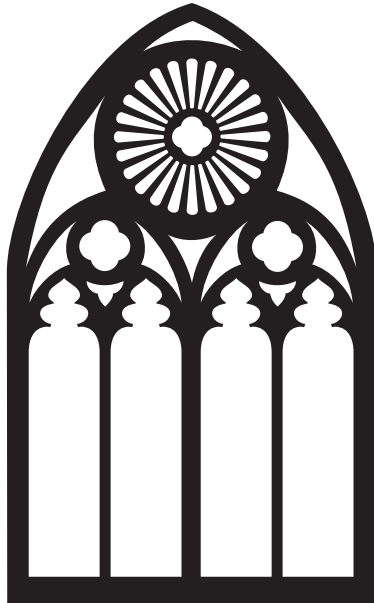




Perpendicularity



Authored By Riverview Church

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**RIVERVIEW
EXISTS TO
PROCLAIM
THE
LIBERATING
POWER OF
THE GOSPEL
AS WE
GROW,
SERVE,
AND
GO.**



Perpendicularity

*In the book of Acts, the vertical becomes horizontal
as the Gospel of Jesus spreads to the ends of the Earth.*

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Introduction

Luke, a Gentile physician and leader in the early church, really wanted his friend Theophilus to come to saving faith in Jesus. As an educated man, he took it upon himself to write “an orderly account” (Luke 1:6) of the life of Christ (the book of Luke) and the early church (the book of Acts).

This two-volume set displays the “perpendicularity” of the Gospel. A right relationship with God through Jesus (vertical) necessarily results in reconciled relationships with people and the spread of the Gospel throughout the world (horizontal).

This study guide is primarily focused on the book of Acts but takes a running start at it through the last few chapters of Luke. Think of it as re-watching the last episode of the previous season of your favorite show to remember what was going on.

The goal of this study guide is to be a resource for our Life Groups to be used alongside our weekend service messages (which you can check out through the rivchurch app, our podcast, or online at rivchurch.com/perpendicularity). While this material can be used for individual study, we believe it will be most helpful when discussed with other people.

Some may think this material is over their heads and others may believe it isn’t deep enough, and that’s OK. Your group can cover as much or as little of the content as is helpful. Ultimately, our prayer is that this study guide will help you develop a framework for how to work through a passage of Scripture and ask the all important questions:

Introduction

What did this passage mean to the original audience?

What does this passage mean (in a universal sense)?

How does this passage apply to my life right now?

Our hope and prayer in this study guide (and corresponding sermon series) is that your vertical relationship with Jesus will impact your horizontal relationships with others. As we do this more and more as a church, we pray the Gospel will reach the ends of the Earth again, just like it did the first time, nearly 2000 years ago!

Pastor Noel Heikkinen
Riverview Church

If these were silent

Luke 19

Background You Should Know

In Luke 1:3 Luke says he wrote his Gospel in order to provide “an orderly account” for his friend Theophilus. Luke’s intent was to offer specific and accurate details of Jesus’ life and ministry. In Luke 19, Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration, which was the festival the Jews would celebrate to remember that God freed them from slavery in Egypt hundreds of years earlier. It was the beginning of the last week of Jesus’ earthly life before He went to the cross to lay down His life to pay the penalty for our sin. While on His way to Jerusalem, Jesus continued to seek out lost people and share the truth with them, which is precisely what He did throughout His entire ministry.

Insights

Jesus and Zacchaeus

In Luke 19:7, the people grumbled when Jesus sought out Zacchaeus, saying “He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.” By pursuing a relationship with anyone who welcomed Him, Jesus provided a great example for us of a life defined by mission. Jesus explicitly stated His specific purpose in Luke 19:10: “For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.” Jesus not only saves people, but He seeks them out in order to do so. Jesus is intentional.



Zacchaeus was a man who seemed to have it all together. He was wealthy, he had a good job, and he had power in the community. Yet, in his interaction with the Lord, he realized that none of that compares to what Jesus offers. Once Zacchaeus experienced salvation through Jesus, he immediately developed a desire to make things right with those he had wronged. He did not avoid his past sins, but understood the gravity of his sin and sought to reconcile with those he had wronged. Although Jesus' death on the cross pays the eternal penalty for our sin, seeking to make right the relationships that were hurt by our sin is of huge importance.

The Parable of the Minas

After Jesus' interaction with Zacchaeus, He told those around Him a parable as He was approaching Jerusalem. Jesus often used parables to teach deep and profound spiritual truths through recognizable cultural stories. Here Jesus spoke of three different servants being given 1 "mina" each, and then He described what each servant did with their minas while their master was away. One servant multiplied his original mina to 10, another increased his mina to five, and the final servant kept his one mina hidden so he wouldn't lose it.

The master celebrates the servants who were faithful with what was given to them and yielded growth. In our spiritual lives, God gives us gifts and abilities to steward and use for His glory. The servant in the parable who hid his mina was afraid to do anything with it because he was afraid of his master. This misunderstanding kept the servant from following what his master had asked of him. When we understand that our good standing with God does not change based on our performance, we feel the freedom to be faithful with what He gives us and to continue growing in our relationship with Him.

The Triumphal Entry

While Jesus is entering Jerusalem, Jesus' disciples were exuberant with their words and exclamations of who He is. In Luke 19:38 they proclaim, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" While the disciples did not know what was coming next, they were unabashed in their proclamation of their coming King.

The Pharisees, Jewish rulers of the day, heard what the disciples were saying, they told Jesus to rebuke them. Jesus' response was one of the many he makes regarding His divinity. In Luke 19:40 Jesus said, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out." Even if my disciples weren't saying these things, because I am the Lord, God's son, the creation would exclaim my goodness.

The entire earth is under the same curse of sin as we are, and eagerly awaits Jesus to return and "make all things new" (Revelation 21:5). Until then, we are to continue to live out the great commission that Jesus gave before he ascended into heaven. In Matthew 28:19 Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."

Other Scripture

- Matthew 28:18-20
- Luke 5:27-32
- Romans 8:22-25
- Romans 12:18
- Galatians 5:16-25
- Revelation 21:1-5

Conversation

Anything stick out to you from this week's message?

One result of Zacchaeus' salvation through Jesus was an immediate desire reconcile with those he had wronged. Do you feel this burden in your life with anyone? If so, what's keeping you from pursuing reconciliation?

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Consider the parable of the minas. Which servant do you identify with the most? Do you feel the freedom to invest your life boldly for Jesus, or are you more likely to be afraid of God's view of you?

How can you celebrate God's character and goodness in your life?

How can we pray for you?

Your Notes

Who sent Jesus to the cross?

Luke 22:1-65

Background You Should Know

The last week of Jesus' earthly life happened during the Feast of Unleavened bread, a week long celebration for the Jews. This festival was celebrated each year by the nation of Israel to remember God's freeing them from slavery in Egypt. Jews would travel from far distances back to Jerusalem to celebrate God's work on their behalf. Ironically, it was during this week that those opposed to Jesus were plotting to kill Him.

Jesus was nearing the end of His public ministry and was using the last few days with His disciples to prepare them for when He will no longer be with them. In Chapter 21, Jesus warned His disciples of what they should expect now that they've given their lives to Him. In Luke 21:18 Jesus reminded them that, although their lives would not be easy, "not a hair on your head will perish."

Insights

Jesus, the true Passover lamb

During the Feast of Unleavened bread, the Jews shared a meal called "Passover" together. The Passover was instituted by God to help the Jews remember a key moment in their history from way



back in Exodus 12. On that night an angel of the Lord came and carried out God's last plague on the nation of Egypt, "passing over" all the Jews who put the blood of a lamb on their doorpost. As the first Passover represented the Jews being freed from bondage in Egypt, Jesus' death as our Passover lamb represents our being freed from the bondage of sin.

Jesus' death on the cross is sufficient to pay the penalty of sin because He was perfect even though we are not. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "For our sake, He (God the Father) made Him (Jesus) to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." By believing in Jesus death on the cross, God frees us from the bondage of sin and we are able to live in freedom from sin's power in our lives. Today, as a way to remember what Jesus has done for us, we celebrate communion. We eat bread and drink wine to remember Jesus' body being broken and blood being shed for us.

The leader as servant

Leadership in our culture is usually defined by success and power. If you were to ask what a strong leader was in our culture today, most people would probably think of a CEO or an entrepreneurial business owner. Jesus' idea of what it meant to lead was vastly different. After the disciples and Jesus had eaten dinner together, the disciples began to argue about which of them was the greatest. Jesus reminds them of the corrupt leadership they have experienced in their lives and says, "Rather, let the greatest among you become the youngest, and the leader as the one who serves" (Luke 22:26).

Jesus knew what is going on in the disciples' hearts and immediately challenged them. Leadership will not be seen by how powerful you are but by how you serve. Jesus' example in His ministry is evidence of this. He was a servant. He consistently loved and cared for those around Him. Jesus' example of service and sacrifice challenges us in our own faith. Am I seeking glory from men or from God? Am I a servant leader? Jesus' challenge to His disciples is a sobering reminder that leadership is not having a seat of power, but voluntarily taking the lowly place of servant to those around us. We need

Who Sent Jesus To The Cross?

God's grace in this life effort because our default position tends to be to seek glory for ourselves more than God.

Jesus prays

"If God knows everything, why should I pray?" This is a common question among many Christians today. Prayer tends to become more of a chore than an upbuilding time of communication with God. The night before Jesus is arrested, He withdrew from His disciples and spent some alone time with God the Father. In this time of prayer, Jesus shared His anxiety about what He was going to experience in the next 24 hours. He even asked God the Father to "remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42). Jesus' prayer is a reflection of the trust He had in His heavenly father.

Although God, being infinite and eternal, knows what will happen and how certain events will go, we do not. We are limited in our understanding of the world and how to best live with what we have been given. By communicating with God in prayer, we are making a statement that we trust Him and that we want to share His heart. That is why we pray for the salvation of those around us, for wisdom in our decision making, and for help when the effects of our sin and the sin of others weighs heavily on us. As our love and trust of God grows, our communication with God through prayer should grow as well.

Other Scripture

- Exodus 12-13
- Luke 11:1-13
- John 13:1-20
- Philippians 4:6
- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

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Conversation

Anything stick out to you from this week's message?

What does it mean to be "freed from the bondage of sin?" Would you say that this is true of you? Why or why not?

Check out Luke 22:24-27. How does Jesus' teaching fly in the face of what our culture defines as "great?" Do you tend to serve others, or is your desire more to be served by others? How specifically can you follow the example of Jesus, who became "great" by serving to the point where He laid down His life for us?

How fruitful is your prayer life? What can you learn and apply from Jesus' example in this area of your life?

How can the group pray for you?

Your Notes



It is Finished

Luke 22:66-23:56

Background You Should Know

After Jesus spent time with His disciples during the Passover feast, He went off to pray to His Father on the Mount of Olives. One of Jesus' twelve disciples, a man who was one of His closest followers, then led the authorities to Him. Jesus did not fight the authorities that came to arrest Him, but instead went willingly. This was the beginning of the end of Jesus' earthly life and ministry, and it is a brutal account of pain and sacrifice.

Crucifixion was the death penalty of the first century, an extended process of slowly suffocating the criminal by hanging them on a wooden cross. In fact, "crucify" is where our English word "excruciating" originates from. On top of the brutality of the cross, Jesus was also beaten, spit on, and mocked as a common criminal. And yet Jesus willingly went through all of this, humiliation and suffering He didn't deserve, so that the penalty of sin could be paid for. This is why in John 14:6 Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to Father except through me."

Insights

The Most Important Question

Throughout Jesus' ministry He often challenged others to consider their view of the "truth" in light of the truth that's found in

It Is Finished

Scripture. For example, Jesus would answer questions about the kingdom of God and probe into the beliefs that others had about Him. While Jesus was before the council, the rulers of the Jews asked Him directly if He was the Christ. Though Jesus did not answer them directly this time, He had clearly shown Himself to be the Son of God by His teaching and miracles.

The question the rulers asked Jesus is the single most important question anyone could ever ask in their lifetime. Is Jesus the Christ? Is He the One whom God has sent to pay the price for sin and save those who put their faith in Him? The rulers asked Him this question not so they could believe, but to condemn Him to death. When we come to terms with the truth of the Bible and who Jesus really is, there are two responses. We can neglect the truth and continue to be our own God, or we can turn from our sin and turn toward Jesus and His saving work for us. Who is Jesus to you?

Jesus Could Have Saved Himself

In Luke 23:35, many people were gathered around Jesus when He was on the cross, but the rulers scoffed and mocked Him. They said, “He saved others; let Him save himself, if He is the Christ of God, His Chosen One!” Remember, as these insults were hurled toward Jesus, He could have come down off the cross and stopped the entire process at any point. Because Jesus was fully man and fully God, He had the power to end the painful torment he went through. But He didn’t.

In fact, Jesus never resisted during His arrest or during His crucifixion. He understood that His mission on earth as a human being was remove the sins of the world through His death on the cross. At the same time, Jesus was aware of the gravity of this mission and even asked God the Father to take it away from Him. In the end, Jesus remained steadfast and chose not to save Himself so that by His death He could save many. In Romans 5:18-19 it says, “Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.” We experience real life when we are justified by Jesus’ act of righteousness for us.

Two Criminals

There is much confusion about salvation among those who claim to follow Jesus. Some believe baptism is required, others believe that a righteous life of works alongside faith is what brings forth salvation in a person. Jesus' interaction with a criminal in the final hours of his life show us that it is by faith alone, "sola fide," that one comes into a relationship with the living God.

While Jesus hung on the cross, there were two criminals being crucified with Him. Both of these criminals were guilty and were being punished for their wrongdoing. One of the criminals echoed the sentiments of the rulers, while the other defended Jesus and requested something from Him. In Luke 23:42 he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." This statement reflects genuine faith in this man. He believed that Jesus is who He says He is, and Jesus replied, "truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise."

In Ephesians 2:8-9 it says, "for by grace that you have been saved, through faith. And this is not of your own doing, it is the gift of God, not a result of works so that no one may boast."

Other Scripture

- Isaiah 53
- Luke 9:18-20
- Romans 5:12-21
- Ephesians 2:8-9
- 1 Corinthians 15:1-5

Conversation

Anything stick out to you from this week's message?

What happens when we confuse salvation by works with salvation by faith? How does knowing God saves us through His grace change our view of God? How does it change how we live our lives?

In our culture today, who do people today say that Jesus is? List some common misconceptions of Jesus and the reasons behind them. How do these misconceptions affect our world?

How do Jesus' words to the criminal give you hope? How do Jesus' words give hope to the world?

How can the group pray for you?

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Your Notes

Death can't hold

Luke 24 - Acts 1:16

Background You Should Know

"I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better, fuller evidence of every sort, to the understanding of a fair enquirer, than the great sign which God hath given us that Christ died, and rose again from the dead."

- Thomas Arnold¹

The resurrection of Jesus is the most important event in the history of the world. It is at the center of the Christian faith. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 15:19 we are told that if the resurrection had not occurred, Christians are "most to be pitied." The resurrection is proof that Jesus is who He said He was. It's proof that death could not hold Him, and that we will experience resurrection if we have put our faith in Him. Easter is the celebration of this glorious truth, that we have a Messiah whose life, death, and resurrection has made a way for us to experience salvation and life to the full.

Insights

Resurrection

The disciples were heartbroken after Jesus was crucified. Some of Jesus' closest followers, upon arriving at his tomb, were greeted by two angels and were frightened. After hearing from the angels, they remembered Jesus' words and ran back to tell the disciples what had happened. This is exactly what happens in our lives



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when we hear the life-changing news of the Gospel. When Jesus' words take root in our hearts, when God gives us faith to believe, we are excited to share that message with those around us.

In Luke 24:11, when the disciples heard these words, many didn't believe it because it seemed to be an "idle tale." However Peter, upon hearing, ran to the tomb for proof of what he had heard. He was no longer paralyzed with doubt and fear, but ran to see the evidence of Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

On The Emmaus Road

Two of Jesus' followers were walking to the town of Emmaus, talking about what had just happened in Jerusalem. Jesus, now resurrected, met them on the road and engaged them in conversation. While their eyes were kept from recognizing Him, Jesus began talking to them about what they had seen in Jerusalem. In Luke 24:27 it says that "beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, (He) interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."

Too often, people are intimidated by the Old Testament and how to study it. Many spend the bulk of their time in the New Testament books, thinking it's easier to apply or understand. But Jesus shows us here that the entire Bible (the Law, History, Prophets, Poetry, and everything else) is all about Him. He walked through the Old Testament with these two guys and shared with them how He Himself was the fulfillment of each prophecy, that He was the Messiah that God promised He would send. Although it can be challenging to read and study, the Old Testament is a rich part of God's Word that shows how God was unfolding His plan of redemption before He sent Jesus into the world to pay the price for our sin.

The Holy Spirit Promised

After Jesus was resurrected, He spent many days with those closest to Him. Before He ascended into heaven, He commanded His disciples to stay in Jerusalem until they would receive the Holy Spirit. This is the same Holy Spirit that would soon empower

Death Can't Hold

them to share Jesus' message of salvation in Jerusalem and eventually to the ends of the earth.

Just like the disciples, when we put our trust in Jesus we also receive the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, grows us in godliness, and enables us to understand God's Word. The Holy Spirit also works through us to carry out God's mission in saving people today. In Romans 10:17 Paul writes, "faith comes through hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."

The Ascension

When Jesus was about to ascend into heaven, those closest to Him asked Him a really important question about restoring the kingdom to Israel. In Acts 1:7 Jesus said to them, "it is not for you to know the times or season that the Father has fixed on his own authority." This wasn't a harsh answer to their question, but a reminder to live out the mission with what they have been given.

Many people become frustrated with the Bible's lack of clarity on certain issues. Although the Bible does not provide explicit answers for every issue and problem, it does provide wisdom in navigating every situation. In our faith, we need to make it a habit to go to the Bible in times when we need direction or encouragement from God. James, the half-brother of Jesus, encouraged us in this as well. In James 1:5 it says, "if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him."

Other Scripture

- 2 Samuel 7:12-17
- 1 Corinthians 15:1-5
- Hebrews 10:19-25
- James 1:1-12
- 1 Peter 1:3-6

Conversation

Anything stick out to you from this week's message?

Why is the resurrection such a crucial part of the Christian faith? How should we talk about the resurrection when we are sharing our faith with others?

On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate yourself on your familiarity with the Old Testament? Are you content with that? How can your Life Group be of help?

In what way do you experience the Holy Spirit working in your life? Do you see the Holy Spirit convicting you of sin, helping you understand the word, and growing you in godliness?

Where do you typically go to find wisdom? Where does the Bible rank? Are you willing to trust God's Word in as the primary source of wisdom in your life?

How can the group pray for you?

Your Notes



On this rock

Acts 1:17 - Acts 2:47

Background You Should Know

The book known as the “Acts of the Apostles” is Luke’s follow up letter to the Gospel of Luke. It serves as a continuing narrative of the apostles and their work of ministry in the 1st century. By this time Jesus had ascended into heaven, and His followers had been commissioned to be witnesses to people all around the world. The once timid disciples now had a mission to share the Gospel with a hostile world around them.

Throughout the entire book of Acts, we see evidence of God working through His people. The title of the book, the “Acts of the Apostles,” could easily be misunderstood. It might imply that everything that happened during this time was accomplished through the power of the “apostles,” men who had been personally sent out by Jesus. Darrell Bock of Dallas Theological Seminary suggests a more fitting title for the book. He likes, “The Acts of the Sovereign God through the Lord Messiah Jesus by his Spirit on Behalf of the Way.”² His hypothetical title of the book highlights both the power of God and the means by which the message of Jesus is spread: not through the power of man but by God’s power and plan working through those who believe in Him.

Insights

The Day Of Pentecost

Pentecost was an annual festival during which the Jews all gathered together to worship God and thank Him for the harvest. In Acts 2 the Pentecost for that particular year was taking place fifty days after Jesus' death, and the city of Jerusalem was packed. While they were all together, the Holy Spirit descended and empowered them to speak in earthly languages they had never been taught (known as "speaking in tongues") so that people in Jerusalem could hear and understand the works of God in their own language. Many were bewildered by this astonishing experience.

Even though some people were amazed, others mocked and suggested that the apostles were drunk! Sadly, this is an all too common reaction from people when the power of God is clearly seen. Even today when someone believes in the Gospel and receives the Holy Spirit, many people will mock the life change that is tangibly seen. Maybe your life has been changed by God and as it says in 2 Corinthians 5:17 you are "a new creation." If so, your role is to be open and loving with the truth of the Gospel, and God's role is to change the hearts of people and give them faith to believe.

Peter's Sermon

Peter responded to the mocking of the people by teaching them about Jesus. In the first recorded sermon in Acts, Peter used much of the Old Testament to teach how Jesus was the Messiah that God sent for us. Peter's words rang true to his Jewish audience, and he was able to share the truth of God's redemptive plan of sending Jesus into the world to pay for sin.

The preaching of the word is the primary means by which the Gospel is shared and lives are changed. In Romans 1:16 it says, "for I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also to the Greek." The Gospel is the good news that Jesus life, death and resurrection has made a way for us to be in relationship with God, and it has great power to change

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people. In Acts 2:37, it says the people “were cut to the heart.” After this sermon, 3000 people repented and were baptized, a demonstration of God’s amazing power to save those who believe in Him.

The Community

God used Peter’s sermon to save a few thousand people, causing huge growth of the community in a really short time. Whenever this quick growth happens in a church, there are many ways that the community can be hurt or hindered in their growth. Selfishness, immaturity and divisiveness are all ways that Satan can work to destroy a community of believers.

In Acts 2:42-47, there is a great description of what true community can look like. They devoted themselves to the teaching of God’s word, they prayed, they were sacrificial with what they owned, they shared meals together and were involved in the lives of one another. This community was so attractive to others that in verse 47 it says, “the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.” There is something powerful when a group of believers live their lives together in community. One of the ways we live out this value at Riverview is through Life Groups, which are great environments for our people to live Gospel centered lives that are on mission and in community.

Other Scripture

- Matthew 28:18-20
- Galatians 3:25-29
- 1 Peter 2:9-12
- 1 Peter 4:7-11
- Jude 20-21

Conversation

Anything stick out to you from this week's message?

Has anyone ever mocked you because of the way God is working in your life? If so, how did you respond?

Describe a time when you heard a sermon and you were "cut to the heart." What specific conviction did you experience? What action steps did you take as a result?

How does your Life Group compare to the description in Acts 2:42-47? What specific attitude or behavior from this passage can you apply to your life?

Do you consider your Life Group to be a "Gospel witness" to the community? How can you be intentional with this?

How can we pray for you?

Perpendicularity

Your Notes

No other name

Acts 3:1 - 4:31

Background You Should Know

After Peter's sermon, the community of God grew from roughly 120 people to over 3000. This new group of Christians experienced the joy of community by sharing life together, studying the word and praying. As the group continued to grow spiritually, God grew their community by more and more people coming to faith.

After this sermon, Peter and John continued to be bold with the message to the Gospel in Jerusalem. In this section of Scripture we see how they dealt with opposition from those in power during the time. Their example of unflinching trust should be encouraging to us as they cling to God in the midst of persecution and threat from the governing authorities. Peter and John, empowered by the Holy Spirit, are committed to lead people to Jesus regardless of the resistance they face.

Insights

Peter's Second Sermon

Peter wasted no time after his first sermon and went into Solomon's portico to begin preaching again. Solomon's portico was a place in the temple known for commerce and discussion. In fact, in John 10:23 we see that Jesus Himself taught in Solomon's portico. Now Peter began preaching, but before he spoke, God healed



a lame man through Peter. This man was clinging to them as he began teaching about Jesus.

In Acts 3:16 we see that Peter used this tangible evidence of God's power to share that "the faith that is through Jesus has given this man this perfect health in the presence of you all." It is by faith and trust in Jesus that this man was healed of his physical ailment. Peter then returned to the Old Testament to share how God had orchestrated and worked throughout history to eventually carry out His work through Jesus and His ministry. Peter is a great example of how we should continue to use what is familiar to people to share the Gospel. Peter, preaching to Jews, used their rich history and understanding of the Scripture to show the truth of the Gospel and urge them to turn to Jesus.

Salvation In No One Else

The rulers of the day heard that Peter and John had healed this man outside the temple and in Acts 4:7 they asked, "by what power or what name did you do this?" Peter, unfazed by who he was speaking to, let them know it was by the power of Jesus that this man was healed. In Acts 4:12 he says, "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." The exclusivity of this statement may cause some to bristle, but Peter is only echoing what Jesus himself says in John 14:6. Jesus is the only one by which we anyone in the world can be saved from their sin. When we understand this, it leads us to being bold with the Gospel with those around us.

Astonished By The Average Joes

Often we hear people say, "I would read the Bible more if it wasn't so difficult to understand." While the Bible can be a difficult book to read and study, it is not impossible. In his *Systematic Theology*, Wayne Grudem speaks about the clarity of Scripture, saying, "the idea that the Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by all who will read it seeking God's help and being willing to follow it."³ If we approach the Bible with a reliance on God to help us and a willingness to follow what it says, the Holy Spirit will help us understand it.

No Other Name

Remember, Peter and John were both fishermen before Jesus called them to follow him. In fact, in Acts 4:13 it says the rulers “perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished.” Following Jesus does not necessarily mean having a college degree or having an above average intelligence. Being a Christian means giving over your life and desires to Jesus and fully trusting that He will be enough for you. God can use anyone to accomplish His work. In 1 Corinthians 1:27-29 it says, “God has chosen what is foolish in the eyes of the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being may boast in the presence of God.”

The Unity Of The Early Community

The early Christian community is described in Acts 4:32 as being of “one heart and soul.” When we think of community, the distinction between “unity” and “uniformity” is an important one. Sadly, many communities strive for uniformity, creating a group of people who are not diverse in their gifting or roles in the body. Unity however, is much more highly valued as a description of godly community. The body has many parts, and each is called to use their gifting and role in the community to share the Gospel and love people. When we are unified with that purpose, the diversity in the church is celebrated and we are a much stronger body of believers.

Other Scripture

- John 1:35-51
- John 14:6
- 1 Corinthians 12:12-26
- Galatians 6:9-10
- James 1:3-5

Perpendicularity

Conversation

Anything stick out to you from this week's message?

As believers, how should we engage with the culture in order to share the Gospel with those around us? How is Peter's example encouraging to us?

Describe your relationship with God's Word. Are you encouraged or discouraged when you read and study it? How does your study of the book of Acts challenge your view of God and of the Bible?

Has your church experience been characterized more by "unity" or by "uniformity?" How does the goal of advancing the Gospel impact your commitment to unity?

How can the group pray for you?

No Other Name

Your Notes



One Little Lie

Acts 4:32 - 5:11

Background You Should Know

The Christian church was being established. The Holy Spirit was recently given to believers for the first time, and the apostles started to preach the Gospel of Jesus. Persecution began, a couple of the apostles (Peter and John) were recently released from the religious leaders, and God miraculously healed people through the apostles. On the heels of this, the church was united as they grew in their understanding of who God is and how to live in light of this new understanding.

Insights

Generosity

Generosity is a natural outcome of a focus on Jesus. When we are united in Jesus and eternity, we won't hold on to our earthly things. This was a powerful time in the church when God's presence was constantly being seen and felt, and the result was a focus on eternal things which helped them let go of their earthly stuff. This does not mean that every single person in the church was selling absolutely everything they had and becoming poor in the name of Jesus. Verse 34 says, "from time to time..." showing that this was something that happened at different times to meet needs, not something that every single person in the church was necessarily taking part in.

Hypocrisy

Ananias and Sapphira wanted to look spiritually mature, but their hearts weren't spiritually right. They looked around and saw that people in the church were being applauded for being generous, so they did the same thing. However, they weren't motivated by the Gospel. Instead, they wanted recognition from men, not God. This is what makes someone a hypocrite, when they act a certain way to gain approval from others, not because they honestly believe in what they are doing.⁴

Submission

Wives have a responsibility to submit to their husbands (Ephesians 5:22), but in the case of a husband sinning against God, the wife's first responsibility is always to God. Submission to God trumps submission to any authority on earth. Acts 5:2 suggests that when Ananias revealed his sinful plan to his wife she didn't try to deter him. Part of a wife's responsibility in submission is to speak God's truth into their relationship and strongly encourage her husband in the way of God. Ananias and Sapphira sinned jointly, and both were held accountable for their actions.

All Sin Is Against God

When we sin, ultimately we are sinning against God. In telling a lie to people, Ananias was lying to the Holy Spirit as well. This is similar to David's confession to God in Psalm 51. He said, "against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge." David committed adultery and murder, and for sure sinned against people, but he recognized that ultimately and most importantly his sin was against God Himself. It's true that Ananias and Sapphira lied to the church leaders, but ultimately in doing so they lied to God as well.

The Deaths Of Ananias And Sapphira

It is shocking to read that Ananias and Sapphira were struck down to death because of their sin. Most likely, God was using extraordinary events like this (as well as other miracles and signs) to establish the church, which is why this is something we don't see happening today. God was teaching about His power and justice in a time when it was

Perpendicularity

necessary to establish solid truth and lay a foundation. Perhaps God felt it was crucial to weed out any hypocrisy or corruption in the church as it was just starting. Or maybe God needed to powerfully display the seriousness of sin and teach others to have a healthy fear of it. Whatever the reason, this event ended up being a powerful example for others, leading people to take the apostles and the Gospel message seriously.

Other Scripture

- Ezekiel 11:19
- Psalm 51: 4
- Acts 2:44
- 2 Corinthians 8:14-15

Conversation

Did anything stick out to you from this week's message?

In Acts 4:36-5:4, Luke is showing us contrasting examples. Read this passage and discuss the difference between Joseph and Ananias. What was right about Joseph's actions, and wrong about Ananias'?


In Acts 5:5-10 we see that God takes sin seriously. When you think about the result of Ananias and Sapphira's sin, does this surprise you? What effect did this event have on the church?

One Little Lie

*What are some ways that people can be hypocritical in the church or Christianity today?
How can we resist falling into hypocrisy ourselves?*

Generosity flows out of an understanding of the Gospel. Are there any needs you see around you that you or your Life Group could help out with? What is one specific need you could help meet this week?

Your Notes



If this is of God

Acts 5:12 - 42

Background You Should Know

As we read through Acts we see the Christian church continuing to be established. The apostles were unabashedly preaching the truth of Jesus as the Savior, and their foundational message was being confirmed by miraculous healings and events. The church was uniting in their understanding of who God was, resulting in a healthy balance of generosity for others, love for God and people, and a reverence for God and His miraculous power.

Insights

Fear Of God

The church at this time was developing a healthy fear, or reverence, of the power of God. They witnessed the death of Ananias and Sapphira as a result of their sin, and they saw powerful healings and miracles. As a result of all of this, more people were brought to faith in Jesus. This “fear” that the people felt was not necessarily horror or dread, but was instead the awe and reverence that goes along with anything too big for us to understand.

Persecution For Christ

Resistance, even to the point of persecution, comes when we share the truth of Jesus. Living for God does not guarantee that we will have a healthy and happy life. In fact, the Bible teaches that

often it's the contrary. But it also teaches that we, like the apostles, can find profound joy in the middle of suffering.

On God's Team

Gamaliel's advice in Acts 5:33-39 implies that if something is from God, it's unstoppable. As a result we can be assured that when we're speaking truth from God's word, what we're saying will be effective and used by God, no matter how the odds might seem stacked against us. God is in charge of what happens, not us.

Other Scripture

Signs and Wonders To Confirm The Message

- Matthew 14:36
- Acts 2:43; 4:30; 14:3; 19:11
- Mark 6:55-56; 16:20
- Romans 15:19
- 2 Corinthians 12:12
- Hebrews 2:4

Persecution

- Matthew 5:12
- Mark 13:9
- Luke 21:12
- John 15:18-25
- 1 Peter 4:13-16
- James 1:2-4; 12

God's Plan

- Lamentations 3:37
- Isaiah 8:9-10
- Proverbs 21:30
- Acts 11:17

Conversation

Did anything stick out to you from this week's message?

Have a look back at Acts 4:29-31. During their experience of persecution, what did the believers pray for? In what ways did God answer this prayer in Acts 5:12-42?

The apostles were commanded by God to go out and teach, and they did. This wasn't necessarily easy, and they knew there could be harsh consequences. Is there anything you know you are commanded to do in God's Word that you aren't doing out of fear of what might happen?

What are the types of persecution, or resistance, that we can experience today? Have you experienced any of these? Based on this passage, what should our reaction be?

Check out Acts 5:41. Why can Christians rejoice in persecution? How does this apply today? (See also 1 Peter 4:14; John 15:18-19; James 1:2-4)

Your Notes



The face of an angel

Acts 6 - 7

Background You Should Know

The Christian church was growing quickly as the apostles continued to spread the message of Christ, and God was powerfully working through healings and miracles to confirm the truth of His message. Along with the rapid growth of the church came growing pains from within the church, and increased persecution from the outside. Acts 6-7 focuses on how the Gospel mission is not only for the Jews, but also for the Gentiles (the rest of humanity).

The Hellenistic (Greek) and the Hebraic (Hebrew) Jews mentioned in the beginning of this passage had racial and cultural differences. The Hellenists were Greek-speaking Jews who had been born in the provinces, where the Hebraic were Jews born in Palestine who spoke Aramaic and often looked down on the Hellenists as inferior. This “neglecting” of the Grecian widows may or may not have been intentional, but it was a problem that needed to be resolved quickly in order for unity in the church to be restored.⁵

Insights

Church Growth

The Church is not a static thing: it is often growing and changing. Acts 6-7 takes place during a drastic time of growth, and as with any rapid growth, there were growing pains. There are always

things that need to be changed or evaluated when the church grows. The first priority of the church always needs to be spreading God's message, as seen in the apostles' priority of preaching and teaching. But there should also be a delegation of leaders to meet the needs of the people in the community. When a church is small, a certain system may work just fine, but once the old system isn't working due to growth, things may need to be changed for the sake of unity and love.

Qualifications For Ministry Leaders

The most important qualities when selecting the leaders of this ministry were a reliance on the Holy Spirit and wisdom. There is no mention that Stephen or any of the other leaders were experienced in food distribution, had a heart for children or widows, or had any other specific talents that coincided with the role. If there is a need in the church, a deep trust in God and wisdom that comes from studying and applying His Word can be applied to any task and can well equip anyone.

Different Roles

Different people play different roles in the church, and yet all roles are important, and all can serve to spread the message of Christ. The twelve apostles were commissioned by God specifically to preach and teach. But there were other needs as well. Stephen was given a role that might be deemed less important by some, but God used him in miraculous ways. No matter someone's gifting or role in the church, God can powerfully use anyone willing to serve Him.

God's Protection

God did not protect Stephen from persecution, or even death. When we trust in God, it doesn't always guarantee our physical safety. But it does guarantee God will use us, and never leave us, and we will be safe with Him in eternity. We can take comfort in the fact that God is with us no matter what it is we're going through, and remember that He himself suffered to the point of death. There is nothing we will go through that is harder than what God himself faced.

Testimony through Suffering

“Stephen’s most effective contribution to the kingdom of God came through his martyrdom, not through his blessing...[T]he sermons you preach through your pain are louder than the sermons you can ever preach through your blessings...There is an amplification that God can give to your testimony in pain that he just can give in your blessing.” - JD Greear⁶

Stephen’s “Face Of An Angel”

“Stephen’s face did not have that mild, soft, angelic look that we see in so many paintings; neither was it a look of stern judgment and wrath. Instead, his face reflected the perfect peace and confidence of one that knows and trusts God. His face had the same reflected glory that Moses had as he spent time with God in Exodus 34:29-35. The description is of a person who is close to God and reflects some of His glory as a result of being in His presence. “The face of an angel” also means that Stephen was at perfect peace. His face was not filled with fear or terror, because he knew his life was in God’s hands and that Jesus never leaves His people.”⁷

Love God. Love People.

When Stephen was faced with an angry mob, he did not look around at the circumstances or get nervous about what was going on around him. Instead, he looked up to God with his focus on Jesus. Through his entire stoning his eyes stayed on God. And then, his prayer to God led him to love those killing him, even in the exact moment they were doing it.

Stephen Was Competent In The Scriptures

This man knew his Bible! While he was questioned during his trial, Stephen spontaneously walked through the entire Old Testament from memory. He weaved together much of God’s history with Israel, quoting Scripture and going into great detail at some points. Why was Stephen full of faith, the Holy Spirit, grace, power, and wisdom?

Because he was full of God's Word. The result of his competency in the Word was not only reflected in his Christ-like character, but reflected in the fact that no one could "withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking," as it says in Acts 6:10. No one could refute him. To refute Stephen was, in a sense, to refute God, whose word dwelt so richly in Stephen's heart and mind.⁸

Other Scripture

- The books of Genesis and Exodus are both summarized in Stephen's speech
- Amos 5:23-27
- Psalm 31:5; 35:16; 37:12
- Isaiah 66:1-2
- Ecclesiastes 8:1
- Matthew 5:17, 44; 5:34-35; 10:28; 23:37
- Luke 21:14-15; 23:34, 46
- John 7:19
- Acts 22:20
- Romans 2:28-29; 8:35-39

Conversation

Did anything stick out to you from this week's message?

Stephen tells the Jews they are not really obeying the Law because they are missing the whole point, which is Jesus. Their works were not enough. When are you tempted to believe you are saving yourself, that your works are good enough? Read Ezekiel 36:26-27 and Romans 2:28-29 and talk about why obedience on it's own isn't enough.

Perpendicularity

How was Stephen able to pray for those killing him in the midst of being killed? Looking at the example of Jesus, talk about how this type of selflessness is possible, and try to think of examples where you've seen people acting in similar selfless ways.

When you are suffering, where is your focus? Are you looking up to God and seeing Jesus, or are you looking out around you, trying to handle the situation on your own strength? How could you focus more on Jesus instead of your circumstance?

All Christians are called to serve God and His people, not just a church's pastor and leaders. How are you serving right now? If you're not, where could you? How could your Life Group serve your church together?

How can the group pray for you?

Your Notes

Rise and go

Acts 8

Background You Should Know

Stephen, one of the apostles, was martyred under the direction of Saul, and this set in motion a widespread persecution of the Christians. Many Christians left Jerusalem because of the persecution, and they started spreading the Gospel in their new cities.

In Acts 6:5, Philip was one of the seven men that was chosen to serve alongside Stephen in the widow ministry in the church. He went to Samaria, an area that Jews had before this time always avoided. There were strong ethnic and racial tensions between the Jews and Samaritans.

Peter and John were apostles sent to Samaria to confirm what was going on there. The Holy Spirit had just been given to the first believers, and it wasn't yet clear to the church if Samaritans (being non Jews) could receive the Holy Spirit as well. When Peter and John placed their hands on them, God confirmed that the Samaritans were authentic believers too. This was a significant moment for the church, which was just starting to realize that Samaritans were just as qualified to receive the Gospel as were God's chosen people, the Jews.



Insights

Good Out Of Bad

People were scattered throughout the region because of persecution. This helped spread the Gospel far beyond the city. Those persecuted didn't hold back in fear, but took advantage of the opportunity to speak the Word in their new location. While persecution was a terrible thing for people to go through, but God still used it to spread His Truth.

Baptism

Baptism is an outward demonstration of an inward change. Throughout this whole chapter, belief is paired with baptism. When the early believers came to faith, they were immediately baptized as a way to express their changed lives. Today, baptism serves the same purpose. It symbolizes our new birth in Christ and shows others this spiritual truth. When we believe inside, baptism is the outward way to show it, to tell it. Believing inwardly is what saves us, and at the same time an outward demonstration of that belief will naturally follow.

Receiving The Holy Spirit

The Bible is clear that we as believers receive the Holy Spirit as soon as we believe in Christ.⁹ The following Scripture passages support this view: John 3:5-16; John 14:16-28; Acts 1:5; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 1:13-14; Ephesians 4:30; 1 Corinthians 12:13; 2 Corinthians 1:22; 1 John 3:21-24; 1 Peter 4.

It is likely that God gave the Holy Spirit to the Samaritans in such an obvious way in order to provide an outward manifestation of a truth not yet possible to understand because the New Testament had not yet been written. Jesus' truth was sent out with the apostles, and their message was confirmed with signs. These apostles went on to write the New Testament, so in a sense we still have "their hands on us, giving us the Holy Spirit" as we read and believe the Gospel message in the Word.

True Belief in Christ

Simon believed in the power of Jesus and was baptized, but he still had a selfish heart. He wasn't so much attracted to the truth about Jesus as he was to the power that he wanted to possess for himself. He didn't want to actually worship God; he wanted the power of God in order that he himself could be worshipped. This was completely backward. A true Christ follower doesn't follow Christ for selfish gain, but instead out of a selfless love.

Jesus in the Old Testament

The whole Bible, both the Old and New Testament, points to Jesus. Some people think of the two testaments as completely separate, but the New Testament is actually a fulfillment of the Old. Everything in the Bible can be used to point others to the good news about Jesus. Someone familiar with the Old Testament, as Philip was, can show others how Jesus is the fulfillment of exactly what was written thousands of years before he showed up.

Other Scripture

- Isaiah 53:7-8
- Matthew 10:23
- Matthew 28:19
- Mark 16:16-18
- Luke 21:12
- Luke 24:27
- Acts 22:20; 26:10-11
- 1 Corinthians 15:9
- Galatians 1:13
- Galatians 3:27

Conversation

Did anything stick out to you from this week's message?

What does baptism mean to you? Share a little bit about your own baptism. If you are a believer, but have not yet been baptized, why not?

What first attracted you to the Gospel? How has this changed as your understanding of the Gospel has grown?

The persecuted Christians were scattered, yet wherever they went they spread the Gospel. When you find yourself in a new place, especially one you didn't expect or hope to be, do you look at it as a new opportunity to spread God's Word?

How can your Life Group be working together to spread the Gospel message to those around you?

Perpendicularity

Your Notes

Blinded by the Light

Acts 9:1-31

Background You Should Know

As the Christian church was growing, it faced increasing persecution from the Jews and religious leaders of the day. Saul, an educated and passionate Jew, was one of the leading persecutors of the early Christian movement, which at this time was called “The Way.” In Acts 7 we even see that Saul was the one who had supervised the stoning of Stephen.

Insights

Good Intentions

Saul was super passionate about defending his Jewish faith. His intentions were not bad. In fact, he was trying to defend God as best as he could understand Him to be. But good intentions, if not in line with the actual truth, do not equal right actions. Saul was gravely mistaken about who God was, and many people suffered as a result.

Saved by Grace

Saul was not seeking Jesus, but God chose him anyway. Just like Saul, we are not saved by any personal merit or by anything we do. Instead, we are saved simply because God chose to give us his grace. (Check out *Sola Gratia* at GotQuestions.org.)¹⁰



Scary Obedience

Ananias was called by God to do something that seemed crazy and even dangerous. God asked him to go visit a man that was known for throwing Christians into prison. Ananias obeyed anyway, and the results were amazing – Ananias got to be a key player in Saul’s conversion. When we obey God in ways that seem impossible, we often get the privilege of playing a part in His story, sometimes in significant ways that we never could have imagined.

God’s Unlikely Instruments

Christians were being tortured, persecuted, and killed. Families and homes were being ripped apart, and there was Saul, standing by watching it all happen. Not only did he approve, but he even organized and led these persecutions. And yet, this is the guy who would end up being one of the most instrumental people in the spreading of the Gospel, a guy who wrote thirteen of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. No matter someone’s background or experience, God can use them. He often chooses the most unlikely candidates to do his greatest works. Regardless of what you’ve done yourself, God can use you as a powerful witness for Him.

Fear And Love

Acts 9:31 talks about living in the fear of the Lord and being encouraged by the Holy Spirit. Belief in God should involve a mixture of reverence for his holiness and joy in our personal relationship with Him. God is powerful beyond any of us, and this inspires fear or reverence. He is also personal and loving, and this encourages us and inspires joy. An understanding of the fullness of God produces both fear and joy, and the two together go a long way in helping others come to know him too.

Other Scripture

- Daniel 10:7; John 12:29
- Acts 22:6-20
- I Corinthians 15:8-10
- Galatians 1:11-24
- Ephesians 3:7-8
- 2 Corinthians 11:23-28

Saved by Grace

- Luke 19:10
- John 6:44
- Romans 3:10-11; 5:8
- Ephesians 2:1-10; 3:7-8

Conversation

Did anything stick out to you from this week's message?

Saul was radically changed after an intense encounter he had with Jesus. When was the first time that you encountered Jesus in your life? Share with your group briefly how you came to know Christ.

Saul went on to become Paul, the very apostle Paul that wrote a third of the New Testament we now have in our hands. Does it surprise you that God would use someone like him to do such great works? What does this tell you about how God works?

Perpendicularity

Talk about how God chooses us not based on anything we've done, but purely by his grace. How does it impact our life when we truly accept God's unconditional grace instead of trying to earn it?

In Acts 9:31, it says the church grew as it was "walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit." How can we help each other live in the balance of "fear of the Lord" and "comfort of the Holy Spirit?" What are some ways your Life Group could help each other with this?

Your Notes



Unclean and common

Acts 9:32 - 10:48

Background You Should Know

At the beginning of the book of Acts, as Jesus ascended to heaven, He prophesied that His followers would spread the good news. They were to begin in Jerusalem (where Jesus was crucified), then move on to Judea and Samaria (the immediate surrounding countryside), and finally to “the ends of the earth.” Geographically, the story moves us through Lydda (25 miles NE of Jerusalem) to Joppa (another 10 miles or so, on the coast), quickly followed by a trip to Caesarea (about 30 miles north, a key shipping port). If you follow on a map, you can see how Luke is gradually moving his readers away from Jerusalem, according to the strategy Jesus laid out. Notice that the apostles didn’t rush around helter-skelter. Instead, they had a strategy, the strategy given to them by Jesus.

This passage recounts two dissimilar stories that point in the same direction. First, we get a peek into the lives of a paralyzed guy along with a woman who was handy with a needle. These were everyday people with challenging lives, but they kept faith at the center. Then we read about Cornelius, a powerful and respected military leader. Unlike the two people in the first story, Cornelius is an important guy, in an important location, doing an important job. And yet as different as each of these people were, each powerfully impacted by the Gospel.

Peter's vision about clean and unclean foods in Acts 10:9-16 doesn't make much sense unless we understand a bit about ancient Jewish culture. For hundreds of years, the Jews had lived by a complex system of laws and regulations, all revolving around their God. No other ethnicities had direct access to the true God, because the Jews were His people. God is introducing a new concept through Peter's vision. Now anyone can have access to Him, through Jesus who perfectly fulfilled the Law, accomplishing its purpose. The invitation is open, regardless of whether or not someone adopts the ancient Jewish faith. The Jewish Christians found this concept shocking.

Insights

Ordinary People

Luke is rapidly pulling together pieces of history that explain a plan God has been working on since the world began. In the midst of God's unfolding plan, we find a couple of people with rather mundane lives, Aeneas and Dorcus. These two ordinary people stand as a reminder of what redemption is all about. It's about Jesus renewing a broken world and healing the broken people who live in it.

In chapter 10 both Peter and Cornelius demonstrate serious humility and faith. Cornelius was an important Roman leader. In the eyes of his peers, in trusting Jesus Cornelius was embracing the religious beliefs of an inferior people. At the same time, Peter's peers would have seen him welcoming a non-Jewish, military enemy into the newborn Christian family.

The Holy Spirit

God prepared both men for this huge step of faith by sending them each a vision. We then see these men of God stepping out immediately in faith, enthusiastically participating in God's story. God confirms their actions by giving them the Holy Spirit the same sign He gave to the very first Jewish believers.

Perpendicularity

With tolerance being such a big deal in our culture, we might get the idea that this passage is about erasing distinctions and becoming tolerant. Don't make that mistake! Throughout the book of Acts, both Jews and Gentiles are called to repent and worship the King they had tried to destroy. The story of Cornelius is an illustration of this, as we see him turning his back on Roman "truth" because he is broken and needs healing. God invites us to come to Him as we are, and then to transform us from the inside out.

Other Scripture

- Acts 4:1-22
- Acts 8:1-39
- Galatians 3:28-29
- Ephesians 3
- Romans 3

Conversation

Anything stick out to you from this week's message?

How can you, as an "ordinary" individual, use your skills and resources to share the story of Jesus? How could your Life Group work together to share that same story?

What cultural or moral issues might make you feel resistant to sharing the Gospel with certain people, as Peter initially did in Acts 10:14? How might that impact your ability to share the story of Jesus?

When it comes to sharing the Gospel, how do we avoid having the truth that Jesus invites us to “come as you are” get confused with the lie that “all roads lead to heaven?” How does understanding the difference properly affect our view of the Gospel and sharing it with others?

Your Notes



The same gift

Acts 11

Background You Should Know

Keeping up with political issues in the Middle East can be a full time job, even today. Rewind the clock about two thousand years, and most of us are completely lost. While reading the New Testament, it's critical to remember that Rome had conquered Israel, and that the Jewish people were pushing hard against this oppression. In the first century things got so bad that the Jews revolted in 70 AD, starting one of the bloodiest rebellions in their history. The Roman military destroyed the city of Jerusalem, and the Jewish people scattered to the four corners of the known world. Merely ten years after the book of Acts was written, the great city of Jerusalem was obliterated.

Insights

One of the big themes in Acts is God's rescue plan is for everyone. Acts 11:1 is the first account we have in which a small group of Jesus' followers react negatively to non-Jews joining the church family. The author wanted his audience to understand that everyone was invited to participate in redemption, regardless of social status, ethnicity, or gender. He repeated the story of Cornelius' conversion through Peter's blow-by-blow account. As the story is repeated, the church leaders became increasingly convinced that this is indeed God's plan.

Peter's Testimony

In Acts 11:1-18 Peter's testimony is a good example of believers communicating with one another. God was working. Something surprising was happening, and an explanation was needed. Notice that Peter did so with humility and wisdom, and his listeners were anxious to understand. Don't limit God's work to your personal experience. On the other hand, if something doesn't agree with the Bible and the Jesus-focused people in your life, you should seriously question its validity. Here, Peter rose to the occasion with a clear and humble testimony of God's surprising work in Cornelius.

Humility And Faith

Later in Acts 11, Paul returned to the story, and we find Barnabas asking Paul for his help in discipling non-Jews. As a Jewish follower of Jesus, it would have been challenging to wrap your mind around the idea of Gentiles being on equal footing with the Jews and to teach new believers these new ideas. So Barnabas contacted Paul, who had impressive multi-cultural background. Again, we see an example of humility and faith. Barnabas put someone else into leadership who had deeper skills and understanding, exemplifying that leadership is not about prestige, it's about effectively sharing the story of Jesus.

Notice the selfless response of the church at Antioch in Acts 11:27-30 when they learned that a famine is on its way. Instead of turning inward and worrying about how they're going to make it, this church began making plans to help another group that's worse off than they are. As God's people, this is an encouragement to respond sacrificially to people in need, by acting out the same kind of generosity God has shown us.

Other Scripture

- Acts 15:6
- Galatians 2:12
- 1 Peter 3:8-17
- 2 Corinthians 5:6-21
- Romans 3

Perpendicularity

Conversation

Anything stick out to you from this week's message?

What issues make us hesitate in extending "family" to those coming in from the outside?

We have a variety of communication tools that were not available at the time Acts was written. Discuss how these might apply in sharing God's work both within and outside the church. Why is it important to communicate God's movement in our lives to other believers?

What is the difference between a "good idea" and the work of the Holy Spirit? How can we tell when God is truly at work?

What is our responsibility to meeting the needs of our fellow believers? How does that work out in your life? Within your church?

Your Notes



In and out

Acts 12

Background You Should Know

Identifying “King Herod” can be quite confusing, as three separate “Herods” are mentioned in the first five books of the New Testament. Herod is a family, not an individual name. The “Herod” in this section of Acts is Herod Agrippa, a vicious and paranoid tyrant installed by Rome as king of the Jews. Secular sources tell us that Herod Agrippa worked hard to reconcile relations between Rome and Jerusalem, which is what we see him attempting to do in this passage. By executing James and imprisoning Peter, Herod hopes Roman authorities would be impressed by his determination to stamp out political rebellion. It also would have pacified religiously zealous Hebrews, by defending their ancient tradition against perceived heresy. Unfortunately, Herod Agrippa’s political ambition put him in direct opposition with God’s plan, which was definitely not his best move.

Twice, the author mentions that Peter is miraculously released from prison during Passover. Why is this significant? Passover has been the “Independence Day” of Jewish history since God’s showdown with the Pharaoh of Egypt in the book of Exodus. This was the first of many times God saved His people, all pointing toward Jesus’ ultimate sacrifice, when He died and rose again to save mankind. The crucifixion of Jesus also took place at Passover, so it’s no surprise that God chose this special time of year to free Peter from his chained guards and prison walls.

Acts 12 highlights the confrontation between Israel's official, the reigning king Herod Agrippa, and the true King of Israel, Jesus. By the end of this chapter, in verses 18-24, the earthly king did his best to stamp out the spread of news of Jesus' ultimate triumph. He retreated, licking his wounds, and sought worship elsewhere until he was eventually struck dead.

Insights

Eternal Perspective

Jim Elliot, a twentieth century martyr, famously wrote, "he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."¹³ The guys in Acts 12:1-18 had a similar perspective. This passage tells the story of two men being persecuted for their faith. The first disciple, James, was martyred, but the second disciple, Peter, was dramatically rescued. When things are going well, it's easy enough to think, "God is good." This passage forces us to ask what that means. By typical standards, James' life did not end so well, but God was no less "good." The fact is, our belief in God's goodness and love often rests on how comfortable we are. Yet this story, and many others including Jesus', defies that definition of goodness. These men understood that ultimate joy is not found in enjoying your life, but in handing it over to God.

Laughter

In spite of all this persecution, Acts 12 has some hilarious scenes. There was an angel who basically had to bludgeon Peter to wake him up. There was a servant girl who got so excited that she rushed off, leaving Peter standing awkwardly on the front porch. And finally there was a devout group of believers, praying for all they're worth that God would rescue Peter from James' fate, but then thinking it's a ghost when God practically drops Peter off at the door. God has a sense of humor, so don't be afraid to laugh along with the Bible's funny stories.

Perpendicularity

Faith And Doubt

We have many accounts of the early church's unfailing trust in God, but in this passage the human side is evident. Although they were praying, they were doubtful. While they hoped that God would rescue Peter from Herod Agrippa's sword, they weren't really expecting it. In other words, they were regular people like you and me. Our Christian journey is a messy one, filled with faith and doubt. Sometimes it's encouraging to see that not all that much has changed in the last two thousand years. We still love Jesus, just like the early church did, and we still make fools of ourselves, just like they did.

Other Scripture

- Job 38:1-42:6
- Matthew 2
- Mark 6:14-29
- Hebrews 11
- Matthew 5:1-11

Conversation

Anything stick out to you from this week's message?

How do you respond when God chooses to rescue someone else from apparent devastation, but not you? If your health, family or respected position were stripped away from you, would you feel that God has let you down?

In And Out

Where in your life are you praying for God's intervention, yet doubting that He will do it?

In the end, Peter (and many of the other disciples too) ended up as martyrs because they wouldn't shut up about Jesus. How this fact impact your attitude toward talking with others about Jesus?

Your Notes



Being sent

Acts 13 - 14

Background You Should Know

These chapters summarize the first of three missionary journeys described in Acts. Paul and Barnabas stepped out from leading the church at Antioch, and intentionally sought new territory for sharing the good news of Jesus. Acts 13:3 talks about how the church elders “lay hands” on Paul and Barnabas before sending them out as missionaries with the story of the Gospel. This is a healthy pattern for church leadership, identifying new leaders, and publicly commissioning them to serve God.

Even though Paul and Barnabas were going to tell Jesus’ story to non-Jews, they still kicked things off by finding the local synagogues, which were the heart of Jewish civic life. Why did they go to the synagogues first? Because God’s special people are key to the story of God redeeming our broken world. As you read Scripture, you get the sense that the Jews were special people in the eyes of God. Why is this important? In Jesus, God redefined what it meant to be His special people. This new understanding grows up through the stories we read in the Old Testament and is fulfilled in Jesus. Those who were on the outside join into something completely new, while those who were on the inside all along (from a Jewish heritage) get a new perspective on what it means to be “God’s people.”

Insights

Gospel Relevance

Depending on his audience, Paul chose various strategies in sharing the Gospel. To the Jews, he drew upon their rich and God-centered heritage. To the Gentiles, he discusses the concept of one God, Creator of all, something a Jewish person would have taken for granted. Paul made the story personal to his audience. It became their story, and yet he ends with Jesus. This is our challenge as well, to tell the story of Jesus in a way that makes sense to our listeners. Sometimes we have the tendency to limit the message of the Gospel to our own personal experience. It's important to remember that we're telling a bigger story.

Look at the impact of the Gospel message just within these two chapters. Sometimes the Good News is received with joy, and other times with just the opposite. Although many people believed, some responded with violent physical attack. God's message often flies in the face of human tradition because Jesus' message is revolutionary on all fronts. While the Gospel brings a message of peace between God and man, it will always bring controversy. The effects of the Gospel are exhilarating, complex, uncomfortable, unstoppable.

Seen Through Creation

In Acts 14:15-17, Paul explains that God never left mankind without "evidence of Himself." In fact, he repeats this concept in Romans 1:19-20, when he writes, "ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see His invisible qualities - His eternal power and divine nature." Throughout history, God has entrusted the specific story of redemption to His people. At the same time, He makes clear that no one on the planet can claim they never knew He existed. His fingerprints are all over our world, whether we're looking up at the starry universe or down at the sweet face of a new child.

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Other Scripture

- Romans 1:16 - 3:29
- Genesis 1
- Psalm 139
- Colossians 1:15-23
- Acts 17:22-34

Conversation

Anything stick out to you from this week's message?

Ideally, are all believers supposed to follow the example of Paul and Barnabas, in taking the Gospel to those who haven't heard it? Why or why not?

Paul's life challenges us to be fluent in telling the story of Jesus. Do you feel like you can share the Gospel with people who see life differently than you do - even within our own culture? What would it take to get you there?

Are there people in your life who react with aggression to the Gospel? How do you respond?

Being Sent

Sometimes, negative reactions to the Gospel can be a reaction to the messenger more than the message. What are positive and negative ways to communicate what God is doing in your life?

As a group, talk about your initial response to the Gospel. Did the story of Jesus immediately fill you with joy, or was your journey a longer one?

Looking back on your life before Jesus, how do you see that God never left you “without a witness” of Himself?

Your Notes



By grace alone

Acts 15:1-35

Background You Should Know

We live in a culture that celebrates multiculturalism, so it can be difficult to wrap our minds around the what was actually going on in this passage. James pulled Paul and Barnabas into a discussion regarding the merging of Jewish and Gentile Christians into one family. The tension between the two groups was like a tug-of-war. On one side were ex-Pharisees who believed in Jesus, but still saw the Gospel through a very specific ethnic lens. They lived by tradition. Many of their ancestors had died to preserve their heritage. They weren't meaningless or silly traditions, rather they came from Abraham, Moses, and ultimately God Himself. On the other side were people from all walks of life and ethnicities, brought to the faith through Paul's ministry. These Gentiles had been invited to also become children of God. To the ex-Pharisees, they must have seemed like radicals, skipping around with no sense of the treasure they had access to. This was the conversation for Paul and the other leaders in the early church.

Insights

Grace

Paul and the other church elders returned to their congregations with a strong message about the Gospel. This message wasn't dependent on ethnic identity, it was about God's grace. And that

grace had to be lived out in both directions. Jewish law would not be forced on Gentile believers. On the other hand, Gentile believers were supposed to steer clear of any offensive holdovers from past lifestyles. For example, pretty much anything to do with pagan temples was out. Within the church family, there is no room for prestige or prejudice. And that doesn't just apply to race. It applies to wealth, gender, social status, and just about anything else you can think of.¹¹

Unity

Throughout the New Testament, Paul repeatedly emphasizes the importance of unity. We see an example of him living this out in Acts 15, when he and the other church leaders hash out how the Gospel relates to cultural tensions. When they were done, the Antioch church felt “great joy” and “very encouraged” by the message that returned from Jerusalem. Where previously there had been resentment and the beginning of division, now they experienced unity and celebration. In other words, these churches figured out how to apply the message of the Gospel to their everyday lives. They slogged through the messy, stressful stuff and came out with more love and more commitment to each other.

Paul and Barnabas weren't trouble-makers. They also weren't passive, and they weren't afraid to ruffle feathers in the church. Instead, we see them working through real life issues alongside the people they loved, willing to stand firm on what God was doing with the non-Jewish church. The way to unity is often a difficult road, but it is always a way to restoration and peace.

Other Scripture

- 1 Corinthians 8 - 9
- James 2:2-7
- Galatians 3:28
- Ephesians 4:14-16
- Romans 12

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Conversation

Anything stick out to you from this week's message?

Within the world-wide church, we see a huge ethnic and cultural spectrum. What cultural assumptions do you bring into our faith? How do you make sure the Gospel ranks higher than any other perspectives that govern your thinking?

"Open-handed" issues are areas of the faith in which we can agree to disagree with other believers. "Closed-handed" issues are the things that define whether or not you're a Christ-follower. Racial and ethnic issues aside, are there Christian groups you struggle to respect? How can we practically embrace those who handle "open-handed" issues differently than we do?

Are there areas in your life to which you are not applying the message of the Gospel? How would it look if you did? What is holding you back?

How can we know the line between "splitting hairs" and standing for the truth within the church?

Your Notes



Encouraging the Church

Acts 15:36 - 16:40

Background You Should Know

In Acts 15:36 Paul began his second of three missionary journeys. During his travels Paul planted several churches that ended up on the receiving end of New Testament letters, or “epistles.” These cities include Philippi (Acts 16:12-40), Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9), Corinth (Acts 18:1-17), and Ephesus (Acts 18:19-21). The epistles were written after Paul left these cities and sent letters back in order to provide instruction and encouragement to these young churches.

Insights

Gospel Barriers

The Bible doesn’t give all the specifics about the relationship between Paul and Barnabas, but we do know that they didn’t see eye to eye to eye. In Acts 15:39 it says they had a “sharp disagreement,” which can also be translated “angry dispute.” This indicates that they likely did not remain unified in the way that God calls Christians to be unified. And yet, God used their split in a positive way. More people hear the Gospel because they go different directions, and more churches are planted as a result.

When we share the Gospel we don't typically face the same dangers as Paul and other Christians experience in Acts 15 and 16. For them it was life or death, whereas for us it's more subtle. The barriers we face might include fear of persecution in our workplace, fear of losing friends, or fear of creating rifts in our relationships with family. Many those fears can prove to be realistic. This is why Paul's example is so important. He faced death and imprisonment, and yet he sings and prays with Silas while they're imprisoned. Once free from prison, Paul presses on to share the Gospel with more people. Paul truly was a man motivated not by a desire to please man, but a desire to please God.¹²

Other Scripture

- 1 Corinthians 1:10
- Philippians 1:12-18
- Galatians 1:10
- Matthew 10:16-42

Conversation

Anything stick out to you from this week's message?

In Acts 15:39, we see that Barnabas and Paul have a disagreement that separates them. What is an example of a time you struggled to love and be unified with another Christian?

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In the case of Barnabas and Paul, we know that ultimately God used their disagreement for good. They went on to plant a number of churches, each on their own path. Can you think of a time when God used a negative situation to create a good outcome?

After Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned they were “praying and singing hymns” and they end up sharing the Gospel with the jailer and his family. Have you ever experienced fear in sharing the Gospel with friends or family? How have you overcome that fear in the past? How do you think you can overcome fear in the future?

Your Notes

Culturally fluid

Acts 17

Background You Should Know

At this point in Paul's second missionary journey, he is now entering Thessalonica. Thessalonica was the capital of Macedonia, located in the Roman empire, and was home to a large population of both Jews and Gentiles. Many people traveled through this port city, so Paul likely saw this area as a strategic place to share the Gospel because it was a center of trade and culture.¹⁴ Paul later wrote two letters to the church in Thessalonica, which appear in our Bibles as 1 & 2 Thessalonians.

Paul then travels to Berea, where he encounters some faithful Christians who lived by the Word of God, and then he moves on to Athens. The city of Athens was even more strategic and diverse than Thessalonica, because its location was in the southern portion of Greece and served as a thruway for travelers coming to and from Rome. Athens was famous for its Areopagus, which was an open air pavilion that overlooked the city where prominent thinkers of the day would engage in discourse and debate.

Insights

Doctrinally Conservative And Culturally Fluid

The early church was characterized by a desire to contextualize the Gospel to the listening world while at the same time staying



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true to the truth of God's Word. We see examples of both of these concepts in Acts 17. When reaching out to the Thessalonians with the Gospel, the Jewish leaders lashed out at Paul and his companions. However, in Berea in Acts 17:11, the Jewish people were described as being "more noble than those in Thessalonica" because "they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." The Bereans believed that the Bible is the written Word of God, so they tested what they were hearing against the writings of the Bible.

Paul shared the Gospel in the context of each culture he encountered. We see this in Acts 17:1-2 when Paul went to the synagogue and reasoned with Jewish people using the Scriptures. He knew that reasoning from Scripture was something they were culturally familiar with, so Paul went to the synagogues and followed this pattern throughout Acts. Paul used a different approach in Acts 17:22-31. Instead of reasoning directly from Scripture, he used what was familiar to the Athenians to connect with them.

A Tender Heart

In Acts 17:16 it says that Paul's spirit was "provoked" as he observed the idols of the people of Athens. Paul's response here is a great example for us. He didn't avoid those who didn't yet know Jesus, nor did he antagonize them because of their worldview. Instead, Paul's heart was tender, and he studied their culture so that he could learn the best way to communicate the Gospel to them.

Other Scripture

- 1 & 2 Thessalonians
- Colossians 3:4-5
- 2 Peter 3:8-18
- Hebrews 3:7-19

Conversation

Anything stick out to you from this week's message?

What was your reaction when you heard the Gospel for the first time? Did you respond immediately or quickly with belief, or did it take you a while to place your faith in Jesus?

In Acts 17:11 the author commends the Jews in Berea because they "received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." When you hear a teaching at church that is difficult to accept or understand, how do you determine what you will choose to believe? Do you turn to the Bible? Why or why not?

What are the "unknown gods" in the culture today? How can you, like Paul, connect with the culture in your own city or neighborhood to share the good news about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection?

Have you had someone respond positively when you shared the Gospel with them? How do stories of lives changed by Jesus help us to remain encouraged and motivated to share the Gospel?

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Your Notes

Do not be silent

Acts 18:1-21

Background You Should Know

This section describes the beginning of Paul's ministry in Corinth, a city known for extreme immorality. In fact, sexual immorality in particular was so commonplace in Corinth that an immoral woman was called a "Corinthian Girl." Given Paul's experiences with persecution in ministry up to this point, it is not surprising that he likely feared for his life and well-being in such a volatile environment. In Acts 18:9-11 Paul receives a vision from God that reassures him and gives him courage to continue his ministry.

Insights

Beginning in Acts 18:12 Paul was brought before an official named Gallio for judgement. As was the case in Philippi in Acts 16:19-24, Paul was not given the chance to speak. Gallio made the decision not to hear testimony from either Paul or the Jews, which actually benefitted the early Christians. Gallio ruled that Paul and the others who were sharing the Gospel fell under Jewish practice, and thus Christianity became classified as a Jewish sect in the eyes of the Roman government. This meant that because Judaism was "approved" by Rome at the time, Christians could live out their faith with some freedom as well. If Gallio had determined that Christianity was completely separate from Judaism, the early church could have faced more persecution in the earlier days because only certain religions were allowed in the Roman empire.¹⁴



Gospel Stewardship

Paul's ministry in Corinth involved a partnership with Priscilla and Aquila, a married couple who allowed Paul to stay in their home. Here we learn that Paul was bi-vocational, working as a tentmaker while also being active in his work in ministry. While there are many who work full time in their ministry roles, most people in the church will hold marketplace jobs and be involved with ministry in a volunteer capacity. There are many ways to go about being missional. Regardless of your vocation, each of us exists to proclaim the liberating power of the Gospel as we grow, serve, and go.

Other Scripture

- Matthew 28:18-20
- Philippians 4:14-15
- 2 Corinthians 11:9
- 1 & 2 Corinthians
- Revelation

Conversation

Anything stick out to you from this week's message?

Riverview exists to proclaim the liberating power of the Gospel as we grow, serve, and go. What does it look like for you to "go"? How can you intentionally enter the lives of others on a regular basis in order to give them a glimpse of the Gospel?

Do Not Be Silent

In Acts 18:9-10 God came to Paul in a vision and reassured him by telling him in a vision that he would have the protection of God and God's people while in Corinth. Have you ever experienced reassurance from God about a decision you made? Are there any promises in the Bible that provide you assurance when you are in a difficult situation?

Although the American church is not typically subject to persecution like we read about in Acts, the global church often is. What can we do to support our church family around the world as they choose to live out their faith in the midst of persecution?

How do you respond when people criticize you because of your beliefs? If you aren't a Christian, why do you think Christians are willing to continue believing in God even when people criticize them or even physically harm them?

How can we pray for one another this week?

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Your Notes

Speaking boldly

Acts 18:22 - 19:41

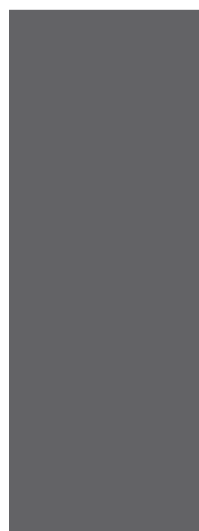
Background You Should Know

The ancient city of Ephesus was a picturesque port city located on the eastern coast of 1st century Asia, now known as the modern country of Turkey. The city had a vibrant economy and a diverse population. Like many Roman cities, the city center of Ephesus included a theater, an arena for athletics, a library, and a massive public marketplace. There were many temples and gods in Ephesus, the most prominent being the fertility goddess Artemis. In fact, the temple to Artemis was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, and was at the center of life for the Ephesian people.

Insights

The Holy Spirit

In the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) we read about how John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus to begin his ministry by baptizing people with water. After Jesus' resurrection, Jesus baptized his followers with the Holy Spirit. Now, in Acts 18:24-19:6, Paul and other followers of Jesus find people who were baptized by John with water, but never heard about Jesus and so they never received the Holy Spirit. In fact, they had never even heard of the Holy Spirit.



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The Holy Spirit tends to be the least talked about member of the Trinity, compared to how often we talk about Jesus and the Father. Yet, the Holy Spirit has a critical role in the life of every believer. All who believe in Jesus are given the Holy Spirit, who gives us a variety of gifts and guides us so that we can grow in our faith and understanding of God. Ultimately, the role of the Holy Spirit is to guide us into truth, the truth of Jesus Christ and the truth of God's Word.

As we have now read in several passages, there is a pattern of people believing in Jesus and immediately being baptized (Acts 2:36-41, Acts 8:34-39, Acts 16:30-33 and Acts 19:4-5). All who have faith in Jesus should be baptized, but baptism is not necessary for salvation. Rather, once you believe, you choose to obey God by being baptized as your first act of obedience.

Other Scripture

- 1 Corinthians 12
- Luke 3:1-17
- John 16:13
- 1 Corinthians 2:6-16

Conversation

Anything stick out to you from this week's message?

Have you been baptized? If not, what holds you back?

Speaking Boldly

Sometimes people who are not yet believers actually have a fairly good understanding of the Bible or God, but they are missing the core of the Gospel message -- that Jesus died on the cross for our sins, was buried, and rose from the dead to give us hope for eternal life. How do you talk to friends or family who have an unclear picture of the Gospel, but think they understand what Christianity is? What are some ways that you can encourage them and help them come to a fuller understanding of Jesus?

The rioters in Ephesus included business owners that had profited off of people worshipping crafted idols. We might not face that same situation today, but there may be times we offend people in our culture because of the positions we take and the way that affects their personal lives. How can we respectfully and lovingly deal with these disagreements with non-believers when it comes to important topics?

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Your Notes

Do not Hesitate

Acts 20

Background You Should Know

At this point in time, Paul had likely written both the epistle we now know as 1 Corinthians as well as a second letter to the Corinthians which is not part of the Bible (he refers to this letter in 2 Corinthians 2:3-4). This second letter was written “tearfully” and after Paul had made a “painful visit” to the church in Corinth (2 Corinthians 2:1-4), scholars believe that Paul sent Titus to Corinth to find out their reaction. After hearing that they responded with a spirit of wanting to be reconciled with Paul, he wrote the letter of 2 Corinthians and then visited Corinth (Acts 20:2-3).¹⁴

Paul spent 3 years with the church in Ephesus (Acts 20:31). This helps explain why his goodbye to the elders in Ephesus was full of emotion, as was the reaction of the elders (Acts 20:36-38).

Insights

The man who fell asleep during Paul’s preaching, Eutychus, had a name that literally means “luck” or “fortune.”¹⁴ How embarrassing to be remembered for having fallen asleep while listening to Paul! Paul didn’t seem to be bothered – he healed Eutychus and then continued to talk with the group “until daybreak” (Acts 20:10-12). It seems that Eutychus’ fortune is that he was brought back to life, and wasn’t rejected from the group.



Encouraging Words

While Paul was speaking to the elders in Ephesus, he bid them farewell and left them with a message of encouragement. In Acts 20:8, he said “... I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the Gospel of the grace of God.” Paul’s statement here shows us that his priorities in life and ministry were in the right place. He treasured Jesus and the mission that was given him, and understood that his life was going to be marked by proclaiming the Gospel to people all over the world. Regardless of the outcome of his ministry, his goal was to finish well. When we look back on our lives as Christ-followers, Paul’s words should echo in us as we hopefully have also “testified to the Gospel” throughout our spiritual lives.

In Paul’s goodbye message to the Ephesian elders (pastors), he emphasized the value of giving instead of receiving (Acts 20:35). In particular, he mentioned the ways that he sacrificed for the Ephesians (Acts 20:31-35). He also challenged them to recognize the weight of responsibility they had been given as overseers (Acts 20:28) and to watch out for the people who would change or add to the Gospel message (Acts 20:29-30). One thing that is clear from his parting words is that he passionately cared for the church in Ephesus, and he also did not lose his faith in Jesus even as he knew afflictions and further imprisonment were in his future. Although it is difficult, sometimes we have “Gospel goodbyes” with those whom we love and are going to share the Gospel in a different part of the world.

Other Scripture

- 1 Corinthians 9:24-26
- Ephesians 4:1-3
- 2 Timothy 4:7
- Hebrews 12:1-2
- 1 Peter 4:12-19

Conversation

Anything stick out to you from this week's message?

Have you ever fallen asleep during an important meeting or a class? How do you think others viewed Eutychus after he is brought back to life? Paul does not criticize the man or condemn him for not listening and falling asleep, but instead heals him and continues talking with the group (Acts 20:9-11). How can we extend that same kind of forgiveness and grace to people who offend us or don't listen when we share the Gospel?

The Christian life has often been described as a marathon instead of a sprint. How are you doing in the race? Where are you and how are you feeling on the journey?

Imagine being Paul, knowing that you are heading to a city where you know you will experience suffering (Acts 20:22-23). How do you think you would respond if you were in a similar situation?

As followers of Jesus, we know that we will face suffering (check out 1 Peter 4:12-19). It can be easier to despair in our suffering rather than finding hope. How can we suffer with the confidence of hope like Peter, Paul and other Christians we read about in the New Testament?

How can the group pray for you?

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Your Notes

For the name of Jesus

Acts 21:1 - 22:29

Background You Should Know

When Saul (now Paul) was converted in Acts chapter 9 he immediately began to teach that Jesus was the Son of God. Paul is now heading towards Jerusalem again as he offers the Gospel to Jews and Gentiles alike. There were Jews who tried to kill him in both Damascus and Jerusalem, but he is now returning to the very place his life was threatened. Paul's trip is a reminder that the Gospel is meant for all people.

We get a first hand account of Paul's decision to physically take the good news and the certain opposition that he knew he would face. This is a moment of obedience for Paul, and we get to see how God weaves uncertainty and struggle into a foundation for the church that has lasted until this day. It's easy to understand why many from the church of Ephesus begged Paul to stay, as they feared for his life if he returned to Jerusalem.

Insights

Life And Death

This section of Acts lays out the clear struggle that Paul had ahead of him. As Paul departed from the church of Ephesus there were repeated attempts by others on the journey to change Paul's mind about going to Jerusalem. In Acts 21:13 Paul clearly stated that he



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was willing not only to be bound, but to die if that was what must be done in the name of the Lord Jesus. There was an incredible determination from Paul to share the Gospel in Jerusalem at all costs. Paul left the church in Ephesus at this point, “tearing” himself away from the people there. Paul began his journey towards Jerusalem, expecting trouble once he proclaims the Gospel there. He was right! Once Paul mentioned his mission of bringing the Gospel message to the Gentiles, the crowd erupts again and Paul is then taken by the guards to jail.

You can feel the tension in the story almost immediately as many knew of Paul and his message. This takes us back to Acts 9, when God spoke to Ananias telling him to speak to Paul who is staying at the house of Judas. God said “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel” Almost immediately Paul was mixed up with the religious and political elite as they tried to stop him from spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. God’s promise to have His name proclaimed to the Gentiles and their kings is a great focus as we begin to walk through the end of Acts.

Like Paul, who formerly was a persecutor of Christians, we each have our own history of sin that is helpful in understanding the weight the punishment Jesus took on our behalf. Although we can not get stuck constantly replaying our past sin, it is good to realize how much God must love us to wash us clean simply because He loves us. From the point of Paul’s conversion on, he has accepted his position in Christ and believes that God will use him. In the same way, we must accept that God has taken all of our sin and is willing to use us to do His good work.

Other Scripture

- Acts 9:19-31
- 2 Corinthians 1:8-10
- 1 Thessalonians 2:2
- Romans 1:1-7
- 1 Thessalonians 2:16

Conversation

Anything stick out to you from this week's message?

What are some of the obstacles Paul faced both physically and emotionally as he made his way to share the Gospel in Jerusalem?

How can we practically apply Paul's passion for the Gospel in our own lives?

What are some of the cultural hurdles Paul faces from the angry crowd and when he is arrested?

When Paul speaks to the tribune in Acts 22, he does so by using his personal testimony. Have you had the opportunity to share your story with others? How has God used your testimony to help others come to faith in Jesus?

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Your Notes

Paul accused

Acts 22:30 - 23:35

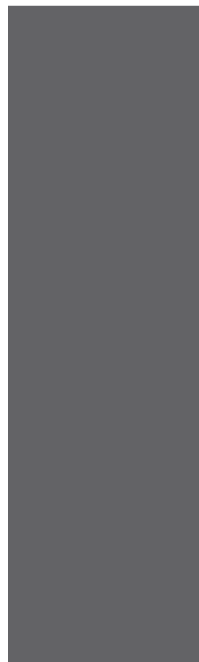
Background You Should Know

As Paul continues his journey to Jerusalem, the Sanhedrin enter the story. The Sanhedrin was the court for the Jewish high council who was Paul's main accuser. Though the Sanhedrin was a Jewish court with a religious foundation, it also had great political power. This intermingling of culture, religion, and politics is important to the story. In Acts 21 Paul was almost killed by an angry mob, and then he was arrested. Paul was then imprisoned and taken to the Sanhedrin so the commander could hear the formal charges. For his own safety, Paul was then removed from the Sanhedrin and placed back in Jail and then sent on to a Gentile court in Caesarea. Amidst all of the uproar, the commander in charge could not find a formal charge against Paul. Politically speaking, government officials had a strong desire to appease the Jews and find fault with Paul. That made the verdict that much more striking.

Insights

Gospel Tension

It is interesting to try to imagine what Paul must have been thinking in these moments. What must it have been like for Paul to stand before the same court that had put Jesus on trial just a few years earlier? As familiar as Paul was with Jewish law, it must have struck him as ironic that he himself had persecuted innocent



Christians and dragged them in front of the Sanhedrin, and now he was being persecuted in the same way. It is a sign of Paul's faith that he would continue on this journey, believing that even in death God had a plan and his Gospel would go out to all people.

The Sanhedrin and the angry mob of Jews in Jerusalem knew of Paul and his teachings. They believed Paul's teaching to be corrosive to their understanding of religion. In reality, the opposite was true. Through the Gospel of Jesus, God has broken down all cultural, religious, or human barriers that might separate any person from Him. The people calling for Paul's death did not believe this. They had not accepted the work of Jesus and were extremely threatened by Paul and the early church. As we view the story through this lens, we can understand the tension that existed as Paul continued to spread the Gospel.

Legalism And Grace

Although we now have a full understanding of the Gospel of Jesus in the Bible, it can still be tempting to build up our own set of rules and guidelines that become our focus instead of the Gospel. The Pharisees and Sadducees of the day could not accept that grace had covered over the need to earn salvation and that Jesus was God. The power of the Gospel covers every sin we have committed and will commit, for all eternity, without any action of our own. We simply accept that Christ died and rose again to cover our sins and we are saved. Our desire to serve Him should come from our understanding of His sacrifice for us, knowing that our sin cannot undo or weaken the salvation we have received. At the same time, our good works do not add to our salvation as Jesus has already covered all. As such we can live our lives knowing that we are free to obey Jesus so that his name will be glorified and his Gospel will be known.

Other Scripture

- John 18:12-23
- 1 Corinthians 15:12
- Galatians 1:15-24
- Romans 1:16

Conversation

Anything stick out to you from this week's message?

How did Paul attempt to break down cultural divides as he spoke to the Jewish crowd at the beginning of Acts 22?

Why do you think Paul was arrested? Why do you believe the Sanhedrin so threatened by Paul's message?

If we're already saved by the Gospel, what is our motivation to obey the commands in the Bible? How do we learn to live in the freedom of the Gospel, rather than out of an obligation to earn something from God?

How does Paul's example inspire you to be bolder in sharing your faith with others?

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Your Notes

Paul in custody

Acts 24

Background You Should Know

Paul had now been transferred from Jerusalem and was imprisoned in Caesarea. In Jerusalem, the Sanhedrin had never filed a formal charge against Paul that merited punishment. For safety concerns, Paul's case was elevated to Governor Felix. Governor Felix was not known for being a particularly moral political figure. His reputation was that of a partier who had multiple wives and took advantage of his status. It's important to note that Governor Felix wanted to find fault with Paul so that he could appease the Jews, as they clearly wanted Paul gone. The politics of Governor Felix' decision are important and ultimately led to his decision to keep Paul under house arrest as chapter 24 comes to a close. This is important as we begin to understand Paul's witness to him and the brave words he spoke. Paul not only shared the Gospel with governor Felix, but would touch on how Christians were to live.

Insights

Love Your Enemy

Acts 24 walks through Paul's trial before Felix. The trial itself does not offer up much more evidence against Paul or any decisions regarding Paul's fate. It almost seems like a placeholder until we get to Acts 25 and 26 but we can't miss the end of the chapter. Paul was on a missionary journey and was trusting God with the



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outcome. Felix kept Paul under loose imprisonment for two years until a new governor took over. How frustrating would it be to have minimal contact with the outside world for two full years while you were passionately trying to spread the great news of the Gospel? During this time Paul shared the Gospel with Felix and one of his wives. He spoke on hard topics such as righteousness, judgement and self control. While we can't know all of Paul's inner thoughts, we can see his heart for the lost as he aims to save the man that has wrongly imprisoned him for over two years. It is a reminder of our call as Christians to love and serve others and it is a picture of God's for all people.

The mission of the early church was to bring the Gospel to all people. The message of Jesus would transcend cultural barriers and offer a global message of grace. There are many barriers that can prevent us from sharing the Gospel with others around us. When we face challenges, we can rely on the word of God to refresh us and remind us the importance of sharing the Gospel. At the end of the chapter it mentions that Felix hoped that Paul would bribe him, suggesting that Paul could have probably paid Felix to let him go. Instead, Paul trusted God with his circumstances and did not let the things he could not control get in the way. We are not sure if Felix or any of his family put their faith in Jesus, but we can see Paul trusting God with his situation and believing that God could work through him even while he was imprisoned.

Other Scripture

- John 5:28-29
- 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16
- 2 Timothy 2:9-13
- 2 Corinthians 11:23-27

Conversation

Anything stick out to you from this week's message?

What type of risk did Paul face by speaking bluntly to governor Felix about the Gospel and about his own life?

How does Paul's story remind you of difficult situations you have faced in your own life and in your walk with God?

In what ways does Paul trust God to work despite his challenging situation?

Where in your life might there be an opportunity to share the Gospel with someone unlikely, as Paul did with Felix?

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Your Notes

Paul's appeal

Acts 25 - 26

Background You Should Know

From Paul's original journey to Jerusalem starting in Acts 21, he has encountered many roadblocks. What started as a riot in Jerusalem a few years before has continued to evolve and Paul now stood on trial before King Agrippa. The trial of Paul was over two years old, but the Jews were just as intent on stopping him as they ever had been. They continued to petition for Paul to be sent to Jerusalem so that they might murder him on the way. King Agrippa was the direct descendent of the ruthless Herod Agrippa I, so his motives couldn't be trusted. This lineage is important because Herod Agrippa I murdered James and imprisoned Peter for similar charges.

Insights

In these two chapters we get to read an extended explanation from Paul as he made his case in front of King Agrippa. Once again, Paul restated his own story of conversion that occurred on the road to Damascus in Acts 9:1-19. That moment led to a complete turnaround for Paul, from his own days of persecuting Christians. Paul was once recognized as one of the most aggressive and loyal Jews on his mission to stop the spread of the Christian church. He now stood before the king and in front of the Jewish leaders. The Jewish leaders didn't believe that Jesus was God and



this caused an obvious division between the Jewish leaders and the early Christian church. This is an important point to consider in our own walk. This distinction is our starting place for the Gospel. Jesus was fully God and fully man. His death on the cross paid for our sins and was the atonement for all sins for all mankind.

A Story Of Redemption

Paul's story is a great story of redemption. As he recalled his conversion on the road to Damascus, it is a reminder of how God took an enemy of his name and used him to glorify His name. The truth is that we are all sinners and have a history of rebellion towards God. God used an enemy of His name as one of the key leaders in the early church and authors in the Bible. Paul was not perfect after his conversion, he simply was obedient and willing to do what God had asked of him. God asks the same thing of us. In John 13:34-35 God commands us to love one another as he has loved us. By this, the verse says, others will know that we are disciples of God. We might not be persecuted the way that Paul was, but we each face hurdles and roadblocks as we try to emulate God's love every day. We can use prayer, community and the Bible to refresh us on this journey, keeping a heart that is willing to love and serve others.

"In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame" (1 Peter 3:15). Paul's defense before King Agrippa is a great example of this verse. Paul, on his missionary journeys, frequently shared his conversion story with those around him as a means of sharing the Gospel. God has given each and every one of us a unique life and story. Sharing our story and sharing our reasons for believing the Gospel are ways in which God brings about salvation in other people.

Other Scripture

- Mark 12:13-17
- Acts 9:1-19
- John 13:34-35
- John 14:6
- Romans 15:16
- 1 Peter 3:13-17

Conversation

Anything stick out to you from this week's message?

What are simple ways we can live out our love for others on a daily basis?

Have you ever shared your conversion story with anyone in your life (friend, co-worker, family member)? What effect did it have on you and on them? If time allows, have everyone in the life group share their conversion story in 5 minutes or less.

Paul, in this passage, is being persecuted for his faith. What does persecution look like for a Christian in our context? How should we respond in those moments?

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Paul was open and free with the Gospel message to anyone who would listen. Do you take opportunities to share the Gospel with others? Why or why not?

How can the group pray for you?

Your Notes

Proclaiming the Gospel with all boldness

Acts 27 - 28

Background You Should Know

After Paul's trial in front of King Agrippa, it was decided that he would indeed be sent to Rome to appeal to Caesar. He boarded a ship as a normal prisoner but had to make a significant journey to Rome. The journey was hundreds of miles long on the open sea and would eventually end with a shipwreck near the island of Malta. We are able to see how God protects Paul once again, as the Centurion chose to spare the prisoners to protect Paul's life. Paul spent nearly three months on the island of Malta after the shipwreck and had a significant impact on the local people as he healed the local sick. Paul's influence is honored by the people even though he arrived as a common prisoner.

Once Paul landed in Rome he was put under house arrest with a local soldier on guard. Paul used this opportunity to engage with the local Jewish leaders, proclaiming Jesus as God and spreading the Gospel. Paul used his house arrest as an opportunity to create a welcome place for any that might come and an opportunity to share the Gospel.



Insights

In the final two chapters of Acts, the story continued to twist and turn as Paul made his way towards Rome. Paul's story on the ship reminds us of Jesus' own experience when He calmed the sea. God used an angel to promise Paul that all would be safe and nobody would be harmed. On a ship of 276 people, Paul used God's provision as an opportunity to give Him glory, and they held a communion service giving thanks for God's promise. It was a remarkable moment of hope as Paul continued to face uncertainty. Paul's life was threatened at every turn yet he continued to turn back to God to thank Him for all He had done.

All For Jesus

Throughout Acts the early church continued to be met with much resistance. It's great to step back from the story and look at his journey to see how God used those limitations to reach so many for the Gospel. Throughout Paul's travels he had the chance to speak to many of the highest officials and political leaders, both Jew and Gentile. God never promised the road would be easy for Paul. In fact, God said He would show him how much he would suffer in God's name when he spoke to Ananias way back in Acts 9. While the situation looked hopeless many times, God was increasing His influence to more people from more places. In the same way, we face limitations in our own lives. Sometimes it is easy to feel like we don't have enough time or resources, or that we aren't equipped with the knowledge or understanding to reach others right where they are. The Bible is full of stories of God using flawed people to do His work. Paul was not perfect in any way, but God used his servant heart to use every situation for good.

On the Island of Malta, Paul healed all of the sick that came to him and was honored as he left. We find a similar situation in Acts 14:11-18, when Paul healed a crippled man in Lystra while with Barnabas. While it does not indicate exactly how Paul responded on the island, we see from the previous story that when he healed the crippled man the people thought he and Barnabas were Greek gods and they wanted to worship them. Paul and Barnabas gave all glory to God and turned the attention to Him. Paul had an

understanding of how God was orchestrating his situation. Even if we do not experience miraculous situations on a day to day basis, we can remember Paul's response for our daily lives and remember that God is working in our lives and he deserves the glory. We exist to bring glory to His name in everything we do.

Other Scripture

- Acts 9:16
- Acts 14:11-18
- 2 Timothy 3:10-17

Conversation

Anything stick out to you from this week's message?

How did Paul use the unfortunate events on his journey to bring glory to God?

Is there a difficult situation you can think of in your life that God has used you to be a light to others?

Paul was bold in his message but a loving servant to others, what are some practical ways to love others in this way in your daily life?

Perpendicularity

Your Notes

End Notes

1. Thomas Arnold, *Sermons on the Christian Life*, p.324
2. Darrell Bock, *BECNT Commentary: Acts*, p.50
3. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p.108
4. Sermon by Matt Chandler: Acts 5-6:7: Reliance <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aphgAViohlw#t=40>
5. <http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/jamie-son-fausset-brown/acts-6.html>
6. Stephen: 5 Important Lessons from an Ordinary Christian: Acts 6-7 by JD Greear http://www.summitrdu.com/messages/?enmse=1&enmse_spid=17
7. <http://www.enduringword.com/commentaries/4406.htm>
8. <https://dustinanderson717.wordpress.com/category/stephen/>
9. <http://www.gotquestions.org/receive-Holy-Spirit.html>
10. <http://www.gotquestions.org/sola-gratia.html>
11. Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Connections*
12. <http://biblehub.com/greek/3948.htm>
13. Jim Elliot, *Journal*, p. 108
14. Constable, Dr. Thomas L. "Notes on Acts." Sonic Light. N.p., 2015. Web. 17 Feb. 2015. <<http://soniclight.com/>>.





Resources

- Dr. Constable's "Notes on Acts" can provide more information on the topics covered in this passage at soniclight.com
- More information about persecution of Christians around the world: <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/>
- For a timeline of Paul's life and mission work, check out <https://www.blueletterbible.org/study/paul/timeline.cfm>
- Check out the website Got Questions for further explanation about the baptism of the Holy Spirit: <http://www.gotquestions.org/Spirit-baptism.html>
- If you want to learn more about baptism or want to get baptized, you can email baptisms@rivchurch.com
- <http://www.biblestudytools.com/>
- Believers bible commentary - William McDonald



Maps



Spain

Italy

Rome

Puteoli

Rhegium

Syracuse

Malta

Paul's Journey

57-62 AD

Prison in Caesarea
Trip to Rome & Ship Wreck
Prison in Rome





Spain

Italy

Rome

Puteoli

Rhegium

Malta

*Locations
to Note*

IN THE BOOK OF ACTS





MEDITERRANEAN
SEA

SEA OF
GALILEE

Caesarea

Samaría

Joppa

Lydda

Judea

Jerusalem

Azotus

Ashkelon

Gaza

DEAD SEA



Reading Plan

Here's a reading plan to get you in the Bible a little each weekday as we go through the book of Acts. There's some in the Old Testament and some in the New Testament that goes along with the message the following weekend. As you read, think about how you can take the vertical influence of Christ and spread it horizontally through your friends, family, and community.

Week 1

- Day 1 - Luke 19:1-10
- Day 2 - Luke 19:11-27
- Day 3 - Luke 19:28-48
- Day 4 - Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 5:27-32
- Day 5 - Galatians 5:16-25, Revelation 21:1-5

Week 2

- Day 1 - Luke 22, Philippians 4:6
- Day 2 - Luke 22:1-23, Exodus 12
- Day 3 - Luke 22:24-38, Exodus 13
- Day 4 - Luke 22:39-53, John 13:1-20
- Day 5 - Luke 22:54-65, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Week 3

- Day 1 - Luke 22:66-23:56
- Day 2 - Luke 22:66-23:5, Isaiah 53
- Day 3 - Luke 23:6-23:16, Romans 5:12-21
- Day 4 - Luke 23:18-43, Ephesians 2:8-9
- Day 5 - Luke 23:44-56, 1 Corinthians 15:1-5

Week 4

- Day 1 - Luke 24, 2 Samuel 7:12-17
- Day 2 - Luke 24:1-12, 1 Corinthians 15:1-5
- Day 3 - Luke 24:13-35, Hebrews 10:19-25
- Day 4 - Luke 24:36-53, James 1:1-12
- Day 5 - Acts 1:1-16, 1 Peter 1:3-6

Week 5

- Day 1 - Acts 1:17-2:47, Matthew 28:18-20
- Day 2 - Acts 1:17-26, Galatians 3:25-29
- Day 3 - Acts 2:1-13, 1 Peter 2:9-12
- Day 4 - Acts 2:14-36, 1 Peter 4:7-11
- Day 5 - Acts 2:37-47, Jude 20-21

Week 6

- Day 1 - Acts 3:1-4:31
- Day 2 - Acts 3:1-10, John 1:35-51
- Day 3 - Acts 3:11-26, 1 Corinthians 12:12-26
- Day 4 - Acts 4:1-22, Galatians 6:9-10
- Day 5 - Acts 4:23-37, James 1:3-5

Week 7

- Day 1 - Acts 4:32-5:11
- Day 2 - Acts 4:32-37, Ezekiel 11:19
- Day 3 - Acts 5:1-11, Psalm 51:4
- Day 4 - Acts 4:32-5:11
- Day 5 - 2 Corinthians 8:14-15, Acts 2:44

Week 8

- Day 1 - Acts 5:12-42, Matthew 14:36, Romans 15:19
- Day 2 - Acts 5:12-21, John 15:18-25, 1 Peter 4:13-16
- Day 3 - Acts 5:22-32, Mark 6:55-56, Hebrew 2:4
- Day 4 - Acts 5:33-42, Luke 21:12, James 1:2-12
- Day 5 - Acts 5:12-42, Isaiah 8:9-10, Proverbs 21:30

Week 9

- Day 1 - Acts 6:1-7:60
- Day 2 - Acts 6, Isaiah 66:1-2
- Day 3 - Acts 7:1-22, Psalm 31:5, Psalm 35:16, Psalm 37:12
- Day 4 - Acts 7:23-60, Romans 2:28-29, Romans 8:35-39
- Day 5 - Acts 6:1-7:60

Week 10

- Day 1 - Acts 8, Isaiah 53:7-8
- Day 2 - Acts 8:1-8, Matthew 10:23, Matthew 28:19
- Day 3 - Acts 8:9-25, Mark 16:16-18
- Day 4 - Acts 8:26-40, Luke 21:12, Luke 24:27
- Day 5 - Acts 8, Acts 22:20; 26:10-11

Week 11

- Day 1 - Acts 9:1-31, Daniel 10:7; John 12:29
- Day 2 - Acts 9:1-19, 1 Corinthians 15:8-10
- Day 3 - Acts 9:20-31, Galatians 1:11-24
- Day 4 - Acts 9:1-31, Luke 19:10, John 6:44
- Day 5 - Romans 3:10-11; 5:8, Ephesians 2:1-10; 3:7-8

Week 12

- Day 1 - Acts 9:32-10:48, Galatians 3:28-29
- Day 2 - Acts 9:32-43, Acts 4:1-22
- Day 3 - Acts 10:1-16, Acts 8:1-39
- Day 4 - Acts 10:17-33, Ephesians 3
- Day 5 - Acts 10:34-48, Romans 3

Week 13

- Day 1 - Acts 11, Acts 15:6
- Day 2 - Acts 11:1-18, Galatians 2:12
- Day 3 - Acts 11:19-30, 1 Peter 3:8-17
- Day 4 - Acts 11, 2 Corinthians 5:6-21
- Day 5 - Romans 3, Ephesians 3

Week 14

- Day 1 - Acts 12, Job 38
- Day 2 - Acts 12:1-11, Job 39, Matthew 2
- Day 3 - Acts 12:12-19, Job 40, Mark 6:14-29
- Day 4 - Acts 12:20-25, Job 41, Hebrews 11
- Day 5 - Acts 12, Job 42:1-6, Matthew 5:1-11

Week 15

- Day 1 - Acts 13, Acts 17:22-34
- Day 2 - Acts 13:1-12, Genesis 1
- Day 3 - Acts 13:13-52, Psalm 139
- Day 4 - Acts 14:1-18, Colossians 1:15-23
- Day 5 - Acts 14:19-28, Romans 1:16-32

Week 16

- Day 1 - Acts 15:1-35, 1 Corinthians 8
- Day 2 - Acts 15:1-21, 1 Corinthians 9
- Day 3 - Acts 15:22-35, James 2:2-7
- Day 4 - Acts 15:1-35, Galatians 3:28
- Day 5 - Romans 12, Ephesians 4:14-16

Week 17

- Day 1 - Acts 15:36-16:40
- Day 2 - Acts 15:36-16:5, Philippians 1:12-18
- Day 3 - Acts 16:6-15, Galatians 1:10
- Day 4 - Acts 16:16-24, 1 Corinthians 1:10
- Day 5 - Acts 16:25-40, Matthew 10:16-42

Week 18

- Day 1 - Acts 17
- Day 2 - Acts 17:1-15, Colossians 3:4-5
- Day 3 - Acts 17:16-22, 2 Peter 3:8-18
- Day 4 - Acts 17:23-34, Hebrews 3:7-19
- Day 5 - Acts 17

Week 19

- Day 1 - Acts 18:1-21
- Day 2 - Acts 18:1-11, Matthew 28:18-20
- Day 3 - Acts 18:12-21, Philippians 4:14-15
- Day 4 - Luke 1:5-23, 2 Corinthians 11:9
- Day 5 - Acts 10:1-15

Week 20

- Day 1 - Acts 18:22-19:41
- Day 2 - Acts 18:22-29, 1 Corinthians 12
- Day 3 - Acts 19:1-10, Luke 3:1-17
- Day 4 - Acts 19:11-20, 1 Corinthians 2:6-16
- Day 5 - Acts 19:21-41, John 16:13

Week 21

- Day 1 - Acts 20, Ephesians 4:1-3
- Day 2 - Acts 20:1-16, 2 Timothy 4:7
- Day 3 - Acts 20:17-38, Hebrews 12:1-2
- Day 4 - 1 Corinthians 9:24-26,
1 Peter 4:12-19
- Day 5 - Acts 20

Week 22

- Day 1 - Acts 21:1-22:29, 1 Thessalonians 2:2
- Day 2 - Acts 21:1-16, Acts 9:19-31
- Day 3 - Acts 21:17-26, 2 Corinthians 1:8-10
- Day 4 - Acts 21:27-36, Romans 1:1-7
- Day 5 - Acts 21:37-22:29, 1 Thessalonians 2:16

Week 23

- Day 1 - Acts 22:30-23:35
- Day 2 - Acts 22:30-23:11, John 18:12-23
- Day 3 - Acts 23:11-22, 1 Corinthians 15:12
- Day 4 - Acts 23:23-35, Galatians 1:15-24
- Day 5 - Acts 22:30-23:35, Romans 1:16

Week 24

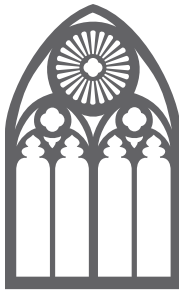
- Day 1 - Acts 24
- Day 2 - Acts 24:1-9, John 5:28-29
- Day 3 - Acts 24:10-21, 2 Timothy 2:9-13
- Day 4 - Acts 24:22-27, 2 Corinthians 11:23-27
- Day 5 - Acts 24, 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16

Week 25

- Day 1 - Acts 25
- Day 2 - Acts 25:1-22
- Day 3 - Acts 25:23-26:11
- Day 4 - Acts 26:12-32
- Day 5 - Acts 26

Week 26

- Day 1 - Acts 27
- Day 2 - Acts 27:1-38, Acts 9:16
- Day 3 - Acts 27:39-28:16, Acts 14:11-18
- Day 4 - Acts 28:17-31, 2 Timothy 3:10-17
- Day 5 - Acts 28



A digital version of this study guide as well as the corresponding message video and audio from our weekend services can be found at:

rivchurch.com/perpendicularity