not be justified from through the law of Moses. ⁴⁰So beware that what is said in the prophets does not happen to you:

⁴¹Look, you scoffers, marvel and vanish away, because I am doing a work in your days, a work that you will never believe, even if someone were to explain it to you.”

⁴²As they were leaving, the people urged them to speak about these matters the following Sabbath. ⁴³After the synagogue had been dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who were speaking with them and urging them to continue in the grace of God.

⁴⁴The following Sabbath almost the whole town assembled to hear the word of the Lord. ⁴⁵But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what Paul was saying, insulting him.

⁴⁶Paul and Barnabas boldly replied, “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first. Since you reject it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, we are turning to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷For this is what the Lord has commanded us: **I have made you a light for the Gentiles to bring salvation to the ends of the earth.”**

⁴⁸When the Gentiles heard this, they rejoiced and honored the word of the Lord, and all who had been appointed to eternal life believed. ⁴⁹The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. ⁵⁰But the Jews incited the prominent God-fearing women and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas and expelled them from their district. ⁵¹But Paul and Barnabas shook the dust off their feet against them and went to Iconium. ⁵²And the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

THEMES: Community on mission, evil spirits, Old Testament points to Jesus, joyful obedience

VERSE TO REMEMBER:

“From this man’s descendants, as he promised, God brought to Israel the Savior, Jesus.” (Acts 13:23)

IN COMMUNITY:

As disciples of Jesus, we're never alone as we aim to spread the Gospel. Paul and Barnabus were prayed for and encouraged as they left for a very difficult missionary journey, and they went together. Who are some people who have partnered with you and encouraged you in your faith and mission?

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In Iconium they entered the Jewish synagogue, as usual, and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed. ²But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. ³So they stayed there a long time and spoke boldly for the Lord, who testified to the message of his grace by enabling them to do signs and wonders. ⁴But the people of the city were divided, some siding with the Jews and others with the apostles. ⁵When an attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to mistreat and stone them, ⁶they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian towns of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding countryside. ⁷There they continued preaching the gospel.

⁸In Lystra a man was sitting who was without strength in his feet, had never walked, and had been lame from birth. ⁹He listened as Paul spoke. After looking directly at him and seeing that he had faith to be healed, ¹⁰Paul said in a loud voice, "Stand up on your feet!" And he jumped up and began to walk around.

¹¹When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they shouted, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" ¹²Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. ¹³The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the town, brought bulls and wreaths to the gates because he intended, with the crowds, to offer sacrifice.

¹⁴The apostles Barnabas and Paul tore their robes when they heard this and rushed into the crowd, shouting, ¹⁵"People! Why are you doing these things? We are people also, just like you, and we are proclaiming good news to you, that you turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and everything in them. ¹⁶In past generations he allowed all the nations to go their own way, ¹⁷although he did not leave himself without a witness, since he did what is good by giving you rain from heaven and fruitful seasons and filling you with food and your hearts with joy." ¹⁸Even though they said these things, they barely stopped the crowds from sacrificing to them.

¹⁹Some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and when they won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, thinking he was dead. ²⁰After the disciples gathered around him, he got up and went into the town. The next day he left with Barnabas for Derbe.

²¹After they had preached the gospel in that town and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, to Iconium, and to Antioch, ²²strengthening the disciples by encouraging them to continue in the faith and by telling them, "It is necessary to go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God." ²³When they had appointed elders for them in every church and prayed with fasting, they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

²⁴They passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. ²⁵After they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. ²⁶From there they sailed back to Antioch where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work they had now

completed.²⁷ After they arrived and gathered the church together, they reported everything God had done with them and that he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.²⁸ And they spent a considerable time with the disciples.

THEMES: Boldness, persistence, cultural idols, encouragement, leadership development

VERSE TO REMEMBER:

“When they had appointed elders for them in every church and prayed with fasting, they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.” (Acts 14:23)

IN COMMUNITY:

One of the key factors in a growing community of disciples is strong leadership. Once the Gospel began to spread in various Asian cities, Paul and Barnabas were committed to developing elder teams in each church to facilitate the discipleship process. Take some time to pray for and/or encourage the ministers and elders who have been tasked with leading the way in your church community.

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Some men came down from Judea and began to teach the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom prescribed by Moses, you cannot be saved.”

²After Paul and Barnabas had engaged them in serious argument and debate, Paul and Barnabas and some others were appointed to go up to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem about this issue. ³When they had been sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and they brought great joy to all the brothers and sisters.

⁴When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church, the apostles, and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. ⁵But some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, “It is necessary to circumcise them and to command them to keep the law of Moses.”

⁶The apostles and the elders gathered to consider this matter. ⁷After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brothers, you are aware that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the gospel message and believe. ⁸And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he also did to us. ⁹He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. ¹⁰Now then, why are you testing God by putting a yoke on the disciples’ necks that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? ¹¹On the contrary, we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus in the same way they are.”

¹²The whole assembly became silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul describe all the signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. ¹³After they stopped speaking, James responded, “Brothers, listen to me. ¹⁴Simeon has reported how God first intervened to take from the Gentiles a people for his name. ¹⁵And the words of the prophets agree with this, as it is written:

¹⁶After these things I will return and rebuild David’s fallen tent. I will rebuild its ruins and set it up again, ¹⁷so that the rest of humanity may seek the Lord—even all the Gentiles who are called by my name—declares the Lord who makes these things ¹⁸known from long ago.

¹⁹Therefore, in my judgment, we should not cause difficulties for those among the Gentiles who turn to God, ²⁰but instead we should write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from eating anything that has been strangled, and from blood. ²¹For since ancient times, Moses has had those who proclaim him in every city, and every Sabbath day he is read aloud in the synagogues.”

²²Then the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, decided to select men who were among them and to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas: Judas, called Barsabbas, and Silas, both leading men among the brothers. ²³They wrote: “From the apostles and the elders, your brothers, To the brothers and sisters among the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings. ²⁴Since we have heard that some without our authorization went out from us and troubled you with their words and unsettled your

³⁰So they were sent off and went down to Antioch, and after gathering the assembly, they delivered the letter. ³¹When they read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement. ³²Both Judas and Silas, who were also prophets themselves, encouraged the brothers and sisters and strengthened them with a long message. ³³After spending some time there, they were sent back in peace by the brothers and sisters to those who had sent them. ³⁵But Paul and Barnabas, along with many others, remained in Antioch, teaching and proclaiming the word of the Lord.

VERSE TO REMEMBER:

IN COMMUNITY:

How do you handle conflict that arises from differing perspectives? There was a huge disagreement among the disciples in the early church regarding the role of the Jewish law and tradition in the lives of the growing number of Gentile converts. As disciples of Jesus it's important to rely on God's Word, wise leadership, and humble discussion and processes in order to maintain unity in the face of these matters.

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After some time had passed, Paul said to Barnabas, "Let's go back and visit the brothers and sisters in every town where we have preached the word of the Lord and see how they're doing." ³⁷Barnabas wanted to take along John who was called Mark. ³⁸But Paul insisted that they should not take along this man who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone on with them to the work. ³⁹They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed off to Cyprus. ⁴⁰But Paul chose Silas and departed, after being commended by the brothers and sisters to the grace.

¹Paul went on to Derbe and Lystra, where there was a disciple named Timothy, the son of a believing Jewish woman, but his father was a Greek. ²The brothers and sisters at Lystra and Iconium spoke highly of him. ³Paul wanted Timothy to go with him; so he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, since they all knew that his father was a Greek. ⁴As they traveled through the towns, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem for the people to observe. ⁵So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.

⁶They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia; they had been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. ⁷When they came to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. ⁸Passing by Mysia they went down to Troas. ⁹During the night Paul had a vision in which a Macedonian man was standing and pleading with him, "Cross over to Macedonia and help us!" ¹⁰After he had seen the vision, we immediately made efforts to set out for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

¹¹From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, the next day to Neapolis, ¹²and from there to Philippi, a Roman colony and a leading city of the district of Macedonia. We stayed in that city for several days. ¹³On the Sabbath day we went outside the city gate by the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and spoke to the women gathered there. ¹⁴A God-fearing woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, was listening. The Lord opened her heart to respond to what Paul was saying. ¹⁵After she and her household were baptized, she urged us, "If you consider me a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

¹⁶Once, as we were on our way to prayer, a slave girl met us who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She made a large profit for her owners by fortune-telling. ¹⁷As she followed Paul and us she cried out, "These men, who are proclaiming to you a way of salvation, are the servants of the Most High God." ¹⁸She did this for many days.

Paul was greatly annoyed. Turning to the spirit, he said, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out right away.

¹⁹When her owners realized that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities. ²⁰Bringing them before the chief magistrates, they said, "These men are seriously disturbing our city. They are Jews ²¹and are promoting customs that are not legal for us as Romans

to adopt or practice.”²²The crowd joined in the attack against them, and the chief magistrates stripped off their clothes and ordered them to be beaten with rods.²³After they had severely flogged them, they threw them in jail, ordering the jailer to guard them carefully.²⁴Receiving such an order, he put them into the inner prison and secured their feet in the stocks.

²⁵About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the jail were shaken, and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone’s chains came loose. ²⁷When the jailer woke up and saw the doors of the prison standing open, he drew his sword and was going to kill himself, since he thought the prisoners had escaped.

²⁸But Paul called out in a loud voice, “Don’t harm yourself, because we’re all here!”

²⁹The jailer called for lights, rushed in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas.

³⁰He escorted them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

³¹They said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.”

³²And they spoke the word of the Lord to him along with everyone in his house. ³³He took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds. Right away he and all his family were baptized. ³⁴He brought them into his house, set a meal before them, and rejoiced because he had come to believe in God with his entire household.

³⁵When daylight came, the chief magistrates sent the police to say, “Release those men.”

³⁶The jailer reported these words to Paul: “The magistrates have sent orders for you to be released. So come out now and go in peace.”

³⁷But Paul said to them, “They beat us in public without a trial, although we are Roman citizens, and threw us in jail. And now are they going to send us away secretly? Certainly not! On the contrary, let them come themselves and escort us out.”

³⁸The police reported these words to the magistrates. They were afraid when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens. ³⁹So they came to appease them, and escorting them from prison, they urged them to leave town. ⁴⁰After leaving the jail, they came to Lydia’s house, where they saw and encouraged the brothers and sisters, and departed.

THEMES: Emerging leaders, go and tell, evil spirits, miracles leading to salvation

VERSE TO REMEMBER:

“Paul went on to Derbe and Lystra, where there was a disciple named Timothy, the son of a believing Jewish woman, but his father was a Greek.” (Acts 16:1)

IN COMMUNITY:

A big part of being a disciple of Jesus is helping others become disciples of Jesus. Notice the investment Paul made in Timothy and Lydia, two young and eager disciples who ended up becoming influential leaders in the early church. Who are you investing in so you can help them become more like Jesus?

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After they passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. ²As usual, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and rise from the dead: “This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah.” ⁴Some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, including a large number of God-fearing Greeks, as well as a number of the leading women.

⁵But the Jews became jealous, and they brought together some wicked men from the marketplace, formed a mob, and started a riot in the city. Attacking Jason’s house, they searched for them to bring them out to the public assembly. ⁶When they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city officials, shouting, “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here too, ⁷and Jason has welcomed them. They are all acting contrary to Caesar’s decrees, saying that there is another king—Jesus.” ⁸The crowd and city officials who heard these things were upset. ⁹After taking a security bond from Jason and the others, they released them.

¹⁰As soon as it was night, the brothers and sisters sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. Upon arrival, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. ¹¹The people here were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, since they received the word with eagerness and examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. ¹²Consequently, many of them believed, including a number of the prominent Greek women as well as men. ¹³But when the Jews from Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul at Berea, they came there too, agitating and upsetting the crowds. ¹⁴Then the brothers and sisters immediately sent Paul away to go to the coast, but Silas and Timothy stayed on there. ¹⁵Those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens, and after receiving instructions for Silas and Timothy to come to him as quickly as possible, they departed.

¹⁶While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply distressed when he saw that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with those who worshiped God, as well as in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also debated with him. Some said, “What is this ignorant show-off trying to say?”

Others replied, “He seems to be a preacher of foreign deities”—because he was telling the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.

¹⁹They took him and brought him to the Areopagus, and said, “May we learn about this new teaching you are presenting? ²⁰Because what you say sounds strange to us, and we want to know what these things mean.” ²¹Now all the Athenians and the foreigners residing there spent their time on nothing else but telling or hearing something new.

²²Paul stood in the middle of the Areopagus and said, “People of Athens! I see that you are extremely religious in every respect. ²³For as I was passing through and observing the objects of your worship, I even found an altar on which was inscribed, ‘To an Unknown God.’ Therefore, what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴The

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After this, he left Athens and went to Corinth,² where he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul came to them,³ and since they were of the same occupation, tentmakers by trade, he stayed with them and worked.⁴ He reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and tried to persuade both Jews and Greeks.

⁵When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself to preaching the word and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah. ⁶When they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his clothes and told them, "Your blood is on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."⁷ So he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next door to the synagogue. ⁸Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, along with his whole household. Many of the Corinthians, when they heard, believed and were baptized.

⁹The Lord said to Paul in a night vision, "Don't be afraid, but keep on speaking and don't be silent." ¹⁰For I am with you, and no one will lay a hand on you to hurt you, because I have many people in this city." ¹¹He stayed there a year and a half, teaching the word of God among them.

¹²While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack against Paul and brought him to the tribunal. ¹³"This man," they said, "is persuading people to worship God in ways contrary to the law."

¹⁴As Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrongdoing or of a serious crime, it would be reasonable for me to put up with you Jews. ¹⁵But if these are questions about words, names, and your own law, see to it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of such things."¹⁶ So he drove them from the tribunal. ¹⁷And they all seized Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal, but none of these things mattered to Gallio.

¹⁸After staying for some time, Paul said farewell to the brothers and sisters and sailed away to Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. He shaved his head at Cenchreae because of a vow he had taken. ¹⁹When they reached Ephesus he left them there, but he himself entered the synagogue and debated with the Jews. ²⁰When they asked him to stay for a longer time, he declined, ²¹but he said farewell and added, "I'll come back to you again, if God wills." Then he set sail from Ephesus.

²²On landing at Caesarea, he went up to Jerusalem and greeted the church, then went down to Antioch.

²³After spending some time there, he set out, traveling through one place after another in the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

²⁴Now a Jew named Apollos, a native Alexandrian, an eloquent man who was competent in the use of the Scriptures, arrived in Ephesus. ²⁵He had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately about Jesus, although he knew only John's baptism. ²⁶He began to speak

boldly in the synagogue. After Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained the way of God to him more accurately. ²⁷When he wanted to cross over to Achaia, the brothers and sisters wrote to the disciples to welcome him. After he arrived, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. ²⁸For he vigorously refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating through the Scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah.

THEMES: Jesus the Messiah, persecution, encouragement, accountability in community

VERSE TO REMEMBER:

“Paul came to them, and since they were of the same occupation, tentmakers by trade, he stayed with them and worked.” (Acts 18:2b-3)

IN COMMUNITY:

It's interesting that Paul maintained involvement in tentmaking in the midst of the chaos of his ministry and travels. It can be difficult to navigate the demands of school, vocation, or family and still remain focused on helping others become disciples of Jesus. How have you handled this challenge?

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While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the interior regions and came to Ephesus. He found some disciples ² and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”

“No,” they told him, “we haven’t even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”

³“Into what then were you baptized?” he asked them. “Into John’s baptism,” they replied.

⁴Paul said, “John baptized with a baptism of repentance, telling the people that they should believe in the one who would come after him, that is, in Jesus.”

⁵When they heard this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began to speak in tongues and to prophesy. ⁷Now there were about twelve men in all.

⁸Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly over a period of three months, arguing and persuading them about the kingdom of God. ⁹But when some became hardened and would not believe, slandering the Way in front of the crowd, he withdrew from them, taking the disciples, and conducted discussions every day in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰This went on for two years, so that all the residents of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord.

¹¹God was performing extraordinary miracles by Paul’s hands, ¹²so that even facecloths or aprons that had touched his skin were brought to the sick, and the diseases left them, and the evil spirits came out of them.

¹³Now some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists also attempted to pronounce the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, “I command you by the Jesus that Paul preaches!” ¹⁴Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish high priest, were doing this.

¹⁵The evil spirit answered them, “I know Jesus, and I recognize Paul—but who are you?” ¹⁶Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them, overpowered them all, and prevailed against them, so that they ran out of that house naked and wounded.

¹⁷When this became known to everyone who lived in Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks, they became afraid, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high esteem.

¹⁸And many who had become believers came confessing and disclosing their practices, ¹⁹while many of those who had practiced magic collected their books and burned them in front of everyone. So they calculated their value and found it to be fifty thousand pieces of silver. ²⁰In this way the word of the Lord spread and prevailed.

²¹After these events, Paul resolved by the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem. “After I’ve been there,” he said, “It is necessary for me to see Rome as well.” ²²After sending to Macedonia two of those who assisted him, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.

²³About that time there was a major disturbance about the Way. ²⁴For a person named Demetrius, a silversmith who made silver shrines of Artemis, provided a great deal of business for the craftsmen. ²⁵When he had assembled them, as well as the workers engaged in this type of business, he said, “Men, you know that our prosperity is

derived from this business. ²⁶You see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this man Paul has persuaded and misled a considerable number of people by saying that gods made by hand are not gods. ²⁷Not only do we run a risk that our business may be discredited, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be despised and her magnificence come to the verge of ruin—the very one all of Asia and the world worship.”

²⁸When they had heard this, they were filled with rage and began to cry out, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” ²⁹So the city was filled with confusion, and they rushed all together into the amphitheater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul’s traveling companions. ³⁰Although Paul wanted to go in before the people, the disciples did not let him. ³¹Even some of the provincial officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent word to him, pleading with him not to venture into the amphitheater. ³²Some were shouting one thing and some another, because the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together. ³³Some Jews in the crowd gave instructions to Alexander after they pushed him to the front. Motioning with his hand, Alexander wanted to make his defense to the people. ³⁴But when they recognized that he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for about two hours, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”

³⁵When the city clerk had calmed the crowd down, he said, “People of Ephesus! What person is there who doesn’t know that the city of the Ephesians is the temple guardian of the great Artemis, and of the image that fell from heaven? ³⁶Therefore, since these things are undeniable, you must keep calm and not do anything rash. ³⁷For you have brought these men here who are not temple robbers or blasphemers of our goddess. ³⁸So if Demetrius and the craftsmen who are with him have a case against anyone, the courts are in session, and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. ³⁹But if you seek anything further, it must be decided in a legal assembly. ⁴⁰In fact, we run a risk of being charged with rioting for what happened today, since there is no justification that we can give as a reason for this disturbance.” ⁴¹After saying this, he dismissed the assembly.

THEMES: Baptism of repentance, gospel multiplication, persecution, cultural idols

VERSE TO REMEMBER:

“This went on for two years, so that all the residents of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord.” (Acts 19:10)

IN COMMUNITY:

In most cities, Paul would stay for weeks or months preaching the Gospel. In Ephesus, he stayed for years. The city was a world center of trade and culture, making it ideal as a Gospel hub. “All the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord” because of the discourse that was happening in Ephesus. Take some time in community to pray for Gospel expansion in major cities, universities, and other cultural centers in our world today.

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After the uproar was over, Paul sent for the disciples, encouraged them, and after saying farewell, departed to go to Macedonia. ²And when he had passed through those areas and offered them many words of encouragement, he came to Greece ³and stayed three months. The Jews plotted against him when he was about to set sail for Syria, and so he decided to go back through Macedonia. ⁴He was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia. ⁵These men went on ahead and waited for us in Troas, ⁶but we sailed away from Philippi after the Festival of Unleavened Bread. In five days we reached them at Troas, where we spent seven days.

⁷On the first day of the week, we assembled to break bread. Paul spoke to them, and since he was about to depart the next day, he kept on talking until midnight. ⁸There were many lamps in the room upstairs where we were assembled, ⁹and a young man named Eutychus was sitting on a window sill and sank into a deep sleep as Paul kept on talking. When he was overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was picked up dead. ¹⁰But Paul went down, bent over him, embraced him, and said, "Don't be alarmed, because he's alive." ¹¹After going upstairs, breaking the bread, and eating, Paul talked a long time until dawn. Then he left. ¹²They brought the boy home alive and were greatly comforted.

¹³We went on ahead to the ship and sailed for Assos, where we were going to take Paul on board, because these were his instructions, since he himself was going by land. ¹⁴When he met us at Assos, we took him on board and went on to Mitylene. ¹⁵Sailing from there, the next day we arrived off Chios. The following day we crossed over to Samos, and the day after, we came to Miletus. ¹⁶For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus to avoid spending time in the province of Asia, because he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if possible, for the day of Pentecost.

¹⁷Now from Miletus, he sent to Ephesus and summoned the elders of the church. ¹⁸When they came to him, he said to them, "You know, from the first day I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, ¹⁹serving the Lord with all humility, with tears, and during the trials that came to me through the plots of the Jews. ²⁰You know that I did not hesitate to proclaim anything to you that was profitable and to teach you publicly and from house to house. ²¹I testified to both Jews and Greeks about repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus.

²²"And now I am on my way to Jerusalem, compelled by the Spirit, not knowing what I will encounter there, ²³except that in every town the Holy Spirit warns me that chains and afflictions are waiting for me. ²⁴But I consider my life of no value to myself; my purpose is to finish my course and the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of God's grace.

²⁵"And now I know that none of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will ever see me again. ²⁶Therefore I declare to you this day that I am

³²“And now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all who are sanctified. ³³I have not coveted anyone’s silver or gold or clothing. ³⁴You yourselves know that I worked with my own hands to support myself and those who are with me. ³⁵In every way I’ve shown you that it is necessary to help the weak by laboring like this and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, because he said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

THEMES: Go and tell, resurrection, Lord's supper, sacrificial living, false teachers

“But I consider my life of no value to myself; my purpose is to finish my course and the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of God’s grace.” (Acts 20:24)

As disciples of Jesus, we are called to lay down our lives for God and for one another. What parts of your life are the most difficult to relinquish? Is it your schedule? Your future? Your family? Yourself? Consider the example of Jesus Himself, who “gave His life as a ransom for many.”

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After we tore ourselves away from them, we set sail straight for Cos, the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. ²Finding a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, we boarded and set sail. ³After we sighted Cyprus, passing to the south of it, we sailed on to Syria and arrived at Tyre, since the ship was to unload its cargo there. ⁴We sought out the disciples and stayed there seven days. Through the Spirit they told Paul not to go to Jerusalem. ⁵When our time had come to an end, we left to continue our journey, while all of them, with their wives and children, accompanied us out of the city. After kneeling down on the beach to pray, ⁶we said farewell to one another and boarded the ship, and they returned home.

⁷When we completed our voyage from Tyre, we reached Ptolemais, where we greeted the brothers and sisters and stayed with them for a day. ⁸The next day we left and came to Caesarea, where we entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the Seven, and stayed with him. ⁹This man had four virgin daughters who prophesied.

¹⁰After we had been there for several days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. ¹¹He came to us, took Paul's belt, tied his own feet and hands, and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews in Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him over to the Gentiles.'" ¹²When we heard this, both we and the local people pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem.

¹³Then Paul replied, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

¹⁴Since he would not be persuaded, we said no more except, "The Lord's will be done."

¹⁵After this we got ready and went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁶Some of the disciples from Caesarea also went with us and brought us to Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to stay.

¹⁷When we reached Jerusalem, the brothers and sisters welcomed us warmly. ¹⁸The following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. ¹⁹After greeting them, he reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

²⁰When they heard it, they glorified God and said, "You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law.

²¹But they have been informed about you—that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to abandon Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or to live according to our customs. ²²So what is to be done? They will certainly hear that you've come. ²³Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have made a vow. ²⁴Take these men, purify yourself along with them, and pay for them to get their heads shaved. Then everyone will know that what they were told about you amounts to nothing, but that you yourself are also careful about observing the law. ²⁵With regard to the Gentiles who have believed, we have written a letter containing our decision that they should keep themselves from food sacrificed to idols, from blood,

from what is strangled, and from sexual immorality.”

²⁶So the next day, Paul took the men, having purified himself along with them, and entered the temple, announcing the completion of the purification days when the offering would be made for each of them. ²⁷When the seven days were nearly over, some Jews from the province of Asia saw him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd, and seized him, ²⁸shouting, “Fellow Israelites, help! This is the man who teaches everyone everywhere against our people, our law, and this place. What’s more, he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.” ²⁹For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple.

³⁰The whole city was stirred up, and the people rushed together. They seized Paul, dragged him out of the temple, and at once the gates were shut.

³¹As they were trying to kill him, word went up to the commander of the regiment that all Jerusalem was in chaos. ³²Taking along soldiers and centurions, he immediately ran down to them. Seeing the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. ³³Then the commander approached, took him into custody, and ordered him to be bound with two chains. He asked who he was and what he had done. ³⁴Some in the crowd were shouting one thing and some another. Since he was not able to get reliable information because of the uproar, he ordered him to be taken into the barracks. ³⁵When Paul got to the steps, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the crowd, ³⁶for the mass of people followed, yelling, “Get rid of him!”

³⁷As he was about to be brought into the barracks, Paul said to the commander, “Am I allowed to say something to you?”

He replied, “You know how to speak Greek? ³⁸Aren’t you the Egyptian who started a revolt some time ago and led four thousand men of the Assassins into the wilderness?”

³⁹Paul said, “I am a Jewish man from Tarsus of Cilicia, a citizen of an important city. Now I ask you, let me speak to the people.”

THEMES: Go and tell, prayer, Jews and Gentiles, Nazirite vow, persecution

VERSE TO REMEMBER:

“After greeting them, he reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.” (Acts 21:19)

IN COMMUNITY:

From time to time, the early disciples would pause together to celebrate what God had done among them and to renew their commitment to the Lord through prayer, fasting, and dedication to obedience. What can you thank God for this week? How has He been at work in and among your community of disciples? What new commitments can you consider?

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⁴⁰After he had given permission, Paul stood on the steps and motioned with his hand to the people. When there was a great hush, he addressed them in Aramaic: "Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense before you." ²When they heard that he was addressing them in Aramaic, they became even quieter. ³He continued, "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strictness of our ancestral law. I was zealous for God, just as all of you are today. ⁴I persecuted this Way to the death, arresting and putting both men and women in jail, ⁵as both the high priest and the whole council of elders can testify about me. After I received letters from them to the brothers, I traveled to Damascus to arrest those who were there and bring them to Jerusalem to be punished.

⁶"As I was traveling and approaching Damascus, about noon an intense light from heaven suddenly flashed around me. ⁷I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?'

⁸"I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?'

"He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, the one you are persecuting.' ⁹Now those who were with me saw the light, but they did not hear the voice of the one who was speaking to me.

¹⁰"I said, 'What should I do, Lord?' "The Lord told me, 'Get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told everything that you have been assigned to do.'

¹¹"Since I couldn't see because of the brightness of the light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and went into Damascus. ¹²Someone named Ananias, a devout man according to the law, who had a good reputation with all the Jews living there, ¹³came and stood by me and said, 'Brother Saul, regain your sight.' And in that very hour I looked up and saw him. ¹⁴And he said, 'The God of our ancestors has appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One, and to hear the words from his mouth, ¹⁵since you will be a witness for him to all people of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶And now, why are you delaying? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name.'

¹⁷"After I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance ¹⁸and saw him telling me, 'Hurry and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me.'

¹⁹"But I said, 'Lord, they know that in synagogue after synagogue I had those who believed in you imprisoned and beaten. ²⁰And when the blood of your witness Stephen was being shed, I stood there giving approval and guarding the clothes of those who killed him.'

²¹"He said to me, 'Go, because I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'"

²²They listened to him up to this point. Then they raised their voices, shouting, "Wipe this man off the face of the earth! He should not be allowed to live!"

²³As they were yelling and flinging aside their garments and throwing dust into the air, ²⁴the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, directing that he be interrogated with the scourge to discover the reason they were shouting against him like this. ²⁵As they stretched him out for the lash, Paul said to the centurion standing by, "Is it legal for you to scourge a man who is a Roman citizen and is uncondemned?"

²⁶When the centurion heard this, he went and reported to the commander, saying, "What are you going to do? For this man is a Roman citizen."

²⁷The commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?"

"Yes," he said.

²⁸The commander replied, "I bought this citizenship for a large amount of money." "But I was born a citizen," Paul said.

²⁹So those who were about to examine him withdrew from him immediately. The commander too was alarmed when he realized Paul was a Roman citizen and he had bound him.

³⁰The next day, since he wanted to find out exactly why Paul was being accused by the Jews, he released him and instructed the chief priests and all the Sanhedrin to convene. He brought Paul down and placed him before them. ¹Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, "Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience to this day." ²The high priest Ananias ordered those who were standing next to him to strike him on the mouth. ³Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! As You are sitting there judging me according to the law, and yet in violation of the law are you ordering me to be struck?"

⁴Those standing nearby said, "Do you dare revile God's high priest?"

⁵"I did not know, brothers, that he was the high priest," replied Paul. "For it is written, **You must not speak evil of a ruler of your people.**" ⁶When Paul realized that one part of them were Sadducees and the other part were Pharisees, he cried out in the Sanhedrin, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. I am being judged because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead!" ⁷When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. ⁸For the Sadducees say there is no resurrection, and neither angel nor spirit, but the Pharisees affirm them all.

⁹The shouting grew loud, and some of the scribes of the Pharisees' party got up and argued vehemently, "We find nothing evil in this man. What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?"

¹⁰When the dispute became violent, the commander feared that Paul might be torn apart by them and ordered the troops to go down, take him away from them, and bring him into the barracks. ¹¹The following night, the Lord stood by him and said, "Have courage! For as you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so it is necessary for you to testify in Rome."



When it was morning, the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves under a curse not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. ¹³There were more than forty who had formed this plot. ¹⁴These men went to the chief priests and elders and said, "We have bound ourselves under a solemn curse that we won't eat anything until we have killed Paul. ¹⁵So now you, along with the Sanhedrin, make a request to the commander that he bring him down to you as if you were going to investigate his case more thoroughly. But, before he gets near, we are ready to kill him."

¹⁶But the son of Paul's sister, hearing about their ambush, came and entered the barracks and reported it to Paul. ¹⁷Paul called one of the centurions and said, "Take this young man to the commander, because he has something to report to him."

¹⁸So he took him, brought him to the commander, and said, "The prisoner Paul called me and asked me to bring this young man to you, because he has something to tell you."

¹⁹The commander took him by the hand, led him aside, and inquired privately, "What is it you have to report to me?"

²⁰"The Jews," he said, "have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down to the Sanhedrin tomorrow, as though they are going to hold a somewhat more careful inquiry about him. ²¹Don't let them persuade you, because there are more than forty of them lying in ambush—men who have bound themselves under a curse not to eat or drink until they have killed him. Now they are ready, waiting for your consent."

²²So the commander dismissed the young man and instructed him, "Don't tell anyone that you have informed me about this."

²³He summoned two of his centurions and said, "Get two hundred soldiers ready with seventy cavalry and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at nine tonight. ²⁴Also provide mounts to ride so that Paul may be brought safely to Felix the governor."

²⁵He wrote the following letter:

²⁶Claudius Lysias, To the most excellent governor Felix: Greetings.

²⁷When this man had been seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them, I arrived with my troops and rescued him because I learned that he is a Roman citizen.

²⁸Wanting to know the charge they were accusing him of, I brought him down before their Sanhedrin. ²⁹I found out that the accusations were concerning questions of their law, and that there was no charge that merited death or imprisonment. ³⁰When I was informed that there was a plot against the man, I sent him to you right away. I also ordered his accusers to state their case against him in your presence.

³¹So the soldiers took Paul during the night and brought him to Antipatris as they were ordered. ³²The next day, they returned to the barracks, allowing the cavalry to go on with him. ³³When these men entered Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him. ³⁴After he read it, he asked what province he was from. When he learned he was from Cilicia, ³⁵he said, "I will give you a hearing whenever your accusers also get here." He ordered that he be kept under guard in Herod's palace.

¹Five days later Ananias the high priest came down with some elders and a lawyer named Tertullus. These men presented their case against Paul to the governor. ²When Paul was called in, Tertullus began to accuse him and said, “We enjoy great peace because of you, and reforms are taking place for the benefit of this nation because of your foresight. ³We acknowledge this in every way and everywhere, most excellent Felix, with utmost gratitude. ⁴But, so that I will not burden you any further, I request that you would be kind enough to give us a brief hearing. ⁵For we have found this man to be a plague, an agitator among all the Jews throughout the Roman world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. ⁶He even tried to desecrate the temple, and so we apprehended him. ⁸By examining him yourself you will be able to discern the truth about these charges we are bringing against him.” ⁹The Jews also joined in the attack, alleging that these things were true.

¹⁰When the governor motioned for him to speak, Paul replied, “Because I know you have been a judge of this nation for many years, I am glad to offer my defense in what concerns me. ¹¹You can verify for yourself that it is no more than twelve days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem. ¹²They didn’t find me arguing with anyone or causing a disturbance among the crowd, either in the temple or in the synagogues or anywhere in the city. ¹³Neither can they prove the charges they are now making against me. ¹⁴But I admit this to you: I worship the God of my ancestors according to the Way, which they call a sect, believing everything that is in accordance with the law and written in the prophets. ¹⁵I have a hope in God, which these men themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection, both of the righteous and the unrighteous. ¹⁶I always strive to have a clear conscience toward God and men. ¹⁷After many years, I came to bring charitable gifts and offerings to my people. ¹⁸While I was doing this, some Jews from Asia found me ritually purified in the temple, without a crowd and without any uproar. ¹⁹It is they who ought to be here before you to bring charges, if they have anything against me. ²⁰Or let these men here state what wrongdoing they found in me when I stood before the Sanhedrin, ²¹other than this one statement I shouted while standing among them, ‘Today I am on trial before you concerning the resurrection of the dead.’”

²²Since Felix was well informed about the Way, he adjourned the hearing, saying, “When Lysias the commander comes down, I will decide your case.” ²³He ordered that the centurion keep Paul under guard, though he could have some freedom, and that he should not prevent any of his friends from meeting his needs.

²⁴Several days later, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and listened to him on the subject of faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁵Now as he spoke about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix became afraid and replied, “Leave for now, but when I have an opportunity I’ll call for you.” ²⁶At the same time he was also hoping that Paul would offer him money. So he sent for him quite often and conversed with him.

²⁷After two years had passed, Porcius Festus succeeded Felix, and because Felix wanted to do the Jews a favor, he left Paul in prison.



¹Three days after Festus arrived in the province, he went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea. ²The chief priests and the leaders of the Jews presented their case against Paul to him; and they appealed, ³asking for a favor against Paul, that Festus summon him to Jerusalem. They were, in fact, preparing an ambush along the road to kill him. ⁴Festus, however, answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself was about to go there shortly. ⁵"Therefore," he said, "let those of you who have authority go down with me and accuse him, if he has done anything wrong."

⁶When he had spent not more than eight or ten days among them, he went down to Caesarea. The next day, seated at the tribunal, he commanded Paul to be brought in. ⁷When he arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him and brought many serious charges that they were not able to prove. ⁸Then Paul made his defense: "Neither against the Jewish law, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I sinned in any way."

⁹But Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor, replied to Paul, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem to be tried before me there on these charges?"

¹⁰Paul replied, "I am standing at Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried. I have done no wrong to the Jews, as even you yourself know very well. ¹¹If then I did anything wrong and am deserving of death, I am not trying to escape death; but if there is nothing to what these men accuse me of, no one can give me up to them. I appeal to Caesar!"

¹²Then after Festus conferred with his council, he replied, "You have appealed to Caesar; to Caesar you will go."

¹³Several days later, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived in Caesarea and paid a courtesy call on Festus. ¹⁴Since they were staying there several days, Festus presented Paul's case to the king, saying, "There's a man who was left as a prisoner by Felix. ¹⁵When I was in Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews presented their case and asked that he be condemned. ¹⁶I answered them that it is not the Roman custom to give someone up before the accused faces the accusers and has an opportunity for a defense against the charges. ¹⁷So when they had assembled here, I did not delay. The next day I took my seat at the tribunal and ordered the man to be brought in. ¹⁸The accusers stood up but brought no charge against him of the evils I was expecting. ¹⁹Instead they had some disagreements with him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, a dead man Paul claimed to be alive. ²⁰Since I was at a loss in a dispute over such things, I asked him if he wanted to go to Jerusalem and be tried there regarding these matters. ²¹But when Paul appealed to be held for trial by the Emperor, I ordered him to be kept in custody until I could send him to Caesar."

²²Agrippa said to Festus, "I would like to hear the man myself."

"Tomorrow you will hear him," he replied.

²³So the next day, Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp and entered the auditorium with the military commanders and prominent men of the city. When

Festus gave the command, Paul was brought in. ²⁴Then Festus said, “King Agrippa and all men present with us, you see this man. The whole Jewish community has appealed to me concerning him, both in Jerusalem and here, shouting that he should not live any longer. ²⁵I found that he had not done anything deserving of death, but when he himself appealed to the Emperor, I decided to send him. ²⁶I have nothing definite to write to my lord about him. Therefore, I have brought him before all of you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after this examination is over, I may have something to write. ²⁷For it seems unreasonable to me to send a prisoner without indicating the charges against him.”

¹Agrippa said to Paul, “You have permission to speak for yourself.” Then Paul stretched out his hand and began his defense: ²“I consider myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, I am to make my defense today against all the accusations of the Jews, ³especially since you are very knowledgeable about all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently.

⁴“All the Jews know my way of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own people and in Jerusalem. They have known me for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived as a Pharisee. ⁶And now I stand on trial because of the hope in what God promised to our ancestors, ⁷the promise our twelve tribes hope to reach as they earnestly serve him night and day. King Agrippa, I am being accused by the Jews because of this hope. ⁸Why do any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead? ⁹In fact, I myself was convinced that it was necessary to do many things in opposition to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰I actually did this in Jerusalem, and I locked up many of the saints in prison, since I had received authority for that from the chief priests. When they were put to death, I was in agreement against them. ¹¹In all the synagogues I often punished them and tried to make them blaspheme. Since I was terribly enraged at them, I pursued them even to foreign cities.

¹²“I was traveling to Damascus under these circumstances with authority and a commission from the chief priests. ¹³King Agrippa, while on the road at midday, I saw a light from heaven brighter than the sun, shining around me and those traveling with me. ¹⁴We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice speaking to me in Aramaic, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’

¹⁵“I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’

“And the Lord replied, ‘I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting. ¹⁶But get up and stand on your feet. For I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and a witness of what you have seen and will see of me. ¹⁷I will rescue you from your people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them ¹⁸to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a share among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’

¹⁹“So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. ²⁰Instead, I preached to those in Damascus first, and to those in Jerusalem and in all the region

of Judea, and to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works worthy of repentance. ²¹For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and were trying to kill me. ²²To this very day, I have had help from God, and I stand and testify to both small and great, saying nothing other than what the prophets and Moses said would take place—²³that the Messiah would suffer, and that, as the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light to our people and to the Gentiles.”

²⁴As he was saying these things in his defense, Festus exclaimed in a loud voice, “You’re out of your mind, Paul! Too much study is driving you mad.”

²⁵But Paul replied, “I’m not out of my mind, most excellent Festus. On the contrary, I’m speaking words of truth and good judgment. ²⁶For the king knows about these matters, and I can speak boldly to him. For I am convinced that none of these things has escaped his notice, since this was not done in a corner. ²⁷King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you believe.”

²⁸Agrippa said to Paul, “Are you going to persuade me to become a Christian so easily?”

²⁹“I wish before God,” replied Paul, “that whether easily or with difficulty, not only you but all who listen to me today might become as I am—except for these chains.”

³⁰The king, the governor, Bernice, and those sitting with them got up, ³¹and when they had left they talked with each other and said, “This man is not doing anything to deserve death or imprisonment.”

³²Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been released if he had not appealed to Caesar.”

THEMES: Testimony, resurrection, witness, gospel influence, human authority

VERSE TO REMEMBER:

“Agrippa said to Paul, ‘Are you going to persuade me to become a Christian so easily?’”
(Acts 26:28)

IN COMMUNITY:

Paul’s respectful appeal to authority led to an opportunity to share about Jesus with some of the most prominent Roman officials. As disciples of Jesus we are called to submit to human authorities. Why is this difficult? What human authority do you find yourself under? Do you carry yourself with respect and humility?

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When it was decided that we were to sail to Italy, they handed over Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion named Julius, of the Imperial Regiment. ²When we had boarded a ship of Adramyttium, we put to sea, intending to sail to ports along the coast of Asia. Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, was with us. ³The next day we put in at Sidon, and Julius treated Paul kindly and allowed him to go to his friends to receive their care. ⁴When we had put out to sea from there, we sailed along the northern coast of Cyprus because the winds were against us. ⁵After sailing through the open sea off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we reached Myra in Lycia. ⁶There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy and put us on board. ⁷Sailing slowly for many days, with difficulty we arrived off Cnidus. Since the wind did not allow us to approach it, we sailed along the south side of Crete off Salmone. ⁸With still more difficulty we sailed along the coast and came to a place called Fair Havens near the city of Lasea.

⁹By now much time had passed, and the voyage was already dangerous. Since the Day of Atonement was already over, Paul gave his advice ¹⁰and told them, “Men, I can see that this voyage is headed toward disaster and heavy loss, not only of the cargo and the ship but also of our lives.” ¹¹But the centurion paid attention to the captain and the owner of the ship rather than to what Paul said. ¹²Since the harbor was unsuitable to winter in, the majority decided to set sail from there, hoping somehow to reach Phoenix, a harbor on Crete facing the southwest and northwest, and to winter there.

¹³When a gentle south wind sprang up, they thought they had achieved their purpose. They weighed anchor and sailed along the shore of Crete. ¹⁴But before long, a fierce wind called the “northeaster” rushed down from the island. ¹⁵Since the ship was caught and unable to head into the wind, we gave way to it and were driven along. ¹⁶After running under the shelter of a little island called Cauda, we were barely able to get control of the skiff. ¹⁷After hoisting it up, they used ropes and tackle and girded the ship. Fearing they would run aground on the Syrtis, they lowered the drift-anchor, and in this way they were driven along. ¹⁸Because we were being severely battered by the storm, they began to jettison the cargo the next day. ¹⁹On the third day, they threw the ship’s tackle overboard with their own hands. ²⁰For many days neither sun nor stars appeared, and the severe storm kept raging. Finally all hope was fading that we would be saved.

²¹Since they had been without food for a long time, Paul then stood up among them and said, “You men should have followed my advice not to sail from Crete and sustain this damage and loss. ²²Now I urge you to take courage, because there will be no loss of any of your lives, but only of the ship. ²³For last night an angel of the God I belong to and serve stood by me ²⁴and said, ‘Don’t be afraid, Paul. It is necessary for you to appear before Caesar. And indeed, God has graciously given you all those who are sailing with you.’ ²⁵So take courage, men, because I believe God that it will be just the way it was told to me. ²⁶But we have to run aground on some island.”

²⁷When the fourteenth night came, we were drifting in the Adriatic Sea, and about

midnight the sailors thought they were approaching land. ²⁸They took soundings and found it to be a hundred twenty feet deep; when they had sailed a little farther and sounded again, they found it to be ninety feet deep. ²⁹Then, fearing we might run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight to come. ³⁰Some sailors tried to escape from the ship; they had let down the skiff into the sea, pretending that they were going to put out anchors from the bow. ³¹Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, “Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.” ³²Then the soldiers cut the ropes holding the skiff and let it drop away.

³³When it was about daylight, Paul urged them all to take food, saying, “Today is the fourteenth day that you have been waiting and going without food, having eaten nothing. ³⁴So I urge you to take some food. For this is for your survival, since none of you will lose a hair from your head.” ³⁵After he said these things and had taken some bread, he gave thanks to God in the presence of all of them, and after he broke it, he began to eat. ³⁶They all were encouraged and took food themselves. ³⁷In all there were ²⁷⁶ of us on the ship. ³⁸When they had eaten enough, they began to lighten the ship by throwing the grain overboard into the sea.

³⁹When daylight came, they did not recognize the land but sighted a bay with a beach. They planned to run the ship ashore if they could. ⁴⁰After cutting loose the anchors, they left them in the sea, at the same time loosening the ropes that held the rudders. Then they hoisted the foresail to the wind and headed for the beach. ⁴¹But they struck a sandbar and ran the ship aground. The bow jammed fast and remained immovable, while the stern began to break up by the pounding of the waves. ⁴²The soldiers’ plan was to kill the prisoners so that no one could swim away and escape. ⁴³But the centurion kept them from carrying out their plan because he wanted to save Paul, and so he ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to land. ⁴⁴The rest were to follow, some on planks and some on debris from the ship. In this way, everyone safely reached the shore.

THEMES: Fear, courage, God’s plan, salvation

VERSE TO REMEMBER:

“So take courage, men, because I believe God that it will be just the way it was told to me.” (Acts 27:25)

IN COMMUNITY:

It can be easy to forget the miracles God has done over and over again to make His name known in our world. Take a few moments to thank God for His immense power and unending love for His people.

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Once safely ashore, we then learned that the island was called Malta. ²The local people showed us extraordinary kindness. They lit a fire and took us all in, since it was raining and cold. ³As Paul gathered a bundle of brushwood and put it on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened itself on his hand. ⁴When the local people saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "This man, no doubt, is a murderer. Even though he has escaped the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live." ⁵But he shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no harm. ⁶They expected that he would begin to swell up or suddenly drop dead. After they waited a long time and saw nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god.

⁷Now in the area around that place was an estate belonging to the leading man of the island, named Publius, who welcomed us and entertained us hospitably for three days. ⁸Publius's father was in bed suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went to him, and praying and laying his hands on him, he healed him. ⁹After this, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed. ¹⁰So they heaped many honors on us, and when we sailed, they gave us what we needed.

¹¹After three months we set sail in an Alexandrian ship that had wintered at the island, with the Twin Gods as its figurehead. ¹²Putting in at Syracuse, we stayed three days. ¹³From there, after making a circuit along the coast, we reached Rhegium. After one day a south wind sprang up, and the second day we came to Puteoli. ¹⁴There we found brothers and sisters and were invited to stay a week with them. And so we came to Rome. ¹⁵Now the brothers and sisters from there had heard the news about us and had come to meet us as far as the Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage. ¹⁶When we entered Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself with the soldier who guarded him.

¹⁷After three days he called together the leaders of the Jews. When they had gathered he said to them, "Brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our ancestors, I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. ¹⁸After they examined me, they wanted to release me, since there was no reason for the death penalty in my case. ¹⁹Because the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar, even though I had no charge to bring against my people. ²⁰For this reason I've asked to see you and speak to you. In fact, it is for the hope of Israel that I'm wearing this chain."

²¹Then they said to him, "We haven't received any letters about you from Judea. None of the brothers has come and reported or spoken anything evil about you. ²²But we want to hear what your views are, since we know that people everywhere are speaking against this sect."

²³After arranging a day with him, many came to him at his lodging. From dawn to dusk he expounded and testified about the kingdom of God. He tried to persuade them about Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets. ²⁴Some were persuaded by what he said, but others did not believe.

²⁵Disagreeing among themselves, they began to leave after Paul made one statement: “The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your ancestors through the prophet Isaiah ²⁶when he said,

Go to these people and say: You will always be listening, but never understanding; and you will always be looking, but never perceiving.²⁷ For the hearts of these people have grown callous, their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; otherwise they might see with their eyes and hear with their ears, understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.

²⁸Therefore, let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.”³⁰ Paul stayed two whole years in his own rented house. And he welcomed all who visited him, ³¹proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

THEMES: Hospitality, miracles, testimony, prophesy, salvation for all

VERSE TO REMEMBER:

"He (Paul) welcomed all who visited him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance." (Acts 28:40b-31)

IN COMMUNITY:

What impact has our study of the book of Acts had in your life? How will you think and live differently as a result of interacting with this text? Take some time to consider how God might want to use you to expand the Gospel in the coming weeks and months.

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EPILOGUE

As we close this chapter of our “One More” journey, reflecting on the Book of Acts, it’s clear that the spirit of the early church is not a relic of the past but a powerful blueprint for our future. We’ve witnessed how ordinary individuals, gripped by the Gospel’s audacity and fueled by the Holy Spirit, turned their world upside down.

From Jerusalem to the ends of the earth, their fervent devotion to teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, and prayer, coupled with an unyielding commitment to sharing Jesus, led to astounding growth. We’ve seen how they embraced diversity, confronted false teachings, suffered persecution with joy, and, through it all, bore witness to the resurrection of Jesus, constantly adding “one more” to their numbers.

This study journal has been a companion, a space to capture the teaching of the Spirit and the transformative power of God’s Word. But the true measure of its impact won’t be found in the pages filled with notes, but in the lives we live from this day forward. The question “What’s in it for me?” has been definitively answered: a life unleashed to invite everyone to know and enjoy Jesus as we stumble together in our pursuit to love like Him.

The lessons from Acts call us to action—to invite ONE MORE, to launch ONE MORE venue, and to plant ONE MORE church—all saturated in persistent prayer.

So, what’s next for us? The “One More” journey is far from over. As we step into the coming months, let’s carry the urgency and joy of the early church into our daily lives. This means intentionally seeking out our “one more,” engaging in spiritual conversations, and being ready to share the miraculous story of Jesus with those around us.

It means continuing to embrace intentional prayer rhythms—daily, weekly, monthly, and quarterly—trusting that God will ignite a revival in our community and beyond. Let’s cultivate generous hearts, ready to invest our time, talents, and resources to see the Gospel spread.

The God who worked wonders in the first century is the same God at work today. He desires to move profoundly through each of us. Just as Paul and Barnabas were “commended to the grace of God for the work they had now completed,” let us, too, be people who wholeheartedly commit ourselves to the Lord’s work, knowing that He will equip us for every good deed. Let the spirit of Acts empower us to live boldly, speak courageously, and love unconditionally, so that “the word of God spread and multiplied,” and countless more might know and enjoy Jesus as we stumble together in our pursuit to love like Him.

Other Resources

Bible Project summary of Acts

bibleproject.com/videos/acts-1-12

bibleproject.com/videos/acts-13-28

Precept Austin Acts commentary

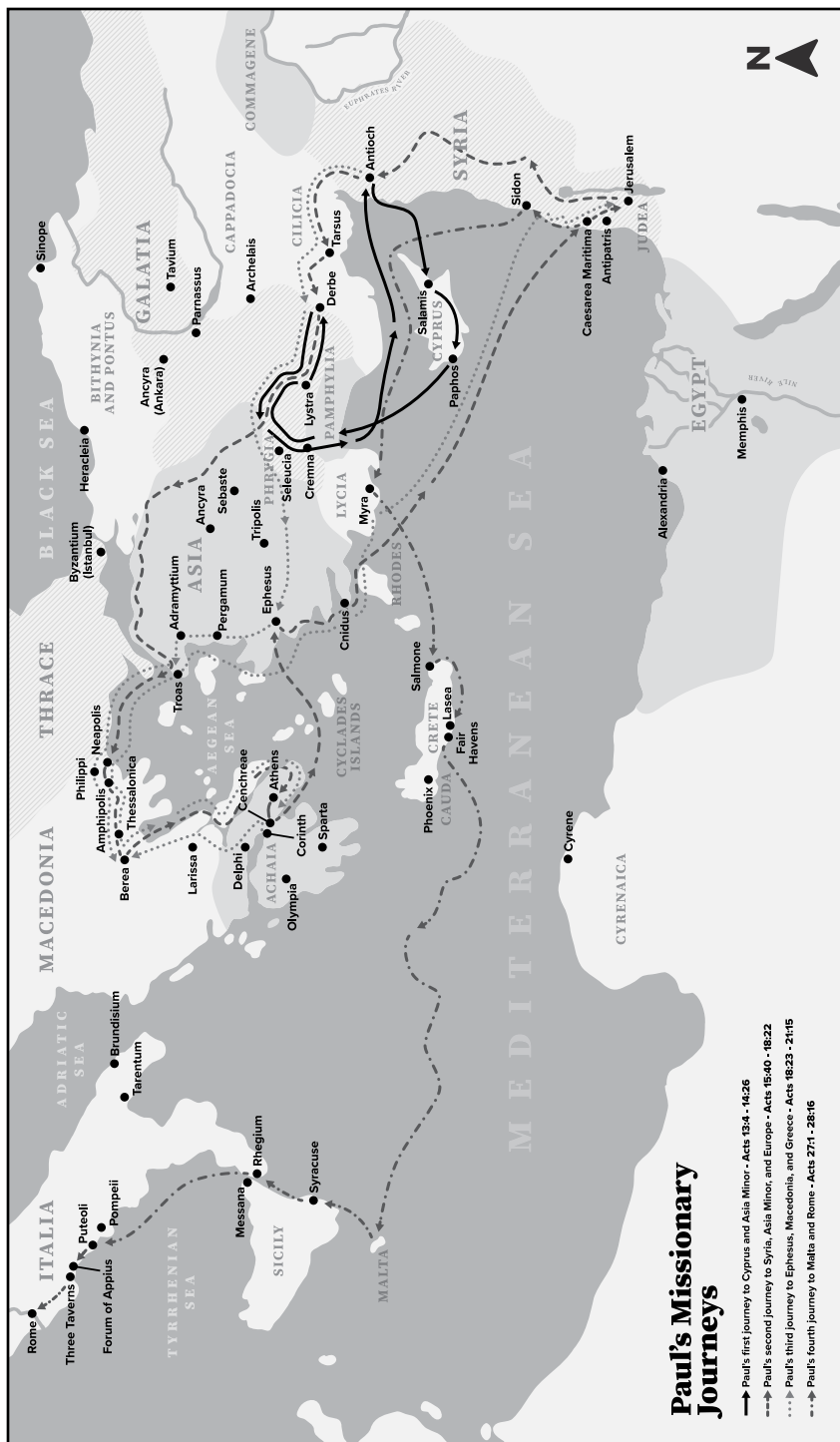
preceptaustin.org/acts_commentaries

For companion messages, please visit

rivchurch.com/messages

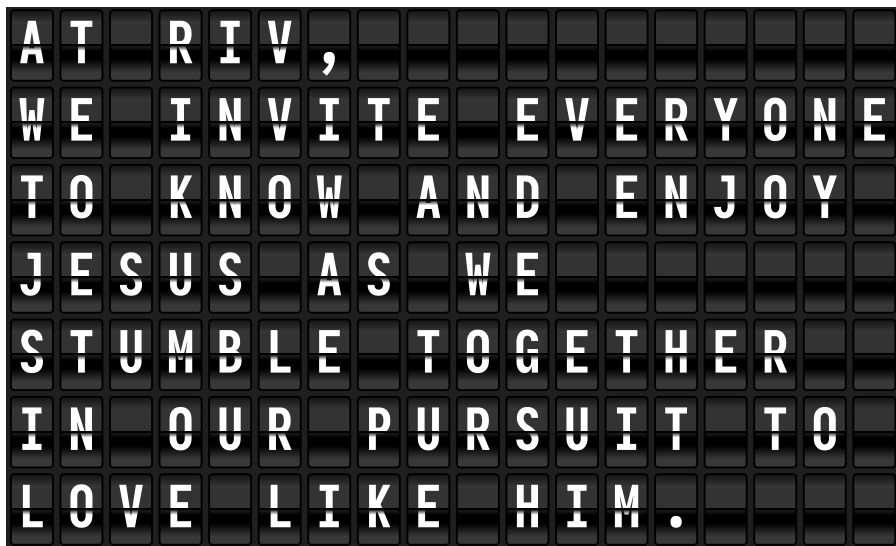
For a PDF version of this journal visit

rivchurch.com/onemore-journal



Paul's Missionary Journeys

- Paul's first journey to Cyprus and Asia Minor - Acts 13:4 - 14:26
- Paul's second journey to Syria, Asia Minor, and Europe - Acts 15:40 - 18:22
- ... Paul's third journey to Ephesus, Macedonia, and Greece - Acts 18:23 - 21:15
- .- Paul's fourth journey to Malta and Rome - Acts 27:1 - 28:16



As a church, we meet at four venues throughout the Lansing area.

In addition, we meet as smaller groups in what we call RivCommunities throughout the week.

We'd love for you to join us. Visit rivchurch.com/visit for service times.

Holt Venue

3585 Willoughby Rd.
Holt, MI 48842

MSU Venue

Meeting on campus
in East Lansing

REO Town Venue

1115 S. Washington Ave
Lansing, MI 48910

Westside Venue

7533 W. St. Joseph Hwy.
Lansing, MI 48917

If this journal was passed along to you by a friend, we hope you find it useful as you work through the book of Acts.

If you have questions, we'd love to be a resource for you as you explore your faith. Contact us at hello@rivchurch.com.

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They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching,
to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.
Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple,
and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with joyful and
sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.
Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Acts 2:42, 46-47

INVITE

LAUNCH

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ONE MORE