

The background of the cover is a photograph of a construction site. In the foreground, there is a grid of steel rebar laid out on a dirt surface, likely for a concrete foundation. A person wearing dark rubber boots and purple pants is standing on the rebar, holding a shovel. The scene is outdoors with a grassy area and trees in the background. A large, semi-transparent white triangle is positioned in the top right corner, containing the logo and title.

Explore the Bible[®]

DEAF PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

Acts 1–12

Vance H. Pitman, General Editor

LIFE BY DESIGN

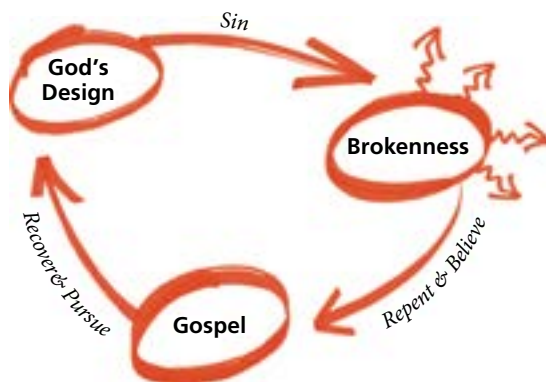
We live in a broken world. This brokenness is seen in suffering, violence, poverty, pain, and death around us. Brokenness leads us to search for a way to make **LIFE work.**

The Bible tells us that God originally planned a world that worked perfectly—where everything and everyone fit together in harmony. God made each of us with a purpose—to worship Him and walk with Him. (See Genesis 1:31 and Psalm 19:1.)

Life doesn't work when we ignore God and His original design for our lives. We selfishly insist on doing things our own way. The Bible calls this sin. Sin leads to a place of brokenness. The consequence of our sin is separation from God—in this life and for all of eternity. (See Romans 3:23 and Romans 6:23.)

At this point we need a remedy—some good news. Because of His love, God did not leave us in our brokenness. Jesus, God in human flesh, came to us and lived perfectly according to God's Design. Jesus came to rescue us—to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. He took our sin and shame to the cross, paying the penalty of our sin by His death. Jesus was then raised from the dead—to provide the only way for us to be rescued and restored to a relationship with God. (See John 3:16; Colossians 2:14; and 1 Corinthians 15:3-4.)

We don't have the power to escape this brokenness on our own. We need to be rescued. We must ask God to forgive us—turning from sin to trust in Jesus. This is what it means to repent and believe. Believing, we receive new life through Jesus. God turns our lives in a new direction. (See Mark 1:15; Ephesians 2:8-9; and Romans 10:9.)



When God restores our relationship to Him, we begin to discover meaning and purpose in a broken world. Now we can pursue God's Design in all areas of our lives. God's Spirit empowers us to recover His Design and assures us of His presence in this life and for all of eternity. (See Philippians 2:13 and Ephesians 2:10.)

Now that you have heard this Good News, God wants you to respond to Him. You can talk to Him using words like these: My life is broken—I recognize it's because of my sin. I believe Christ came to live, die, and was raised from the dead—to rescue me from my sin. Forgive me. I turn from my selfish ways and put my trust in You. I know that Jesus is Lord of all, and I will follow Him.

Excerpted from Life on Mission: A Simple Way to Share the Gospel.

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» GENERAL EDITOR



For much of my Christian journey, if you had asked me what the Book of Acts is about, I would have answered that it's about the birth and growth of the early church. In reality, the Book of Acts is about that and so much more.

The story opens with the resurrected Lord Jesus spending His last 40 days on earth with His disciples, speaking about the kingdom of God (1:3). It closes with the apostle Paul spending two years in Rome under house arrest and telling all who came to visit him about Jesus and the kingdom of God (28:30-31). Between these two bookends is the account of the birth and growth of the church. The implication is significant: God established His church as His primary tool for the expansion of His kingdom to the ends of the earth!

What you will read in the Book of Acts is the story of believers—ordinary people—being empowered by the Holy Spirit to accomplish God's eternal mission of establishing a kingdom representing every tribe, tongue, people, and nation.

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This study was originally published as
EXPLORE THE BIBLE: DEAF PERSONAL
STUDY GUIDE (ISSN
2167-8820; Item 005075111) by Lifeway
Christian Resources of the Southern
Baptist Convention, Nashville, TN 37234,
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BIBLE READING PLAN

MARCH

- ☐ 1. Acts 1:1-5
- ☐ 2. Acts 1:6-8
- ☐ 3. Acts 1:9-11
- ☐ 4. Acts 1:12-14
- ☐ 5. Acts 1:15-22
- ☐ 6. Acts 1:23-26
- ☐ 7. Acts 2:1-4
- ☐ 8. Acts 2:5-13
- ☐ 9. Acts 2:14-17
- ☐ 10. Acts 2:18-21
- ☐ 11. Acts 2:22-28
- ☐ 12. Acts 2:29-32
- ☐ 13. Acts 2:33-36
- ☐ 14. Acts 2:37-40
- ☐ 15. Acts 2:41-42
- ☐ 16. Acts 2:43-47
- ☐ 17. Luke 23:1-4
- ☐ 18. Luke 23:5-12
- ☐ 19. Luke 23:13-19
- ☐ 20. Luke 23:20-25
- ☐ 21. Luke 23:26-31
- ☐ 22. Luke 23:32-34
- ☐ 23. Luke 23:35-38
- ☐ 24. Luke 23:39-43
- ☐ 25. Luke 23:44-49
- ☐ 26. Luke 23:50-56
- ☐ 27. Luke 24:1-8
- ☐ 28. Luke 24:9-12
- ☐ 29. Luke 24:13-27
- ☐ 30. Luke 24:28-35
- ☐ 31. Luke 24:36-43

APRIL

- ☐ 1. Luke 24:44-51
- ☐ 2. Acts 3:1-10
- ☐ 3. Acts 3:11-16
- ☐ 4. Acts 3:17-23
- ☐ 5. Acts 3:24-26
- ☐ 6. Acts 4:1-4
- ☐ 7. Acts 4:5-12
- ☐ 8. Acts 4:13-18
- ☐ 9. Acts 4:19-22
- ☐ 10. Acts 4:23-26
- ☐ 11. Acts 4:27-31
- ☐ 12. Acts 4:32-37
- ☐ 13. Acts 5:1-6
- ☐ 14. Acts 5:7-11
- ☐ 15. Acts 5:12-16
- ☐ 16. Acts 5:17-24
- ☐ 17. Acts 5:25-32
- ☐ 18. Acts 5:33-42
- ☐ 19. Acts 6:1-7
- ☐ 20. Acts 6:8-10
- ☐ 21. Acts 6:11-15
- ☐ 22. Acts 7:1-5
- ☐ 23. Acts 7:6-8
- ☐ 24. Acts 7:9-16
- ☐ 25. Acts 7:17-22
- ☐ 26. Acts 7:23-28
- ☐ 27. Acts 7:29-32
- ☐ 28. Acts 7:33-34
- ☐ 29. Acts 7:35-39
- ☐ 30. Acts 7:40-47

MAY

- ☐ 1. Acts 7:48-56
- ☐ 2. Acts 7:57-60
- ☐ 3. Acts 8:1-8
- ☐ 4. Acts 8:9-13
- ☐ 5. Acts 8:14-17
- ☐ 6. Acts 8:18-25
- ☐ 7. Acts 8:26-29
- ☐ 8. Acts 8:30-35
- ☐ 9. Acts 8:36-40
- ☐ 10. Acts 9:1-6
- ☐ 11. Acts 9:7-16
- ☐ 12. Acts 9:17-20
- ☐ 13. Acts 9:21-25
- ☐ 14. Acts 9:26-30
- ☐ 15. Acts 9:31-35
- ☐ 16. Acts 9:36-43
- ☐ 17. Acts 10:1-8
- ☐ 18. Acts 10:9-14
- ☐ 19. Acts 10:15-23
- ☐ 20. Acts 10:24-33
- ☐ 21. Acts 10:34-43
- ☐ 22. Acts 10:44-48
- ☐ 23. Acts 11:1-9
- ☐ 24. Acts 11:10-17
- ☐ 25. Acts 11:18-26
- ☐ 26. Acts 11:27-30
- ☐ 27. Acts 12:1-5
- ☐ 28. Acts 12:6-10
- ☐ 29. Acts 12:11-14
- ☐ 30. Acts 12:15-19
- ☐ 31. Acts 12:20-25



ACCEPTING CHRIST

Richie Noble



My name is Richard Noble, but I prefer being called Richie. I was born Deaf, but my family is all hearing. I understood there was a God when I was seven years old, while I was playing during recess. My mother took my siblings and me to church. She was concerned that I would go to hell and talked to her pastor about baptizing me. When I was 12, I was

baptized, but I did not understand. There were no interpreters.

I attended the Kentucky School for the Deaf, and later I lived in Washington, D.C. to attend Gallaudet University. Later I moved to Los Angeles, California, to find happiness and peace. Finally, in 1994, I moved back to my home in Kentucky. Four months later my father died. I believe God allowed this to happen to make me wake up and see my need for Jesus.

A hearing Christian woman met me at my father's funeral. She finger spelled her name to me. I remember that the fruit of the Spirit flowed in her. During my visits to her home, I noticed she and her husband were truly living for Christ. I visited her church, and finally on Father's Day in 1994, I asked God for forgiveness of my sins and made a confession of faith. Living for Christ is how I found true happiness in life.

I learned about a Seminary School for the Deaf in Louisville, Kentucky. God called me to attend Boyce Bible College, where I obtained my Associate of Arts for Ministry. I learned about ministry, and I practiced ministry by teaching Sunday School, preaching a few times, and being a summer camp missionary. God called me to serve Him as a pastor in different parts of Kentucky, and now as a church planter in Fort Wayne, Indiana. I pray for spiritual growth among the Deaf and hope to establish Deaf churches in Indiana.

Do you find yourself looking for true happiness? A relationship with God, through His Son, Jesus, is the only way to find true happiness. It is not difficult.

Tell God that you are a sinner (Romans 3:32).

Tell God you believe Jesus died for you, and ask Him to forgive you and come into your heart to live (Romans 10:9).

Rejoice and thank God for His gift of salvation (Romans 3:22).

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF ACTS

» 1. Who Wrote the Book of Acts?

Most Bible teachers agree that Luke wrote both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. Luke was a Gentile and a medical doctor (Colossians 4:14). He traveled and worked with the apostle Paul.

» 2. When Was the Book of Acts Written?

Bible teachers believe Luke finished writing the Book of Acts about A.D. 64.

» 3. Why Was the Book of Acts Written?

Luke had several reasons to write this book. The good news about Jesus traveled all over the world. Luke wanted to show how that happened.

Luke also wrote about people who were telling untrue things about Christians. Christians were not troublemakers. They helped other people to live the right way.

Luke talked with many of the disciples and other people that knew Jesus. Luke wrote about the miracles he saw. In both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, Luke was careful to be sure he had the correct information.

Luke wrote about the strength and growth of the early church and how the church (believers) faced persecution.

Luke wrote both books to help Theophilus and other new believers grow in their faith.

» 4. To Whom Was the Book of Acts Written?

The Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts were written to the same man. His name was Theophilus. The name *Theophilus* means “one who loves God.” In his Gospel, Luke called Theophilus most excellent. These words were used when speaking or writing to rich or important people or government officials.

The word *Theophilus* could also mean “people who love God.” This may have been the way Luke addressed all believers, Jew or Gentile, rather than a real person.

If Theophilus was a rich man, maybe he helped Luke with money for the books. It was very expensive to have a book written and then copied by hand. Maybe Theophilus was rich enough to pay someone to copy Luke's two books and send copies to several places so people could read them. In this way, Luke was able to write these books for many early Christians to read.

»» 5. Important Ideas in the Book of Acts

Luke told how the good news about Jesus spread around the world. The outline of the Book of Acts can be seen in Acts 1:8. The Christian faith started in Jerusalem. It spread to the country of **Judea**. It also spread to the people of **Samaria**. Finally it spread to every place in the known world.

Luke wanted people to know that the Christian faith was from God. Anyone who was against Christians was against God.

Luke wanted to show the Jewish people that the Christian faith was not a separate religion. He used the disciples' words to show the Christian faith made the Jewish faith complete. Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament because He is the **Messiah**.

Finally, Luke showed that the gospel of Jesus was for all people in every nation. Jesus died to give salvation to Jews and also to Gentiles.



Session 1

RESPONSIBLE

ACTS 1:1-11

Jesus said believers are responsible to witness for Him.

FIRST THOUGHTS

Jesus gave His followers the work of telling the whole world about Him and His salvation. The believer's job is to obey the instructions Jesus gave us.

Today, Southern Baptists have missionaries presenting Christ to Deaf people in many countries. New believers are baptized and trained. Deaf churches are organized. New Deaf believers go to nearby communities and start Deaf churches.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Luke wrote two books to a man named Theophilus. The first book is the Gospel of Luke. The Book of Acts is his second book.

The Gospel of Luke was about the life and teachings of Jesus until He **ascended** into heaven.

The **apostles** were together. They were waiting to hear more from Jesus. They did not know this would be the last time they would see Him on earth.

The Book of Acts continues the story of the work of the apostles after Jesus went to heaven.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 1:1-11)

1. Jesus' Disciples Remember His Promise (Acts 1:1-5)

VERSES 1-2a.

¹ To Theophilus. The first book I wrote was about everything Jesus began to do and teach. ^{2a} until the day He was taken up into heaven.

The Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts were written to the same man. Read the Introduction to the Book of Acts on pages 6-7 to understand more about Theophilus.

VERSE 2b.

^{2b} Before this, with the help of the Holy Spirit, Jesus told the Apostles He had chosen what they should do.

Before He was taken up into heaven, Jesus gave instructions to the eleven remaining apostles. Why only eleven apostles? Because Judas betrayed Jesus and then killed himself.

VERSE 3.

³ After His death, He showed himself to them and proved in many ways that He was alive. The Apostles saw Jesus during the forty days

after He was raised from the dead, and He spoke to them about the kingdom of God.

After Jesus rose from death, He appeared to the disciples many times. In New Testament times, when people needed to prove the things they said were true, they must have at least two other people to say they were telling the truth.

Many more people saw Jesus after He rose from death. That proved His **resurrection** was true.

Jesus talked to them about the kingdom of God. He was talking about God's kingdom. It is a kingdom that is now, before He comes back. He also talked about the end of earthly time when God sets up His eternal kingdom.

BIBLE SKILL: *Proofs of the Resurrection of Jesus*

The Bible tells about several proofs that Jesus rose from death. His apostles and many others saw Him alive after His resurrection. On the left is a list of verses that explain when the apostles saw Him. On the right is a list of who they were and what they were doing.

Read the Bible verses and draw a line from the Bible verses to the people that saw Him and where they were when they saw Him.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 1. Matthew 28:16-17 | (A) Two men walking to Emmaus. |
| 2. Mark 16:12 | (B) Mary Magdalene at Jesus' tomb. |
| 3. Mark 16:14 | (C) Saul on the road to Damascus. |
| 4. Luke 24:13-15 | (D) Apostles on a mountain in Galilee. |
| 5. John 20:19 | (E) Two followers walking in the country. |
| 6. John 21:3-8 | (F) Ten apostles and others in a locked room. |
| 7. Acts 9:3-6 | (G) Eleven apostles while they were eating. |
| 8. John 20:26-28 | (H) Eleven apostles in the upper room. |
| 9. John 20:11-16 | (I) Apostles were fishing. |

VERSE 4.

⁴ Once when He was eating with them, He told them not to leave Jerusalem. He said, “Wait here to receive the promise from the Father which I told you about.”

Jesus gave instructions to His followers during the forty days after His resurrection. The first instruction He gave them was to stay in Jerusalem.

VERSE 5.

⁵ “John baptized people with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

Jesus told them the Holy Spirit would come to them while they stayed in Jerusalem. At an earlier time, He explained to them about the Holy Spirit. They remembered His words in John 15:26-27. They were comforted by His words.

They remembered the promise He gave them. It was the promise He would never leave them alone.

Has someone you loved ever left you, maybe because of their job or on a long vacation? They promised they would come back. Did you still feel lonely? Write a few words about that time.

2. Jesus’ Apostles Tell About His Resurrection (Acts 1:6-8)

VERSE 6.

⁶ When the Apostles were all together, they asked Jesus, “Lord, are you now going to give the kingdom back to Israel?”

During Jesus’ time, all Jews thought the **Messiah** would set up an earthly kingdom. The **apostles** knew Jesus’ mother, Mary, was from the family line of David. That was the family line the

┌
Messiah would come from. They thought Jesus would be their king, and He would defeat the Roman government. They would become a free nation again.

VERSE 7.

⁷ Jesus said to them, “The Father is the only One who has the authority to decide dates and times. These things are not for you to know.”

Jesus did not criticize them because they had the wrong idea about God’s kingdom. Jesus told them gently that it was not something they needed to know.

He reminded them how God is the only One who can make the decision about when His kingdom will happen. God does not need to tell His followers everything He is doing. He lets us know only the things we need to know.

VERSE 8.

⁸ “But when the Holy Spirit comes to you, you will receive power. You will be my witnesses—in Jerusalem, in all of Judea, in Samaria, and in every part of the world.”

Jesus continued to give instructions. First, He said the Holy Spirit would come to them. Then they would receive power. What did He want them to use the power of the Holy Spirit for? They were commanded to be His witnesses.

Where should they be witnesses? They must be witnesses in the center of the Jewish nation, Jerusalem. They must also go to **Judea**. Judea was the area where Jerusalem was located. They must go witness in the area named **Samaria**. Most Jews hated the Samaritans because they were not pure Jews. They were mixed with other nationalities and religions. It would be hard for them to reach out to those hated people.

Finally, Jesus told them they must go witness to the ends of the earth. The disciples did not know how far that would be or the things that would happen to them.

Jesus promised them they would receive power. This was not power for them to defeat the Romans. It was not to receive benefits for themselves. The power they received was the strength to witness to the whole world. It was power to be strong when they were being persecuted.

Can you think of ways the Holy Spirit helps you have power in your life today? Name at least three ways He helps you or three ways He gives you power.

3. Jesus' Disciples See How He Will Return (Acts 1:9-11)

VERSE 9.

⁹After He said this, as they were watching, He was lifted up, and a cloud hid Him from their sight.

The disciples felt different emotions. They were heartbroken when Jesus died. Sadness turned to joy when He rose from death. They felt peace and strength while Jesus was with them for forty days.

Then, everything changed. With their own eyes, they saw Him leave to go up into heaven. They were surprised and sad.

VERSE 10.

¹⁰As he was going, they were looking into the sky. Suddenly, two men wearing white clothes stood beside them.

Have you seen a space shuttle take off? People stand and look at it until they can no longer see it in the distance. It seems to disappear. They know it is there, but they can't see it.

Jesus' disciples stared into the sky until they could not see Him. They knew He was there, but they could not see Him.

Suddenly, two men were with them. Bible teachers believe they were angels who looked like men. In the Bible, angels are often described as wearing shining white clothes.

VERSE 11.

¹¹ *They said, "Men of Galilee, why are you standing here looking into the sky? Jesus, whom you saw taken up from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you saw Him go."*

The most important thing about this verse is not the angels. It is the picture of how Jesus will return. He will come back from heaven. He will have a physical body for all people to see.

A basic belief of our Christian faith is this: Jesus will come back from heaven to earth again.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Jesus Will Return*

Jesus will return in His physical body. He will return in glory.

Read these verses and complete the sentences.

1. Matthew 16:27. Jesus "will come again with His _____."
2. Acts 1:11. Jesus "will come _____."
3. First Corinthians 15:23b. "When _____ comes again, those who belong to Him will be _____."
4. First Thessalonians 4:16. "The _____ himself will come down from _____."

IN MY CONTEXT

Janet was a Deaf lady who worked in a large insurance office. When the manager needed to be out of the office, he gave Janet a list of things he wanted her to do. Often she would need to work after closing time to complete the work.

Janet's Deaf friends usually met for dinner at 5:30 every Friday evening. One Friday, Janet needed to work late and could not go with her friends. They came to her office and urged her to leave. She explained her boss gave her work to do, and she must complete it. If she did not complete his work list, he would be disappointed with her work.

Jesus gave us instructions to follow after He went back to heaven. We do not want to disappoint Jesus. We must be careful to follow His instructions with joy.

Read Matthew 28:18-20 and complete the following sentences.

Jesus told the believers to:

**So go and make _____ of all people in the _____.
_____ them in the name of the _____ and the _____
and the _____.**

**This command is for all believers. Do you believe it is for you, also?
YES NO.**

MEMORY VERSE

“But when the Holy Spirit comes to you, you will receive power. You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all of Judea, in Samaria, and in every part of the world.” —Acts 1:8

Answers to Bible Skill Questions: 1-D. 2-E. 3-G. 4-A. 5-F. 6-I., 7-C. 8-H. 9-B.

Answers to Key Doctrine Questions: 1. Father's glory and with His angels.
2. Back in the same way you saw Him go. 3. Christ, raised to life. 4. Lord, heaven.



Session 2

EMPOWERED

ACTS 2:1-15

The Holy Spirit gives power to believers.

FIRST THOUGHTS

The Holy Spirit gives special power to the followers of Jesus. He gives us power to witness to other people. The Holy Spirit gives us power to obey the instructions Jesus gave us. He gives us power to stand strong for our faith.

We read often about empowering Deaf people. What does this mean? It means Deaf people are encouraged to be independent and in charge of their lives. The Holy Spirit also empowers Deaf people to be strong in telling other Deaf people about Jesus. We must claim that power and use it!

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In the lesson last week, we learned the eleven **apostles** watched Jesus return to heaven in a cloud. Two angels told them Jesus will come back the same way He left. Everyone will be able to see Him. He will return in His physical body.

Acts 1:12-26 tells how the apostles met in an upper room to pray. They decided they must replace Judas. Judas was the apostle that betrayed Jesus and then killed himself.

Casting lots was similar to drawing names from a hat. This method was used several times in the Old Testament (Leviticus 16:7-11, Joshua 18:8, 1 Chronicles 24:30-31, Jonah 1:7).

The man they selected was one of the disciples from the beginning of Jesus' ministry. He witnessed Jesus' **resurrection**. They chose Matthias to become an apostle.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 2:1-15)

1. God Gives the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4)

VERSE 1.

¹ *When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.*

In the lesson title, the word *empowered* means “to receive power.” Have you seen that word in connection with helping Deaf people to become more independent?

After Jesus **ascended** into heaven, the twelve apostles were together again. With them were Jesus' brothers, His mother Mary, and other people. That was at the time of the **festival of Pentecost**. This was celebrated forty-nine days after the **Passover**.

VERSES 2-4.

² *Suddenly a noise like a strong, blowing wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.* ³ *They saw something like flames of fire that were separated and stood over each person there.*

┌
⁴They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began to speak different languages by the power the Holy Spirit was giving them.

Four things happened to the people in that room. They heard something. They saw something. They felt something. They did something.

1. They heard a loud noise. The noise sounded like a strong wind. The verse does not say it was a strong wind. The verse says it sounded like a strong wind. The noise filled the whole house where they were meeting.

2. They saw something that looked like flames of fire. The verse does not say it was flames. It looked like flames. The flames stayed above each person's head.

3. They felt something. They were filled with the Holy Spirit. Until this time the Holy Spirit was with them. When they were baptized with the Spirit, He was in them. Read Jesus's words in Acts 1:4-5. He promised they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit. This verse shows that promise happened. It is important to understand that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was for all believers who were there, not the **apostles** only.

4. They did something. They began to speak in different languages. The Holy Spirit gave them power to speak. The verse does not say the Holy Spirit spoke through them. It says He gave them power to speak.

KEY DOCTRINE: *The Holy Spirit Is God*

The Bible states in several places that the Holy Spirit is God. Jesus, the Son, is God. God, the Father, is God. Altogether this is called the trinity. They are all God. Some Bible verses name them all at the same time. The word *trinity* is not in the Bible. It is a word we use to talk about this relationship.

Read these two verses. Who is named in them?

Matthew 28:19 _____

2 Corinthians 13:14 _____

2. People Ask Questions (Acts 2:5-13)

VERSE 5.

⁵*There were some religious Jews staying in Jerusalem who were from every country in the world.*

The words *religious Jews* meant “people that were truly dedicated to the Jewish faith.” It also meant people that were not Jewish by birth but changed from their old religion to the Jewish faith. They tried to obey all the religious laws. They tried to celebrate all the festivals. They were in Jerusalem to celebrate the **Pentecost festival**. These people were from every country in the world. They spoke different languages.

VERSE 6.

⁶*When they heard this noise, a crowd came together. They were all surprised, because each one heard them speaking in his own language.*

The visiting Jews outside the house heard the noise. They wanted to know what was happening. Many of them came together to see for themselves. When they arrived they were surprised. They heard their own language. They understood what the apostles said.

VERSES 7-8.

⁷*They were completely **amazed** at this. They said, “Look! Aren’t all these people that we hear speaking from Galilee?”* ⁸*“Then how is it possible that we each hear them in our own languages?”*

Most of the apostles were from the area of Galilee, about one hundred miles north of Jerusalem.

The people asked two questions. 1. Aren’t all these people from Galilee? 2. How can we hear them in our own language?

At that time there were four major languages spoken in the Roman Empire. 1. Latin, used in Roman government affairs. 2. Greek, used in books, drama, and poetry. 3. Hebrew, used in the Jewish synagogues and temple. 4. Aramaic, used every day by most people in and around Israel. This is probably the language Jesus and the apostles used in their everyday conversations.

Parts of the New Testament were first written in Aramaic. Other parts were first written in Greek.

In addition, many of the smaller nations and groups of people had their own languages. Many people were able to understand more than one language. Many of them probably understood some Aramaic and Greek, but they heard in their own heart languages. These languages were used in other parts of the world. They were not secret languages. This is like many Deaf people who understand English, but ASL is their heart language, and they understand ASL best.

Visitors to Jerusalem probably thought the **apostles** would speak in Aramaic because they were from Galilee. They could not understand how they could hear their own languages.

VERSES 9-11a.

⁹ “We are from different places: Parthia, Media, Elam, Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, ¹⁰ “Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, the areas of Libya near Cyrene, Rome ^{11a} “(both Jews and those who had become Jews), Crete, and Arabia.”

This is a list of the places the visitors came from. The Word List in the back of these lessons explains where their nations were located. You can see where the people came from on the map on the last page of this book. Many were from faraway places, and they represented most of the world at that time.

VERSE 11b.

^{11b} “But we hear them telling in our own languages about the great things God has done!”

Most Bible teachers agree the things they heard were words of praise to God for the wonderful things God had done.

VERSE 12.

¹² They were all amazed and confused, asking each other, “What does this mean?”

This is the third question they asked. It was their most important question. They were honest. They understood something wonderful was happening. They did not understand why it was happening.

VERSE 13.

¹³ *But others were making fun of them, saying, "They have had too much wine."*

A group of people did not understand the languages they heard. Most Bible teachers believe these were people from **Judea** who spoke the Aramaic language. When the apostles spoke in other languages, the Judeans did not understand them.

BIBLE SKILL: *The Work of the Holy Spirit*

This lesson is about the Holy Spirit. There are many verses that explain the kinds of work the Holy Spirit does. Here are a few verses to show some of His work. Read them and fill in the blanks.

1. Luke 12:11-12. "The Holy Spirit will _____ you."
2. John 15:26. "I will send you the _____."
3. Romans 8:27b. "The Spirit _____ to God for His people."
4. Acts 1:8. "When the Holy Spirit comes to you, you will receive _____."

3. Peter's Sermon (Acts 2:14-15)

VERSE 14.

¹⁴ *But Peter stood up with the eleven apostles, and in a loud voice he spoke to the crowd: "My fellow Jews, and all of you who are in Jerusalem, listen to me. Pay attention to what I have to say."*

Peter was a strong leader. He needed to use a loud voice so everyone would be quiet and listen to him. He told them he had something important to tell them. He told them they must pay

attention. He wanted to explain what was happening. He wanted to tell them the truth about Jesus.

Jesus gave the **apostles** the work of telling the world about the salvation He gives. Peter obeyed Jesus' instructions and began to tell about Him.

VERSE 15.

¹⁵ *"These people are not drunk, as you think; it is only nine o'clock in the morning."*

Before Peter began his sermon, he explained they were not drunk. It was too early in the day for the whole group to be drunk. Some Bible translations use the third hour. That is how time was expressed in those days.

Peter gave a long and powerful message to explain about Jesus. In the next lesson and the Easter lesson, we will learn more about his sermon.

The people had questions. Peter took the opportunity to tell them about salvation through Jesus. Often our friends who are not believers have questions about our faith. We need to be ready to tell them how to become saved through Jesus.

**Have you ever had an opportunity to tell someone about Jesus?
YES NO.**

Be honest, did you take advantage of that opportunity? YES NO.

If you did take advantage of the opportunity, write a few words about what happened. _____

If you did not take advantage of that opportunity, write a few words about why you did not. _____

IN MY CONTEXT

A small group of Deaf believers began to study about the power the Holy Spirit. They learned He gives them power to witness to other people about Jesus.

All members in the Deaf group agreed witnessing is difficult. They began to make excuses about why they do not witness to their unsaved friends. The Deaf leader wrote their excuses on the board. He asked them to look at the list and decide if there were any good reasons Deaf people should not witness to their friends.

Do you use these excuses? Are they good excuses? Put an “X” on the lines if you use the excuses and if they are good excuses.

Excuses	I use them. They are good excuses.	
1. I am too shy.	_____	_____
2. People will make fun of me.	_____	_____
3. I don’t know the Bible well.	_____	_____
4. I am too busy.	_____	_____
5. Witnessing is the pastor’s job.	_____	_____

Are there any good reasons not to witness? Why are there no good reasons? The Holy Spirit gives us power to witness to other people.

Write a few words about the things you will do to stop making excuses. _____

MEMORY VERSE

“But when the Spirit of truth comes, He will lead you into all truth. He will not speak His own words, but He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is to come.” —John 16:13

Answers to Bible Skills Questions: 1. teach. 2. helper. 3. speaks. 4. power.



Session 3

TOGETHER

ACTS 2:41-47

Believers need to work together to do what Jesus commanded them to do.

FIRST THOUGHTS

The power of the gospel is seen in the unity of Jesus' followers. When members of the Deaf ministry or church pray and work together, they will experience the power of the gospel also.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Last week we learned that Peter told the people to listen and pay attention. It is important to know what Peter told the people

(Acts 2:16-40). Peter told them the **apostles** saw the miracles of Jesus.

Peter told the Jewish people about Jesus. They killed Jesus on a cross. God's plan was for Jesus to be raised from death.

He talked about David's **prophecy** in Psalm 16:8-11. The **Messiah** would not stay in the grave. David's prophecy was fulfilled.

The apostles saw Jesus die on the cross. They saw Him after He rose from the grave. They saw His **ascension**. He gave them the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The people wanted to know what they must do to be saved. Peter told them to change their hearts and lives. They should be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. The gift of the Holy Spirit would come to them also (Acts 2:38).

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 2:41-47)

1. Devoted (Acts 2:41-42)

VERSE 41.

⁴¹ Then those people who accepted what Peter said were baptized. About three thousand people were added to the number of believers that day.

Peter told the people how to be saved. We do not know exactly how many people were there. This verse says around three thousand people believed. They accepted Peter's teaching about Jesus.

At that time, people were baptized immediately. They believed. They were baptized. Some churches today ask new believers to take classes about their new faith. That was not the way the early church did things. New believers were baptized immediately. Today, missionaries to Deaf people in other nations often baptize new believers very soon after they accept Christ.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Baptism*

The Baptist Faith and Message* explains baptism. It is the immersion of a believer in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Immersion means to be put completely under water.

What must people do before they are baptized? Read the verses and fill in the blanks.

Acts 16:31. "_____ in the Lord Jesus."

Mark 16:16. "Anyone who _____."

Acts 2:41. "People who _____ Peter's words."

In lessons we have already studied, we learned Jesus gave His followers work to do. What is that work? It is to make disciples. Believers must witness to other people.

VERSE 42.

⁴² *They spent their time learning the apostles' teaching, sharing, breaking bread, and praying together.*

This verse describes the lives of the first believers. Their activities are an example for today's churches to follow.

What is the most important example? They loved each other. We see that love by the things they did. This verse explains four things the believers did.

1. They learned. The **apostles** taught them the things Jesus taught. Most people in this group were probably Jews. They knew the Old Testament. The New Testament was not written yet. They learned by being told. A few years later the apostles began to write down the teachings of Jesus.
2. They shared. They were not selfish. If someone in their group had a serious need, they shared their money, food, or clothing.

3. They fellowshiped with each other. This verse calls it breaking bread. In New Testament times, breaking bread had two meanings. The first and most important meaning was the Lord's Supper. They joined in the Lord's Supper often to remember the sacrifice of Jesus. Second, it meant sharing meals together. That could happen in meeting places and in homes.
4. They prayed together. They prayed for God to give them wisdom and strength to teach and witness.

Does your Deaf group do some of these things? List as many as you can think of. _____

BIBLE SKILL: *Teach God's Word*

One of the instructions Jesus gave His followers was to teach God's Word to other people. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament command believers to teach.

Read the verses. Answer these questions about teaching.

1. Deuteronomy 4:9. Whom must believers teach? _____
2. Deuteronomy 6:7. When must believers teach? _____
3. Matthew 5:19b. What should believers teach? _____
4. Matthew 28:20. Who told believers to teach? _____
5. Colossians 1:28. What is the reason to teach? _____

2. Together (Acts 2:43-47a)

VERSE 43.

⁴³ *The **apostles** were doing many miracles and signs, and everyone felt great respect for God.*

Read this verse carefully. Who did people feel respect for? Was it the **apostles**? No, it was God. Why did people respect God? They respected God because of the miracles He did through the apostles. They respected God because of the love they saw among the believers. The believers' lives brought glory to God.

Sometimes believers do not get along with each other. People do not respect them because of their behavior. When believers do not get along with each other, it causes lost people not to respect God.

VERSES 44-45.

⁴⁴ All the believers were together and shared everything. ⁴⁵ They would sell their land and the things they owned and then divide the money and give it to anyone who needed it.

The believers gave to people who needed something. Many of these people were from other countries. They probably did not bring enough food or money to last for a long time. They wanted to stay longer in Jerusalem so they could hear more about Jesus.

People who had enough helped people who had nothing. People who lived in the area sold their land.

This verse does not say believers sold everything and put the money together to divide it. The verse clearly says they gave the money to people who needed it.

We do not see people selling their land in later churches. Later churches did give support to people who needed help. The apostle Paul thanked the people in Macedonia for giving to people in other churches. Macedonia was a poor group. It did not matter. They gave as much as they were able to give (2 Corinthians 8:1-9).

Believers show love when they help each other.

VERSE 46.

⁴⁶ The believers met together in the temple every day. They ate together in their homes, happy to share their food with joyful hearts.

┌
The temple was a large building. It had different sized rooms. Some were used for storing things. Other rooms were used for the priests to stay in. The larger rooms were used for meetings.

The Jewish people often met in the temple to talk about the Old Testament Scriptures. New believers did the same thing. They met in the temple every day to hear about Jesus. They also met in their homes in smaller groups.

They were happy to be with other believers. They were happy to share their food with other believers.

Have you heard some Christians say they do not need to go to church? They say they can worship at home. That is not what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches us to meet together. We meet to pray, teach, fellowship, and worship.

VERSE 47a.

^{47a} They praised God and were liked by all the people.

Chapter 2 emphasizes believers praised God. Their lives showed their praise. People liked the things they saw in the group of believers.

They were free to worship in the way the apostles led them. The believers had a time of peace. The early church grew rapidly. Believers were free to witness about Jesus. They were not hurt.

Very soon people began to hate and **persecute** believers. Earlier, Jesus warned His disciples how people would hate them and persecute them (Matthew 10:22). Later, Christians were killed because they loved Jesus. All the apostles except John were killed. John died of natural causes.

The main idea of this lesson is the believers were together.

Do you think all groups of believers are together? YES NO.

Are some believers doing things that cause trouble? YES NO.

List three things the early believers did to stay together.

3. Growing (Acts 2:47b)

VERSE 47b.

⁴⁷ Every day the Lord added those who were being saved to the group of believers.

The important part of this verse is “every day.” Believers witnessed about Jesus every day. People accepted Jesus every day. The Lord added to the group every day.

The group of believers was not called the church at that time. They were not called Christians at that time. They were called believers. Sometimes they were called people of the way (John 14:6).

List some ideas to discuss with your class about what you can do to help needy Deaf people and their families in your community.

**The Baptist Faith and Message* is the statement of faith of the Southern Baptist Convention. It summarizes key Southern Baptist thought in the areas of the Bible and its authority, the nature of God as expressed by the trinity, the spiritual condition of man, God’s plan of grace and salvation, the purpose of the local church, ordinances, evangelism, Christian education, interaction with society, religious liberty, and the family. A copy of *The Baptist Faith and Message* is available at www.lifeway.com/Product/baptist-faith-message-2008

IN MY CONTEXT

Members of a Deaf ministry decided to study about the early church. They studied the four things described in Acts 2:42.

Each week they studied a different action of the church. They planned dinners together in their church. They planned Bible studies and meals in the homes of members.

They invited others to come to the fellowship meetings. They used the fellowship times to witness to other people. They used the time to teach each other from the Bible.

The most important thing they did was to pray. They praised God and prayed for each other.

Finally they took their faith outside the meetings. When they heard about a Deaf person who was in trouble, they helped. People in the Deaf community noticed how the Deaf believers treated each other. People who were not believers began to attend their church. Several people accepted Jesus as their Savior.

Are you involved with a group that tries to follow the example of the early believers? What are some of the activities you would like to do? _____

Write a few words about a plan you would like to see your Deaf group follow based on the example of the early believers. _____

MEMORY VERSE

“The believers met together in the temple every day. They ate together in their homes, happy to share their food with joyful hearts.”

—Acts 2:46

Answers to Key Doctrine questions: 1. believe. 2. believes. 3. accepted.

Answers to Bible Skills Questions: 1. Children. 2. Sitting at home, go walking, lie down, get up. 3. Obey commands of Jesus. 4. Jesus. 5. Bring people into God’s presence.



Session 4

RESURRECTED!

LUKE 24:1-12

The apostles' message is the truth about the resurrection.

FIRST THOUGHTS

What is the message of the church? It is salvation through faith in the **resurrected** Jesus.

As you study this lesson, do you really believe the **resurrection** of Jesus is true? Many Deaf people say they have a problem accepting this. Look at the truths in this lesson, and let the Holy Spirit lead you to tell your Deaf friends why you believe the resurrection of Jesus is true.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

We have been studying the Book of Acts. In the Book of Acts the **apostles** told about the resurrection of Jesus. This lesson is the story of the resurrection of Jesus. Luke wrote the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts.

Remember Luke was not an apostle. Read the information about Luke in the Introduction to the Quarter. Luke learned about the life of Jesus from the apostles and other people who were followers of Jesus.

Last quarter, we learned about the **Harmony of the Gospels**. Again, in today's lesson we will study Bible passages from other Gospel writers (Matthew, Mark, and John). Each writer has a different style. Each writer wrote from his own point of view and memory. That is the reason all the information is not written in the same words or in the same way in each verse.

The important thing to remember is that God told them what to write.

You should have at least one other Bible with you to look up verses from other Bible writers.

BIBLE SKILLS: *Comparing Scriptures*

This entire lesson is made up of Bible skills. Each of today's verses has at least one other verse connected to it.

Read the extra verses and answer the questions. Use your second Bible to find the different verses. This is a way to improve your Bible skills.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (LUKE 24:1-12)

1. The Tomb Is Empty (Luke 24:1-3)

VERSE 1.

¹*Very early on the first day of the week, at dawn, the women came to the tomb, bringing the spices they had prepared.*

The first three verses in this chapter describe the things a group of women saw and did.

Compare these verses with the other Gospel writers. Write notes about what is the same and what is different.

Matthew 28:1. _____

Mark 16:1. _____

John 20:1a. _____

Why did the women who were followers of Jesus go to the tomb? When a person dies, their body begins to decay. That causes a terrible odor. They went to put spices inside the burial cloths to block the terrible smell.

Jewish law would not let people do any kind of work on the Sabbath. Taking care of Jesus' body was work. They waited until the next day. The day after the Sabbath was called the first day of the week.

Read all of the verses. Write the names of the women who went to the tomb. _____

VERSE 2.

²*They found the stone rolled away from the entrance of the tomb.*

Compare the other Gospels. Write your notes about what you see that is the same and what you see that is different.

Matthew 28:2. _____

Mark 16:3-4. _____

The women faced four shocking things that morning. What was the first thing that shocked the women? The stone was moved.

They could not think of any way for it to be moved. Guards were standing there to keep Jesus' followers from taking Jesus' body away.

Luke does not explain how the stone was moved. Read the verses from Matthew and Mark. Who moved the stone? _____

VERSE 3.

³But when they went in, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

Compare the other Gospels. What do you notice about them?

Matthew 28:6. _____

Mark 16:6. _____

John 20:2b. _____

They faced a second shock. The tomb was empty. Jesus' body was gone. The women did not understand. The angel told them Jesus was **resurrected**. The women did not pay attention to the angel. They continued to think about Jesus' missing body. They did not connect the two thoughts: 1. Jesus' body was missing. 2. The angels said He rose from the dead.

What is your opinion? What did they think happened to Jesus body?

2. The Angels Explain (Luke 24:4-8)

VERSES 4-5a.

⁴While they were wondering about this, two men in shining clothes suddenly stood beside them. ^{5a}The women were very afraid and bowed their heads to the ground.

The women needed someone to explain why the tomb was empty. They saw it was empty. They did not know why.

The angels told the women that Jesus rose from the dead. He was resurrected.

The **resurrection** of Jesus is the most important point in these verses. He was dead and now He is alive. He promised His followers He would rise again. He did!

What were the women wondering about? They were wondering where the body of Jesus was. They loved Him and followed Him. They served Him. Now He was gone. They were worried and had broken hearts.

Then the third shock happened. Two men suddenly appeared in front of them. Their clothes were shining white. Matthew says the guards were very frightened. The women were also frightened. They bowed very low. It was the custom for people to touch the ground with their foreheads when they showed honor to someone.

Read Matthew 28:3-5 and Mark 16:5a. Describe the angels.

VERSES 5b-6.

^{5b} The men said to them, “Why are you looking for a living person in this place for the dead? ⁶ “He is not here; He has risen from the dead. Do you remember what He told you in Galilee?”

Another shock! Jesus rose from the dead! The angel reminded the women about Jesus’ words while they were all in Galilee. The women forgot the things Jesus said. They were sad and shocked. They were confused. They did not understand the things happening to them. They did not remember Jesus’ words of comfort.

Read Matthew 28:5-6 and Mark 16:7. List three things the angel told the women to do.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Jesus Rose from the Dead*

Jesus appeared to His followers at least nine times after His resurrection. Those are listed in the first lesson of this quarterly.

Jesus also showed Himself to apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 15:3-8).

VERSES 7-8.

⁷“He said the Son of Man must be handed over to sinful people, be crucified, and rise from the dead on the third day.”⁸ Then the women remembered what Jesus had said.

The angel reminded the women about Jesus’ words. They saw Jesus when He was arrested. They saw Him crucified. They saw Him put in the tomb. Then they were able to see the last part of Jesus’ statement was fulfilled. He rose from the dead on the third day.

Read Luke 9:22 and Luke 18:31-33. Make a list of the things Jesus said would happen to Him.

3. The Apostles Are Amazed (Luke 24:9-12)

VERSES 9-11.

⁹The women left the tomb and told all these things to the eleven apostles and the other followers.¹⁰ It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and some other women who told the apostles everything that had happened at the tomb.¹¹ But they did not believe the women, because it sounded like nonsense.

Everyone involved with the event was **amazed**. The guards were totally frightened. The women did not find Jesus in the tomb. Now we read about the reaction of the apostles.

The women went back to the apostles and told them the things they saw and heard.

Why were there only eleven apostles? Judas had already killed himself. He was the apostle who turned Jesus over to His enemies. Luke wrote that the apostles did not believe the women. The other Gospel writers do not mention this.

Read Matthew 28:8. The women were _____ and _____.

Read Mark 16:10. Jesus' followers did not know He was resurrected. They were _____ and _____.

VERSE 12.

¹² But Peter got up and ran to the tomb. Bending down and looking in, he saw only the cloth that Jesus' body had been wrapped in. Peter went away to his home, wondering about what had happened.

Peter believed the women. He went running to the tomb. When he arrived at the tomb, he saw the cloth Jesus' body was wrapped in. Nothing else was there.

John ran to the tomb with Peter. He wrote more details than the other Gospel writers because he was there. This is an interesting place to see how two different people wrote about the same event.

Read John 20:3-9. Who gave the most details, Luke or John?

IN MY CONTEXT

In this lesson we have looked at the events in Luke 24:1-12. We have also looked at the other Gospels. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were all led by the Holy Spirit to write from their memory about the day they found the empty tomb. None of the Gospel writers wrote all of the details. They did not write in exactly the same way. This shows they did not invent a story and try to fool people with it. The one thing they all said was Jesus was **resurrected** from the dead.

Can you tell the story of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection so someone can understand it clearly? YES NO.

Read the story several times in each of the Gospels and in different translations until you know the story and can tell it clearly in ASL. If possible, see these Bible verses in the *ASL Bible. The Bible is presented in ASL by professional Deaf signers.

Can we be sure we have eternal life? (Yes, because of Jesus' resurrection. He died and was raised for us.)

When you think about Jesus' resurrection, do you feel a sense of awe and amazement? YES NO. We must not talk or act silly about the resurrection.

We must ask ourselves some serious questions:

- 1. Do I believe the resurrection is real? YES NO.**
- 2. Do I tell other people about the wonderful news of Jesus' resurrection? YES NO.**

MEMORY VERSE

"So Jesus is the One whom God raised from the dead. And we are all witnesses to this." —Acts 2:32



Session 5

COURAGEOUS

ACTS 4:1-13

Believers need courage to tell others about Jesus.

FIRST THOUGHTS

The Holy Spirit gives believers courage to teach the truth. When Deaf church members spend time in prayer and seeking God's will, they will experience the work of the Holy Spirit and have courage to teach the truth. They will have courage to stand up for what is right when they are involved in Deaf organizations in their state and community.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Between last week's lesson and this lesson several things happened (Acts 3:1–4:1,13-31). Peter and John went to the temple. A crippled man was begging for money. Peter told him they did not have any money. They gave him something better. Peter told him by the power of Jesus he must stand and walk. He jumped up and went into the temple with them, praising God. The people were **amazed**.

Peter explained it was not their power that healed the man. He testified about Jesus. It was faith in Jesus that made this crippled man well.

Peter reminded them they tortured and crucified Jesus because they did not understand what they were doing. God sent Jesus to them to bless them.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 4:1-13)

1. Jewish Leaders Challenge John and Peter (Acts 4:1-7)

VERSES 1-2.

¹While Peter and John were speaking to the people, priests, the captain of the soldiers that guarded the temple, and Sadducees came up to them. ²They were upset because the two apostles were teaching the people and were preaching that people will rise from the dead through the power of Jesus.

There were three groups of people who approached Peter and John: 1. The soldiers that guarded the temple. 2. The priests. 3. The **Sadducees**.

Soldiers always went with the priests. The priests never went anywhere alone. The priests believed they were the only ones who should be able to teach in the temple. They did not want Peter and John to teach.

The Sadducees had the greatest objection. They were from wealthy families. They cooperated with the Roman

government. The **Sadducees** did not believe in a physical bodily **resurrection** (Matthew 22:23).

The Sadducees did not want people to preach that Jesus rose from the dead. They did not want the Roman government to hear that Peter and John were telling people about a King who rose from the dead. They were afraid the Roman government might think the Jews would go to war with them. They were afraid the Romans would stop them from governing Jewish religious things.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Witnessing*

Every believer must try to win lost people. These verses tell who must go and where believers must go.

Who must go?

1. John 20:21 _____

2. Romans 10:13-14 _____

Where to go?

3. Matthew 22:9-10 _____

4. Matthew 28:19 _____

VERSE 3.

³*The Jewish leaders grabbed Peter and John and put them in jail. Since it was already night, they kept them in jail until the next day.*

Jewish law did not permit a trial at night. The last sacrifice of the day usually started about three o'clock in the afternoon. When that was over, the temple gates were closed. Nothing happened until the next morning.

Peter and John were arrested because they did three things.

1. They healed a crippled man.
2. They taught in the temple.
3. They told the truth about the resurrection of Jesus.

VERSE 4.

⁴But many of those who had heard Peter and John preach believed the things they said. There were now about five thousand in the group of believers.

From the very beginning of the church, people tried to stop the message of Jesus. Christians were ordered to not talk about Jesus and His resurrection. A few years later Christians were persecuted and killed because they loved Jesus. Today, Christians, including some Deaf Christians, in some nations are persecuted and killed because of their faith.

Persecution and death did not stop believers from talking about Jesus. The church continued to grow. Putting people in jail did not stop the growth of the church. Punishing people because of their belief in Jesus did not stop the church from growing.

VERSES 5-6.

⁵The next day the rulers, the elders, and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. ⁶Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander were there, as well as everyone from the high priest's family.

The Roman governor appointed the **high priest** during the time of Jesus. The Romans ruled government activities. The Jewish priests ruled religious activities and local Jewish **civil** behavior.

This group was the Jewish Council or the **Sanhedrin**. It was made up of seventy men plus the **high priest**. Luke thought it was important to name some of the people who attended the meeting.

Jesus stood in front of Annas the **high priest** before His crucifixion. Caiaphas was the son-in-law of Annas. John was not the same as the apostle named John. There is nothing else about him in the Bible. There is nothing else about Alexander.

Luke did not explain why the rest of the high priest's family was there.

VERSE 7.

⁷*They made Peter and John stand before them and then asked them, “By what power or authority did you do this?”*

The leaders saw the crippled man who was healed. They could not say it did not happen. They wanted to know who gave Peter and John the authority to heal a crippled man. Who gave them the authority to teach and preach about Jesus?

Remember this group of men thought people must have their permission to do anything in the temple.

What is your opinion? Why do you think the leaders were afraid of the teachings of Jesus? _____

2. Peter Answers (Acts 4:8-12)

VERSES 8-10a.

⁸*Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and you elders”* ⁹*“Are you questioning us about a good thing that was done to a crippled man? Are you asking us who made him well?”*

^{10a}*“We want all of you and all the people to know that this man was made well by the power of Jesus Christ from Nazareth.”*

The Holy Spirit gave Peter the power to answer the leaders. This was the third time Peter took the opportunity to preach about Jesus. Peter and John did not want any of the people to think they healed the man by their own power. They wanted the people to know Jesus was the real healer.

VERSE 10b.

^{10b}*“You crucified Him, but God raised Him from the dead. This man was crippled, but he is now well and able to stand here before you because of the power of Jesus.”*

Again they wanted to be sure the leaders understood it was not their power. They were very clear that it was Jesus who healed him. They did not want praise for themselves.

VERSE 11.

¹¹ *“Jesus is ‘the stone that you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.’”*

A cornerstone is the first stone set in the ground to start a foundation for a building. Builders looked for a perfectly square stone so they could lay the foundation straight. The cornerstone must be perfectly square. If it were not perfect, the walls would be crooked. They looked through piles of stones until they found the perfect stone.

Peter used this example to show that Jesus is the only true and perfect foundation for salvation. He referred to Psalm 118:21-22 when he told them Jesus was the cornerstone. The Jewish leaders rejected Him the same way builders throw away stones. They crucified Jesus.

VERSE 12.

¹² *“Jesus is the only One who can save people. No one else in the world is able to save us.”*

What was the most powerful thing Peter told them? “Jesus is the only way to be saved. Nothing else can save people.” Before Jesus died, people depended on making sacrifices to get forgiveness for their sins. Peter told the leaders that would not save them now. Only Jesus could save them. Only Jesus can bring people to God the Father.

Do you believe Jesus is the only way a person can be saved? YES NO.

Why do you think that? _____

3. The Jewish Leaders Understand (Acts 4:13)

VERSE 13.

¹³ *The leaders saw that Peter and John were not afraid to speak, and they understood that these men had no special training or education. So they were amazed. Then they realized that Peter and John had been with Jesus.*

The Holy Spirit gave Peter and John boldness to speak. They were not afraid to tell the truth about Jesus.

The religious leaders knew that the **apostles** did not have training in the Jewish law. Peter's and John's answers showed they spent time with Jesus. He was the greatest teacher.

The leaders refused to accept Jesus' teachings while He was alive. Now they were afraid Peter and John would continue to teach the gospel of Jesus.

BIBLE SKILL: *Boldness*

Bold means to speak without fear.

The Book of Acts lists four times the apostles spoke without fear.

Read these verses in Acts. Write the name of the person who spoke without fear.

1. Acts 2:14 _____

2. Acts 4:13 _____

3. Acts 4:24-31 _____

4. Acts 28:30-31 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

Peter and John were not afraid. They continued to be bold. They continued to teach and preach about salvation through Jesus.

Believers today can expect arguments from others who do not accept Jesus as Lord. They do not accept His teachings. Only through faith in Jesus can a person experience salvation. Believers must be bold and explain the truth about salvation through Jesus.

How will believers become strong enough to speak without fear?

Do you depend upon the Holy Spirit to give you the courage and words when people go against you? YES NO.

Do you know the Bible verses well enough to explain how to become saved to people who do not know Jesus? YES NO.

Here are two verses to help you. Explain them in your own words.

John 3:16 _____

Romans 3:23-24 _____

Now, practice signing these verses in ASL so you will feel comfortable signing them for someone else.

MEMORY VERSE

“Jesus is the only One who can save people. No one else in the world is able to save us.” —Acts 4:12

Session 6

HONEST

ACTS 4:36–5:11

God demands discipline in His church.

FIRST THOUGHTS

Believers must understand sin within the church is a serious thing. Sin in the church cannot be taken lightly. If one sin is allowed, it will soon grow to affect many members. Believers cannot say any sin in the church is all right.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In the lesson last week, we learned Peter and John spoke boldly about Jesus. Acts 4:14-31 tells the things that happened next.

Jewish leaders sent the **apostles** away and talked among themselves. They warned the apostles they must not use the name of Jesus when they taught people.

Peter and John told the leaders God commanded them to preach about Jesus. Peter said they could not keep quiet.

Peter and John went back to the other believers and told them what the Jewish leaders said. Then they all prayed for boldness to speak without fear. The house where they were meeting began to shake. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak God's word without fear.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 4:36–5:11)

1. Example Number One: Barnabas (Acts 4:36-37)

VERSE 36.

³⁶ *One of the believers was named Joseph, a Levite born in Cyprus. The apostles called him Barnabas (which means “one who encourages”).*

Today's lesson gives us three examples of members of the early church. We have people like them in our churches today.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Church Membership*

People who were baptized became members of the church. In the Book of Acts they are usually called believers.

The New Testament church is a local group of baptized believers. The church obeys Jesus' teachings. Each member is responsible for his or her own relationship with Christ.

Who can become a member of a church? Read these verses to answer this question.

1. Acts 2:47 “Those who were being _____.”
2. Acts 5:14 “men and women _____.”
3. Acts 6:7 “number of Jewish priests _____.”

After a person believes, he or she can be baptized and become a church member.

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We will learn more about Barnabas in future lessons. He traveled with Paul on missionary trips. Barnabas was a Levite. This is the tribe the Jewish priests came from. He was born on Cyprus. He probably spoke several languages including Aramaic, Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. He probably heard the gospel in his own language on the day of **Pentecost**. His real name was Joseph. The **apostles** gave him the nickname Barnabas (the encourager) because he encouraged other believers.

VERSE 37.

³⁷ Joseph owned a field, sold it, brought the money, and gave it to the apostles.

Barnabas led by example. His actions showed how believers should act. Barnabas sold some land and gave all the money to the apostles. The apostles used the money to help poor people.

The apostles did not tell Barnabas he must give the money to them. He did it because he wanted to. He had a loving and generous heart.

Barnabas did not want people to praise him for his actions. He was a humble man. He was happy to help others. He was a good example of a true follower of Jesus.

Joseph's name became Barnabas because he cared about other people. He was nicknamed encourager. Look at your own life. What name do you think people would give you? _____ Why would they call you that name? _____

2. Example Number Two: Ananias (Acts 5:1-6)

VERSE 1.

¹ But a man named Ananias and his wife Sapphira sold some land.

This verse introduces us to two more examples. They are not good examples. Ananias and his wife Sapphira saw people respected Barnabas because he sold his land and gave the money to the apostles. The apostles did not tell anyone they must sell

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their land. Believers chose to do it voluntarily. Other people followed Barnabas' example with love and humility.

Ananias and Sapphira also sold some land. They wanted other people to see what they were doing.

VERSE 2.

²He kept back part of the money for himself; his wife knew about this and agreed to it. But he brought the rest of the money and gave it to the apostles.

The apostles did not tell believers they must give all of the money to them. A person could give all or any part of the money. They were not required to give any of it to the apostles. It was the person's own decision about how much to give.

Ananias decided to keep some of the money. That was all right. He could keep whatever he wanted to keep. His wife agreed with him. But they told the apostles they gave it all to them.

Ananias and Sapphira did the same things as Barnabas but for different reasons. They did not have good motives. They wanted people to praise them. Do you know some people today like that?

VERSE 3.

³Peter said, "Ananias, why did you let Satan rule your thoughts to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep for yourself part of the money you received for the land?"

Ananias and Sapphira were believers. They were part of this early church. They allowed Satan to lead them to lie about the money they received for the land. Satan led them to keep some of the money and lie about it. They said they gave all the money.

VERSE 4.

⁴"Before you sold the land, it belonged to you. And even after you sold it, you could have used the money any way you wanted. Why did you think of doing this? You lied to God, not to us."

The sin of Ananias was not that he kept part of the money. His sin was that he lied to God. Peter knew what happened. Peter told Ananias he knew about his lie.

Notice in verse 3, Peter told Ananias he lied to the Holy Spirit. In verse 4 Peter told Ananias he lied to God. It is clear from these verses Peter understood God and the Holy Spirit are one. They, with Jesus, are the **trinity**.

What was the basic reason Ananias lied? He wanted praise for his generosity. He wanted people to think he was as good as Barnabas.

VERSES 5-6.

⁵When Ananias heard this, He fell down and died. Some young men came in, wrapped up his body, carried it out, and buried it. ⁶And everyone who heard about this was filled with fear.

God's punishment was quick. He demands that His church be careful. The church must not allow sin to continue in the church.

It is important to understand this punishment was part of God's **discipline** of His children. God was protecting His church from lies and deception. The church must show God's holy character. He cannot allow sins in the church to damage His character.

The church did not cause Ananias and Sapphira to die. They died physically. It does not mean Ananias lost his salvation.

Today, do you think God punishes church members who sin against the church? YES NO.

What are some of the ways people sin against God in the church? Name four things.

3. Example Number Three: Sapphira (Acts 5:7-11)

VERSES 7-8.

⁷ About three hours later his wife came in, but she did not know what had happened. ⁸ Peter said to her, “Tell me, was the money you got for your field this much?” Sapphira answered, “Yes, that was the price.”

Sapphira and Ananias agreed to lie about the money they received for their land. Sapphira was not required to back up her husband. She was responsible for her own actions. She could not blame her actions on her husband.

Peter gave her a chance to tell the truth. She did not tell the truth. She told the same lie her husband told. She said they gave all the money to the **apostles**.

VERSES 9-10.

⁹ Peter said to her, “Why did you and your husband agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look! The men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.” ¹⁰ At that moment Sapphira fell down by his feet and died. When the young men came in and saw that she was dead, they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.

Peter asked her why they decided to lie to the Spirit of the Lord. She did not have time to answer. She fell over dead. The apostles did not kill her. God punished her because she lied to Him.

The lesson we learn from Acts 5:1-10 is that God is not happy when we let evil live in His church. He demands His church to be pure. He is angry when people cause trouble in His church. It was important for the early church to set a holy and pure example for nonbelievers.

VERSE 11.

¹¹ The whole church and all the others who heard about these things were filled with fear.

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This verse explains itself. God made it very clear He would not accept sin in His church. He made it very clear He would punish believers when they sin.

When all the people saw what happened to Ananias and Sapphira they were afraid. They were afraid to disobey God. They were afraid to allow sin to remain in the church.

BIBLE SKILL: *Church Trouble*

What should church members do if another member causes trouble in the church?

Jesus gave instructions about how to handle church members who cause trouble or sin openly.

Read Matthew 18:15-17. List the things church members should do.

1. Go to him in _____.

2. Tell him what he did _____.

If he refuses to listen:

3. Go to him _____.

4. Take _____ or _____ people with you.

If he refuses again:

5. Tell the _____.

6. Treat him like a person who _____ in God.

IN MY CONTEXT

We often hear about Deaf churches or congregations who begin to lose members. Soon the ministry dies. A Deaf leader felt sad to see that happen. He wanted to know what caused the groups to become smaller. He talked with some of the members of churches that failed to grow. He asked them why the churches failed to grow.

When he had some answers, he made a list of the reasons named most often. There were many reasons given.

Look at the top three reasons these churches failed to grow. By each reason, write the things you think church members could do to help the church grow again. Remember the instructions Jesus gave.

1. What to do when church members sin openly.
2. What to do when church members criticize each other.
3. What to do when people cannot get along with each other.

The Deaf leader recommended these ideas to his church:

1. Members must encourage others through obedience and sacrifice.
2. Members must be sure their own motives are right.
3. Members must understand God will judge their actions and motives.

Do you agree these are good actions for a church to follow? YES NO.

MEMORY VERSE

“With great power the apostles were telling people that the Lord Jesus was truly raised from the dead. And God blessed all the believers very much.” —Acts 4:33



Session 7

FAITHFUL

ACTS 5:25-35,38-42

Be faithful to tell about Jesus.

FIRST THOUGHTS

Believers must remain faithful in sharing the gospel message. They must not stop when people go against them.

Deaf church members need to realize they may be the only people who can tell other Deaf people in the community about Jesus. What a great responsibility. God has placed your Deaf ministry in just the right place to reach lost Deaf people for Christ in your area.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

We learned in previous lessons that Peter and John were arrested and put in jail. The Jewish leaders warned them not to preach in the name of Jesus. Then, they let them go.

The verses between last week's lesson and today's lesson describe the actions of the **apostles**. Peter and John continued to preach about Jesus, and they healed people.

They were arrested a second time. They were put in jail. During the night an angel came. He opened the jail doors and let Peter and John out.

The next morning the Jewish leaders told the soldiers to bring them in for a trial. The Jewish leaders wanted to stop the growth of the Christian faith.

When the soldiers went to the jail, Peter and John were gone. The doors were locked. The guards were standing in their correct places. Everything was the way it should be. Only one thing was wrong. Peter and John were gone.

The leaders and the soldiers were upset. They did not know where their prisoners were.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 5:25-35,38-42)

1. Returning to the Temple (Acts 5:25-28)

Someone told the Jewish council where to find the apostles. The Jewish council was called the Sanhedrin.

VERSE 25.

²⁵ *Then someone came and told them, "Listen! The men you put in jail are standing in the Temple teaching the people."*

The first time Peter and John were arrested they were released. The temple leaders commanded them not to teach about Jesus.

The apostles were not afraid. They went back to the temple and started teaching again.

Again Peter and John were arrested. Again they were put in jail. Again the leaders told them they must not teach people about Jesus. Again Peter and John went back to the temple to tell about Jesus.

VERSE 26.

²⁶ Then the captain and his men went out and brought the apostles back. But the soldiers did not use force, because they were afraid the people would stone them to death.

The common people respected and honored the **apostles**. Many of them gathered to listen to Peter and John talk about Jesus.

The soldiers went to arrest them again. Peter and John went with the soldiers peacefully. The guards were afraid to use force. Why? They were afraid the people would protect the apostles. The soldiers were afraid the people would kill them.

VERSES 27-28.

*²⁷ The soldiers brought the apostles to the meeting and made them stand before the leaders. The **high priest** questioned them, ²⁸ Saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in that name. But look, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are trying to make us responsible for this man's death."*

There were four things the priests worried about.

First, they were angry because the apostles disobeyed them. The apostles continued to preach about Jesus.

Second, they were worried about the use of Jesus' name. They did not tell the apostles to stop teaching. They told them to stop teaching in Jesus' name. Notice the priests would not say the name of Jesus. They said, "That name."

Third, the Christian faith was growing. They wanted to stop the Christian faith.

Fourth, they did not want to be blamed for the death of Jesus. The apostles continued to explain the Jewish people were responsible for His torture and death. Read Matthew 27:25-26.

BIBLE SKILL: *The Name of Jesus*

The Bible tells us the name of Jesus has power. When we pray, we pray in the name of Jesus. The apostles performed miracles in the name of Jesus. His name is above all names. Read the following verses. Explain their meaning in your own words.

1. Acts 4:12 _____
2. Acts 19:5 _____
3. Philippians 2:9-10 _____

2. Standing Strong (5:29-32)

VERSE 29.

²⁹ *Peter and the other apostles answered, “We must obey God, not human authority!”*

Peter was a leader of the group of apostles. He did not tell them the things they should say. They all obeyed the commands of Jesus. They all agreed together.

The teachings of the Old and New Testaments say people must obey the laws of their government. These are called **civil** laws. The only time people are allowed to disobey civil laws is when those laws go directly against God’s laws. Peter spoke out strongly. They must obey God’s laws.

VERSE 30.

³⁰ *“You killed Jesus by hanging him on a cross. But God, the God of our ancestors, raised Jesus up from the dead!”*

The next two things Peter said were the things that made the leaders most angry. He said the Jewish people were responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus. Did you read Matthew 27:25-26?

Not only did Peter blame the Jews for crucifying Jesus. He said God raised Jesus from the dead. Remember many of the leaders were **Sadducees**. They taught there was no such thing as life after death. They did not believe in **resurrection**.

VERSE 31.

³¹ *“Jesus is the One whom God raised to be on His right side, as Leader and Savior. Through Him, all people could change their hearts and lives and have their sins forgiven.”*

Peter continued to say things that upset the **Sanhedrin**. He continued to talk about the resurrection of Jesus. Then he told them Jesus could change them. He could forgive their sins.

The Jewish religion taught that only God the Father can forgive sins through sacrifices and save people.

Peter told them Jesus was sitting on the right side of God. The Sanhedrin knew that meant Jesus is equal with God.

VERSE 32.

³² *“We saw all these things happen. The Holy Spirit, whom God has given to all who obey him, also proves these things are true.”*

ASL uses a strong sign: period. It means “and that is the way it truly is.” The end! Peter said there was proof that the things they said were true. They saw all the things that happened. God gave them the Holy Spirit. So, all of those teachings were true. Period!

KEY DOCTRINE: *Obeying Government Laws*

Believers must obey civil Laws. Fill in the blanks from these verses:

1. Romans 13:1 “must _____ to the government.”
2. 1 Timothy 2:2 “_____ for rulers.”
3. 1 Peter 2:13 “_____ to people who have authority.”

Believers must obey God more than people.

4. James 4:12 "God is the _____."

5. Acts 5:29 "We must obey _____, not _____ authority!"

6. Ephesians 1:21 "put Christ _____ all rulers, authorities."

3. Waiting for a Decision (Acts 5:33-35,38-39)

VERSE 33.

³³ *When the leaders heard this, they became angry and wanted to kill them.*

In the verses above, we learned why the members of the Sanhedrin were angry. They killed Jesus. Now they wanted to kill His followers. It was a very emotional meeting.

VERSE 34.

³⁴ *But a Pharisee named Gamaliel stood up in the meeting. He was a teacher of the law, and all the people respected him. He ordered the apostles to leave the meeting for a little while.*

Gamaliel is only mentioned twice in the Bible. Paul says in Acts 22:3, Gamaliel was a respected teacher of the Law of Moses. He saw the leaders were becoming more angry and emotional.

He wanted to speak to the Sanhedrin privately. He told the apostles to go outside for a little while.

VERSE 35.

³⁵ *Then he said, "People of Israel, be careful what you are planning to do to these men."*

While the apostles were outside, Gamaliel talked to the leaders. First he warned them to be careful. They should not rush to make a quick decision. In verses 36-37 he reminded them of two men who led rebellions. They were both killed. Their followers scattered. They failed. He compared Jesus to those two men.

VERSES 38-39.

³⁸ “And so now I tell you: Stay away from these men, and leave them alone. If their plan comes from human authority, it will fail. ³⁹ “But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop them. You might even be fighting against God himself!” The leaders agreed with what Gamaliel said.

Gamaliel was a wise man. The **Sanhedrin** listened to him and accepted his advice. He told them to leave the followers of Jesus alone. If this new faith is from God it will not fail. If it is from a man, it will fail. They did not want to fight against God.

4. Rejoicing in Suffering (Acts 5:40-42)

VERSE 40.

⁴⁰ They called the apostles in, beat them, and told them not to speak in the name of Jesus again. Then they let them go free.

We do not know if they beat the **apostles** the first two times they were arrested. The Jewish leaders warned them not to speak in the name of Jesus.

This is the first time the Bible reports that Christians were punished for their faith. Punishment of Christians continues today in many parts of the world.

VERSES 41-42.

⁴¹ The apostles left the meeting full of joy because they were given the honor of suffering disgrace for Jesus. ⁴² Every day in the temple and in people’s homes they continued teaching the people and telling the Good News—that Jesus is the Christ.

Most people would be afraid of receiving more punishment. The apostles were not afraid. They thought it was an honor to suffer for Jesus.

Why did the apostles think it was an honor to suffer for Jesus? Write a few words about your thoughts. _____

IN MY CONTEXT

Look back to lesson number two. Look at the section called “In My Context.” You listed some excuses for not witnessing to other Deaf people. Do you notice there is one excuse not listed? It is punishment or persecution.

In some places in the world today Christians, hearing and Deaf, are being killed for their love for Jesus. We are all greatly saddened when we hear that groups like **ISIS** cut off the heads of Christian children. We must pray for our brothers and sisters in those countries. In many countries it is against the law to witness about Jesus.

In America believers are more often mocked or teased for their faith. Sometimes they are discriminated against. Christian pastors are told they must not preach against homosexuality. The government calls that preaching “hate crimes.”

1. Should pastors stop preaching about that topic? YES NO.
2. Have you ever faced people who laughed at you or mocked you? YES NO.
3. What did you do at that time? _____
4. Were you like Peter? YES NO.
5. Did you continue to share your faith? YES NO.

MEMORY VERSE

Peter and the other apostles answered, “We must obey God, not human authority!” —Acts 5:29.



Session 8

SERVING

ACTS 6:1-10

Believers must serve unselfishly.

FIRST THOUGHTS

Believers honor God and further His kingdom through unselfish service. This lesson is about giving, serving, and solving problems in the church. Every Deaf church and every Deaf group in the church will face problems. Do you discuss giving and stewardship in your Deaf Bible study? Do the Deaf people in your group understand about the tithe, and how to know how much their tithe should be? Do not be afraid to talk about giving and tithing. Jesus and the **apostles** talked about money!

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

There were several groups of Jews who became believers. The two largest groups were the Greek speaking group and the Aramaic speaking group. The group that spoke Greek was made up of people from outside the land of Israel. Most people outside Israel were Gentiles and spoke Greek in their daily lives. They were influenced by Greek culture. They used the Greek translation of the Old Testament. That translation is known as the **Septuagint**.

The Aramaic speaking group was made up of Jews who were from Israel. They used the Hebrew Old Testament in the synagogues and temple.

In Bible times, widows and orphans were the poorest people in the nation. Widows were not allowed to own land. When their husbands died, it was the responsibility of their sons to care for them. If they had no children, they were totally alone.

The Old Testament has many rules about taking care of widows. Use a **concordance** to look for the word widow. You will find verses to explain some of these rules.

The early church obeyed those rules. They were careful to take care of widows and orphans in their congregation.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 6:1-10)

1. Understanding a Need (Acts 6:1-2)

VERSE 1.

¹The number of followers was growing. But during this same time, the Greek-speaking followers had an argument with the other followers. The Greek-speaking widows were not getting their share of the food that was given out every day.

The church was growing in numbers. There were only twelve apostles to work with thousands of believers. They could not know about everything that happened in such a large group.

Some of the group were Greek Jews who became believers. They were Gentiles who became Jews and then became Christians. Some of the group were also Gentiles, but from false religions. They accepted Christ also. The larger part of the group were Jews from **Judea**. The whole Greek speaking group was probably not as large as the group of Hebrew Jews. The Jews and Gentiles argued.

Satan attacked the church in two ways. He used outside forces to **persecute** the early believers. Believers became stronger because of persecution.

The second way Satan attacked the church was to cause arguments between believers. He continues to attack the church today. He causes believers to argue and gossip.

VERSE 2.

²The twelve apostles called the whole group of followers together and said, "It is not right for us to stop our work of teaching God's word in order to serve tables."

The **apostles** learned the Greek widows were not treated fairly. Jesus called the apostles to teach and preach. They did not have time to take care of individual people with physical needs. This does not mean they did not care. They just did not have time. They needed help. They called the whole group of followers together.

Have you experienced disagreements in your church? YES NO.

How did you solve the problem? _____

2. Solving a Problem (Acts 6:3-7)

VERSES 3-4.

³"So, brothers and sisters, choose seven of your own men who are good, full of the Spirit, and full of wisdom. We will put them in charge of this work. ⁴"Then we can continue to pray and to teach the word of God."

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This was the first time the early church showed a division of responsibilities. The apostles needed to give their full time to prayer and preaching.

The church selected new leaders to minister to the physical and spiritual needs of believers. They were responsible for managing the money of the church.

The apostles told the group to choose men who had four special requirements:

1. They must be men. The early church had women who were wonderful servants of Christ. Do you remember the women who followed and served Jesus when He was on earth? In those times women were not accepted as leaders.

2. They must be good. As we learned from the story of Ananias, not all people in their group were good. They were believers, but they had human faults. The apostles said to choose men who had reputations for being good.

3. They must be full of wisdom. Their daily lives must show they made good decisions. They must understand people and their problems. They must be able to solve problems in a Christlike way.

4. They must be full of the Holy Spirit. When people are saved they are filled with the Holy Spirit. This is another way of saying the men must be true believers. The Holy Spirit must show through their lives.

VERSE 5.

⁵The whole group liked the idea, so they chose these seven men: Stephen (a man with great faith and full of the Holy Spirit), Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas (a man from Antioch who had become a follower of the Jewish religion).

Seven men were chosen to lead the church's care ministry. All seven men had Greek names. They were probably part of the group of Greek-speaking Jews.

Notice that the verse says Stephen had great faith and was full of the Holy Spirit. He was the first Christian **martyr**. Philip

became known as a strong evangelist. We will hear more about Stephen and Philip in future lessons. The Bible does not tell about any of the other deacons.

These seven men took over the daily care of believers. They were not called deacons at that time. The same duties were performed later by men who were called deacons or **elders**.

VERSE 6.

*⁶Then they put these men before the **apostles**, who prayed and laid their hands on them.*

The laying on of hands is an important event. This verse and Acts 13:3 show people were set aside for special service. Most often it was used for setting aside the people God calls to serve Him in a special way.

There are other important places in the church for members to serve Christ. It is important for each member of a local church to find a place of service. Each member has special talents to use in this service. The church is strong only when all members find a place of service to use their talents.

VERSE 7.

⁷The word of God was continuing to spread. The group of followers in Jerusalem increased, and a great number of the Jewish priests believed and obeyed.

While Jesus was on earth His words changed the lives of people. These men and women were strong in their faith. They were not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus. Their boldness helped change the lives of many other people.

An important part of this verse is about Jewish priests who became believers. The priests were usually against the teaching of the apostles. Probably these priests were not the ruling priests. They were priests who ministered in the temple every day. They listened to the apostles teach about Jesus. They became followers of Jesus. They obeyed His commands.

BIBLE SKILL: Requirements to Be a Deacon

Read Timothy 3:1-10. List the requirements.

1. Desires a _____
2. Not give people reason to _____ him.
3. Have only one _____.
4. Be _____.
5. Be _____.
6. _____ by others.
7. Ready to _____ guests.
8. Not drink too much _____.
9. Like to _____.
10. Be _____ and _____.
11. Not _____ money.
12. Be a _____ family leader.
13. Not be a _____ believer.
14. Have the respect of people who are _____ in the church.
15. _____ say things they do not believe.
16. Get rich by _____ others.

3. Testing a Servant (Acts 6:8-10)

VERSE 8.

⁸Stephen was richly blessed by God who gave him the power to do great miracles and signs among the people.

Until this time, only apostles did miracles. After they laid hands on Stephen, God gave him the power to perform miracles. Stephen was strong and faithful.

VERSE 9.

⁹ But some people were against him. They belonged to the synagogue of Free Men (as it was called), which included people from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and Asia. They all came and argued with Stephen.

One synagogue in Jerusalem was for Greek-speaking Jews who were not from Jerusalem. Most of the people in this synagogue were former slaves. They were now free. Others were not former slaves but were from outside Jerusalem.

VERSE 10.

¹⁰ But the Spirit was helping him to speak with wisdom, and his words were so strong that they could not argue with him.

Stephen was probably a well-educated man. He had a sharp mind and was a deep thinker. He did not depend on his own wisdom to argue with the Jews. The wisdom given to him by the Holy Spirit silenced the Jewish leaders who tried to debate with him about Jesus.

KEY DOCTRINE: *The Work of the Holy Spirit*

In Acts 6, we see how Stephen was blessed.

1. Verse 5: He was _____ of the Holy Spirit.
2. Verse 8: God gave him the power to do great _____.
3. Verse 10: The Holy Spirit helped him to _____ with wisdom.

IN MY CONTEXT

Does your church or Deaf group have leaders who have special responsibilities? YES NO. In addition to teachers and deacons, some Deaf leaders are responsible to help serve their members who have special needs.

If some Deaf people need food or other help, does your Deaf group act quickly to help them? YES NO. We can help spread the gospel by meeting physical needs of people. We must give that service before the need becomes a stumbling block to others.

If a Deaf person has a spiritual need, does your Deaf group act quickly to minister to them? YES NO. If believers do not act quickly, there may be arguments in the group.

Does every believer in your group have a responsibility within the group? YES NO. When believers work together they can experience God's blessing. We receive His blessing when we serve in the power of the Holy Spirit.

List the leaders of your church and what they are responsible for:

Do you think you might become a leader if you had some training? YES NO. Talk with your pastor or leader about how you can become a strong leader.

MEMORY VERSE

“But the Spirit was helping him to speak with wisdom, and his words were so strong that they could not argue with him.”—Acts 6:10



Session 9

OBEDIENT

ACTS 8:26-31,35,38-39

God requires obedience.

FIRST THOUGHTS

Obedience means “to hear God’s word and do the things He says.” When a believer obeys God, it means he trusts God. Sometimes obeying God is very difficult. We may not know what will happen when we obey God. We must trust Him to take care of us.

Deaf believers cannot truly worship God if we do not obey God. A major way we obey God is to share the gospel message with other Deaf people. When we are obedient, God gives us

opportunities to tell others about Jesus. We must act on the opportunities God gives us.

Often Deaf people say they do not feel strong enough to obey God's command to witness to other people. Study this lesson. Pay attention to the way Philip obeyed God's leadership. He studied the Scriptures so he could be ready to explain his faith to other people. You will become more confident as you study the Bible.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Last week we learned Stephen spoke to the leaders of the **Synagogue** of Free Men. He spoke strongly. They could not say anything to disagree with him. They made a plan to say Stephen preached against Moses.

They secretly told some men to say, "We heard Stephen speak against Moses and against God." This caused the people to become angry. The people in the meeting watched Stephen closely. They saw that his face looked like the face of an angel.

The **high priest** said to Stephen, "Are these things true?"

Stephen answered with a powerful speech. You can read that speech in Acts 7:2-53. His answers made the crowd angry.

They would not listen and ran at Stephen. They began to stone him to death. The people who told lies against Stephen left their coats with a young man named Saul. Saul agreed it was good to kill Stephen. Saul later became a believer. His name was changed to Paul. We will learn more about him in the second half of the Book of Acts.

As Stephen was dying, he prayed God would forgive the men who killed him.

That was the beginning of persecution of Christ's followers. All the believers, except the **apostles**, were scattered throughout **Judea** and **Samaria**.

Saul also was trying to destroy the church. He hunted down believers to kill them or put them in jail. The believers did not stop preaching and teaching about Jesus. Wherever they went they told people the good news.

Philip was the first apostle to go to the city of **Samaria** and preach about Christ. He performed miracles there. He became known as an evangelist.

Then Peter and John went through towns in Samaria and preached the gospel.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 8:26-31,35,38-39)

1. Called to Seek Lost People (Acts 8:26-29)

VERSE 26.

²⁶ *An angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Get ready and go south to the road that leads down to Gaza from Jerusalem—the desert road.”*

God sent an angel to Philip. The angel told him to go south to a road that went to a desert. The road led to an area called Gaza. It was southwest of Jerusalem near the Mediterranean coastline. It was the road most people traveled from Jerusalem to Africa. Gaza was about fifty miles from Jerusalem.

Not many people traveled that road. They traveled in groups. They walked or they rode in slow-moving wagons pulled by oxen.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Obedience*

God told Philip to go and he went. That is a good definition of obedience!

God requires obedience. Study these verses about obedience. Fill in the blanks.

1. First Samuel 15:22b. “It is better to _____ than to give sacrifices.”
2. Hebrews 5:8. “Even though Jesus was the Son of God, He learned _____ by what he suffered.”

3. Hebrews 5:9. "And because His obedience was _____, He was able to give eternal salvation to all who obey Him."
4. First Peter 1:22. "Now that your obedience to the truth has purified your souls, you can have _____ for your Christian brothers and sisters. So love each other deeply with all your heart."

VERSE 27.

²⁷ So Philip got ready and went. On the road he saw a man from Ethiopia, a eunuch. He was an important officer in the service of Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians; he was responsible for taking care of all her money. He had gone to Jerusalem to worship.

Philip got up and went. God did not tell Philip why he should go there. Philip did not question God. He obeyed Him. Philip went to the lonely road and met a government official from Ethiopia. We do not know his name. He was the man who took care of the queen's money. He was her treasurer. He was highly trusted. He was a eunuch. He had accepted the Jewish religion. He was returning home after spending time in Jerusalem. He was probably in Jerusalem to celebrate the **Pentecost festival**.

VERSES 28-29.

*²⁸ Now, as he was on his way home, he was sitting in his chariot reading from the Book of Isaiah, the **prophet**. ²⁹ The Spirit said to Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it."*

The official was able to read either Greek or Hebrew. While he traveled he was reading Isaiah 53:7-8.

The Holy Spirit told Philip to go near the chariot. Philip did not know why the Spirit led him there. He obeyed the Spirit. He knew God put him in the right place at the right time.

Philip was an evangelist. He knew Jesus wanted all people everywhere to hear the gospel message. He was ready to tell them about Jesus.

Do you study the Bible so you can tell others about Jesus? YES NO.

List some of the things you can do to prepare yourself to witness to others.

2. Prepared to Share the Gospel (Acts 8:30-31,35)

VERSES 30-31.

³⁰ So when Philip ran toward the chariot, he heard the man reading from Isaiah the prophet. Philip asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" ³¹ He answered, "How can I understand unless someone explains it to me?" Then he invited Philip to climb in and sit with him.

Philip was always ready to explain the gospel. The Holy Spirit gave him the words to say.

He went near the chariot. The Ethiopian was reading the Scriptures out loud. Philip asked him if he understood the things he read.

The man said he needed someone to explain the Scripture to him. So the official invited Philip to come sit in his chariot with him. Philip was ready. If the man had questions, Philip answered them.

In verses 32-34 we learn he asked Philip who the **prophet** Isaiah was talking about. Philip explained it was Jesus. Then Philip told the man the good news about Jesus.

VERSE 35.

³⁵ Philip began to speak, and starting with this same Scripture, he told the man the Good News about Jesus.

Philip explained how the Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled by Jesus. He probably explained other books in the

Old Testament that told about the **Messiah**. God provided the opportunity for Philip to witness to the man.

Did you ever feel God was giving you the opportunity to tell someone about Jesus? YES NO.

Did you obey God and witness to that person? YES NO.

In your own words tell about your experience. _____

3. Focused on Salvation (Acts 8:38-39)

VERSE 38.

³⁸ *Then the officer commanded the chariot to stop. Both Philip and the officer went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.*

Both Philip and the Ethiopian man went into the water (verses 37-38). He was baptized by **immersion**. *Immersion* means Philip put him completely under water.

Philip baptized the Ethiopian as a way to show the man's faith in Jesus. Baptism does not save a person. Baptism shows a person is a believer. After people become believers, they are baptized. Baptism by immersion is an act of obedience for the believer.

VERSE 39.

³⁹ *When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord took Philip away; the officer never saw him again. And the officer continued on his way home, full of joy.*

After Philip baptized the officer, the Holy Spirit took Philip away. The officer was not worried about Philip going away. He was full of joy. History tells us strong Christian churches were started in Ethiopia.

The official went home full of joy. An early church historian named Irenaeus wrote about the Ethiopian officer. Irenaeus lived around A.D. 130-202. Irenaeus said the officer returned to Ethiopia and told his own people about Jesus. He became a missionary to his own people.

BIBLE SKILL: *Jesus' Fulfilled Old Testament Prophecy*

The Ethiopian was reading a prophecy in Isaiah about Jesus. A major theme of Acts is how Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecy as the Savior. Read these verses and name who made the prophecy about Jesus.

1. Acts 2:22-36 _____
2. Acts 3:18-26 _____
3. Acts 8:33-34 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

John is a Deaf Christian who rides the bus to work every day. Several other Deaf people ride the same bus at the same time. Many times John has the feeling he must tell them about Jesus, but he doesn't.

One day John talked with his pastor about his shyness. The pastor told him he was not obeying God. The feelings he had were the leadership of the Holy Spirit. John prayed for courage and then witnessed to one of the Deaf men. The man accepted Christ as his Savior.

Are you aware of opportunities God gives you to share the good news of Jesus? YES NO.

Do you take advantage of these opportunities? YES NO.

Do you find it hard to witness? YES NO.

Do you feel you do not know how to witness? YES NO.

Do you trust the Holy Spirit to direct you? We must remember God calls us to be His witnesses. Why? Salvation is available to all who are willing to receive Jesus. We must obey God's command to witness to other people.

If we do not take advantage of opportunities to witness, are we obeying God? YES NO. Why do you think that? _____

Will you ask God to show you opportunities to witness this week?

Will you ask God to give you strength and understanding to witness?

MEMORY VERSE

While they were traveling down the road, they came to some water. The officer said, "Look, here is water. What is stopping me from being baptized?" —Acts 8:36



Session 10

CHANGED

ACTS 9:3-9,15-20

People must be saved before they try to serve God.

FIRST THOUGHTS

God uses different kinds of people to serve Him in different ways. God calls all people to be His messengers. What is the first step to become His messenger? It is a promise to follow Christ. Each believer has a special way to serve God. All believers are not the same. We should use all of our talents to spread the gospel of Jesus.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In session 8 we learned about the death of Stephen. There was a group of men who stoned him to death. While they were throwing stones they put their coats on the ground in front of a young man named Saul.

In the first two verses of this chapter we read about Saul again. He was out looking for believers. Why? He wanted to kill them or throw them in jail.

He decided to go to Damascus to hunt believers there. Damascus was a town about one hundred forty miles north east of Jerusalem. The Romans had control of the city. They let the Jewish leaders control religious affairs in Damascus.

Saul needed to get approval from the leaders to go to Damascus to hunt the followers of Christ's way. Early Christians were often called People of the Way. He asked for letters to permit him to go to Damascus to arrest believers and bring them to Jerusalem for trial and punishment.

Saul was between thirty and thirty-five years old at that time. Jewish leaders thought he was a wonderful young man. They gave him permission to go to Damascus.

Today's lesson starts while Saul is on the road to Damascus.

EXPLORE THE TEXT: (ACTS 9:3-9, 15-20)

1. Saul Meets Jesus (Acts 9:3-6)

VERSE 3.

³ So Saul headed toward Damascus. As he came near the city, a bright light from heaven suddenly flashed around him.

Saul thought he could destroy the church and stop the spread of the gospel. Other Jewish leaders were working in Jerusalem to destroy the early church. Saul thought it was his responsibility to

go outside of Jerusalem to destroy the followers of Jesus. While he was on his way a bright light started flashing around him.

VERSES 4-5.

⁴ Saul fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul! Why are you persecuting me?" ⁵ Saul said, "Who are you, Lord?" The voice answered, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."

The light was so bright it caused him to fall to the ground. In Acts 26:13-14, Paul (the new name for Saul) wrote that everyone around him also fell to the ground.

Everyone heard the voice also (verse 7). The voice asked Saul why he was persecuting believers. It was clear that Saul was persecuting believers. That meant he was persecuting Jesus at the same time. Believers are Jesus' representatives on earth.

KEY DOCTRINE: *God Uses All Kinds of People for His Work*

As you study this lesson, tell what kind of work each person did.

1. Ananias: _____
2. Judas: _____
3. People who traveled with Saul: _____

Saul asked who was talking to him. Priests and rabbis in the Old Testament time believed a voice from heaven was the voice of the Lord. It is not clear if Saul met God the Father or Jesus. He knew enough about Jesus to realize it was Him. Or maybe he recognized that Jesus is the Lord God!

The voice and the light were surprising and frightening to Saul. The next thing the voice said surprised him even more. The voice said, "I am Jesus." Saul believed Jesus was dead. Imagine how he felt when Jesus talked to him. Jesus was not dead.

VERSE 6.

⁶ *“Get up now and go into the city. Someone there will tell you what you must do.”*

First, Jesus asked Saul why he was persecuting Him. Second, Jesus told Saul who He was. Third, Jesus told Saul what he must do next.

Jesus told Saul to go into Damascus. He did not tell Saul why he must go. Saul obeyed Jesus. He went on to Damascus.

2. The People with Saul (Acts 9:7-9)

VERSE 7.

⁷ *The people traveling with Saul stood there but said nothing. They heard the voice, but they saw no one.*

Paul had some soldiers and possibly some servants with him. People did not travel alone. They always went with a larger group for protection.

This verse says the people stood there. They did not run away from the frightening event.

They could hear the sound of the voice. They did not see anyone. They were witnesses of the event. Later they could say Saul's story was true.

VERSES 8-9.

⁸ *Saul got up from the ground and opened his eyes, but he could not see. So those with Saul took his hand and led him into Damascus.* ⁹ *For three days Saul could not see and did not eat or drink.*

Saul opened his eyes, but he was blind. He could not see how to walk. The people with him took his hand and led him to Damascus.

This verse says Saul could not eat or drink for three days. What is your opinion? Why was Saul unable to eat or drink? Or, does it mean he was fasting? Write a few words about your opinion. _____

Read verses 10-14 to learn about this man named Ananias. Remember the first Ananias died when he lied to the Holy Spirit about a field he sold. We do not know how this Ananias came to know Jesus. Maybe he was in Jerusalem and heard about Jesus. He was a follower of Jesus. He heard about Saul. He knew Saul persecuted believers. The Lord spoke to Ananias and comforted him.

3. Jesus Calls Saul to Serve Him (Acts 9:15-20)

VERSES 15-16.

¹⁵ But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! I have chosen Saul for an important work. He must tell about me to those who are not Jews, to kings, and to the people of Israel ¹⁶ I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

Ananias delivered God's message to Saul. He told Saul he would suffer as he carried the gospel to Gentiles. Most believers were Jews. The Lord said for Saul to go to Gentiles. Most Jews did not want any contact with Gentiles. Why? They thought Gentiles were unclean.

He told Saul he would suffer as he told kings about Jesus. After Saul became Paul, he was the first apostle to witness to kings. We will learn about that in future lessons.

God's message told Saul he would witness to the Israelites also. It is important to understand the Jewish leaders thought Saul betrayed them. It would be difficult for him to tell them about Jesus.

VERSES 17-19.

¹⁷ So Ananias went to the house of Judas. He laid his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus sent me. He is the one you saw on the road on your way here. He sent me so that you can see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸ Immediately, something that looked like fish scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he was able to see again! Then Saul got up and was baptized. ¹⁹ After he ate some

food, his strength returned. Saul stayed with the followers of Jesus in Damascus for a few days.

Ananias obeyed God's command. He went to the house of a man named Judas. Two of Jesus' **apostles** were also named Judas. One Judas betrayed Jesus and died. The faithful Judas is also called Thaddaeus (Matthew 10:3, Mark 3:18). The Judas in this verse is not the same as Judas Thaddaeus. This Judas was a later believer.

It is wonderful to hear the first words from Ananias were "Brother Saul." Even though Ananias was frightened at first, he accepted Saul as his brother in the Lord.

He told Saul he knew about his experience on the road to Damascus. The same voice Saul heard sent Ananias to him. The reason Ananias went to Saul was to tell him he would be able to see again. He would be filled with the Holy Spirit. After Saul became a believer, he was baptized.

Saul stayed at the home of Jesus' followers for a few days. He ate some food. He used that time to get his strength back.

VERSE 20.

²⁰ *Soon he began to preach about Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "Jesus is the Son of God."*

Saul began preaching. He first preached in the synagogues. He declared Jesus is the Son of God. He is the **Messiah**. Saul said he spent some time in **Arabia** where it seems he learned much from the Lord (Galatians 1:11-17).

We can imagine the Jewish leaders were upset. Saul was preaching the things they were trying to stop. Saul's preaching was an act of love. He wanted the Jewish leaders to be saved. They did not feel the same way. They believed Saul betrayed them. They wanted to punish him. Saul was persecuted many times during his ministry.

BIBLE SKILL: *Persecuted Because of the Gospel*

Jesus told Saul he would suffer because he followed Him. Jesus said all of His followers should expect persecution. Read these verses. Choose from the list below to tell where the verses are found in the Bible.

1. "People will insult you and hurt you. ... But when they do, you will be blessed." _____
2. "People will arrest you and treat you cruelly because you follow me." _____
3. "Remember what I told you: If people did wrong to me, they will do wrong to you, too." _____
4. "Everyone who wants to live as God desires, in Christ Jesus, will be persecuted." _____

John 15:20a

2 Timothy 3:12

Matthew 5:11

Luke 21:12

IN MY CONTEXT

All believers are called by God. We are called to spread the gospel of Christ. We do that in different ways. Service requires us to be obedient to God's call. The only requirement for service is a commitment to follow the teachings of Jesus. That commitment starts when we accept Him to become our Lord and Savior.

Several years ago a Deaf congregation began to study the meaning of service. They studied how we are called. They studied what kind of service we give to others. They studied the requirements to be servants.

They agreed on five things: 1. Every believer is called to serve God. 2. Believers serve in different ways. 3. They must have a salvation experience. 4. They must be able to explain their own experiences to other Deaf people. 5. Service requires obedience to God.

Think about your own salvation experience. Have you completed these four acts of obedience?

- 1. Have you accepted Jesus as Lord? YES NO.**
- 2. Are you fellowshiping with other believers? YES NO.**
- 3. Have you been baptized? YES NO.**
- 4. Have you started telling other Deaf people about salvation through Jesus? YES NO.**

Are any of your answers NO? Explain why. _____

MEMORY VERSE

Soon he (Paul) began to preach about Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "Jesus is the Son of God." —Acts 9:20



Session 11

BOLD

ACTS 9:36-43

Believers must have bold faith.

FIRST THOUGHTS

Believers must have faith to share the gospel in a bold way. God often puts believers in a place where they can share the gospel. God put Peter in the right place to share the gospel. In the same way we must be ready to tell about Jesus when we have an opportunity.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Last week we learned how Saul became a follower of Jesus. The last verse we studied was Acts 9:20. You can read about the beginning of Saul's ministry in Acts 9:21-35. When we study the rest of the Book of Acts we will learn much more about Saul. The name Saul is used until Acts 13:13. From that point on the name Paul is used. The difference is that Saul was involved with Jewish leaders and Jewish Christians until he went to **Antioch**. Saul was his Jewish name. Paul was his Roman name. When he became the apostle to the Gentiles, he started using his Roman name.

At the same time Peter was also traveling and preaching about Jesus. He visited God's people who lived in Lydda. Lydda was a small town on the road from Jerusalem to Joppa. We do not know the meaning of the town's name.

Peter met a man named Aeneas who was paralyzed. He was not able to leave his bed for eight years. Peter told Aeneas Jesus Christ could heal him. It was not Peter who could do this. It was the power of Jesus. Peter said, "Stand up." Aeneas stood up immediately. Peter became famous in that area. All the people living in Lydda saw the healed man and turned to the Lord.

By A.D. 250, Lydda became a strong center for Christianity because of Peter's influence.

The Book of Acts tells about the missionary trips of four **apostles**: Peter, John, Philip, and Paul. Paul went on the longest missionary trips. Peter and John sometimes traveled together. The missionary trips of Peter, John, and Philip were shorter. They were just as important.

Look at the map on the back inside cover to see the trips of Peter, John, and Philip. They spread the gospel everywhere they went.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 9:36-43)

1. Tabitha Dies (Acts 9:36-37)

VERSE 36.

³⁶*In the city of Joppa there was a follower named Tabitha (whose Greek name was Dorcas). She was always doing good deeds and kind acts.*

Joppa was a town about thirty-eight miles from Jerusalem. It was the main seaport of **Judea**. Today it is a part of Tel Aviv, Israel.

A woman named Tabitha lived in Joppa. During Bible times, people often had names from two different languages. Tabitha was her Aramaic name, Dorcas was her Greek name. Both *Dorcas* and *Tabitha* mean **gazelle**. She probably followed the Jewish faith before she became a follower of Christ.

Many versions of the New Testament call Tabitha a **disciple**. She was not one of the original **apostles**. In the Greek language, the followers of a person were called his disciples. This is also true of people who followed a special belief.

Tabitha had a wonderful reputation. She was always doing good things. She was kind. We do not know anything about her family. We do not know if she was rich or poor. We do not know how old she was. We know about her actions. We do know she was busy doing good things for other people.

VERSE 37.

³⁷*While Peter was in Lydda, Tabitha became sick and died. Her body was washed and put in a room upstairs.*

The Bible does not say she was sick for a long time. Maybe she became sick and died suddenly.

It was the custom in that time to wash a dead person in a special way and then lay them in a room. Why? People wanted to come and mourn. They wanted to show their respect for the dead person and tell about their good memories about that person.

Maybe you have wondered about this: When you go to heaven to be with Jesus, what will people left on earth say about you? What are some of the things you would like for them to say? How will they remember you? _____

2. Peter Is Called (Acts 9:38-39)

VERSE 38.

³⁸ *Since Lydda is near Joppa and the followers in Joppa heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two messengers to Peter. They begged him, "Hurry, please come to us!"*

Peter was in Lydda and people in Joppa heard about him. They knew he healed Aeneas in Lydda (Acts 9:32-35). The people in Joppa did not give up hope. They asked Peter to hurry. They knew Tabitha was already dead. Maybe they thought Peter could do a miracle and raise her from the dead. Maybe they wanted Peter to give them words of comfort.

VERSE 39.

³⁹ *So Peter got ready and went with them. When he arrived, they took him to the upstairs room where all the widows stood around Peter, crying. They showed him the shirts and coats Tabitha had made when she was still alive.*

This verse does not say Peter discussed the possibility of Tabitha coming back to life. It does not say he went to Joppa for that purpose. We can be sure he followed the leading of the Holy Spirit. He was ready to do whatever God told him to do.

It is still the custom in the Middle East for people to meet and cry out loud for a long time when someone dies. That is what the women were doing when Peter arrived. They were mourning her and praising her at the same time.

Why do you think the people wanted Peter to come to Tabitha's home?

3. Tabitha Is Alive Again (Acts 9:40-41)

VERSES 40-41a.

⁴⁰ Peter sent everyone out of the room and knelt and prayed. Then he turned to the body and said, “Tabitha, stand up.” She opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. ⁴¹ He gave her his hand and helped her up.

Peter’s experience is a little bit like the time Jesus raised Jairus’ daughter from the dead (Mark 5:21-42). One thing they both did was to ask everyone to leave the room.

Peter knelt down to pray. Peter asked for strength and the ability to help Tabitha. Then Peter told Tabitha to stand up. She sat up immediately, and Peter helped her stand. This is the first time the Bible tells about an apostle bringing someone back to life.

These verses do not teach us that believers have the power to resurrect others at any time they want to. Even if they have great faith, it does not mean they can decide to bring someone back to life. In the New Testament, miracles always showed the power of God so people would believe in Jesus.

Resurrection from death is the work of God. It is a mystery. We do not know how God raises someone from death. We do know only God has the power to do that.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Only God Can Raise People from the Dead*

Peter was with Jesus when Jesus raised people from the dead. Compare the events. Describe them in a few of your own words.

Mark 5:22-24,35-42. _____

Mark 5:25-34. _____

Luke 7:11-17. _____

John 11:1-44. _____

Did these people stay alive? YES NO.

VERSE 41b.

⁴¹ *Then he (Peter) called the saints and the widows into the room and showed them that Tabitha was alive.*

This is the first time in the Book of Acts that believers are called saints. The word *saint* means “someone who has been saved.” It does not mean the person is perfect.

It is important to understand that Tabitha’s earthly body would not live forever. She would die like all people die. She would die on earth and live forever in heaven. The important point is that her earthly life was given back to her.

4. Many People Believe (Acts 9:42-43)

VERSE 42.

⁴² *People everywhere in Joppa learned about this, and many believed in the Lord.*

Everywhere the **apostles** went, people decided to follow Jesus. People everywhere in Joppa learned about Tabitha coming back to life. Many people believed.

VERSE 43.

⁴³ *Peter stayed in Joppa for many days with a man named Simon who was a tanner.*

This event gave Peter the opportunity to stay in Joppa. Simon was a very common name. Do not confuse this Simon with the two apostles named Simon. The apostles were Simon Peter and Simon the Zealot (Matthew 10:4).

Tanners prepared the skin of the dead animal so it could be used for clothing or furniture. Jews would not associate with people who were tanners because they touched dead animals. It was against Jewish law for them to touch an animal that was already dead. But they could touch animals they killed for sacrifices.

When Peter stayed with Simon, it showed he found new freedom in Christ. He preached to all people. Salvation through Jesus is for all people.

BIBLE SKILLS: *Names and Places*

Read the verses in today's lesson.

List the names of three people who were talked about. In which verse do you find them listed?

1. _____ Verse _____

2. _____ Verse _____

3. _____ Verse _____

List the names of two towns named in these verses.

4. _____ Verse _____

5. _____ Verse _____

IN MY CONTEXT

The people in Joppa were very sad because Tabitha died. They could not understand why she must die. She did good things.

We learned God used Tabitha's death and **resurrection** to win lost people to faith in Jesus.

Often we hear people say, "Why did a person have to die so young?" Or they may say, "He was always so good to other people. Why did he need to die?"

Sometimes we may even hear, "She was ninety-five years old. She lived a wonderful helpful life."

All of these statements leave out one thing. What is that thing they leave out? God can be trusted. We can trust Him even in the death of His faithful followers. Sometimes we do not understand why people die. We must still trust Him.

People may be doing good things. It is God who uses them to bring people to himself.

Have you lost someone you loved recently? YES NO. Who? _____

Can you see any good that came from that loss? YES NO.

Are you able to trust God to show you some good that will come from that loss? YES NO. Write a few words about your feelings. _____

Find Romans 8:26-39. Let these verses give you comfort in difficult times.

How can you help other people who are having the same experience? _____

MEMORY VERSE

"People everywhere in Joppa learned about this, and many believed in the Lord." —Acts 9:42



Session 12

ACCEPTING

ACTS 10:9-15,43-48

Believers need to open their hearts to other people.

FIRST THOUGHTS

The gospel message is for all people. Their backgrounds do not matter. Their life experiences do not matter. Their family lines are not important. All people are important to God.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

The first eight verses of chapter 10 tell the story of Cornelius. He lived in Caesarea. He was an officer in the Italian group of the Roman army.

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In session 9, we learned how Philip witnessed to an official from Ethiopia. After the man was baptized, Philip went away. He preached next in towns on his way to Caesarea. So the people in the area around Caesarea already heard some preaching about Jesus.

Cornelius was a religious man. Cornelius and all the people in his house worshiped the true God. This means he was a believer in the Jewish religion.

He was an example of a good man of the Jewish faith. He gave a lot of money to poor people. He prayed to God often.

One afternoon around three o'clock, he saw a vision. An angel of God came to him. The angel said his name, "Cornelius." He stared at the angel. Then he became afraid. He said, "What do you want, Lord?" He knew God sent the angel.

Peter stayed in Joppa after God used him to heal Tabitha. He stayed with a man named Simon. The angel told Cornelius to send some men to Joppa and bring Peter to Caesarea. The angel left.

Cornelius sent two servants and a soldier to Joppa to ask Peter to come back to Caesarea with them. Caesarea was on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. It was about thirty miles north of Joppa.

Look at the map on the back inside cover to see Peter's trip from Jerusalem to Lydda, to Joppa, then to Caesarea.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 10:9-15, 43-48)

1. Peter's Vision (Acts 10:9-15)

VERSE 9.

⁹*About noon the next day as they came near Joppa, Peter was going up to the roof to pray.*

Peter was still in Joppa. While Simon prepared the noon meal, Peter went to the rooftop to pray. People used their flat rooftops like we might use a deck. The roof was a quiet place to pray. The roofs were made of wooden beams covered with boards or tiles. Sometimes hardened mud covered the boards. The stairs to the roof were on the outside of the house.

Peter was on the rooftop while Cornelius's servants were coming to Joppa.

VERSE 10.

¹⁰ He (Peter) was hungry and wanted to eat, but while the food was being prepared, he had a vision.

Peter went up on the roof to wait for his meal and to pray. While he was praying, he saw a vision.

VERSES 11-13.

¹¹ He (Peter) saw heaven opened and something coming down that looked like a big sheet being lowered to earth by its four corners. ¹² In it were all kinds of animals, reptiles, and birds. ¹³ Then a voice said to Peter, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat."

At a time when Peter was hungry, God spoke to him about food. God used food as a picture of His future plans for Peter.

VERSE 14.

¹⁴ But Peter said, "No, Lord! I have never eaten food that is unholy or unclean."

A voice from heaven told Peter to eat. Peter was not quick to obey. Bible teachers do not know who the voice was. The voice said God made these things clean. It could be the voice of the Holy Spirit. It could be the voice of an angel. The voice spoke for God.

The sheet held all kinds of animals. Jewish people refused to eat many of these animals. The Law of Moses told them the animals they were allowed to eat (Leviticus 11).

BIBLE SKILL: *Unclean*

Leviticus 11 lists foods that are clean and unclean. God did not tell the Israelites why some animals were unclean. He told them why they should not touch or eat the animals.

Leviticus 11:43-45 tells why they must not touch or eat the unclean animals.

Fill in the blanks.

1. Keep yourselves holy for Me because I am _____.
2. Do not make yourself _____ with any of these crawling animals.
3. You must be _____ I am _____.

Peter said he would not eat that kind of food. He said it was not clean. He was careful not to eat any unclean food.

VERSE 15.

¹⁵ *But the voice said to him again, “God has made these things clean, so don’t call them ‘unholy!’”*

Peter was a stubborn man. He would argue with people. At least twice he argued with Jesus (Matthew 16:21-23, Mark 14:27-31). Finally, the voice told him strongly to stop arguing. God made these animals clean. Peter must stop calling them unclean.

In the next verses (Acts 10:16-42), Luke wrote more about Peter’s experience on the rooftop. The vision was repeated three times. Peter did not understand what the vision meant. He thought about it. While he was thinking, some men came to the gate. They told Peter about the vision Cornelius had. They stayed all night with Peter at Simon’s house. The Spirit told Peter to go with them. “Do not doubt.”

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The next day Peter went with them. Some of the followers from Joppa joined him. On the following day, they came to Caesarea. Cornelius was waiting for them. He called together his relatives and close friends. When Peter went in, Cornelius met him, fell at his feet, and worshiped him. Peter told him to stand up. Peter said he was only a man. Cornelius explained his vision to Peter. Peter explained his vision to Cornelius.

Peter preached to the people in Cornelius' house. In his sermon he told them about salvation through faith in Jesus. To God every person is the same. God accepts anyone who worships Him and does what is right. Doing what is right means following Jesus.

2. Peter's Announcement (Acts 10:43)

VERSE 43.

⁴³ *"All the prophets say it is true that all who believe in Jesus will be forgiven of their sins through Jesus' name."*

Peter announced to everyone the only way to be saved is through Jesus.

This verse is the end of Peter's sermon. He closed his sermon by saying all the Old Testament prophets told the truth. All people who believe in Jesus will have their sins forgiven. Their sins are forgiven through Jesus' name.

Look back at Acts 4:12. Peter and John were speaking to the Jewish religious leaders. They told them Jesus' name is the only name given in the world so people can be saved.

Peter ended this sermon by declaring that salvation through Jesus is available to anyone willing to trust in Him.

What is the most important announcement a believer must make?

Do you make that announcement? YES NO.

3. The Holy Spirit's Power (Acts 10:44-46a)

VERSE 44.

⁴⁴ *While Peter was still saying this, the Holy Spirit came down on all those who were listening.*

Peter was still preaching when the Holy Spirit came to all the people listening to him.

VERSES 45-46a.

⁴⁵ *The Jewish believers who came with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been given even to the nations.* ^{46a} *These believers heard them speaking in different languages and praising God.*

Do you remember how Peter took several Jewish Christians with him from Joppa to Caesarea? They were **amazed** that the Holy Spirit was given to Gentiles. This verse says the Holy Spirit had been given even to the nations. *The nations* are words Jewish people used to describe anyone who was not Jewish.

The Jewish believers heard them speaking in different languages. Remember the same thing happened on the day of **Pentecost** (Acts 2:1-4).

Again, the new believers were using their own languages to praise God.

Why do you think Peter took Jewish believers from Joppa with him to Caesarea? _____

Discuss your opinions with the members of your class.

4. Gentiles Are Accepted (Acts 10:46b-48)

VERSES 46b-47.

^{46b} *Then Peter said,* ⁴⁷ *“Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we did!”*

Peter reminded the people traveling with him of three things they all experienced.

First, he said these new Christians became believers the same way the Jewish believers did. Second, they received the Holy Spirit the same way the Jewish believers did.

Finally, Peter asked them a serious question. Should anyone stop these new believers from being baptized the same way the Jewish believers were baptized?

VERSE 48.

⁴⁸ *So Peter ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.*

Peter gave the order for the new believers to be baptized. The new believers completed two acts of obedience. They believed. They were baptized.

KEY DOCTRINE: *God Sent Jesus to All People*

Read Acts 10:28b. In your own words explain what you think this verse means.

IN MY CONTEXT

A Deaf church continued to grow because the members invited everyone to come and enjoy their fellowship. Then, people started leaving the church. The Deaf pastor was very worried. He talked to some of the people who left the church. He asked them, “Why did you stop coming to our Deaf church?”

He was surprised at their answers. Here are some of their answers: 1. “Some members make me feel stupid when I don’t understand Bible verses.” 2. “Some members criticize my family background.” 3. “I don’t have enough money to pay for fellowship activities.” 4. “Other people have nicer clothes than I have.”

There were other things on his list. He decided to talk to the Deaf leaders in the church about this list. The leaders decided to have a class on the things that are required for church membership.

Their final answer was: Salvation is offered to all people. Their race is not important. Their family history is not important. How much money they have is not important. How smart they are is not important. If they are hearing or Deaf, it is not important. Salvation comes through faith in Jesus alone.

What is required for a person to become a member of your church?

_____ **Discuss this with your class.**

Does your Deaf group welcome Deaf people from different backgrounds? YES NO.

Name a few things you can do to welcome people from different backgrounds to become believers. _____

MEMORY VERSE

“All the prophets say it is true that all who believe in Jesus will be forgiven of their sins through Jesus’ name.” —Acts 10:43



Session 13

SPECIAL

ACTS 12:7-12,16-19

Believers know God will protect them while they are sharing the gospel.

FIRST THOUGHTS

Sharing the gospel message gives the believer new experiences. God uses these experiences to show His awesome power.

Bob is a Deaf man who had never tried to tell someone how to become saved. He faithfully attended the Deaf church, gave more than his tithe, studied his Bible, and prayed regularly. But he never felt the courage to witness. One day he was asked to go on a **mission** trip to another nation. He wanted to explain that

he did not witness, but he thought his friends at church would be disappointed in him. So he helped to raise the money and went with the team. One part of preparation was learning how to give his testimony. In that foreign nation, Bob tried to witness and the Holy Spirit blessed his witness. He led four Deaf men to accept Jesus as Savior. When he returned home, he continued to feel God would be with him, and he witnessed often to Deaf people in his own community.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In last week's lesson we learned about Peter's journey to Caesarea. Cornelius, his friends, and his family became believers. Peter stayed in Caesarea for a while.

The **apostles** and believers in **Judea** heard that some who were not Jewish had accepted God's teaching, too. When Peter went back to Jerusalem, some people argued with him because he went to homes of unclean people.

When the Jewish believers heard Peter's story, they stopped arguing. They praised God for the new believers.

Many believers were persecuted after Stephen was killed. They moved to other countries. Everywhere they went they preached the gospel.

Barnabas went to **Antioch** and then to Tarsus to find Saul. He saw God was blessing the people in Antioch. In Antioch, the followers were called Christians for the first time. *Christian* means "little Christ." Most Deaf people sign it as Jesus + person. Some sign the word as Christ + person.

During that same time King Herod began to **persecute** Christians. He ordered James, the brother of John, to be killed. James was the first apostle to be killed. Herod arrested Peter also.

Herod put Peter in jail. He planned to kill Peter. The church prayed earnestly for Peter.

The night before his trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers. He was chained to them. Other soldiers guarded the door.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 12:7-12, 16-19)

1. Peter Is Rescued (Acts 12:7-10)

VERSE 7.

⁷ Suddenly, an angel of the Lord stood there, and a light shined in the cell. The angel struck Peter on the side and woke him up. “Hurry! Get up!” the angel said. And the chains fell off Peter’s hands.

Peter was sleeping. He was not afraid. The angel touched him on the side to wake him. The angel said, “Hurry! Get up!” Peter probably wondered how he could get up. He was chained to the soldiers.

He did not have much time to wonder about that. The chains fell off Peter’s hands. They were not weak little chains. They were large and strong. The cuffs were usually three inches wide and one half inch thick. They fell off by God’s power.

VERSES 8-9.

⁸ Then the angel told him, “Get dressed, and put on your sandals.” And Peter did. Then the angel said, “Put on your coat and follow me.” ⁹ So Peter followed him out, but he did not know if what the angel was doing was real; he thought he might be seeing a vision.

The angel gave Peter five instructions. The angel told Peter to hurry and do these things: 1. Get up. 2. Get dressed. 3. Put on his shoes. 4. Put on his coat. 5. Follow the angel.

Peter did not know if the angel was real or if he was having a dream or vision. He did not argue with the angel. He obeyed the instructions quickly.

VERSE 10.

¹⁰ They went past the first and second guards and came to the iron gate that separated them from the city. The gate opened by itself for them, and they went through it. When they had walked down one street, the angel suddenly left him.

Each cell (room) in the jail had a locked door. Those cells were in a group of cells called a cell block. The cell block had a large iron door that was locked. The whole jail had a large wall around it and the strong gate was also locked.

The angel led Peter past all three of those locked doors. They did not make any noise as they went out. The soldiers continued to sleep. The angel led Peter through the gate. Then the angel left him.

Sometimes we are rescued from very large things. Other times we are rescued from small things. These things can be as simple as someone helping us change a flat tire.

Write a few words about a time you were rescued from some difficult situation. _____

2. Christians Are Happy (Acts 12:11-12)

VERSE 11.

¹¹ Then Peter realized what had happened. He thought, "Now I know that the Lord really sent his angel to me. He rescued me from Herod and from all the things the people thought would happen."

Peter stood alone in the street. He knew he was not dreaming. Everyone thought Herod would kill Peter like he killed James. Peter knew God saved him. He was very happy.

God does not always save believers from persecution. God did not save Stephen or the apostle James from death. Sometimes He uses the persecution of believers for His glory. We may not always understand. We must trust God.

VERSE 12.

¹² When he considered this, he went to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark. Many people were gathered there, praying.

While Peter was standing in the street outside the jail, he had time to think. It was early in the morning, before dawn. Peter

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knew the believers were praying for him. Also he knew the best place for them to meet was at Mary's home. This Mary was the mother of John Mark, the young man who wrote the Gospel of Mark.

Peter went to Mary's home and knocked on the door.

Can you imagine how you would feel if something like that happened to you? What is the first thing you would want to do?

3. Peter Tells How He Became Free (Acts 12:16-17)

Read verses 13-15. Rhoda was a servant girl. Peter knocked on the outside door. Rhoda went to answer it. She recognized Peter's voice. She was very happy. She ran inside and told the group. But she forgot to open the door for Peter! He stood outside and knocked some more.

She told them Peter was at the door. They told her she was crazy. They knew he was in prison. She kept on saying it was true. She still did not open the door.

Then finally, they said it was Peter's angel. At that time people thought every person had an angel to take care of them.

VERSE 16.

¹⁶ Peter continued to knock, and when they opened the door, they saw him and were amazed.

Peter stood outside the door. He continued to knock. Finally they opened it. They were **amazed**. They knew Peter was in jail. Now he was standing in front of them.

VERSE 17.

¹⁷ Peter made a sign with his hand to tell them to be quiet. He explained how the Lord led him out of the jail, and he said, "Tell James and the other believers what happened." Then he left to go to another place.

The believers were amazed and excited. They were rejoicing loudly. He told them to be quiet so he could talk. Peter told how God used an angel to rescue him.

He told them to go and tell James and other believers what happened. Remember Herod already killed James the brother of John.

Peter knew the soldiers would look for him. The first place they would look is with other believers. Peter left them to go to a safer place.

BIBLE SKILL: *Rescued*

Read Acts 5:19-23 and Acts 12:6-10. Both events are true. How are they alike? Make a check mark in the column under the verses in Acts to see how the events are alike.

	5:19-23	12:6-10
1. A light shined.	_____	_____
2. An angel.	_____	_____
3. Angels told them what to do next.	_____	_____
4. Apostles were sleeping.	_____	_____
5. Chained to soldiers.	_____	_____
6. Chains fell off.	_____	_____
7. Guards couldn't find the apostles.	_____	_____
8. Happened during the night.	_____	_____
9. Led them outside.	_____	_____
10. More than one apostle.	_____	_____
11. Obeyed the angel.	_____	_____
12. Opened the doors.	_____	_____
13. Peter alone.	_____	_____

4. Herod Becomes Worried (Acts 12:18-19)

VERSES 18-19.

¹⁸ *The next day the soldiers were very upset and wondered what had happened to Peter.* ¹⁹ *Herod looked everywhere for him but could not find him. So he questioned the guards and ordered that they be killed. Later Herod moved from Judea and went to the city of Caesarea, where he stayed.*

The rescue of Peter caused several things to happen.

1. It upset the soldiers. Their responsibility was to watch Peter. They lost him.
2. It caused the government to start investigating the event.
3. The verse says Herod looked everywhere. That does not mean Herod himself looked. It means he sent people to look for Peter.
4. Herod questioned the guards. They did not have good answers for him.
5. He decided to kill the guards. They were punished. Why? They lost their prisoner.

Later Herod moved to Caesarea. While he was there he let the people call him a god. He did not give glory to God. An angel struck him and he died (Acts 12:19b-23).

After Herod died, God's message grew (Acts 12:24).

KEY DOCTRINE: *God Will Take Care of You*

In many verses, the Bible says God takes care of His people. Peter wrote about God's care in his first letter. Read 1 Peter 5:7. What should we do when we have worries? Copy the verse here and memorize it.

IN MY CONTEXT

We are not always able to explain God's work. Even if we cannot explain His work, we must be thankful for what He does. God is all powerful. We can trust Him to take care of us. We can be especially thankful when bad things happen. We know God is still protecting our souls.

People who continue to reject God experience frustrations. They cannot have peace in their hearts. They do not know the peace God gives. Every believer has the responsibility to tell other people how to have peace and joy.

What was the first thing Peter did? He went to the place where the believers were meeting. He let other people know he was safe.

Ask yourself: Do I really believe God keeps my soul safe? YES NO.

**Do you let other people know God is keeping your soul safe?
YES NO.**

**Do you know some Deaf people who do not believe in Jesus?
YES NO.**

Write a few words about how you can tell them how to be safe in Jesus. _____

This week, I can tell _____ about God's love and care.

We will return to the Book of Acts in a few months. Next week we will begin a study of 1 Samuel. Study the first few chapters of 1 Samuel to prepare for the Bible study next week.

MEMORY VERSE

"Peter was kept in jail, but the church prayed earnestly to God for him." —Acts 12:5

Acts 1–12: An Outline



EMPOWERMENT FOR THE CHURCH (1:1–2:47)

- A. Waiting for power (1:1-26)
- B. The source of power (2:1-13)
- C. Pentecostal witness to the dispersion (2:14-47)



EARLY DAYS OF THE CHURCH (3:1–12:25)

- A. In Jerusalem (3:1–7:60)
- B. In Samaria: the Samaritan Pentecost (8:1-25)
- C. To the ends of the earth:
Philip's witness (8:26-40)
- D. Conversion and preparation
of Paul (9:1-31)
- E. In Judea: Peter in Caesarea
(9:32–11:18)
- F. To the ends of the earth
(11:19–12:25)



**PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY
JOURNEY (13:1–14:28)**



**THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL
(15:1-35)**



**PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY
JOURNEY (15:36–18:22)**



**PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY
JOURNEY (18:23–21:16)**



**PAUL EN ROUTE TO AND
IN ROME (21:17–28:31)**

WORD LIST

Amazed—Happily surprised.

Antioch—Many Jews lived there. Also called Caesarea.

Apostles—The twelve men chosen by Jesus to follow Him.

Ascended; Ascension—When Jesus went into heaven.

Civil—Government law, not religious law.

Concordance—An alphabetical list of Bible words and the verses where they are found.

Disciple—A follower of Jesus. The apostles are often called disciples.

Discipline—To correct or punish.

Doctrine—Important basic belief.

Early church fathers—Leaders of the early church from about A.D. 100 to A.D. 400.

Elders—Church leader similar to a deacon.

Empower—To help a person become able to do something.

Festival—Time set aside for rejoicing.

Focused—Paying close attention to things.

Gazelle—An animal with fast, graceful movements and beautiful eyes.

Harmony of the Gospels—A chart showing when the Gospels give the same information.

Hebrews—God's chosen people, the Jews.

Herod Agrippa—The king who ordered James to be killed.

High priest—The leader of the priests.

Immerse; Immersion—Put totally under water.

ISIS—A terrorist group in the Middle East.

Levites—People from the Tribe of Levi. Priests came from this tribe.

Martyr—Someone who dies because of his faith.

Mathias—The disciple chosen to replace Judas Iscariot as an apostle.

Messiah—Hebrew word that means Savior. The Greek word is Christ.

Mission—Special work for God.

Motive—Reason for actions or decisions.

Passover—Celebration of the day the death angel passed over Jewish families in Egypt.

Pentecost—Old Testament harvest celebration, fifty days after Passover. The day the Holy Spirit was given to the first believers.

Persecute—Hurt, speak badly about, punish.

Pharisees—One of the groups of Jewish religious leaders.

Prophecy—Tell something that will happen in the future.

Prophet—Someone who told God’s words to the Jewish people.

Repent—Be sorry for your sins and change your behavior.

Resurrection; Resurrected—Rise from the dead after being buried.

Sadducees—One of the groups of Jewish religious leaders.

Samaria—Area and city about forty miles north of Jerusalem.

Sanhedrin—The group that governed the Jewish people.

Septuagint—Oldest translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into the Greek language.

Strike—Hit very hard.

Synagogue—Jewish place of worship.

Tanner—Person who cleans and sews animal skins.

Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all in one Person.

The places in Acts 2:9-11 are listed almost as they might have been seen looking at a map. It is as if they said, “All people, from one end of the world to the other.” The specific geographical names are not important. They just emphasize the many different languages that were heard. Everyone was able to understand.

Arabia—A nation in Asia.

Asia—part of Turkey.

Cappadocia—An ancient kingdom of Asia.

Crete—A large island in the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea, now called Candia.

Cyrene—A country in Africa on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

Egypt—A larger area than the present nation of Egypt.

Elam—Probably a group from the area of Media.

Judea—The southern area of Israel including Jerusalem.

Libya—A nation in the northern part of Africa.

Media—A nation near the Caspian Sea.

Mesopotamia—Now part of Turkey.

Pamphylia—A nation near the Mediterranean Sea.

Parthia—A nation in the northern part of modern Persia.

Phrygia—A nation in Asia Minor.

Pontus—A very powerful kingdom of Asia.

Rome—Probably means Jews living in Rome, and speaking Latin.

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS AND LEADERS

- Online commentary: <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/index.htm>

- Bible verses in this publication are from the New Century Version (NCV). This translation is available online at <http://www.biblegateway.com>. It is also available as an eBook. You can download it for a fee from this site: <http://biblegateway.christianbook.com/the-everyday-bible-ebook/9781418533618/pdf/9616EB?p=1172355>

- The ASL Bible is produced by Deaf Missions and available at www.deafmissionsstore.com

- The ASL Bible for mobile devices is available at www.DeafBible.com or www.Bible.is/Deaf

- Let's Sign Hymnal and the ASL Bible are available at www.Letssignllc.com

- The Baptist Faith and Message is available at <http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp> or you can order them from <http://www.lifeway.com/Product/baptist-faith-message-2000-tract-P001146686>

Explore the Bible.®

LEADER GUIDE

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Acts 1–12

Session 1

RESPONSIBLE

ACTS 1:1-11

PLAN AHEAD

Review the resources page for ideas to make your teaching more effective.

Ask _____ to study the Introduction to the Book of Acts and summarize it for the class.

Ask _____ to sign the hymn, “Go Tell It on the Mountain” (Let’s Sign Hymnal* #102).

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 1:1-11)

Discuss the Introduction to the Book of Acts in the pupil material.

Encourage class members to read all of the chapter(s) being studied each week so they can get the complete story.

1. Jesus’ Disciples Remember His Promise (Acts 1:1-5)

The title of this book in some Bible translations is The Acts of the Apostles. It is more the acts of the Holy Spirit working through the **apostles** and the church.

The English word *apostle* is from the Greek *apostolos*. It means a person with a message. An apostle speaks with the authority of the person who sent him. The twelve apostles were chosen from the larger group of disciples. Discuss the signs used for *disciple* and *apostle*.

2. Jesus’ Apostles Tell About His Resurrection (Acts 1:6-8)

The Greek word *martus* is often translated in English as *witness*. We get our English word **martyr** from this Greek word. A *martyr* is “someone who dies because of his faith in Christ.” Discuss the concept and appropriate sign(s) for witness and martyr.

Acts 1:8 outlines the Book of Acts: Chapters 1–7, witnessing in Jerusalem; 8–11, in **Judea** and **Samaria**. The rest of the book tells about witnessing to all the world.

3. Jesus' Disciples See How He Will Return (Acts 1:9-11)

Discuss appropriate sign(s) for **resurrection** and **ascension**.

As you lead the discussion, ask class members to find one of the verses in Dig Deeper (The Ascension of Jesus) and sign it for the class.

DIG DEEPER: *The Ascension of Jesus (Acts 1:9)*

Luke also wrote about the ascension in his Gospel (Luke 24:50-53). We do not know where this happened. It was forty days after the resurrection (Acts 1:3). Peter wrote how Jesus ascended to heaven and is at God's right side (1 Peter 3:22). Paul wrote about Jesus ascending higher than all the heavens (Ephesians 4:7-13, quoting from Psalm 68:18). To Timothy, Paul said Jesus was taken up in glory (1 Timothy 3:16).

As you lead the discussion, ask class members to find one of the verses in Scripture Search (Angels) and tell the class to whom the angels spoke.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: *Angels (Acts 1:10)*

Angels are created beings who are the special messengers God occasionally used to give His message to His people. In the Old Testament, angels spoke to individuals like Jacob (Genesis 32:1-2) and Gideon (Judges 6:11-23). In the New Testament, angels spoke to Joseph (Matthew 1:20-21; 2:13) and Mary (Luke 1:26-38). Angels also spoke to the shepherds when Jesus was born (Luke 2:8-15) and to the women at the tomb when Jesus was resurrected (Luke 24:4-7). Often, two angels spoke for God. According to Jewish law, two witnesses were required to prove something was true (Deuteronomy 19:15).

IN MY CONTEXT

Ask class members if they filled in the blanks for the study in In My Context. Remind them they need to use the New Century Version because other translations may use different words for the same concepts.

Session 2

EMPOWERED

ACTS 2:1-15

PLAN AHEAD

Review the resources page for ideas to make your teaching more effective.

Secure a map to locate the nations represented on the Day of Pentecost.

Ask _____ to sign the hymn, Breathe on Me (Let's Sign Hymnal* #59).

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 2:1-15)

Introduce the lesson by briefly summarizing Acts 1:12-26. (See Understand the Context in the pupil material.) Luke named all the disciples except Judas Iscariot. Only Peter, John, and James are named again in the Book of Acts.

1. God Gives the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4)

As you lead the discussion, ask class members to find one of the verses in Dig Deeper (**Pentecost**) and sign it for the class.

DIG DEEPER: *Pentecost (Acts 2:1)*

Discuss appropriate sign(s) for Pentecost. (Harvest celebration)

The Day of Pentecost was a Jewish special day from the time they left Egypt. It was seven weeks after the Passover. It was also called the Festival of Weeks. It was a harvest festival.

When plants began to mature, the farmer tied a reed around the first ripening fruits from each of the main crops: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates. At the time of harvest, they cut these first fruits and offered them to the Lord. This ceremony showed their gratitude to God for the harvest and for His blessings throughout Jewish history.

Several followers were in the room, not just the eleven **apostles**. The Holy Spirit came on all of them.

Use the pupil material to encourage discussion of the four things that happened.

Ask _____ to discuss Scripture Search (Other Languages) and summarize it for the class.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: *Other Languages* (Acts 2:4)

In some Bible translations, the words *different languages* are translated more closely to the Greek words as *other tongues*. That Greek word also means *languages*. The context of these verses is that the apostles spoke in real languages and the people from other nations could understand them. There is a difference between the concept of speaking a foreign language and speaking in tongues.

2. People Ask Questions (Acts 2:5-13)

Use the pupil material to discuss the various nations present that day. Use a map to locate these nations.

Later, when Peter and Paul traveled, they found groups of believers in many different nations.

3. Peter's Sermon (Acts 2:14-15)

In this study, we will not review Peter's sermon. Encourage class members to read it and see how carefully Peter presented the gospel to all the Jews listening to him.

IN MY CONTEXT

Review class members' notes in the last part of In My Context. Encourage discussion of how to have courage to witness. Suggest the idea of a special time to study more about witnessing to other Deaf people.

Session 3

TOGETHER

ACTS 2:41-47

PLAN AHEAD

Secure copies of The Baptist Faith and Message for each one in the class. Your church office may have copies. You can download and print a copy from <http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp> or you can order them (\$.20 each) from <http://www.lifeway.com/Product/baptist-faith-message-2000-tract-P001146686>.

Ask _____ to sign the hymn, “Brethren, We Have Met to Worship” (Let’s Sign Hymnal* #61).

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 2:41-47)

1. Devoted (Acts 2:41-42)

Discuss appropriate signs for *devoted*, as used in this lesson.

Ask _____ to study Dig Deeper (Baptism) and summarize it for the class.

DIG DEEPER: *Baptism (Acts 2:47)*

In the Book of Acts most people were baptized very soon after they became saved. In many Baptist churches in America a person must wait a certain period of time between their salvation and baptism. He may take a class to know more about his experience and about the church. In other churches, they only wait until it is convenient to schedule the baptism.

What does your church do? Ask your pastor if there is a reason for the way it is done. Review the Key Doctrine (Baptism) in the pupil material.

For more information about what Baptists believe about baptism, read The Baptist Faith and Message.

Review class members' responses to the Bible Skill (Teach God's Word) in their quarterly.

2. Together (Acts 2:43-47a)

Can you imagine what would happen in your Deaf group if Deaf people from many other areas came to your church, were saved and baptized, and stayed in your community to learn more about the gospel? Where would they live? Would there be money for food? This is the problem this first church faced.

Encourage discussion of what your church does (or could do) to help needy Deaf people and their families in your community.

3. Growing (Acts 2:47b)

Ask class members to find one of the verses in the Scripture Search (Church Growth). Challenge the class with the last paragraph in this section in the pupil material.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: *Church Growth (Acts 2:47)*

It began with the eleven apostles and some other followers. Acts 1:15 says there were about 120 believers when they chose Matthias to take the place of Judas. In Acts 2:41, Luke reported three thousand more were added. And every day, more were added to the church (Acts 2:47; 5:14). These numbers do not report what was happening in other nations after the people returned home from the Day of Pentecost. Also, many times they counted only men, not women and children.

Think about this as you look at your church. You may only have a few Deaf people today, but if you follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, you will reach out to others. You may be the only believer in your family or where you work. Let God use you to spread the good news.

IN MY CONTEXT

Review class member's responses to the last questions in the pupil material. Encourage discussion.

Session 4

RESURRECTED!

LUKE 24:1-12

PLAN AHEAD

Review the resources page for ideas to make your teaching more effective.

Bring a copy of a **Harmony of the Gospels** to show the class how it is arranged. You may have one in the back of your study Bible, or find one in your church library.

Ask _____ to sign the hymn, “He Lives” (Let’s Sign Hymnal* #142).

EXPLORE THE TEXT (LUKE 24:1-12)

To begin the lesson, place two objects on the table (i.e. an apple and an orange, or a mirror and a comb). Ask each one to write down three words to describe each item. Collect their papers and notice the different ways they answered. Point out that this is why the Gospel writers differ in their stories. They wrote from memory, several years later. The Holy Spirit led them to tell it in their own words.

1. The Tomb Is Empty (Luke 24:1-3)

Ask _____ to study Dig Deeper (Jesus’ Tomb) and summarize it for the class.

DIG DEEPER: *Jesus’ Tomb (Luke 24:2)*

Jesus’ tomb was typical of the Jewish religion and customs. Tombs were in caves or carved from rock (Genesis 23:19-20; Mark 5:1-5). The Jews wrapped the body in linen cloth and inserted spices and oils. Nicodemus took seventy-five pounds of spices to prepare Jesus’ body for burial (John 19:39).

The entrance to a tomb was usually closed with some kind of material. Pilate ordered a large stone to cover the entrance. A smooth surface was prepared to make it easier to roll the stone into place.

This is only one of many times in the New Testament that women were involved in the activities of the followers of Jesus and the church as it developed.

2. The Angels Explain (Luke 24:4-8)

Refer to the discussion of the ministry of angels in the first lesson in this quarterly.

Were the women doubters or seekers? Did they not believe Jesus, or did they just not understand? Encourage discussion of acting in faith when we do not understand fully.

3. The Apostles Are Amazed (Luke 24:9-12)

Ask _____ to study Scripture Search (The Women at the Tomb) and summarize it for the class.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: *The Women at the Tomb (Luke 24:1)*

Neither Matthew, Mark, nor Luke were present at the tomb. John was there. Their stories of who was present at any one time do not always agree. Luke did not name the women in verse 1, but he listed them in verse 10. They are also listed in the other Gospels. Matthew lists Mary Magdalene and another woman named Mary (Matthew 28:1). Mark lists Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome (Mark 16:1). John lists only Mary Magdalene (John 20:1). Joanna is identified in Luke 8:3 as the wife of the manager of Herod's household. Salome was possibly the mother of James and John (Mark 16:1; Matthew 27:56).

IN MY CONTEXT

Use the questions at the end of the pupil material to generate discussion of the need to express our faith in the **resurrection**. Without the resurrection, the gospel story is just another good story.

Session 5

COURAGEOUS

ACTS 4:1-13

PLAN AHEAD

Review the resources page for ideas to make your teaching more effective.

Ask _____ to sign the hymn, “I Am Resolved” (Let’s Sign Hymnal* #167).

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 4:1-13)

1. Jewish Leaders Challenge John and Peter (Acts 4:1-7)

Ask _____ to study Scripture Search (The Temple Guards) below and summarize it for the class.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: *The Temple Guards (Acts 4:1)*

The work of the temple guards is outlined in 1 Chronicles 26. They were divided into groups according to tribes (verse 1). Then they were divided into groups according to their family leaders (verse 12). They were assigned duties at the temple, just like the other Levites. Each group was assigned a temple gate to guard (verse 13). Others guarded the temple storerooms (verse 15). Each day six guards were on duty on the east side of the temple, four were on duty on the north side, and four were on duty on the south side. Two guards were stationed at each of the two storerooms, four were stationed along the road leading to the west courtyard, and two guards stayed in the court itself (verses 17-19). Some guarded the temple treasury and the gifts that were dedicated to God (verse 20). When valuable things were captured in battle, some of them were brought to the temple (verse 27).

In verse 5, “the rulers, **elders**, and teachers of the law” describes the **Sanhedrin**. Discuss the appropriate sign for *Sanhedrin*. (Group 70, Seventy members plus **High Priest**.)

Ask _____ to study Dig Deeper (The Sanhedrin) below and summarize it for the class.

DIG DEEPER: *The Sanhedrin (Acts 4:5)*

The Sanhedrin was the highest Jewish judicial office. There were seventy-one members. The Hebrew word Sanhedrin means “seated together” and describes a court of justice. The High priest presided. Other priests and former high priests were included, along with elders (family heads) and scribes (legal professionals). Most of the priests were Sadducees and most of the scribes were Pharisees.

The Jewish Sanhedrin was responsible for the trial of Jesus (Matthew 26:59; Mark 14:55, 15:1; Luke 22:66; John 11:47-48) and the apostles (Acts 4:13-14; 5:21; 6:12; 22:30; 23:1-4).

Check class members’ answers to the Key **Doctrine** (Witnessing). Emphasize that every believer is a witness.

2. Peter Answers (Acts 4:8-12)

What two tools did Peter use in his speech to the Sanhedrin? (The Holy Spirit and the Scriptures.)

3. The Jewish Leaders Understand (Acts 4:13)

Peter may have had little biblical education before he met Jesus, but then he had three years of teaching from the Master!

Check class members’ answers for the Bible Skill (Boldness). Ask for volunteers to tell (briefly) what they know about each person.

IN MY CONTEXT

Use the closing paragraphs in the pupil material to emphasize the plan of salvation. Discuss appropriate signs to express the terms. Ask volunteers to quote one of the verses from memory. Encourage class members to memorize the verses.

Encourage the class to read all of chapters 4–5 to understand what happened between this lesson and next week’s lesson.

Session 6

HONEST

ACTS 4:36–5:11

PLAN AHEAD

Review the resources page for ideas to make your teaching more effective.

Ask _____ to sign the hymn, “The Family of God “(Let’s Sign Hymnal* #411).

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 4:36–5:11)

1. Example Number One: Barnabas (Acts 4:36-37)

Do you know someone you believe is completely honest? Or someone who is almost always dishonest? Encourage discussion of the value of honesty in a person’s character, especially as it relates to the church.

In this lesson, three people are presented as examples of honesty or dishonesty.

Ask _____ to study Dig Deeper (Barnabas) and share this information with the class.

DIG DEEPER: *Barnabas (Acts 4:36-37)*

Barnabas’s real name was Joseph, but everyone called him Barnabas. That name means “son of encouragement.” He is described in Acts 11:23-24 as a “good man, full of the Holy Spirit and full of faith.” He was from the tribe of Levi and his home was in Cyprus.

In addition to the story in today’s lesson, Barnabas is the one who introduced Saul to the leaders in Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-27). When the church sent him to Antioch, he asked Saul to come help him. He and Saul carried money from the Antioch church to the believers in Jerusalem.

In today's story, the description of this sharing is not like the communist idea of no individual ownership. It was all voluntary, as people were led by the Holy Spirit.

2. Example Number Two: Ananias (Acts 5:1-6)

Barnabas, Ananias, and Sapphira were probably not the only ones who sold their property to help others. Luke chose these three as examples of what people did.

What sin did Ananias and Sapphira commit? (Lied about how much money they got. Personal pride.)

3. Example Number Three: Sapphira (Acts 5:7-11)

Lead the discussion of Scripture Search (The Church) and ask class members to sign the verses.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: *The Church (Acts 5:11)*

Up to this point the group of Christians had been called believers. Later (Acts 11:26) they were called Christians.

In verse 11, for the first time, Luke uses the Greek word for church, *ekklesia* (congregation). When Jesus said my church, He meant the church belongs to Him. In Ephesians 1:22-23, Paul spoke of the church as the "body of Christ." (See also Romans 12:5.)

Paul and Peter both compared the church to a building (1 Corinthians 3:10-17; 1 Peter 2:5-8). The church is called the family of God (Galatians 4:5-7).

The church is also compared to a flock of sheep, with Jesus as the Chief Shepherd (Acts 20:28).

Paul pictured the church as the bride of Christ, presented to Him with all its beauty (Ephesians 5:27). John had a similar word picture of the church in Revelation 21:2, "prepared like a bride dressed for her husband."

IN MY CONTEXT

Believers encourage others through their genuine acts of obedience and sacrifice. Believers are held accountable by God for their actions and motives.

Close by signing together the first verse of "The Family of God."

Session 7

FAITHFUL

ACTS 5:25-35,38-42

PLAN AHEAD

Review the resources page for ideas to make your teaching more effective.

Ask _____ to sign the hymn, Trust and Obey (Let's Sign Hymnal* #443).

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 5:25-35,38-42)

1. Returning to the Temple (Acts 5:25-28)

Review the story from the previous lesson. This is “part two.” Peter and John were arrested, put in jail, tried by the **Sanhedrin**, and told not to teach about Jesus any more. Emphasize how this fits the discussion of obeying God or **civil** laws.

Encourage discussion of the faith and courage Peter and John needed to return to the temple.

Ask class members to tell what they wrote in Bible Skill (The name of Jesus). Relate this power to the faith of the **apostles**.


2. Standing Strong (Acts 5:29-32)

As you discuss the Scripture Search (Peter's Answer), ask class members to find and sign the verses.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: *Peter's Answer (Acts 5:30-32)*

Peter answered the Jewish leaders with five statements:

1. “You killed Jesus” (verse 30a).
2. “The God of our ancestors raised Jesus up from the dead” (verse 30b).
By ancestors, Peter meant Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

- 
3. “Jesus is the One whom God raised to be on His right side, as Leader and Savior” (verse 31a). Peter made it clear Jesus is the Messiah.
 4. Salvation only comes through repentance and faith in Jesus as Savior. All people can now become saved (verse 31b).
 5. We have seen it, and we have seen the power of the Holy Spirit which Jesus sends to all believers (verse 32).

3. Waiting for a Decision (Acts 5:33-35,38-39)

Ask _____ to study Dig Deeper (Gamaliel) and summarize it for the class.

DIG DEEPER: *Gamaliel (Acts 5:34)*

Gamaliel was a very important Pharisee and a famous teacher. He taught Saul (Acts 22:3). In these verses, Gamaliel was smart in his speech. He said if what Peter preached was false, the idea would soon die out. Just give it time. He used as an example two other men, Theudas and Judas from Galilee. The Bible does not tell anything about these two men. Apparently they led an opposition to a tax list. Both men died and no followers were left. This would also happen to the apostles if their message was not from God.

And then Gamaliel gave a warning. If this is from God, and the Sanhedrin tried to stop the apostles, they would be fighting against God!

4. Rejoicing in Suffering (Acts 5:40-42)

Use the question at the end of this section in the pupil material to generate discussion of rejoicing when we suffer for Jesus.

IN MY CONTEXT

Use the question at the end of this section in the pupil material to generate discussion of the need to remain faithful.

Session 8

SERVING

ACTS 6:1-10

PLAN AHEAD

Review the resources page for ideas to make your teaching more effective.

Invite a deacon to visit the class and briefly tell how deacons are chosen in your church, what the deacons do, and answer questions from the class.

Ask _____ to sign the hymn, “To the Work” (Let’s Sign Hymnal* #442).

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 6:1-10)

1. Understanding a Need (Acts 6:1-2)

Ask the deacon to come in at the beginning of the hour. This will give him an opportunity to see the Deaf group in action. Ask him to speak briefly, then let the class ask questions.

Ask class members to locate one of the verses in Scripture Search (Care for Widows) and sign it as you discuss it.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: *Care for Widows (Acts 6:1)*

The problem with the widows was a real problem, but not due to a wrong attitude by the apostles. They were too busy to become aware of it until someone told them. Then they acted quickly. They knew God always takes care of the poor and those who are weak (Psalm 12:5; 14:6).

The poor were permitted to harvest the grain left at the edges of the fields (Leviticus 19:9-10; 23:22). The courts were ordered to show justice to the poor (Exodus 23:6-7). Everyone must be generous with the poor (Deuteronomy 15:10-11).

Jesus encouraged people to be generous to the poor (Luke 14:12-14). The early church took care of the widows (1 Timothy 5:3-5). James wrote that true religion included taking care of widows and orphans (James 1:27).

Encourage discussion of the two questions at the end of section 1 in the pupil material.

2. Solving a Problem (Acts 6:3-7)

The church discussed the problem, not the **apostles'** behavior. When there is a problem, find out the reason and how to resolve it.

Use the pupil material to discuss qualifications for deacons. Does your church have Deaf deacons? Do you have any Deaf men who are qualified?

3. Testing a Servant (Acts 6:8-10)

Ask _____ to study Dig Deeper (**Synagogue** of Free Men) and summarize it for the class.

DIG DEEPER: *Synagogue of Free Men (Acts 6:9)*

Discuss the appropriate sign(s) for *synagogue*.

There were many synagogues in a city as large as Jerusalem. Only ten adults were needed to establish a synagogue. Some synagogues were located in areas of the city where most of the Jews lived. Others were located in the Gentile areas.

This "Synagogue of the Free Men" is called the synagogue of the libertines in some Bible translations. It was probably made up of people who were citizens of Rome (Jews and Gentiles).

They probably spoke Greek instead of Hebrew in that synagogue.

The word *Hellenist* was sometimes used for these people. The Hellenists supported Greek culture. They often clashed with the Jews who supported Jewish culture.

IN MY CONTEXT

Encourage discussion of who the leaders are and their responsibilities in your Deaf church or Bible class.

Session 9

OBEDIENT

ACTS 8:26-31,35,38-39

PLAN AHEAD

Review the resources page for ideas to make your teaching more effective.

Ask _____ to sign the hymn, “I’ll Tell the World That I’m a Christian” (Let’s Sign Hymnal* #202).

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 8:26-31,35,38-39)

Last week’s lesson was from Acts 6 and this one is from Acts 8. Ask _____ to study Acts 6:11–8:25 and Understand the Context in the pupil material and briefly summarize it for the class. This will help the class keep up with the growth of the church.

Ask _____ to study the Scripture Search (Samaritans) and summarize it for the class.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: *Samaritans (Acts 8:1-4)*

Discuss appropriate sign(s) for *Samaritans*.

Before the events in today’s lesson, Luke wrote about the spread of the gospel into Samaria (Acts 8:1-4). The apostles stayed in Jerusalem, but many believers went to Samaria. One of these was Philip.

This is important as we study the spread of the gospel. Samaritans and Jews did not like each other. Why? In New Testament times, there was hostility between Jews and Samaritans (Luke 9:51-53). Jews would not travel through Samaria.

Jesus showed kindness to Samaritans (Luke 17:11-19). He used Samaritans in His parables and showed them as good neighbors and serving God (Luke 10:30-37).

1. Called to Seek Lost People (Acts 8:26-29)

Ask _____ to study Dig Deeper (Ethiopia) and summarize it for the class.

DIG DEEPER: *Ethiopia (Acts 8:27)*

Philip was one of the first to go to Samaria with the gospel. He was also one of the first to begin to touch the far corners of the earth. In this story, Philip witnessed to an African. The Ethiopian was one who worshiped the God of the Jews, but he was not Jewish by culture. He was an African and served Queen Candice in what is now part of the nation of Sudan, in Africa.

We do not want to place much emphasis on the word *eunuch*. The Greek word *eunuch* means “a person in charge of the bed.” This is because one job given to a eunuch was to be in charge of the king’s harem (wives and female slaves). It could mean the man was castrated, but the term also meant government servant. In some translations of the Old Testament, the term palace officer is used instead of eunuch.

In this verse, it is not clear which characteristic is intended, so it must not have been important to Luke or Philip. Philip made no reference to the man’s nationality, religion, or physical situation. He simply presented the gospel.

2. Prepared to Share the Gospel (Acts 8:30-31,35)

Emphasize that Philip ignored the man’s background and simply presented Jesus as the **Messiah**.

Use the questions at the end of this section in the pupil material to generate discussion about witnessing.

3. Focused on Salvation (Acts 8:38-39)

Baptism by **immersion** does not give a person salvation. It is a first act of obedience for the believer.

IN MY CONTEXT

Use the questions in this section of the pupil material to apply the lesson.

Session 10

CHANGED

ACTS 9:3-9,15-20

PLAN AHEAD

Review the resources page for ideas to make your teaching more effective.

Use a map to locate Tarsus, **Samaria**, and Jerusalem.

Ask _____ to sign the hymn, “Face to Face with Christ, My Savior” (Let’s Sign Hymnal* #88).

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 9:3-9,15-20)

1. Saul Meets Jesus (Acts 9:3-6)

Ask _____ to sign (in ASL!) verses 1-2, to set the background for this lesson.

Ask class members to sign verse 5 from other translations. Note that many newer translations omit the words used in the King James Version, “It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.” Ask someone to sign Acts 26:14 where this phrase is also used. In NCV it is translated, “You are only hurting yourself by fighting me.” Explain again that newer translations are based on older Greek manuscripts that have been found.

Check class members’ answers to Key **Doctrine** (God uses all kinds of people) in the pupil material.

2. The People with Saul (Acts 9:7-9)

Why do you think it was important for other people to see what Saul saw? (Several eyewitnesses made it impossible for others to doubt Saul’s conversion.)

Ask _____ to study Scripture Search (Saul’s Blindness) and summarize it for the class, signing significant verses.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: *Saul's Blindness (Acts 9:8)*

Saul's blindness was more than just something physical. He was aware of why he was blind (2 Corinthians 4:4-6).

Luke used spiritual blindness as a theme in both his Gospel and the Book of Acts, sometimes quoting from the Old Testament (Isaiah 42:6 quoted in Luke 2:30-32; Isaiah 49:6 quoted in Acts 13:47). Luke pictured salvation as recovery of sight to the blind and as a light to the nations.

Did Saul see his blindness as punishment from God? Probably not. He may have seen it as a symbol of his own spiritual blindness.

3. Jesus Calls Saul to Serve Him (Acts 9:15-20)

Discuss Dig Deeper (Saul's Preparation to Serve Jesus) and ask class members to sign the verses.

DIG DEEPER: *Saul's Preparation to Serve Jesus (Acts 9:20)*

Saul began to preach immediately after he was saved. Did he suddenly get some special gift to do this? No, God started preparing Saul for His ministry many years before Saul was saved.

As a teenager, Saul studied in Jerusalem under a rabbi named Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Saul was a Pharisee (Philippians 3:3-6; Galatians 1:14-15), which means he continued to study the Scriptures.

Was Saul a bad man before he was saved? (Encourage discussion.) He was deeply committed to God. He thought it was God's will for him to stop this new "religion" of Jesus.

When Saul was saved, he was even more committed to God. Now he could use all of his training and wisdom as Christ's missionary to the Gentiles.

Review class members' responses to Bible Skill (Persecuted Because of the Gospel) to help them be sure they have answered correctly.

IN MY CONTEXT

Use the questions at the end of In My Context in the pupil material to make application of this lesson.

Session 11

BOLD

ACTS 9:36-43

PLAN AHEAD

Review the resources page for ideas to make your teaching more effective.

Use a map to show the missionary travel of Peter and John.

Ask _____ to sign the hymn, “Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus” (Let’s Sign Hymnal* #440).

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 9:36-43)

1. Tabitha Dies (Acts 9:36-37)

Ask _____ to study Dig Deeper (Joppa) and summarize it for the class.

DIG DEEPER: *Joppa* (Acts 9:36)

The name *Joppa* means “beautiful.” Joppa is about thirty-five miles northwest of Jerusalem, beside the Mediterranean Sea. The city was established about 1650 B.C.

Cedar logs were floated to Joppa and then taken overland to Jerusalem for Solomon’s temple (2 Chronicles 2:16).

Jonah went on a ship at Joppa to go to Tarshish instead of Nineveh (Jonah 1:3).

In today’s lesson, Joppa was the home of Tabitha (Dorcas). After raising her from death, Peter stayed in Joppa and God taught him about clean and unclean meat. Then he met Cornelius (Acts 10:9-23).

Joppa is now part of the modern city of Tel Aviv, the largest city in Israel.

2. Peter Is Called (Acts 9:38-39)

Use the question at the end of this section in the pupil material to generate discussion of the faith of the believers in Joppa. Did they think Peter could bring her back to life? Did they want Peter to explain to them why a good person like Tabitha would die? Encourage discussion.

3. Tabitha Is Alive Again (Acts 9:40-41)

Discuss Scripture Search (What Are Believers Called in the New Testament?) and ask class members to sign the verses.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: *What Are Believers Called in the New Testament? (Acts 9:41b)*

In this verse, the word *saint*, meaning a Christian, is used for the first time. Paul addressed a letter to the “holy people (saints) at Ephesus” (Ephesians 1:1).

The word *Christian* is used only three times in the New Testament. The believers were first called Christians in Antioch (Acts 11:26). The other two references are Acts 26:28 and 1 Peter 4:16. The word means “little Christs.”

The word *disciple* is used often, and usually refers to those who were present when Jesus was on earth, following Him. A disciple is a learner or student.

The terms *brother* or *sister* occur several times. This is the idea that we are all God’s adopted children.

Believer is used by Paul in 2 Corinthians 6:15 and other places.

The word *follower* is used several times (Acts 9:36). Followers of The Way is used in Acts 24:14 but was not as common as other terms.

Check the responses of class members in Key **Doctrine** (Only God Can Raise People from the Dead). Ask class members to sign a few of the verses.

4. Many People Believe (Acts 9:42-43)

Check the responses of class members to Bible Skills (Names and Places). Locate the towns on a map.

IN MY CONTEXT

Use the questions in the pupil material to generate discussion. If someone has recently lost a family member or close friend in death, lead the class to offer encouragement and support.

Session 12

ACCEPTING

ACTS 10:9-15,43-48

PLAN AHEAD

Review the resources page for ideas to make your teaching more effective.

Secure a map to show Peter's route from Joppa to Caesarea.

Ask _____ to sign the hymn, "Whosoever Will" (Let's Sign Hymnal* #482).

Ask _____ to summarize the story from Acts 10:1-8, to set the background for today's lesson.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 10:9-15,43-48)

Use Scripture Search (Caesarea) to tell more about this city. Ask class members to sign the related verses. Use a map to show Peter's travel to Caesarea and its relation to Jerusalem.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: *Caesarea (Acts 10:1)*

Caesarea was a beautiful city built by Herod the Great on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. It was named in honor of Caesar. It was a trading center, like Ephesus. Roman government for the area was established in Caesarea.

Jesus visited Caesarea (Matthew 16:13; Mark 8:27). Pilate, at the time of the crucifixion of Jesus, lived in Caesarea. Philip, one of the seven deacons chosen in Acts 6, carried the gospel to Caesarea (Acts 8:40). Paul's trial was in Caesarea (Acts 24:1-2). Herod lived and died in Caesarea (Acts 12:19).

1. Peter's Vision (Acts 10:9-15)

Discuss Dig Deeper (Jewish Houses). Ask class members to sign the verses.

DIG DEEPER: *Jewish Houses (Acts 10:9)*

A typical New Testament Jewish family lived in a small house. They may have had only one large room with a small kitchen attached. At night, the father placed his mattress near the door for safety.

In areas where there was little rain, the roof of a house was often flat and used for drying things such as flax and fruit. It was used as an extra room, as a place for worship, and as a cool place to sleep in the summer.

The two spies in Jericho were hidden under some flax on Rahab's rooftop (Joshua 2:6). Samuel and Saul talked on a rooftop just before Samuel anointed Saul to become the first king of Israel (1 Samuel 9:25). David was on the roof of his palace when he saw Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:2). In today's lesson, Peter prayed on a rooftop and had a vision from God.

Use the Bible Skills (Unclean) in the pupil material to explain the idea of clean / unclean foods.

2. Peter's Announcement (Acts 10:43)

Peter concluded his sermon declaring that salvation through Jesus is available to anyone willing to trust in Him.

Encourage discussion of the question at the end of this section in the pupil material.

3. The Holy Spirit's Power (Acts 10:44-46a)

Encourage discussion of class members' response to the question in the pupil material. Relate this to the Old Testament rule of needing two or more witnesses to prove something in court.

4. Gentiles Are Accepted (Acts 10:46b-48)

Use the Key **Doctrine** (God Sent Jesus to All People) to summarize and apply the lesson. Review class members' responses.

IN MY CONTEXT

Encourage discussion of the need for believers to accept everyone and witness to everyone. How does this apply to the different Deaf groups—those who use ASL, hard of hearing, late deafened adults, Deaf people from other cultures?

Session 13

SPECIAL

ACTS 12:7-12,16-19

PLAN AHEAD

Review the resources page for ideas to make your teaching more effective.

Ask _____ to sign the hymn, “When the Morning Comes” (Let’s Sign Hymnal* #473).

Ask _____ to study Understand the Context in the pupil material to tell what happened in Acts 11:1–12:6.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 12:7-12,16-19)

1. Peter Is Rescued (Acts 12:7-10)

Continue summarizing the story through verse 10.

Do these verses teach us that God will always rescue believers from difficult situations? (No. God may want the believer to be a witness for Him during difficult times.)

2. Christians Are Happy (Acts 12:11-12)

Peter went to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark. Ask _____ to study the Scripture Search (John Mark) and summarize it for the class.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: *John Mark (Acts 12:12)*

John Mark was most often called Mark in the Book of Acts.

Mark was the cousin of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10). In Acts 12:25, Barnabas and Saul took Mark with them from Jerusalem to Antioch. He was with them when they taught in the synagogues in the city of Salimis (Acts 13:5). When they arrived in Pamphylia, Mark returned to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13).

Saul did not want to work with Mark later, so Mark went with Barnabas and Saul took Silas with him (Acts 15:37-41). Later Saul (Paul) commended the work of Mark (Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 1:24). Peter also said good things about Mark's work and called Mark his son in Christ (1 Peter 5:13). This is the Mark who wrote the Gospel of Mark. He would have been very young during the ministry of Jesus.

3. Peter Tells How He Became Free (Acts 12:16-17)

Finish telling the story of Peter's imprisonment and rescue (verses 13-15). His concern for the safety of other believers led him to go away from them. He sent word to James, the brother of Jesus, in Jerusalem. Later Peter was with other leaders in Jerusalem (Acts 15:7).

4. Herod Becomes Worried (Acts 12:18-19)

This is the final reference to **Herod Agrippa** I. In the verses following today's lesson Luke writes about Agrippa's death (Acts 12:23).

DIG DEEPER: *Herod (Acts 12:19)*

Herod is the family name for several Roman rulers in Israel.

Herod the Great ruled Israel at the time of Jesus' birth (Matthew 2:1). He was one of the cruelest dictators in all of history. He rebuilt the Jewish temple in 19 B.C. Herod the Great's son, Herod Antipas, killed John the Baptist (Mark 6:14-16) and mocked Jesus during His trial (Luke 23:11). Herod Antipas' son, Herod Agrippa I, ruled over the Israelites for thirty years. He killed James, the brother of John (Acts 12:1-2). Herod Agrippa II is the one before whom Paul was tried (Acts 25:23).

Ask the class to sign together 1 Peter 5:7. This is God's promise to all believers.

IN MY CONTEXT

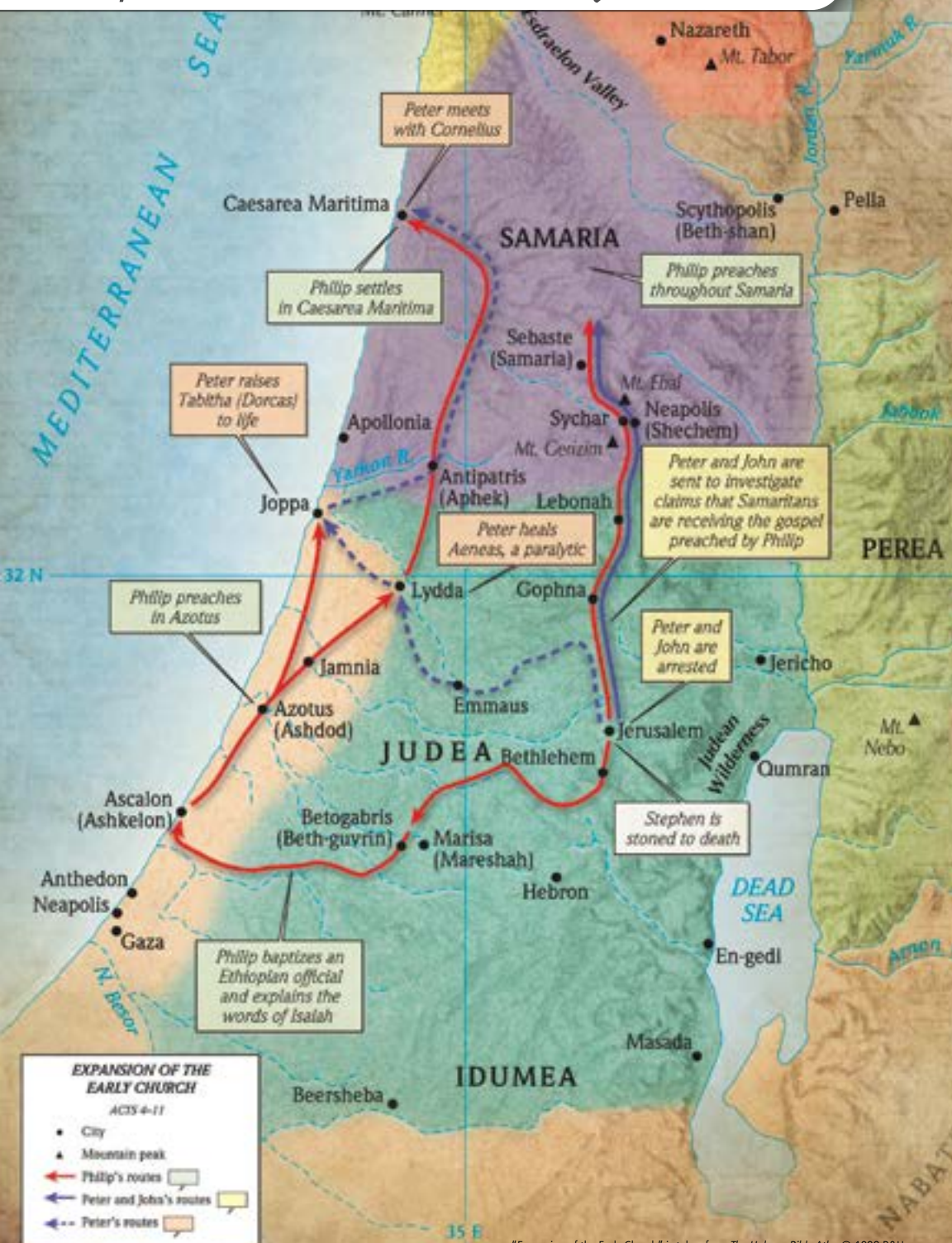
Use the final question in the pupil material to summarize and apply the lesson. Encourage discussion of how to tell others about God's care for His people.

Encourage class members to prepare for the start of next quarter by reading the first few chapters of 1 Samuel.

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Expansion of the Early Church



Acts 1–12

First there were 12. Then 120. Suddenly there came an explosion of spiritual fire, and 3,000 were added. Then 5,000. Like the growth of a tiny seed into a giant tree, the church—called into being by Christ, planted in the gospel, and nourished by the power of the Holy Spirit—pursues to this day its mission of being witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth. From its earliest times, the church has stretched upward in faith and outward in evangelism despite facing bouts of heated persecution and spiritual drought. God's kingdom marches relentlessly forward. By digging deep into Acts 1–12, today's Christ-followers can reconnect with their dramatic early story, renew their passion to obey the Lord, and refocus their vision as His global witnesses.



Let the Word dwell in you.