

DISCUSS

Acts 1 is the bridge between the Gospel of Luke and the foundation of the church. It is a brief pause before Jesus released his disciples to spread the gospel in Jerusalem, Samaria, and to the ends of the Earth. As we read this chapter, we will discover the purpose and power Jesus promises to give his followers and his call to us to participate in his ongoing work.

Note: To learn more about the author and purpose of the Book of Acts, go to **Go Deeper Section 1** at the end of this study.

Read Acts 1:1–8.

These opening verses set the stage for the entire book of Acts, giving us an overview of Jesus’s work between his resurrection and his ascension into heaven. While Luke, the author of Acts, does not give us an exhaustive list of everything Jesus did, these brief verses make one thing clear: the church was founded on the resurrected, living, and active Son of God, Jesus Christ. **What was Jesus doing at the beginning of Acts? What sorts of things seemed important to Jesus after his resurrection?**

Jesus commanded his disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they were baptized by the Holy Spirit. His command gave them a place, a purpose, and a promise, but they had to wait a few days to receive that promise. **What makes waiting on a promise different than waiting on an uncertain hope?**

Verses 6–8 show us that the disciples still did not fully understand Jesus’s purpose. Jesus came to establish the kingdom of God, but they thought he came to throw out the Romans and reestablish the kingdom of Israel. Their hope for Jesus was far too small, focusing on temporary changes rather than his eternal kingdom. **What are you hoping Jesus will do in your life? In your city?**

In what ways might your hopes be too small, or too focused on your “kingdom” on earth?

What could it look like for you to refocus your hope on the kingdom of God?

Instead of telling his disciples exactly when things would happen, he pointed them to what they should be doing

What additional resources or circumstances do you think you need to accomplish what God has asked you to do?

God has given you a purpose, his presence, and the power you need to fulfill his call. The final truth from Acts 1 is that we are living in God's greater story of grace. While each of us has a different experience, all of us are a part of God's greater story.

The book of Acts shows us how the church began in Jerusalem, spread through Judea and Samaria, and grew throughout the known world. We are still caught up in the story of the church today as the gospel continues to reach new people.

In what ways is God writing his story in your home, neighborhood, workplace, and church?

What might be your role in furthering his story?

Read Acts 1:9–11.

Note: To learn more about the second half of Acts 1, go to **Go Deeper Section 2** at the end of this study.

The disciples were stunned when Jesus left. They had spent the last few years following him across Judea, watching his miracles, obeying his commands, and listening to his teaching. And now, they had to wait without him. Like the disciples, we are waiting for Jesus to return. Sometimes, it can feel like we are looking at the sky, waiting, with no powerful purpose.

In what ways do you feel unsure of what God wants you to do next?

God has given you a mission and a purpose, so even if you don't know what is coming next, you can always know what you should be doing today.

Based on the truths from this chapter, what is your purpose for today?

We are a part of God's greater story. We have purpose and power. **In what ways will you live out God's mission for you this week?**

What questions do you have about the reliability of the accounts of Jesus's life?

While you read through Acts, how might you look for clues to the reliability of these accounts?

Sometimes, history can seem like a boring list of names and places. But Acts is more than history; it is the story of the church that is still being written and meant to give you assurance for your faith. **If you tend to get bored with history, how might you reframe this book in your mind to help you gain assurance and hope?**

2. Choosing Judas's Replacement

After the disciples returned to Jerusalem, they waited for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. But they were not inactive as they waited.

Read Acts 1:12–14.

What is the first thing Jesus's followers did after returning to Jerusalem? Why do you think it was important for them to be "united in prayer"?

The apostles (a Greek word meaning "sent ones") and Jesus's family gathered in prayer together. To them, waiting was more than sitting around hoping for someone to knock on their door. Waiting on the promises of Jesus was a prayerful, unified, expectation of God's upcoming work.

What would it look like for you to prayerfully wait on the Lord in your current circumstances? How might you involve your community in your prayerful waiting?

As you read through Acts, you will see the apostles continually stopping to pray. When they did not know what to do, were waiting on uncertain outcomes, or simply had a moment to rest, they prayed together.

In what ways could you live like the apostles and incorporate prayer into your decision-making and downtime?

When they weren't praying, the apostles were actively preparing their community for God's coming promise.

Read Acts 1:15–26.

What were the requirements for Judas’s replacement, listed in verses 21–22?

While the broader community of the early church proposed two candidates to replace Judas, the apostles ultimately decided by casting lots, an ancient way of seeking guidance from the Lord (Prov. 16:33). When we pray, we are trusting God with our cares and concerns. But it can be difficult to trust God with our futures. **What can make it difficult to trust God with a big decision?**

Matthias was chosen as Judas’s replacement, but we never hear about his life and ministry in Acts. We may wonder if he was the right choice. Even when we let God guide our decisions, it can be difficult to trust him with his chosen outcomes. We may sit in doubt of his answers until they prove themselves to be “good decisions.” **When have you doubted God’s reply to your prayers?**

What could it look like to trust God with your prayers, even when he leads you in a way you didn’t expect to go?

3. Weekly 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. Some weeks will have more reading than others, so feel free to complete the daily readings at a pace that makes the most sense to your group.

Session 1 covers only one chapter of Acts, which gives you space to go back to the Gospel of Luke. This will help you build the connection between these two books and understand the fuller context of this passage.

- Day 1: The Resurrection (Luke 24:1–12)
- Day 2: The Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–35)
- Day 3: Jesus’s Final Appearance in Luke (Luke 24:36–53)
- Day 4: Jesus’s Final Appearance in Acts (Acts 1:1–11)
- Day 5: Waiting for Pentecost (Acts 1:12–26)