

# New Testament Genre: Acts

By Donald Kim

## Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

### Assignment One

Look up the three places where Luke, the author of Acts, is mentioned: Philemon 24; Colossians 4:14; and 2 Timothy 4:11. Prepare to share your answers to the following question: What do these verses tell us about Luke?

### Assignment Two

Find an online video of a place where the wind has force and is audible, such as a wind tunnel or a storm. Prepare to play the audio for your group.

### Assignment Three

Read John 14:16–30. Prepare to share your answers to the following question: What are some specific reasons Jesus promised the Holy Spirit?

### Scripture to Memorize

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. Acts 1:8*

### Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand the importance of the book of Acts and identify some characteristics of the work.

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## It's in the Book

30 minutes

### Real-Life Scenario

Let's say you want to write a memoir about your life. Think about all the things you have done and how you might include some reflections on your life events. How would you make sure your stories are clear and believable?

Do you think Dr. Luke might have faced some of those same questions as he sat down to write the book of Acts?

### Writing a History of the Early Church

**Read** Acts 1:1–5 out loud.

#### Studying the Passage

**Verse 1. The first book.** This refers to the Gospel of Luke. Acts is a sequel to Luke's Gospel. **I have dealt with.** The "I" is Luke, the physician, who was a follower of Jesus and coworker of Paul. **Theophilus.** This name means "lover of God." He is the one for whom Luke wrote. Scholars believe Theophilus was a patron who supported Luke's writing projects.

**Verses 1–2. all that Jesus began to do and teach.** The Gospel of Luke focused on Jesus' ministry **until . . . He was taken up.** Now began a new chapter for God's people. **given commands . . . to the apostles.** Jesus told them what to do. Acts records the events of the early church, fulfilling the orders Jesus gave. The title of the book is "The Acts of the Apostles."

**Verse 3. many proofs.** Jesus' proofs show He clearly rose from the dead.

**Verse 4. While staying with them.** Jesus gathered His disciples. **commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem.** His message was clear: don't leave Jerusalem, but wait.

**Verse 5. you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.** The Holy Spirit would soon fill them at Pentecost (Acts 2).

#### Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now share answers to the following question: What do these three Bible references tell us about Luke?

#### Discussion Question

In Luke 1:3, Luke writes, "It seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus." That description was for Luke's Gospel, and here in Acts, Luke was writing just as carefully and accurately. In Acts 1:1–5, what are some hints that Luke is writing truthful history?

#### On Your Own

Luke says Jesus gave many convincing proofs. What sort of proofs would convince you that someone rose from the dead? Read Luke 24:36–51. What proofs does Luke record in his Gospel? List them in the space below.

## The Day of Pentecost

Read Acts 2:1–13 out loud.

### Studying the Passage

**Verse 1. Pentecost.** This Jewish festival occurs fifty days after Passover. Jesus died at Passover. He then arose from the dead and appeared to His followers over a period of forty days (Acts 1:3). Therefore, the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples about a week after Jesus' ascension. **in one place.** The believers gathered together, likely in the upper room.

**Verse 2. mighty rushing wind.** This term refers to noise that is loud.

### Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now play audio of a place that has “mighty rushing wind.”

### Studying the Passage

**Verse 3. tongues as of fire . . . on each one of them.** This must have been an amazing sight. These physical manifestations show the Holy Spirit baptized every believer there.

**Verse 4. filled with the Holy Spirit.** This event fulfilled Jesus' prediction in Acts 1:5. It was a new day for God's people to all have the Holy Spirit. This is called the baptism of the Spirit and happens to every Christian immediately at his or her salvation.

### Discussion Question

In Acts 1:4–5, 7–8, Jesus commanded His disciples to stay in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came upon them. In Acts 2:1–4, the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles. Why was the coming of the Holy Spirit important to make Luke's account believable? Why is the Holy Spirit important for the apostles?

## Apostle Paul and the Holy Spirit

Read Acts 20:17–24 out loud.

### Studying the Passage

In 61 of 65 times the Spirit is mentioned in Acts, the Spirit is leading and guiding the church in its mission efforts. The promise Jesus makes in Acts 1:8 is absolutely crucial for the rest of the book of Acts, but also for the church today. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, which includes God the Father and God the Son. God the Holy Spirit is the Counselor, whom Jesus promised to His disciples in the Gospel of John.

**Verse 17. elders.** *Elder* means “pastor.” Paul addressed the pastors of the Ephesus church near the end of his third missionary journey.

**Verse 18. You yourselves know.** They knew Paul well. Earlier, he had spent three years with them.

**Verse 19. humility . . . tears . . . trials.** These key words describe Paul's heart for the ministry.

**Verse 20. I did not shrink from.** Despite the difficulty, Paul did not shy away. His boldness was clear.

**Verse 22. constrained by the Spirit.** The Holy Spirit led and compelled Paul to go on this difficult assignment to **Jerusalem**.

**Verse 23. in every city.** This was in Asia (present-day Turkey). **Imprisonment and afflictions await.** In Jerusalem, Paul would be arrested and imprisoned. Later he would be sent to Rome.

**Verse 24. not . . . precious to myself.** Paul put God's ministry above his personal safety. This was the work of the Holy Spirit through Paul. **finish my course and the ministry.** Paul's aim was to totally fulfill God's call to ministry. This is a powerful life testimony by Paul. **to testify to the gospel.** By preaching the gospel message throughout the Mediterranean world, Paul was fulfilling Jesus' call (Acts 1:8) through the Holy Spirit's work.

### **Assignment Three Feedback**

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now share answers to the following question: What are some specific reasons Jesus promised the Holy Spirit?

### **On Your Own**

How has the Holy Spirit been evident in your life? What sort of difference does the Holy Spirit make in your decisions? List your answers in the space below.

## **Heart and Hands**

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

**Since Last Week**

5 minutes

**Grace-Filled Accountability**

5 minutes

**Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service**

5 minutes

**Prayer**

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

## At Home: Nail It Down

The Acts of the Apostles, which was written by Luke, is different from the other writings in the New Testament. As a book of historical accounts, Acts gives a real glimpse into the early years of the Christian church.

There was some confusion—the apostles initially didn't know why Jesus had to leave.  
There was some violence—the Christians were being persecuted.  
There was definitely some adventure—Christians were taking the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Acts does not record Paul's entire ministry. Subsequent events appear in Bible books from 1 Timothy to Titus. However, Acts fittingly ends with Paul sharing the gospel "unhindered" (Acts 28:31) in Rome—the heart of the Mediterranean world.

The church continues to take the gospel message to the ends of the earth. The church moves out with the boldness the Holy Spirit gives, in much the same way as the apostles, as they spread the message of hope. The early church was a witness for Christ of His death, burial and resurrection. No program was designed by the apostles. God was at the helm, and He continues to be in control today in the life of the church and the mission that takes the gospel to the world.

How we respond to this message is crucial to our witness. The gospel meets us where we are, but we do not remain there. After we are saved, we can expect change, growth, and especially *going*. The church is still *going*, making disciples of all nations.

We cannot stop just because the book of Acts has an end. The end will come when Jesus returns. Until then, may the church grow increasingly restless to know Christ and take the message of hope to the world.

### Follow up Question

*How does the gospel story continue in your life?*

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.