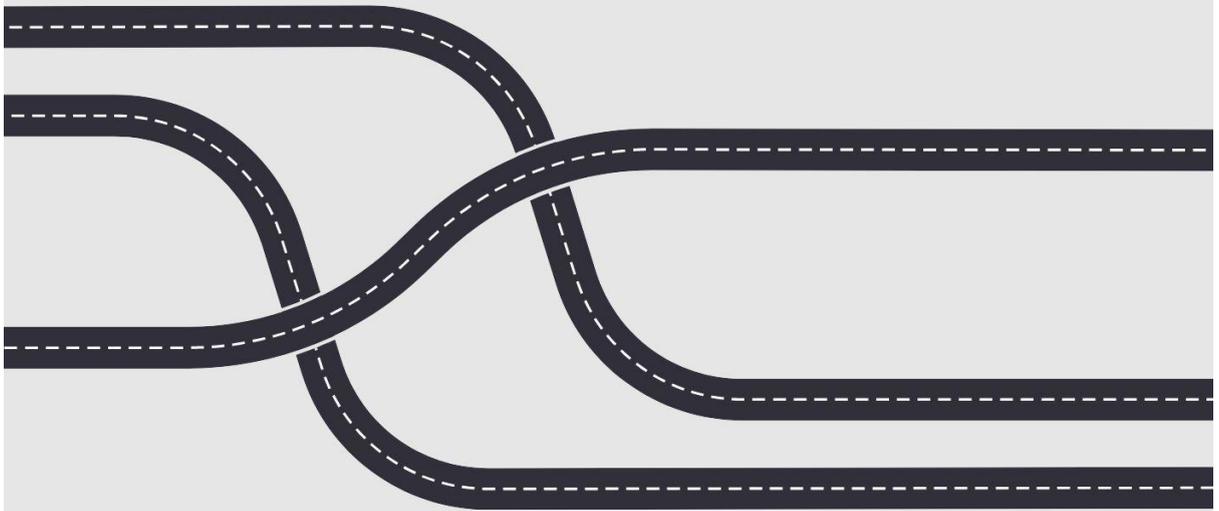


ON THE ROAD



TERM 3 2022
BIBLE STUDY BOOK

BIBLE STUDY PROGRAM – TERM 3 2022

On the Road

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Introduction to Acts

The book of Acts is the second part of a two volume work, the first being The Gospel of Luke. This work is written by Luke, who was a travelling co-worker with the Apostle Paul. The opening sentence of Acts gives us an indication of the contents of the rest of the book:

“In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach”.

The Gospel of Luke, the “former book”, shares the first stage of Jesus ministry. The Book of Acts will show the continuation of Jesus ministry through his Spirit empowered church. While the book’s traditional name is “The Acts of the Apostles”, it may have better been titled “The Acts of Jesus and the Spirit”, as it is Jesus and his Spirit that are the consistent actors throughout the book.

An indicator of the structure of the book can also be found in this first chapter.

Acts 1:6 Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

The story of Acts will follow this geographic pattern Jesus speaks of:

- Chapters 1-7 are about the church’s witness in Jerusalem.
- Chapters 8-12 are about the church’s witness in Judea and Samaria.
- Chapters 13-28 are about the church’s witness to the “ends of the earth”, or at least the beginnings of this movement as the Gospel reaches Rome.

Our studies will concentrate on part of that final section, chapters 12-20 where Paul, along with various travel companions, are sent out by the church on a series of mission journeys.

- Paul’s First Mission Journey: Acts 13:4-14:28
https://visualunit.files.wordpress.com/2010/03/paul_mission1.png
- Paul’s Second Mission Journey: Acts 15:39-18:22
https://visualunit.files.wordpress.com/2010/03/paul_mission2.png
- Paul’s Third Mission Journey: Acts 18:23-21:17
https://visualunit.files.wordpress.com/2010/03/paul_mission3.png

The world into which Paul ventured with the gospel was multicultural and diverse. It was a world of many gods, religious groups and languages. Over all of this was the might of the Roman Empire. The odds seem stacked against Paul and his mission companions. Yet as we read over and over in the Book of Acts “*the word of God continues to increase and spread (Acts 12:24)*” and “*the churches were strengthened in faith and grew daily in number (Acts 16:5)*”.

We too may think the odds are stacked against us in seeing people in Miranda and The Shire won for Jesus. This section of Acts is a reminder to pray, hold fast to the gospel and continue in faith for the glory of God.

Study 1: the first global church

Acts 12:25–13:5

Talk

- 1) We're dropping into Acts a fair way into the story; to help orient ourselves, we'll start by going over some important events in Acts so far. On the cards (**Appendix A**) are events from the early church. As a group, put these events into a rough timeline:

Our passage this week is the introduction to Paul's missionary journeys throughout the north-eastern Mediterranean. For the first half of the series, the two people the story follows are Barnabas and Paul (called Saul for most of the first half of Acts).

- 2) How much do you already know about Barnabas and Saul?

Read Acts 12:25–13:5

- 3) Have a look at the prophets and the teachers in Syrian Antioch; where do they come from? Find, on the map (**Appendix B**), the place of origin of each leader, as well as the cities of Syrian Antioch and Jerusalem. (*Note: Manaen and Simeon might be a little tricky for some groups*)
- 4) What might this list of places suggest about the nature of the church in Syrian Antioch?

Apply

11) Saul had been a Christian for more than a decade and had been preaching for about as long when he was called as an apostle to the Gentiles. The church in Antioch was itself quietly evangelising local Gentiles for **years** (see Acts 11:19–21) before they sent Barnabas and Saul into new territory.

Can you think of any similar contemporary examples? Have you ever seen some particular flourishing of mission or evangelism after years of apparently mundane Christian worship?

12) If we want to see people come to know Jesus through our efforts as a church, St Luke's will need to make sure we lay a solid foundation in our worship and life together. How might we better grow in our devotion to God together as a church?

13) Pray for St Luke's, particularly for our growth as we meet, worship, and live together.

Prayers

Pray for Brett and Mardi, Evie, Harriet, Olivia, and Willow Middleton. Please pray for Brett as he seeks to encourage, serve and build up the wider staff team. Pray for wisdom that he and the team develop ministry plans that will help St Luke's stay faithful and grow into the future.

Pray for Matt and Lauren, Ezra, Joanna and Samuel Thomas and their mission work with OMF International to an unreached people group in South East Asia.

Bring before God those who are physically or mentally ill, grieving or experiencing financial hardships.

Study 2: the faithful God

Acts 13

Talk

- 1) If someone asked you, “what is the gospel”, how confident are you that you could give a good answer?

AND/OR

- 2) In pairs or threes, answer this question in one or two sentences: “What is the Christian gospel?”

- 3) Last week, we saw Barnabas and Saul sent off on their way by the church in Antioch for the sake of the work the Holy Spirit has called them to do. Remember back to last week: what was that specific work?

Read Acts 13

- 4) **Look at Paul’s sermon in vv. 16–41.** What does Paul see as the core of his message?

- 5) Paul talks about Jesus fulfilling promises made to Israel, particularly the promises about one person from the Old Testament in particular. Who is that?

Study 2: Acts 13

12) On the other hand, in this passage we see the gladness of the Gentiles (v. 48) and the apostles' Spirit-filled joy at the spread of the gospel (v. 52). How big a role does joy play in your Christian life?

13) It's appropriate that, in light of the gospel, we should praise God. Spend some time in prayer praising God for what he has done, and pray for our joy in the spread of the gospel.

Prayers

Pray for Jennie and Don Everist. Pray for Jennie as she ministers and cares for the people who attend the Thursday Communion Service. Pray for her as she continues to pray and care for those who are unable to attend, due to Covid.

Pray for the Sparks Family and their mission work making disciples in Spain.

Pray for our Prime Minister and government. Pray for our state and federal members, our Premier and government. We pray also for our local Council including our Mayor.

Study 3: the inconvenient gospel

Acts 14

Talk

- 1) What do you think are the easiest parts of Christian teaching to affirm publicly, or talk about with people who aren't Christians?
- 2) What do you find most uncomfortable about Christian teaching? If you had to change something about biblical doctrine, what does your gut say you'd change?

Read Acts 14:1–20

- 3) There are a number of different characters (or groups that function as characters) in this section. Go through vv. 1–20 again and make a list of them.
- 4) The responses of the Iconians and Lystrans to the gospel are quite different. If you could rank the responses in this passage from best to worst, how would you do it?
- 5) In Lystra we meet a man with faith, and a crowd that also seems very enthusiastic—at least about the healing!—but their reactions appear to be quite different. In what way? Why?

Study 3: Acts 14

- 6) Greek gods were believed to take on human form sometimes. The Lystrans weren't stupid: if you suspected that someone was a god, the most sensible course of action would be to offer sacrifices to them. Even so, Paul and Barnabas explicitly denied they were gods and tried to stop them. Why do you think it was so hard for Paul and Barnabas to stop the Lystrans sacrificing to them?

- 7) The Lystrans experienced the announcement of the gospel, but when they tried to announce it themselves, they twisted it into being about something else that was more comfortable for them. Are there any similar dangers for us today?

Read Acts 14:21–28

- 8) It's very easy to breeze past place names, but have a close look at verse 21b. What is striking about Paul and Barnabas going to these places, given the events of the past few chapters?

- 9) As Paul and Barnabas return to these new churches in verses 21–23,
 - a) what are the apostles' chief concerns for the churches?

 - b) how can you see a deep trust in God playing out in the actions of these early Christians?

Study 3: Acts 14

10) Our church is far better established than these churches.¹ Because of this, it might be easier for us to forget to entrust our ministry together to God, or to ignore parts of our calling to holiness. In light of that, spend some time praying together:

- for your own ministries—at St Luke’s or elsewhere.
- for the staff and ministry leaders at St Luke’s.
- that we would obey God in all ways, including the ways that are inconvenient or uncomfortable.

Prayers

Pray for Colin as Office and Site Manager. We pray for energy and enthusiasm as he looks after staff and the Church site.

Pray for Sarah and husband Tim and her work in India with BCTI and SIM.

Pray for our witness to our local community – especially as more units are developed and more people move into the area. Pray for opportunities to connect with our community.

¹ Some examples:

- most members of our congregations have been Christians far longer than the members of the new churches. Many of us have been Christians longer than the apostles had been
- most members of our congregations know and understand the Bible far better than the Gentile converts at these churches
- we are part of a denomination with almost 500 years of history, and part of one of the strongest inter-church networks in the world (the Anglican Diocese of Sydney)
- we have far better communication and transport infrastructure, and far greater financial resources with which to support churches and ministries

Study 4: the great reunion

Acts 15:1–35

This is the narrative and theological turning point at the heart of the book of Acts. It brings to a head all the questions brought up in the previous chapters. Chief among them: what is the relationship of Jews and Gentiles in the new people of God?

Talk

- 1) How appropriate do you think it is to describe Christianity as a white, Western religion?

OR

- 2) Our study for this week focuses a lot on the relationship between Jews (\approx Israelites)² and Gentiles (non-Jews). Discuss (some of) these statements: what do you agree with? What do you disagree with?
 - In Jesus' church, the differences between Jews and Gentiles don't matter anymore.
 - Jews who convert to Christianity have become Gentiles, so they shouldn't keep the Old Testament law anymore.
 - It doesn't matter that much that Jesus was Jewish; what really matters was that he was human.
 - Non-Jews who become Christians join God's people, so they should keep the Old Testament law just like the first Jewish Christians did.
 - Jews are saved by obeying the law; Christians are saved by faith.
 - The new covenant means that the church has replaced Israel as God's people.
 - The categories of Jew and Gentile don't apply anymore: the real distinction is between believers and non-believers.

² It's more complex than this, but, essentially, Jewishness in the first century AD was related to both Israelite ethnicity and to observance of the Old Testament Law.

Read Acts 15:1–35

- 3) In this chapter, we see the first church council. Believers from across the early church have gathered to discuss one issue: what is the question they need to answer?

- 4) Look at vv. 3–4; what was the basic reaction of the church to Paul and Barnabas' report? How does that clarify the issue in vv. 1 and 5?

- 5) When Luke introduces a group of Pharisees in v. 5 saying that Gentiles should be told to keep the Old Testament law, he describes them as believers: why do you think genuine believers would be making the argument that this group does?

You might want to answer these next two questions split into two groups, with each group answering one question. If you want to split your groups up further, use the verses in square brackets. After each group has answered their question, come back together and share between groups.

- 6) What is Peter's argument (vv. 7–11) [**vv. 7–8, 9–11**] in response to the question of whether Gentiles should keep the Old Testament law?

- 7) What is James' argument (v. 13–21) [**vv. 13–18, 19–21**] in response to the question of whether Gentiles should keep the Old Testament law?

Apply

- 8) What does the outcome of this council mean for how Jews and Gentiles relate to each other in the early church? Do the categories of Jew and Gentile still matter?

- 9) What kinds of broad principles can we draw from this passage about the way Christians should treat each other, particularly when it comes to different ethnicities or cultures?

- 10) Spend some time praying for the spread of the gospel across all the world.

You might find it helpful to direct your prayers using Psalm 67, Luke 2:29–32, or Revelation 7:9–10; you might also like to use the St Luke’s missionary prayer guide (email office@stlukesmiranda.org.au for a copy).

Prayers

Nicole Murray working with Youth and Young Adults. Luke Murray working on Sundays as our Student Minister. Prayer that their time in preparation is productive and good for all they serve.

Pray for Kylie Zietsch and her work at Johannesburg Bible College, South Africa.

Pray for Nonhlanhla Tshabalala, who is undertaking a ministry apprenticeship with Kylie Zietsch in women’s ministry and pastoral care at Johannesburg Bible College, South Africa.

Praise God for our Bible Study leaders and for their faithful work in teaching and ministering to us throughout the term.

Study 5: The Next Mission

Acts 15:36–16:40

Talk

- 1) Can you think of a time when your plans failed but life worked out for the better?

Read 15:36-16:10

- 2) 15:36 marks the start of Paul's second missionary journey. What are his plans? Do these plans work out as expected?
- 3) How do these "problems" strengthen and shape the missionary journey in positive ways? How might this give us some insight into the strange work of the Spirit in this chapter?
- 4) Why does Paul want Timothy to be circumcised? Why would Timothy agree?

Read 16:11-40

- 5) These verses mark the Gospel's entry into Western Europe. What indicators might we get from v11-15 about the willingness of the city of Philippi to hear about the resurrection of the Messiah?

- 6) The chapter begins with worshippers of God outside the hostile city of Philippi but ends with a church planted inside the city walls (16:40). What are the series of events that would see this take place?

- 7) How do these events reveal the mission partnership between Christ and those who belong to him? How does the work of the Spirit and the decisions of Paul and Silas lead to the first church plant in Western Europe?

Apply

- 8) Have a read of 16:29-30. What do you think the Jailer meant when he said "*Sirs, what must I do to be saved*"? How might this change some of our evangelism practices?

- 9) Households prove important in the gospel reaching into Phillippi. Lydia's house and the jailers house become centres of outreach and worship. How can our households do the same?

- 10) Pray for each other's households, that whatever our circumstances, they would be outposts for the gospel.

Prayers

Pray for Cam, Katrina, Peyton and Thea Harte. Pray for Cam as he heads up Children's Ministry, including KOS (Kids on Sunday), Primary Scripture, Children's Thursday arvo programs.

Pray for our ongoing and various Children's, Youth, and Young Adults Ministries; that God would be using the leaders and volunteers to sow seeds and help people grow into mature and loving relationships with Jesus. Pray that this would be a great witness to the wider community.

Study 6: The Known God

Acts 17:1-34

Talk

- 1) Have you ever met someone who has no background knowledge of the Christian faith, or perhaps has never met a practising Christian before? How did that conversation go?

- 2) Has someone from another religion ever tried to convert you? What was it like?

Read Acts 17:1-15

- 3) We witness here the first moment the gospel was spoken in the port city of Thessalonica. Where, when and to whom is it first spoken? How does Paul tailor the message to the audience?

- 4) How do the Jews feel following the success of Paul's preaching? What means do they use to drive them from the city? Have you ever seen people try to use legal means to have the preaching of the gospel hindered or banned?

- 5) While Berea seems more fertile ground for the gospel than Thessalonica, a church does start and thrive in that rough port city. Have a read of 1 Thessalonians 2 to hear Paul speak about this first mission in Thessalonica.

Read Acts 17:16-34

- 6) "To and Unknown God": Do you know many agnostics? How do you find speaking to them about God? Why do they choose agnosticism over atheism? Is it an intellectual decision based on other motivating factors?

- 7) How does Paul's evangelistic method change as he moves into Athens?

- 8) What is the content of his gospel to the Athenians?

- 9) The gospel has always had the scent of death to some and the scent of life to others (2 Corinthians 2:15-16)? What about the gospel Paul preached in Athens may have been appealing? What may have been disturbing to them?

Apply

- 10) How does Paul's method of sharing the gospel compare to yours? What do you find most effective? What parts of the gospel do you find people sneering at?

- 11) Throughout this chapter there is an emphasis on women responding to the gospel. Why do you think women found the gospel appealing?

12) How do you feel about judgement being in Jesus' hands (Acts 17:30-31)?

13) In this passage Christians are accused of "*causing trouble all over the world*". What are the parts of the gospel that continue to "cause trouble" for modern hearers?

Prayers

Pray for Jess Moran as she oversees our Crèche and Playtime programs. We pray for energy and enthusiasm as she looks after this age group as well as providing support and encouragement for the parents.

Pray for our Church Wardens: Colin Adams, Helen Webster and Phil Moss. Pray for our Parish Councillors: Timothy Clipsham, Laurie Davidson, Amanda Garlato, Kath Telfer, Alex Kiefer, Brendan Carpenter and Simon Veltmeyer (also our treasurer). Pray for our Parish Nominators: Timothy Clipsham, Michael Easton, Amanda Garlato, Louise Parkes and Alan Gibson. Pray for our Synod Reps: Michael Easton and Amanda Garlato.

- 4) How are Paul's patterns of ministry in Corinth similar to his patterns elsewhere?

- 5) Why do you think Jesus speaks to Paul at this time? How might Paul have been feeling?

- 6) Jesus promises Paul he has "many in this city". Might Sosthenes, the beaten-up synagogue ruler, be one of them? Do a word search on his name.

Read Acts 18:18-19:10

- 7) Meet Apollos!
 - a) What makes Apollos a good potential leader of God people? Where else do we meet him in the bible?

 - b) What does he lack?

 - c) How is this corrected? How is this a good model for us?

- 8) Having met Priscilla, Aquila and Apollos in Corinth, we switch back to Paul who has arrived at Ephesus. What follows is a strange interaction with some disciples who have not yet received the gift of the Holy Spirit. This delayed gift of the Spirit, where followers of Jesus receive the Spirit in a visible and demonstrative way, happens at three other key moments in Acts. It

Prayers

Pray for They & Eddie our church bookkeepers that they would bring Glory to God in their work.

Pray for Lisa as Admin Assistant, as she looks after the administration of the Church.

Pray for Marty & Katrina, Simeon, Jed and Luke Feltham, who recently made the hard decision to resign from CMS and stop moving towards serving in Kenya. Please pray that God would help them to process the decision and be patient for God to make way for their future.

Study 8:

Acts 19:11-20:12

Talk

- 1) The financial times reported in 2021 that the esoteric and the occult were flourishing during the pandemic.³ Have you found this to be the case amongst family or friends?

Read 19:11-20:12

- 2) Ancient Ephesus has been described as “the magical capital of Asia Minor”. What evidence of this do we see in the passage?
- 3) Paul’s ministry may, in some ways, seem comparable to what the sons of Sceva offered. How does what happens in the chapter set them apart from each other?
- 4) Last week we saw the work of the Spirit evidenced in believers speaking miraculous languages. How do we see the Spirit at work in believers this week?
- 5) In 19:23 we read an early Christian self-designation: “The Way”. We see this also in 19:9. How might this name have arisen? In what ways might this have been a helpful name for Christianity to have taken?

³ <https://www.ft.com/content/ed8dd8b7-77d2-4c9c-8da8-2fa06230daf4>

- 6) How is “the Way” disrupting Ephesian society?
- 7) Demetrius accuses Paul of leading people astray and the actions of the crowd suggest Christians are a dangerous presence. Yet in the words of the city clerk we get a feel for how Christians actually conducted themselves in mission. How is this early mission work a good model for us?

Apply

- 8) When you became a Christian, or while being a Christian, have you ever had to “burn your scrolls”. Have you ever had to give up something important for the sake of obedience to Jesus?
- 9) Does the Christian faith still have the power to overturn the gods and idols of our culture as it did in Ephesus?

Prayers

Pray for Sam and Jess, Percy, Lois, Finn and Cleo Morton. Pray for Sam as our Services Pastor, preparing the elements, which make up our Sunday services. Pray for Sam as he also heads up Youth Ministry and high school Scripture.

We pray for Ministry Trainees Evan Caddy and Matt Peck, working alongside Brett and Sam.

Pray for Rob and Jo, Lili, and Jemma Copland. Pray for Rob’s work as the Anglican Chaplain at the University of Wollongong and for his work as Campus Director of the University Bible Group.

Please pray that the way we welcome people would encourage them to seek Jesus and make St Lukes their home. Pray that we would continue to connect with hospitality and warmth.

Study 9:

Acts 20:13-38

Talk

- 1) Who are some people you would say have been “shepherds” in your christian life?

Read Acts 20:1-12

- 2) In 20:1-6 we hear of travel plans⁴ and travel companions. The size of the mission team is the largest recorded in Acts. What does this suggest? Why might Paul be so eager to bring these people to Jerusalem? You may also want to chase up some of the stories of these characters:

- Aristarchus
- Gaius
- Tychicus
- Trophimus

- 3) What day of the week are Christians meeting for church? How might this explain why they meet at night?

- 4) What do you make of the story about Eutychus?

- Is it a warning for preachers not to speak too long?
- Is it an indictment on young people who have terrible attention spans?
- Is it an encouragement to church wardens to ensure WHS protocols around windows, open flame and ventilation are followed?

⁴ Traditionally it is believed Paul writes 2 Corinthians and Romans at this point. 1 Corinthians has already been sent with Timothy and Erastus 19:22.

11) Paul reminds the elders to look out for the flock, but who is looking out for the elders? Have you found this to be true of you as you grow up in the faith?

Prayers

Pray for David and Kathryn, Reuben and Felix Luis. Pray for David as Campus Director of Geelong Christian Union at the Deakin University Campus in Victoria.

Pray for Peter, Katharine, Noah and Atticus Yock. Pray as they work amongst the students at the campus of Griffith University.

Thank God for the many and varied resources available to us as a parish. As we seek to witness to the goodness of God daily, pray that we might make the most of opportunities to invite people we know to church. Pray that God would be preparing the hearts of people we could invite to a service at St Luke's.

Appendix A: some important events in Acts (Study 1)

Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection.	Jesus' disciples (apostles) are commissioned as his witnesses; Jesus ascends to heaven.	The Holy Spirit is given to the believers at Pentecost; Peter preaches the first Christian sermon.
The early church grows in and around Jerusalem.	The apostles perform miracles and healings.	The first deacons are appointed to serve the church.
Stephen is executed as the first Christian martyr. The first "great persecution" begins in Jerusalem.	Christians begin to spread across Judea, Samaria, the eastern Mediterranean, and Cyprus.	Saul persecutes the church, but is converted when the risen Jesus appears to him.
Barnabas introduces Saul to the apostles, and Saul is accepted by the Jerusalem church.	Peter receives a vision about clean and unclean things; he preaches the gospel to a Roman centurion.	James the son of Zebedee is the first apostle to be executed. Peter is arrested, but freed by an angel.
A famine occurs, and Barnabas and Saul bring aid to the Judean believers.		

Appendix B: eastern Mediterranean c. AD 50 (Study 1)

