



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

# BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

**ACTS**  
Week 1

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# *Before You Begin Your Journey...*

The initial growth of Christianity is an amazing story. A small band of 120 believers in Jesus had lived in the glory of Moses, the Law and the Temple, fading though it was (2Co 3:7). Now, with their leader Jesus risen to heaven, they would live in the glory of the Holy Spirit, a ministry that would be “even more glorious” (2Co 3:8). Their worship and their lives would be reoriented around Jesus.

These believers would live to see their entire culture and worldview reshaped and transformed. They would begin to experience what Paul explained in 2 Corinthians 3:9: “If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness.”

Yet, what did that mean? Were the laws and ceremonies of the old covenant still required? Even for Jewish Christians?

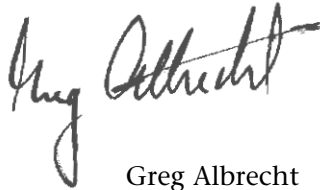
Over a thousand years of law, ceremony and ritual from Mt. Sinai had helped to define the people of Israel. So now, were God’s people still defined by circumcision? Dietary restrictions? Temple worship? Sabbath observance?

In the early years of Christianity, change came slowly among the Jewish converts, but with the influx of gentiles the cultural tensions between the two groups became explosive.

Some three decades after the beginning of Christianity, Paul explained, “Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called ‘uncircumcised’ by those who call themselves ‘the circumcision’ (that done in the body by the hands of men)—remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far

away have been brought near through the blood of Christ” (Eph 2:11-13).

As Luke starts his story in Acts, Jesus and his disciples are standing on the Mount of Olives. Their clear view across the Kidron Valley to the Temple as the traditional center of worship for Judaism in Jerusalem provides the backdrop to the disciples’ question, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Ac 1:6) The stage is set for Luke to relate the inspiring story about the rapid growth of the early church. The message of Jesus Christ grows prolifically as the kingdom of God is extended to gentiles as well as Jews.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Albrecht". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Greg Albrecht  
President, Plain Truth Ministries

# *How to Use the CWR Bible Survey...*

**1**—Read and study at your own pace. This is a devotional. It is designed to help you consider and ponder the great truths of God’s written revelation. It is designed to help you worship and come to know God. We plan to cover the entire Bible in 43 volumes, and while that sounds like a long time, don’t be in a hurry. Take your time! Even though each volume is divided into bite-size daily lessons, you may want to take two days on each “daily” lesson.

**2**—We suggest you set aside a special time for the *CWR Bible Survey* every day. We recommend allowing 30-45 minutes, but even if you can only spare 15 minutes, try to make it part of your regular schedule. You will find that the *CWR Bible Survey* will be an invaluable resource for facing your daily challenges.

**3**—You will need a good Bible. This might be an excellent time for you to consider purchasing a study Bible. Plain Truth Ministries has reviewed many of the study Bibles that are available, and in cooperation with Thomas Nelson and Zondervan, we are pleased to be able to offer two superb study Bibles that will be an excellent resource and help to you. Please see the back pages of this book for more details.

**4**—Always read the assigned passage of the daily lesson in your Bible first. Each daily lesson builds upon the portion of the Bible being covered that day. You may want to begin by praying about what God has in store for you as you read, and then look at the questions and background information.

**5**—Consider the format of each daily lesson. Almost every daily lesson will include:

- **Opening Up to the Word** —a section designed to help you open your mind to the teaching God has inspired.
- **Digging Into the Word**—this section will encourage you to get your nose into the Bible and think deeply about what it says.
- **Living Out the Word**—here you will be challenged to consider the practical implications for your life. How does this passage help you live?

• **Window On the Word**—will offer key insights to help you more clearly understand the daily Bible passage.

**6**—After you finish the daily lesson, take some quiet time. You may simply think, look out the window, take a walk, or even get down on your knees. But use this time to let this daily lesson sink in. Ask God to show you what he wants you to understand from your reading and study.

**7**—Consider the *CWR Bible Survey* for small groups in which you may be involved. Tell your friends about it. If you are involved in a small group that meets for prayer and Bible study, introduce your group to it. Many are seeking an easy-to-read guide to help them understand the Bible and to help them know God. The *CWR Bible Survey* can do that!

• **Abbreviations Used in the *CWR Bible Survey***—

Genesis	Ge	Nahum	Na
Exodus	Ex	Habakkuk	Hab
Leviticus	Lev	Zephaniah	Zep
Numbers	Nu	Haggai	Hag
Deuteronomy	Dt	Zechariah	Zec
Joshua	Jos	Malachi	Mal
Judges	Jdg	Matthew	Mt
Ruth	Ru	Mark	Mk
1 Samuel	1Sa	Luke	Lk
2 Samuel	2Sa	John	Jn
1 Kings	1Ki	Acts	Ac
2 Kings	2Ki	Romans	Ro
1 Chronicles	1Ch	1 Corinthians	1Co
2 Chronicles	2Ch	2 Corinthians	2Co
Ezra	Ezr	Galatians	Gal
Nehemiah	Ne	Ephesians	Eph
Esther	Est	Philippians	Php
Job	Job	Colossians	Col
Psalms	Ps	1 Thessalonians	1Th
Proverbs	Pr	2 Thessalonians	2Th
Ecclesiastes	Ecc	1 Timothy	1Ti
Song of Songs	SS	2 Timothy	2Ti
Isaiah	Isa	Titus	Tit
Jeremiah	Jer	Philemon	Phm
Lamentations	La	Hebrews	Heb
Ezekiel	Eze	James	Jas
Daniel	Da	1 Peter	1Pe
Hosea	Hos	2 Peter	2Pe
Joel	Joel	1 John	1Jn
Amos	Am	2 John	2Jn
Obadiah	Ob	3 John	3Jn
Jonah	Jnh	Jude	Jude
Micah	Mic	Revelation	Rev

# ACTS

Explosive  
Growth of the  
Early Church

# Introduction to Acts

**Authorship:** While the text of Acts does not identify its author, most scholars agree that the person who wrote Acts also wrote the Gospel of Luke. Both are dedicated to Theophilus, probably a Christian who financed Luke's efforts in writing the books. Both books have a similar polished style and emphasis. Early Christian writers, including Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen and Eusebius state that Luke wrote the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts.

**About the author:** Luke was a gentile doctor (Col 4:14). He was well educated, as seen in the quality of his literary style. He was a co-worker of the apostle Paul (2Ti 4:11). Luke went with Paul on the apostle's second missionary journey. Luke was also a historian. His contact with the apostles enabled him to research the story of the early church.

**Date:** Acts ends in the early 60s A.D. with Paul imprisoned in Rome. It does not mention his death (before the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70), so it appears that the book was written in the mid-60s.

**Theme:** In his Gospel, Luke identified the purpose of Jesus' ministry as bringing salvation to the poor, the prisoners, the blind and the oppressed (Lk 4:18-19). Luke picks up his story in Acts after the resurrection of Jesus. In anticipation of his ascension to heaven, Jesus instructs his disciples to continue his ministry. This sets the stage for the rest of the book.

Acts was written as a narrative of major events of the work of the Holy Spirit in the early church. Although it is traditionally entitled *The Acts of the Apostles*, it focuses primarily on the ministries of Peter and Paul. Peter provided early leadership in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, whereas Paul was the main tool God used to bring the gospel to Asia Minor, Greece and Rome. Peter worked mainly with Jewish Christians, while Paul took the gospel to the gentiles.

**Distinctive features:** Speeches, sermons and legal defenses comprise about 20 percent of the book. The rest is narrative, highlighting events in the early development of the church.



**Reading outlines:** Each capital letter corresponds to a daily reading.

**I. COMMISSION TO THE DISCIPLES, 1**

A. Waiting for the Spirit, 1

**II. THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM, 2-7**

A. The Advent of the Spirit, 2:1-13

B. Response to the Spirit, 2:14-47

C. Evangelism in the Church, 3

D. Apostles Arrested! 4

E. Conflict with the Spirit, 5

F. Service in the Spirit, 6

G. Stephen's Defense and Martyrdom, 7

**III. PERSECUTION LEADS TO CONVERSION, 8-12**

A. Conversion: "To Be or Not To Be...", 8

B. Conversion of the Persecutor, 9

C. Conversion of Cornelius, 10

D. On to Antioch, 11

E. The Empire Strikes Back!, 12

**IV. PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY, 13-14**

A. The Sorcerer and the Synagogue, 13

B. The Lame Man Walks, 14

**V. COUNCIL IN JERUSALEM, 15**

A. Law or Grace? 15

**VI. PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY, 16-18:22**

A. The Jailor is Freed, 16

B. The Unknown God, 17

C. Worship the Lord, 18:1-22

**VII. PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY, 18:23-20:38**

A. "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" 18:23-19:41

B. Paul the Caretaker, 20

**VIII. PAUL'S ARREST IN JUDEA, 21-26**

A. "Don't Go to Jerusalem!" 21:1-25

B. Riot in the Temple, 21:26-40

C. Defense to the Jewish Mob, 22

D. Defense to the Jewish Leaders, 23

E. Trial Before Governor Felix, 24

F. Trial Before Governor Festus, 25

G. Defense Before King Agrippa, 26

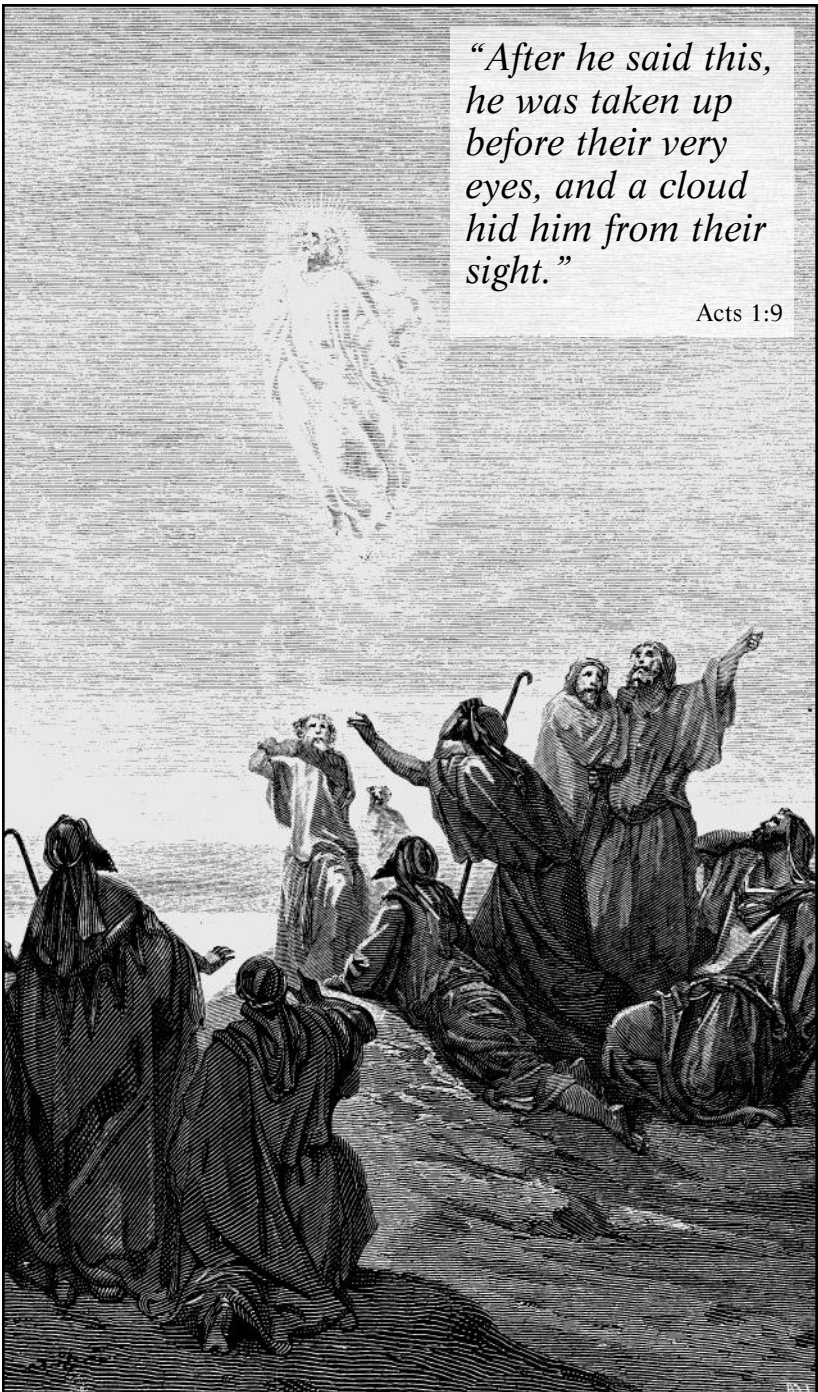
**IX. PAUL'S JOURNEY AND MINISTRY IN ROME, 27-28**

A. Shipwrecked on Malta, 27

B. Prison Ministry in Rome, 28

*“After he said this,  
he was taken up  
before their very  
eyes, and a cloud  
hid him from their  
sight.”*

Acts 1:9



Artwork by Gustav Doré

# Waiting for the Spirit

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DAY 1

Acts 1

Have you ever taken children on a long trip? Did they get impatient before arriving at their destination? How impatient did *you* get?

1. Does Luke's introduction to Acts (vs. 1-2) parallel the introduction to his Gospel account (Lk 1:1-4)? What research methods did Luke use?
2. What was the "promise of the Father" that Jesus gave his disciples (Ac 1:3-7)? Compare with Luke 3:16. Why were the disciples impatient?
3. Examine the main points in Acts 1:8. How is this statement the theme of the book? How does it answer the question in verse 6?
4. How was the power of God demonstrated to the disciples (vs. 9-11)? What do you suppose they were thinking as they stared at his disappearing body?
5. What actions over the ten days following the ascension of Jesus show the devotion of the disciples (vs. 12-26)?
6. Why replace Judas Iscariot (vs. 16-26)? What were the requirements for apostleship (vs. 22-26)?

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1. What "convincing proofs" of the resurrection of Jesus support your faith in him (v. 3)?
  2. Have you been "baptized with the Holy Spirit" (v. 5)? Aren't all Christians?
  3. Are you "constantly in prayer" (v. 14) for unity in the body of Christ and proclamation of the gospel?

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**Jerusalem** was the center of the Jewish world. The Temple stood tall and proud, gleaming in gold, representative of the presence and power of God. The Messiah was expected to come to the Temple and deliver the Jewish people from the tyranny of foreign rule. Few people understood that Jesus the Messiah had already come and gone, and that he, living his life through those who believe in him (Gal 2:20), would empower massive spiritual transformation around the whole world.

## OPENING

up to the Word

## DIGGING

into the Word

## LIVING

out the Word

## WINDOW

on the Word

## The Advent of the Spirit

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Acts 2:1-13

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

Have you ever seen a session of the United Nations in New York City broadcast on television? Imagine the number of interpreters and headsets needed to communicate in so many different languages.

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

**1.** Who gathered in this assembly on the Day of Pentecost (v. 1)? How many followers were there (see Ac 1:13-15)?

**2.** What features accompanied the advent of the Holy Spirit (2:2-4)? Was this event so vivid that these early Christians could never discount it?

**3.** What did it mean to “speak in other tongues” (vs. 4-8)? Was the miracle in *speaking* (v. 4), in *hearing* (v. 8) or in both?

**4.** Locate the countries of the devout Jews who were present for this amazing event (vs. 9-11). Notice these countries later in Acts as the church spreads beyond Jerusalem.

**5.** How did these Jews react (vs. 5-13)? How did they interpret what they saw?

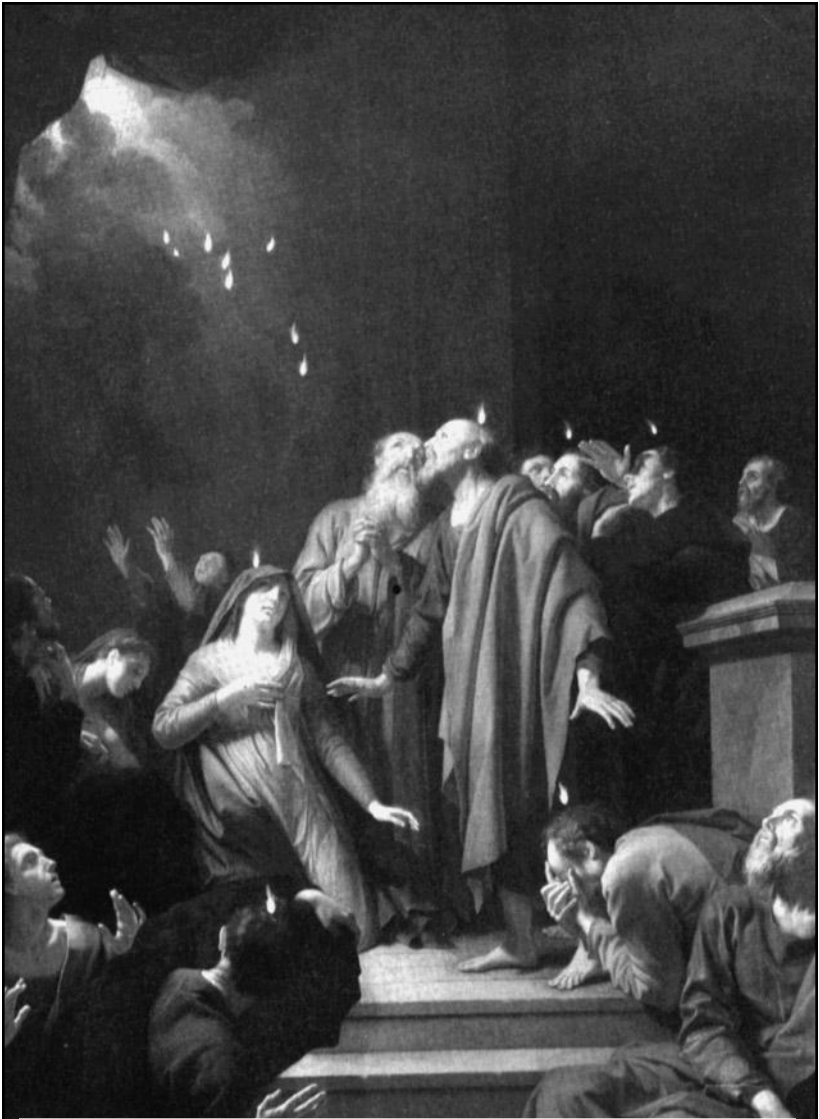
**LIVING**  
out the Word

**1.** Imagine this event on the first Pentecost after the ascent of Jesus. Had you been an observant Jew, how would you have reacted? How would you react now?

**2.** How do you react to new experiences? Do you always suspect the worst first (v. 13)?

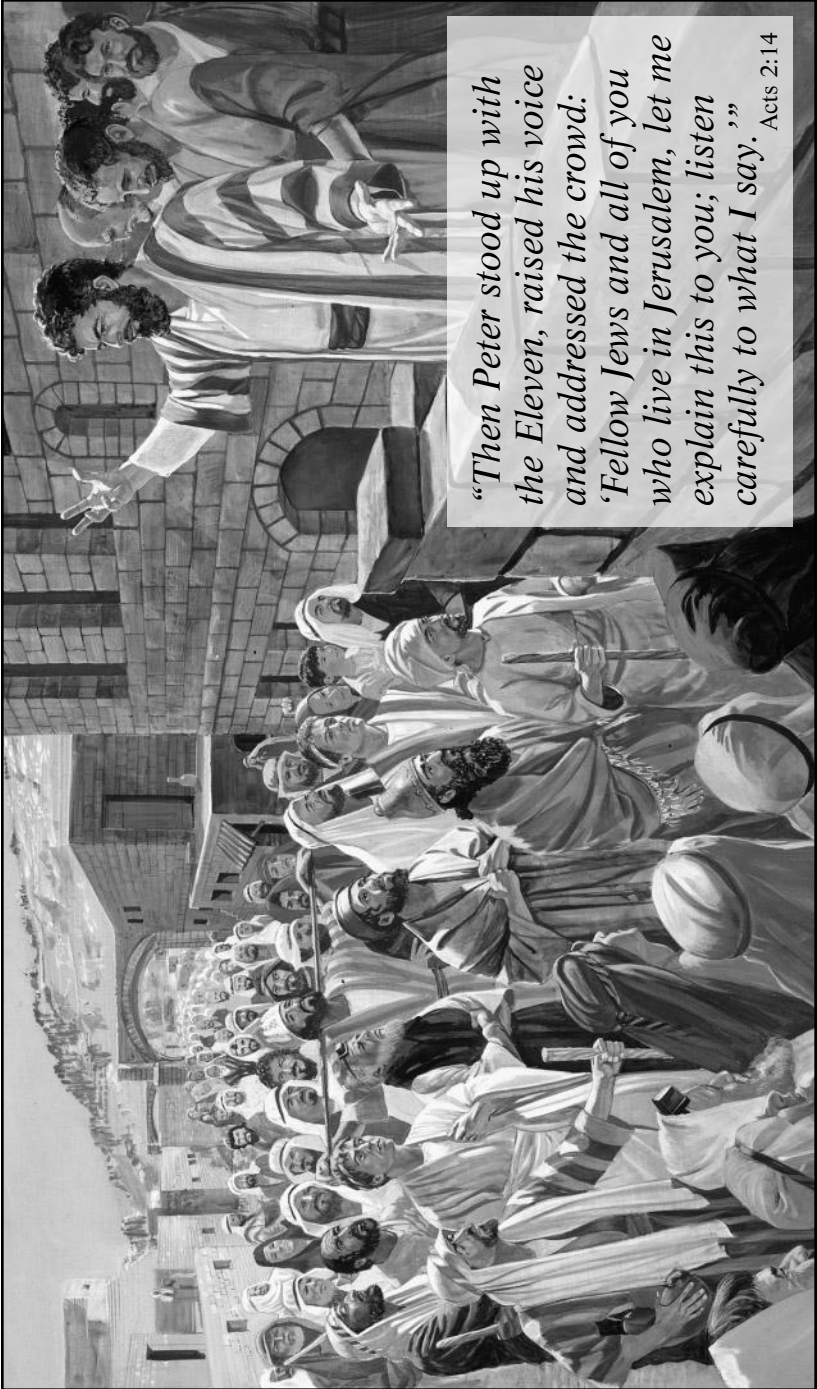
**WINDOW**  
on the Word

**Pentecost** was an annual day of worship for the Jews. In the old covenant, God specified days for commemorating his great power and to focus the attention of the Israelites on him. Pentecost came about seven weeks after Passover and celebrated the spring harvest (Lev 23:16). The disciples were gathered on that Pentecost morning to commemorate that day, little realizing that dramatic new events would transform their lives and their relationship with God.



*“They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”*

Acts 2:3-4



*“Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: ‘Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.’”*

*Acts 2:14*

# Response to the Spirit

DAY 3

Acts 2:14-47

How do you think the delegates of the United Nations would react if they could understand each other in their own language without interpreters?

1. The hours of the day were counted from 6 A.M. How did the time of day support Peter's explanation of this strange speaking in other languages (vs. 14-15)?
2. What was the meaning of this great day (vs. 16-21)? What link to the prophet Joel was made (vs. 16-21)? How did Peter explain this miracle of the Spirit (v. 33)?
3. How did Peter develop the two themes, the resurrection of Christ (vs. 22-36) and the coming of the Holy Spirit (vs. 17-21; 33, 38)?
4. How did the crowd of observant Jews react (v. 37)? What did Peter instruct them to do (vs. 38-40)?
5. How did these new converts react to God's grace (vs. 42-47)? How did their actions demonstrate their repentance, faith and commitment to God?

1. Which of the actions of these early converts parallel your own response to God's gift of the Holy Spirit?
2. Would selling everything you have (v. 45) and giving the proceeds to those who are in need be advisable? Would it make *you* dependent on others? Do you ever give to help the needy?

*The Jews held the tradition that the law was given to Israel on Mt. Sinai on **the first Pentecost**. This episode in Acts, coming soon after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, represented the giving of the Holy Spirit to all humanity. **The prophet Joel** wrote in the 9th century B.C. to warn Israel of the coming judgment of God. Joel prophesied that the Holy Spirit would come upon God's people in the "last days."*

## OPENING

up to the Word

## DIGGING

into the Word

## LIVING

out the Word

## WINDOW

on the Word

## DAY 4

# Evangelism in the Church

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Acts 3

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

Do you keep up with the daily news? How well do you feel you can you rely on the accuracy of the reporting?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

1. Why would the lame man be at the Temple (v. 2)? What was his first wish (v. 3)?
2. How did this miracle empower the disciples to continue the ministry of Jesus (vs. 2-10)?
3. In Peter's sermon, how was Jesus identified (vs. 11-18)? To whom was Peter preaching? How had Jesus' own people treated him (vs. 14-15)? Why (vs. 16-20)?
4. What was the main intent behind the prophecy of Moses and the prophets (vs. 21-26; also see Dt 18:15-19 and 2Sa 7:12, 16)?

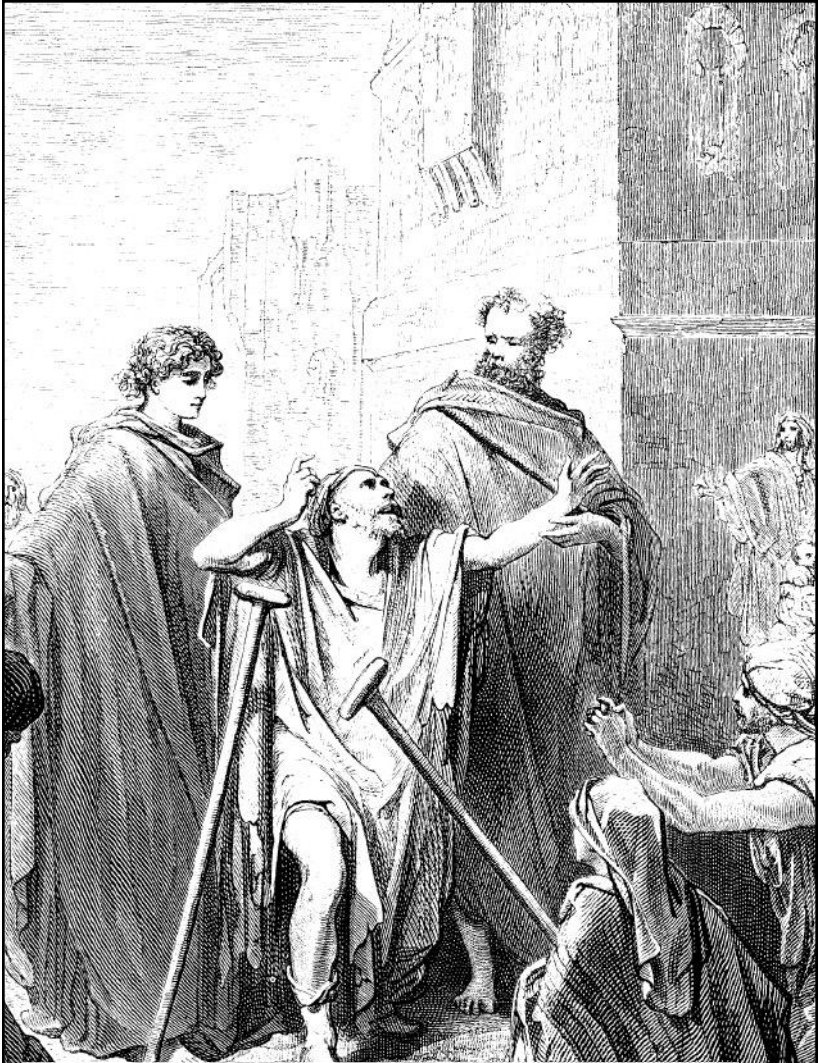
**LIVING**  
out the Word

1. Do you remember a miraculous healing or other intervention by God in your life or that of a family member? Have you thanked God for his goodness?

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

*From the example of David and Daniel many Jews observed a **regular time for prayer** (Ps 55:17 and Da 6:10). Many Jews prayed at the Temple at 6 A.M., 9 A.M. (the third hour), noon (the sixth hour) and at 3 P.M. (the ninth hour). Jews who accepted Jesus as the Messiah continued this tradition in the early years of the church.*





*“Then Peter said, ‘Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.’ Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong.”*

Acts 3:6-7

## Apostles Arrested!

Acts 4

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

Have you ever been arrested for jaywalking? For driving too fast? For not obeying a stop sign? For preaching the gospel?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

1. Who got perturbed at the preaching of Peter after the lame man was healed (v. 1)? Why (v. 2)?
2. Why did the authorities react differently than many of the general populace (vs. 2-4)?
3. Why were the rulers concerned about the authority of the apostles (vs. 5-7)? Was the status quo being threatened? What was Peter's reply (vs. 8-12; see Ps 118:22; Isa 28:16; 42:1-7; 53:11)?
4. Why did Paul feel unable to obey the order to stop preaching about Jesus (vs. 8, 19-20)?
5. Did the early church pray for deliverance from persecution or for boldness in the face of opposition (vs. 32-35)?
6. How was Barnabas a giver rather than a taker (vs. 35-37)?

**LIVING**  
out the Word

1. For what "good deed" might you be known (v. 9)? What greater deed motivates your Christian life?
2. Would you have the same courage as the disciples did to praise God in public (vs. 19-21)?
3. Read the prayer aloud (vs. 24-30). How does the "holy servant Jesus" lead you?

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

*The Jews were governed by **Roman authorities**. The local representative in Judea was the procurator **Pontius Pilate**, who had officiated at the trial and crucifixion of Jesus. In religious and local matters, Roman authorities allowed a **Jewish council** to govern the Jewish people. Some Jewish leaders who controlled the council and Temple worship were of the sect of the **Sadducees**. They did not believe in a resurrection, in contrast to the **Pharisees** and Jewish people in general (Ac 23:6).*

*“ . . . then know  
this, you and  
all the people of  
Israel: It is by  
the name of  
Jesus Christ of  
Nazareth,  
whom you  
crucified but  
whom God  
raised from the  
dead, that this  
man stands  
before you  
healed.”*

Acts 4:10



## Conflict With the Spirit

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Acts 5

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

When do most people lie? (a) on income tax forms, (b) when caught misbehaving, (c) when promoting themselves, (d) when trying to justify their actions.

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

1. How did the actions of Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11) differ from those of Barnabas (4:36-37)? How does this account help us to understand that the Holy Spirit is God—the third Person of the Trinity (5:3-4)? How did the deception of this husband and wife show the ongoing contempt that Satan has for the Holy Spirit (5:3)?
2. What elements of the apostles' ministry led to growth in the church at that time (vs. 12-16)?
3. Who were the church's main enemies in these early years (vs. 17-33)? How did the apostles react to this persecution?
4. What alarmed Gamaliel so much that he, a Pharisee, stood up to other members of the Sanhedrin to protect Peter and John (vs. 34-40)? What did the apostles have to suffer? How did they respond?

**LIVING**  
out the Word

1. Can generosity be feigned?
2. In your daily activities, are you ever tempted to obey humans when you should obey God (v. 29)?
3. How do you resolve your anger when someone unjustly attacks you? Is the advice of Gamaliel (vs. 34-39) always appropriate?

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

*In the general populace, **Pharisees** were more common than **Sadducees**, but **Sadducees** were more common among the priests and in the **Sanhedrin**, the Jewish council for religious matters. The Sanhedrin was led by the **high priest**, a Sadducee. **Gamaliel** was a Pharisee. Before Paul became a follower of Christ, he had been a student of Gamaliel (22:3).*

# Service in the Spirit

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DAY 7

## Acts 6

Where would you like to retire? (a) close to your children, (b) in the land of your parents, (c) near a golf course, (d) right where you live now, (e) far away from everyone you know.

1. How was the problem of caring for church widows typical of human nature (vs. 1-2)?
2. Did the apostles scold the believers for neglect? What was their solution (vs. 3-4)?
3. How was the congregation involved in the selection of leaders (vs. 5-7)?
4. Did members of the synagogue of the Freedmen misunderstand the preaching of Stephen (vs. 8-15)? Or were they angry about Stephen's teaching that Jesus had replaced the customs of Moses?
5. What specific accusations were made against Stephen (vs. 11-14)?

1. Do you help care for any widows, widowers or orphans who are in our out of your family? Have you ever invited anyone in such circumstances to share a meal with you?

2. Do you know anyone who would have been selected, had they lived at this time, by peers to serve the widows in Jerusalem (v. 3)?

***Hellenists** were Grecian Jewish followers of Christ who primarily spoke Greek, while the "Hebraic" Jewish believers primarily spoke Aramaic. Since Jerusalem was held in high esteem in the eyes of the Jewish people, many senior citizens sought to spend their final years there. When husbands died, Hellenist widows became vulnerable since they were often far from support groups.*

### **OPENING**

up to the Word

### **DIGGING**

into the Word

### **LIVING**

out the Word

### **WINDOW**

on the Word