

READ

Acts 2:1–13, 37–47; 5:33–42. If you have time and would like to read more of this section to start your group time, add readings from Acts 3:1–10; 4:1–4, 23–31; 5:1–11, and 21–33.

Note: We have made a daily reading guide of Acts 2–5 so that you can read this whole section throughout your week. You can find the reading plan at the end of this study in **Go Deeper Section 4**.

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Louie Giglio’s teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

In what ways does the Holy Spirit equip the church to fulfill Acts 1:8 in these chapters?

What is the response of the Jewish leadership to Pentecost and the ongoing evangelism of the church?

What is the church’s response to opposition, beatings, and being jailed?

Show Session 2: Strike the Match (22 minutes).

DISCUSS

In this session, we will examine the powerful beginning of the church and its growth under persecution. It was the first evangelism movement. God worked providentially through his people to fulfill the first part of Acts 1:8—they became his witnesses throughout Jerusalem.

Read Acts 2:1–13, 37–41.

Note: To learn more about the Festival of Weeks and its connection to Pentecost, go to **Go Deeper Section 1** at the end of this study.

Before we examine this passage, what are your initial reactions and observations of Pentecost? What appears to be the purpose of the Holy Spirit empowering the apostles?

When the Holy Spirit descends, it is anything but serene. Luke describes the sound of wind as “violent,” and flames spread throughout the room and rested on each person. The Holy Spirit’s descent was so loud that it drew a crowd. Take a look at verses 6–11. **Who is in this crowd?**

In what ways does this gathering provide an opportunity for the disciples to fulfill Acts 1:8?

This scene might appear chaotic, but it did not devolve into ecstatic confusion. Instead, the disciples leaped into action, telling Jews who had gathered from all the corners of the known world about Jesus in every known language. This miracle not only foreshadows the spread of the gospel to the ends of the earth but also confirms the truth of the disciples’ message. Anyone can refute a message, but a message with power is hard to ignore.

What events in your life have confirmed the truth of the gospel?

In what ways is the Holy Spirit empowering you to share the gospel today?

What keeps you from sharing the gospel? Are there any boundaries that challenge the spread of the gospel where you live?

The same Spirit that empowered the disciples resides in every Christian. He empowers us to leap into the mission of God and spread the gospel to those who

don't know Jesus. Some people may believe us and accept Jesus. Others may reject us out of hand. Regardless of the result of our evangelism, the Holy Spirit moves us to action.

What fears or hesitation in your own life do you need to let the Holy Spirit overcome for the sake of fulfilling Acts 1:8?

The courage and power we see on the Day of Pentecost lead the church to grow from one hundred twenty people to over three thousand in a matter of hours. This group quickly becomes a close-knit community.

Read Acts 2:42–47.

What qualities marked the early church? What habits were they committed to practicing?

There is a lot to admire about the early church. Their generosity and hospitality alone set a high bar for every church community today.

In what ways is your church community marked by the early church's heart and habits? What could it look like for you and your small group to practice imitate early church?

In the video, Louie described Acts 2 as the hinge of the book, the point where the people of God shifted from waiting to acting. The Holy Spirit lit a fire in the church that started in a small group and began to spread throughout the city of Jerusalem. But it did not spread without serious opposition.

Read Acts 3:1–10; 4:1–4, 23–31.

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit used the gift of tongues to confirm the truth of the gospel. As we move through Acts, we will see many more confirming signs, often the same miracles Jesus used to confirm his identity as the Son of God. But these miracles are never meant to draw focus to the apostles. Instead, attention is always directed to God and his works.

What does the lame man want from Peter and John? In what ways is their offering better than he expected?

Peter and John, like Jesus, addressed the lame man's spiritual needs *and* physical needs. Even though they did not have any money, which the man asked for, they

were able to help him in a way that changed his life and led to rejoicing.

Think of the people in need in your community. **In what ways can you serve their spiritual and physical needs so that they walk away from you rejoicing in Jesus, first and foremost?**

The Jewish authorities were threatened by Peter and John, jailing them for spreading the message of Jesus. It is important to note that they were opposed for their message, not their character. The authorities jailed Peter and John because they were teaching people about Jesus.

What is the cultural stereotype of Christians today? In what ways are these stereotypes earned?

Do you think Christians are more opposed because of our attitudes and judgments or because of our commitment to sharing the gospel? Why do you think that is?

After they were released from prison, Peter and John shared what happened with the church. Amazingly, the church's first reaction was to pray for more boldness, and they became more eager to share the gospel. Look at verses 29–30. **What would it look like for you and your small group to pray for boldness in living out your faith?**

Note: To learn more about living boldly by the power of the Holy Spirit, go to **Go Deeper Section 2** at the end of this study.

Note: To study the judgment of Ananias and Sapphira, go to **Go Deeper Section 3** at the end of this study.

Read Acts 5:17–33.

In the early days of the church, the apostles were regularly arrested and jailed by the Jewish leaders. But prison could not hold them, and the message of Jesus continued to spread. **What authority compelled the disciples to disobey the authority of the Sanhedrin and High Priest, according to verse 29?**

If you are opposed because of the message of Jesus, you are presented with a decision: Whose authority will you obey—those who oppose the gospel or the God of heaven and earth?

What makes you afraid to share the gospel? What is the worst-case scenario for sharing the gospel in your context?

In what ways is God calling you to be obedient to his call and his mission to seek and save the lost?

LAST WORD

The fire God lit in the early church was fanned into a burning flame through the boldness, faithfulness, and resolute focus of the apostles. We have the opportunity to follow their lead, to live boldly for the name of Jesus in our own communities. Instead of letting fear stifle our role in the mission of God, imagine what God could do with your faithfulness.

God is on the move and is calling you to join him in purpose and power.

GO DEEPER

This section has two potential functions:

1. It can supplement your small group discussion with topics your group may be interested in. We've highlighted where each of the following segments could fit in the Discuss section of the study guide. As the leader, it would be good to familiarize yourself with this section just in case your conversation turns to one of these topics.
2. These sections can also function as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting. Consider using these sections to deepen your group's study of the book of Acts.

1. The Festival of Weeks

The most important events in Christianity occurred during Jewish festivals. Jesus, the lamb of God, was crucified during Passover, and his resurrection occurred during the Feast of First Fruits as the "first fruits of those being raised from the dead" (1 Cor. 15:20). The day the Holy Spirit indwelt the church was no different.

The events of Acts 2 occurred during the Jewish festival Shavuot, exactly seven weeks or fifty days after Passover. This is why it was called the Feast of Weeks by the Jews and Pentecost, meaning "fifty," by the Greeks. It was the second of three "solemn feasts" that required every able-bodied Jewish male to celebrate and make offerings in Jerusalem. The feast also marked the time of the wheat harvest in Israel, which was a time of intense labor. Right after, or even during, the harvest, the men of Israel would gather some of their wheat as a "wave offering" and livestock and travel to Jerusalem.

Read Leviticus 23:15–22.

What was the purpose of each of the offerings during this festival?

This feast served two major purposes: to thank God for the harvest and to find peace with God through sacrifice.

Now, think back to the events in Acts 2. Jews from all corners of the known world had traveled to Jerusalem for Shavuot looking to thank God and have their sins forgiven. It is at this moment that the Holy Spirit moves through his people and gathers the first great harvest of

the church—thousands of new Christians who were now forgiven of their sin and at peace with God.

Read Luke 10:2 and Romans 5:1–2.

The Day of Pentecost resulted in what Shavuot pointed toward: God’s peace and provision. But Pentecost is more than a simple holiday in the past. God is still bringing people from all over the world to himself, reaping souls in a spiritual harvest.

In what ways can you tangibly thank God for his provision?

In what ways can you celebrate being forgiven by and at peace with God?

2. Boldly Living by the Spirit

Evangelism may seem scary—even talking about Jesus is intimidating for some of us. Some of us feel unequipped to talk about God and don’t know what to say. Some of us are afraid of the reactions we might get if we talk about Jesus.

Think back to when God saved you. **What role did other people play in that event?**

Read Ephesians 1:11–14.

According to verse 13, what was your role in your salvation?

The Father predestined and claimed us, Jesus completed the work of salvation, and the Holy Spirit seals us for eternity. While it feels like our responsibility in evangelism is weighty, it is God who is doing all the heavy lifting. The only thing we did was hear the gospel and set our hope on Jesus. Evangelism is simply giving others the opportunity to hear the gospel and set their hope on Jesus. It is God who saves, not us.

Read Romans 8:9–11, 15.

These verses tell us that the Spirit is our life, he fills us with his power, and he gives us a new identity as God’s children. He’s the one working in and through us. Even so, it can be easy to feel ineffective as Christians. **What makes you feel ineffective or weak when it comes to spiritual conversations? What might be causing you to feel this way?**

It is important to realize what is causing us to be afraid to share the gospel because it is not from God. To think that you cannot share the gospel is a demonic lie that is keeping you from accomplishing the work of God.

This week, memorize Romans 8:15. Pray this verse when you become afraid to share the good work that God has done in you. Commit to breaking past or ignoring your fears so that you might live boldly by the Spirit.

3. The Judgment of Ananias and Saphira

Most of the stories in this session recount the victories of the church. But, at the beginning of Acts 5, we read an unusual and unsettling story of sin in the early church.

Read Acts 4:32–5:11.

In what ways are Ananias and Sapphira’s actions shocking and selfish?

What opportunities did Ananias and Sapphira have to tell the truth? What do you think was causing them to lie?

The early church was remarkable in her generosity. It appears to have been common for people to sell their largest assets so that the needy might be taken care of. In verse 5:4, Peter’s questions make clear that Christian landowners were not required to sell land or even donate all the proceeds of that sale to the church. This was a willful and selfless act.

Ananias and Sapphira wanted the reputation and praise that they believed came with this kind of radical generosity but had no intention of being the people they were pretending to be. They acted pridefully and selfishly behind a mask of generosity. Peter was rightly shocked by their deception and selfishness.

We don’t know why this judgment was as harsh or immediate as it was, but we do see that God expects his church to be holy and blameless. Disguising sin as a virtue for selfish gain is shocking, abhorrent, and worthy of judgment.

In what ways could someone build their reputation through selfishness in the church today?

In what ways are you tempted to do good deeds to be seen? Are there any “good” actions you need to

repent of?

4. Acts 2–5 Reading Plan

Acts is a long book, and we won’t be able to study every verse of it during each of these sessions. This reading plan will help you familiarize yourself with the entirety of the book so that you can dig more deeply into God’s Word.

This week, use this reading guide to break up Acts 2–5. As you examine the earliest days of the church, prayerfully consider the ways you can live boldly for Jesus.

- Day 1: The Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–47)
- Day 2: The First Days of the Church (Acts 3:1–4:22)
- Day 3: The Courageous Faith of the Church (Acts 4:23–5:11)
- Day 4: Growing Persecution Against the church (Acts 5:12–42)
