

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Lesson 1 – Study Questions
Acts 1:1-26

DAY ONE

1. Acts of the Apostles is the sequel to the Gospel of Luke, in which Luke recorded Jesus' life and teachings on earth until He was taken up to heaven. Acts continues with the Holy Spirit guiding the early Christian community, a story which continues to this present day. What one or two things interests you most about the study we are about to begin?

Read Acts 1:1-5

2. Luke began by addressing his work to Theophilus (whose name means "lover of God") and reminding him of what the "first book" contained. How does Luke describe the first book in verses 1-2?

3a. After He suffered, Jesus presented Himself alive to the apostles He had chosen and offered them many convincing proofs. According to verse 3, during what period of time did He appear and about what did He speak to His disciples?

b. Select and record two of the "convincing proofs" of Jesus' bodily resurrection as noted, for example, in Luke 24:39, 42-43 and John 20:22, 27.

4. There could be many reasons why Jesus waited with the disciples forty days after His resurrection. What are some reasons that occur to you for Him to have stayed close to them?

5. The good news of the kingdom of God is the message of both John the Baptist and Jesus. In verse 4, Luke recorded Jesus' command to the apostles not to leave Jerusalem but to wait there for the promise of the Father. Record that promise from the last phrase of verse 5.

6. CONNECTION: Today's passage ends with a promise, a promise that the disciples will be baptized with the Holy Spirit in just a few days. Consider what those words could have meant to the apostles. Were they frightened? Were they confused? Imagine how they must have felt, and the many questions they may have had! Do you recall a time when God's plan for you seemed confusing or even frightening? How did you react, and in what way did the Holy Spirit enable you to accomplish what was asked of you?

Remembering that we may not always understand God's plan for us, read and record Jeremiah 29:11 and begin your prayer today asking for the comfort and support of the Holy Spirit.

DAY TWO
Read Acts 1:6-8

8a. Even though Jesus had taught the disciples that His kingdom was not of this world, the Jews believed the Messiah would be a powerful king who would bring glory to Israel and subdue Israel's enemies. In verse 6, what indicates that they still thought He was the militant king prophesied in the Old Testament?

b. According to Jesus' response, there are some things that are for God alone to know. How does Jesus state this in verse 7 (Good memory verse)?

9. Jesus speaks of the Father's own authority. To better understand this phrase, read and record Matthew 24:36.

10. Jesus made it clear that there were things that the disciples were not supposed to know. Now he tells them something they *did* need to know: "You will receive power." Jesus told them when they would receive this power and what this power would enable them to do. Record his words here from the first part of verse 8.

11. In Greek, the word for "witness" is the same as the word for "martyr." Look up the English definition of "witness" and "martyr" and with these definitions in mind, briefly describe how the apostles were to witness according to Jesus' command in the beginning of verse 8.

12. Jesus gives the apostles a road map for their journeys (which resembles King David's path of conquest). According to the end of verse 8 where were they to go and, looking at your map, toward what major city would this route lead them?

NOTE: Rome, in that day, was considered "the end of the earth."

13. CONNECTION: A witness is someone who can say "I know this is true" instead of "I think I know." Like the apostles, we are commanded to witness our faith. Yet, like the apostles who would witness in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, Rome and beyond, our faith must be awakened by the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit. Consider your own faith journey. Was there a specific period or event that you might share with your small group when you felt you were truly awakened to the truth of the Good News of Jesus Christ?

Remembering that we, like the apostles, are commanded to live our faith to others through our thoughts, our words and our deeds, read and record Matthew 5:16 and begin your prayer today thanking Jesus for the opportunity to witness for Him.

DAY THREE
Read Acts 1:9-11

14a. Yesterday's passage closed with the disciples being commissioned by Jesus to witness "to the ends of the earth." According to verse 9, what happened next?

b. What are some reasons that it would have been important for them to witness this ascension of Jesus?

15. In both the Hebrew Testament and New Testament, we read of God's glory and majesty associated with clouds. Read the following passages and describe the connection to Jesus' ascension:

Daniel 7:13 –

2 Kings 2:11 –

16. In verse 10 Luke stated that "While He was going, and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them." Who might the two men in white robes represent and why would they appear to the apostles?

17a. According to verse 11, what did the two men in white robes say to the disciples?

b. To what future event do you think they are referring in their prophecy at the end of verse 11?

18. CONNECTION: The followers of Jesus were met both at the empty tomb and at the ascension by two men in white robes - two angels. They must have been sent by God to bring the people back to reality - to help them process what had occurred. Though they probably do not come in dazzling white robes, God often sends people into our lives when we are confused, overwhelmed, or anxious. Recall a recent time when you knew a person entered your life just when you needed "an angel." Briefly describe how that person clarified your situation or offered you unexpected assistance.

Read and Record Hebrews 1:14. Then begin your prayer gratefully aware of the angels who come in and out of your life in divine service.

Hebrews 1:14 –

DAY FOUR
Read Acts 1:12-14

19. As this passage opens, the apostles were returning to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives. There were laws regulating every facet of Jewish life, even to the distance a devout Jew could walk on the Sabbath. (It was ½ mile.) What is the phrase from verse 12 that refers to the short distance the apostles walked?

20. When the apostles entered the city they went straight to the upper room where they were staying. Which apostles were present in the upper room according to verse 13?

21. Other than the apostles, who else was present (verse 14)?

22. "The women" are mentioned several times throughout the gospels. Read the references below. List the names of the women you find mentioned in each passage and briefly describe some things you learn about them.

Matthew 27:55-56 -

Mark 15:40-41 -

23. What was the group doing in verse 14?

NOTE: The word "brothers" most often refers to close relatives; however, even our current dictionary defines "brother" as a male relation or a close friend who shares a common ancestry, loyalty or purpose, and the latter is the teaching of The Catholic Church in regard to Jesus' use of the word "brothers."

24. CONNECTION: In today's passage from Acts we read of a gathering of Jesus' apostles, friends and family. His mother and his "brothers" are there, now being loyal and true to him. They are devoted to God in spite of the fact that they must have shared both grief and some confusion over all that had happened in the past 40 days, as well as the continuing danger from those in authority. Some families make loyalty easy and enjoyable; some make it more difficult. Whichever is the case in your family, you are called to family loyalty. Record a way that you can be faithful to this call - even if you have a difficult family.

Read and record Proverbs 11:29. If you have a relative who is a special challenge for you, say a special prayer for your relationship with them

DAY FIVE
Read Acts 1:15-20

25a. As today's lesson begins, Peter stood up among the 120 or so believers who were gathered together and began his first speech—an act of leadership. Before He died, Jesus had foretold Peter's role in the future. Record Luke 22:32.

b. Read Matthew 16:18-19. What are the words of Jesus that indicate Peter has the authority to be the leader?

26a. In verse 16 Luke recorded Peter's speech, beginning by explaining that Judas' betrayal of Christ was prophesied. In what manner did Peter address those gathered there and how does he describe Judas?

b. Peter continued his description in verse 17, noting that Judas shared in Jesus' ministry with the other apostles. Read and record the words in John 12:6 that describe one "responsibility" that Judas was assigned as an apostle as well as another word describing him.

27. Verses 18 and 19 are contained in parentheses. Some scholars think Luke added this (rather than Peter speaking it) as a clarification to make some audiences aware of Judas' subsequent death/suicide. What could be a reason that Luke would need to clarify this?

28. In verse 20, there is a reference to Psalms 109:8, which gives the reason for this church meeting. In your own words, what is the reason?

29. CONNECTION: As leader of the apostles, Peter convenes the group to elect a replacement for Judas, the traitor. In this passage, Peter is taking on the role Jesus assigned to him. Peter has come a long way from being a fisherman in Galilee, to being a witness to the transfiguration, to denying His Savior, to now leading the infant church. Have you ever had to step forward and take a leadership position that you feel that God has given you? Briefly describe the challenges you faced and how you overcame them with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Read and record Philippians 2:13, and begin your prayer today realizing that God places us where we should be, when we should be.

DAY SIX
Read Acts 1:21-26

30a. Today's passage begins with the completion of Peter's description (begun in yesterday's lesson) of what the assembly must do. Peter speaks as their leader to the young church gathered in the upper room. Record the last phrase Peter spoke in yesterday's passage.

b. Verse 21 speaks of “one of the men.” How does that verse go on to describe this man?

31a. In verse 22 Peter identifies the beginning and the end of “these days” that Jesus “went in and out among” them. What marks the beginning and the end of these days?

b. At the end of verse 22 the words of Peter declare what “one of these” men must become. Record it here.

32. In response, the group proposed two men. Who were they (verse 23)?

33a. Verse 24 tells us that the next thing the whole group did was pray. What might that indicate about them?

b. Record the first part of their prayer (recorded in the verse 24) and comment on anything you find notable.

34. Verse 25 points out clearly that it was Judas they were seeking to replace in their ministry and apostleship. What does verse 25 say Judas did, and why?

35. Luke concludes the first chapter by telling us what happened. According to verse 26, they cast lots for the man to fill Judas’ place as an apostle. What was the result?

36. CONNECTION: The disciples, under the leadership of Peter, had a difficult decision to make. They had devoted themselves to prayer, so when faced with the need to choose a replacement for Judas, they prayed. Their prayer was that the *Lord* would *make* the choice. Then they trusted the Lord to *show* them His choice. And after Matthias was chosen, they knew they could *trust* that choice. Briefly describe a decision or a choice you have had to make recently, and if and how prayer was involved. What was the outcome of the situation you described?

Immersing our decisions and choices in prayer empowers us to trust the outcome. Psalm 37:5 says, “Commit your way to the Lord, trust in him, and he will act.” With that thought, write a brief prayer asking the Lord to strengthen your faith in His plan.

After completing this lesson, read Chapter 1 (refer to pages 31–33 in the edition copyrighted in 1992 by Our Sunday Visitor or pages 3-7 in the edition reprinted in 2013 by Saint Benedict Press) in the *Meditation and Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* by Alfred McBride, O. Praem. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible: Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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