

Acts – The History of the Church

(God's True Story)

Introduction

The book of Acts was written by Luke, the same Luke who wrote the gospel with his name. Luke was a doctor, and he traveled around with the apostle Paul. As with every other book in the Bible, we can trust that the stories in it are true.

This book is a history book. In it Luke records the deeds of the apostles, empowered by the Holy Spirit, as they shared the gospel and saw the church develop.

Opening Prayer

Father, thank You for inspiring Dr. Luke to write down the history of how the Christian church got started. Give us good listening ears this morning as we learn how the Holy Spirit empowered the early Christians to spread the Good News about Jesus everywhere they went. And, give us the desire to tell everyone we meet about You, too. In Jesus name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse:

The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endure forever. (Psalm 119:160)

Lesson

The Good News is Spread in Jerusalem

After Jesus rose in the clouds, the disciples went back to Jerusalem and waited for the Holy Spirit to come. On the day of Pentecost, they heard a sound like a rushing wind, and they saw tongues like fire over each of them. Then the disciples were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

When that happened, they went out into the city of Jerusalem and told the good news about Jesus Christ to everyone they saw. Even though

there were people there who spoke many different languages, everyone could understand what was being said (2:6). That day Peter preached; about 3,000 people accepted the good news and were saved (Acts 2:41). And that was just the beginning!

In the first part of the Book of Acts, Peter is the apostle talked about most. He and the other apostles told the Jews that Jesus, the One they had crucified, had risen from the dead. He was the promised Savior. The angry religious leaders ordered them to stop telling the good news. But the apostles refused. They knew that no one but Jesus could save the people (Acts 4:12).

When they were put into jail for preaching the gospel, the apostles were asked why they had continued to preach even though they had been forbidden. Peter and the other apostles replied, “*We ought to obey God rather than men*” (Acts 5:29). That’s telling the good news that Jesus is the Savior (Acts 5:42).

The Good News Goes to Judea and Samaria

Not only were people put in jail for preaching the gospel, but some were killed (Acts 7). As the persecution increased, many who believed the message of the apostles scattered and moved away from Jerusalem.

One day when Saul was on his way to Damascus to persecute more believers, he had a surprise meeting with the Lord Jesus (Acts 9:1-5). Suddenly, he understood who Jesus was. At once, Saul the persecutor became Paul the preacher. Paul became one of the most outspoken of all the apostles in the early church. From this point on, we see the gospel being taken “*to the end of the earth*” (Acts 1:8)

The Good News Goes to the End of the Earth

Until now, the gospel had only been preached to the Jewish people. But God had sent His Son to be the Savior for the entire world. Someone had to tell the people in other nations.

Paul took three missionary trips. As he traveled and preached, many more people believed. Paul and his companions were beaten and put in prison. But even then people turned to the Lord (Acts 16).

When Paul went back to Jerusalem after his third trip, he was arrested. He was taken before governors and kings. He even told them how they could be saved.

Eventually Paul was taken to Rome, the center of government, where he was killed. But before he died, he wrote many letters to the churches he had started. And, we have those letters in our Bible today.

The book of Acts gives us the history of the early church. The rest of the New Testament teaches us how to live a godly and fruitful life.

Closing Prayer

Father, it is exciting to know that the same Holy Spirit that empowered the early Christians to go out to all the world to tell people about the Good News about Jesus is still available to us today. We pray that You will fill us with the Holy Spirit so that we will be bold witnesses for You. We want every man, woman, and child to know what Jesus did for us. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Game Center

I'm Thinking of a Book

Choose one book of the Bible. Don't say it. Name the book that comes *before* and the book that comes *after* the book you've chosen. Ask for a volunteer to name the book. The child with the correct answer gets to choose another book and name the book *before* and *after*, and then call on another volunteer to name his book. Continue until each book has been named at least once.

Toss Game

Goal: Learn the first 5 books in the N.T. in order.

How to play: Before class, mark out a 5-square grid with masking tape on the floor. On each square, tape a card with a Bible book name written on it. Divide the class into 2 teams. Give each team a set of 5 cards with the 5 Bible book names on them. Each team takes a turn tossing a bean bag to the grid. If the child's bean bag lands on a square with a Bible book that his/her team does not already have, the child who tossed the bean bag gets to pick up the matching card for their team and places the card in order. The team that puts all the cards in order first wins.

Or, play a game of your choice with the following review questions:

1. What are the names of first four books of the New Testament? (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.)
2. What does the word *gospel* mean? (Good News)
3. Why are the first four books of the New Testament called Gospels? (They tell the good news that Jesus came to earth to save us from our sins.)
4. What book comes after the gospels? (Acts)
5. What do we learn in Acts? (How Jesus' followers spread the gospel to the end of the earth.)

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