

Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About the New Testament
Living the Message 2021-2022
January 2022 Study Guide for Participants and Facilitators

January Question: “Jesus Is Risen! Now What? Acts of the Apostles”

[Click here to watch the video.](#)

Focus Statement and Summary

The fifth book of the New Testament follows naturally from the story of Jesus in the four Gospels, and it effectively answers the question, “Now what?” Now that Jesus has lived, ministered, died, risen, and ascended, how did and does Christ’s word go forth? Written by the same author as the Gospel of Luke – the great story-teller of the New Testament – Acts tells of the bestowal of the Holy Spirit in, with, and out ahead of the apostles, the growth of the early church, and the spread of the good news to the greater world. The book is full of surprises as it displays the expansive, extravagant, and inclusive message through which God reveals this story, truly, for all people. Yet, it does not happen without hardship. Acts describes how the church faced arguments and tough decisions about what it meant to include and welcome “outsiders.” So too, Acts notes how the Apostles faced persecution and suffered much in the sharing of the often offensive nature of God’s grace.

Initial Questions

- In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit causes people to hear the good news of God, each in their own language. Why is this important or meaningful? What’s it like when you meet someone who “speaks your language”? What might it say about God’s presence and action in the rich diversity of humanity?
- As you have heard about the story of Jesus Christ, how has it changed your life (thinking, actions, convictions, heart, etc)?
- What does it mean to be a witness of Jesus?

Key Scripture Passages

[Acts 1:8](#) | Jesus’ commissioning of the Apostles, effectively the theme of the book

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

[Acts 2:1-6](#) | The gift of the Holy Spirit

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

5 Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.

[Acts 11](#) | The first church council meeting. Peter’s report of the Spirit’s spread to the Gentiles

¹² *“The Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a distinction between them and us.”*

Other Notable Passages

[Acts 2](#) | *The Day of Pentecost, Peter's Pentecost Sermon, The First Converts*

[Acts 8:26-39](#) | *Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch*

[Acts 9:1-19](#) | *The Conversion of Saul/Paul*

[Acts 10](#) | *Peter and Cornelius, the Holy Spirit bestowed on Gentiles*

[Acts 15:1-35](#) | *The Second Jerusalem Council*

Further Questions

1. Pastor Ruud described how God's Holy Spirit was often "out ahead" of the Apostles, revealing the all-inclusive, boundary-shattering, redemptive power of God's grace. How does this challenge you/us today? How do boundaries still exist in us or in our communities of faith which make it harder rather than easier for people to hear and participate in the good news?
2. The early church had to adjust based on the Holy Spirit's work. In what ways have you seen the church adjust to new challenges and/or revelations of God's grace? Have you personally ever had to adjust your convictions or limitations based on what you've experienced in the extravagance of God's grace? Where and how is God still leading you/us?
3. The Apostles encounter resistance, hardship, and suffering along the way as they live in Christ and share about God's redemptive message. What do you take away from this reality?

Going Deeper into the Word with Pastor Lose

Pastor Lose shared more thoughts on [Acts 2:38-47](#) and [Acts 4:31-35](#), honing in on three common threads for the disciples and members of the early church—and for us: Preaching and Teaching the Word; Fellowship; and Service.

1. Which of those three common threads have you been more attuned to? Paid attention to?
2. Which of those three could you incorporate more fully into your life of faith?
3. Is there anything else you noticed from these passages that we could emulate as a church, as a community, as individuals?

Closing Prayer

Dear God, the gift of your Holy Spirit shatters boundaries and continues to surprise us in overwhelming love, mercy, and inclusion. Continue to teach and lead us to be your witnesses in word and deed, near and far. Guide the church, bless the sharing of the good news, and sustain us in suffering, through the good news of your Son, our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.