

Acts

of the apostles

PART SIX

WOMEN'S *Bible* STUDY

CALVARY CHAPEL SOUTHEAST

Table of Contents

Welcome from Angela	1
Using This Packet	2
What To Expect	3
Week 1 Day 1: Review	13
Week 1 Day 2: Review	17
Week 1 Day 3: Review	19
Week 1 Day 4: Review	21
Week 2 Day 1: Acts 14:1-20a Get To Know The Passage	29
Week 2 Day 2: Acts 14:1-20a	31
Week 2 Day 3: Acts 14:1-20a	33
Week 2 Day 4: Acts 14:1-20a	37
Week 3 Day 1: Acts 14:20b-15:12 Get To Know The Passage	43
Week 3 Day 2: Acts 14:20b-15:12	45
Week 3 Day 3: Acts 14:20b-15:12	47
Week 3 Day 4: Acts 14:20b-15:12	49
Week 4 Day 1: Acts 15:13-35 Get To Know The Passage	56
Week 4 Day 2: Acts 15:13-35	58
Week 4 Day 3: Acts 15:13-35	60
Week 4 Day 4: Acts 15:13-35	62
Resources	65

Welcome

Welcome back ladies!

I have missed being with you all weekly, and am so excited to finally be back together for Bible Study again. I am sure I am not the only one looking forward to getting back to a regular routine!!

Last year in Acts, we covered half of the book- that is a lot of ground. This year we will finish Acts, and my hope is by the end we all have a pulse on this book.

When we came together last year we saw the coming of the Holy Spirit on the church, and how the early church began to do what Jesus said they would do when they were infilled with His Spirit--they became His witnesses. We saw them go out to Judea, Samaria, and then at the end of our study last year we began to see the gospel be taken “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

This year, as we finish studying what happened next with Paul’s second and third missionary journeys, my hope is that we will not just learn and store what we learn in our minds, but that we would treasure it in our hearts. I pray that just as the Holy Spirit led and moved on the early church because of their yielding to Him, that He would lead us and move throughout our lives as we are yielded to Him.

May the Holy Spirit who is the main character and theme of the book of Acts, be the main character and theme in our lives. Just as the apostles needed Him to do what He called them to do, we need Him just as much to do what He calls us to do.

I pray that we can all experience Him continually in this way.
In Christ,

Angela Brown

Using This Packet

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR BIBLE STUDY

As you go through this Bible Study packet, it is the heart of CCSE Women's Ministry that the focus and purpose of study is to really understand and engage with the Word of God. We believe that 2 Timothy 3:16 is true, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness." This packet it is a tool to help you dig deeper and internalize scripture, so we can look more and more like Jesus every day.

Acts is a narrative book, it is the retelling of history through stories. So the way we study it is going to look a bit different. Our goal is to find the spiritual truths in each story and discover how they apply to our lives in a personal way.

Here are some steps to get the most out of this Bible Study:

1. Pray that the Holy Spirit would reveal His truth to you through the Word.
2. Read through the full week's passage, more than once. The more familiar you are with your passages, the more you will glean from the week's study.
3. Engage with the scripture, take notes in this packet or even in your physical bible. Underline or circle the things that capture your attention or cause you to ask more questions.
4. Write down any questions you have about the verses. You can bring these questions to discuss with your Bible study group.
5. Answer the questions in the packet to share with your group.

What to Expect

SCHEDULE

THURSDAY MORNING 9:45AM—12:00PM

Fellowship
Worship
Teaching
Small Group Discussion

THURSDAY EVENING 6:30—8:30PM

Fellowship
Teaching
Small Group Discussion

September 21
September 28
October 5
October 12

REVIEW
ACTS 14:1-20A
ACTS 14:20B-15:12
ACTS 15:13-35

Discussion Guidelines

Here are some things to keep in mind as we gather in groups:

- Your participation is an encouragement to others
- Be in prayer for others and your studies
- Try to share-
 - Respond to the prompting of the Holy Spirit
- Be others minded-
 - Don't monopolize the conversations, share time
- Confidential-
 - What is shared in the group stays with those in the group
- Keep your focus-
 - Build conversations around the study and teachings
- Please be on time-
 - Start and finish promptly, think of others serving
- Enjoy sweet fellowship





Teaching Notes | Week 1



The beginning of Acts recounts Jesus' 40 days after His resurrection, and before Jesus ascends to heaven He told His apostles that the Holy Spirit would give them power and they would be His witnesses to the ends of the earth. While the believers waited for the promise from God -- the Holy Spirit -- the Spirit descended on them with tongues of fire and languages, spoken through His Spirit to the nations present for Pentecost. The disciples had lost Judas through his betrayal of Jesus, so in faith they cast lots to gain Mathias.

Those of the early church began with one mind and one heart, in adoration and submission to the Lord, undisturbed by differences or prestige. The lame beggar was healed in Acts 3 and persecution against believers replicated the opposition to Jesus. The believers became more bold and prayed for even more boldness. God continued to heal the sick and lame through faith in Jesus. Peter and John are released from prison by God's hand through an earthquake. Then Ananias and Sapphira lie about their generosity, and God strikes them with death. In Acts 5, God frees the believers from prison through Gamaliel's insight and they immediately profess Jesus' name again.

Complaints about being neglected arose among the Hellenistic widows, so the apostles wisely elected seven men abounding in the Spirit and wisdom to care for the widows. This allowed the apostles to continue preaching Jesus and the gospel continued to spread.

Steven is falsely accused of blasphemy, rejection of laws, and destroying the temple. Steven's defense is a recount of Jewish history and God's goal from day one. Like Joseph and Moses, Jesus was rejected, led to the wilderness for a purpose, and He was the ultimate Savior, a replica for Joseph and Moses. Steven clarifies that God has always been with His people and is not restricted to the confines of the temple. Stephen then saw Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father, welcoming him at the end of his speech. Steven is then stoned to death as He radiated oneness with God, and prayed that God not hold this against those stoning him, including the witness Saul.

Believers of the Way begin to scatter in Acts 8, as Jesus had commanded, but persecution forces this dispersion. They scattered among the Jews and the Samaritans. Simon wanted to buy the power of God and was rebuked for his wicked heart. Phillip was then called to a desert road to meet an Ethiopian Eunuch, who became a believer in Jesus after his long unproductive journey to seek God. This began the good news spreading to Africa. Phillip was transported in time and space to Azotus where he immediately preached Jesus again.

In Acts 9, God miraculously met Saul on the road to Damascus, halting Saul's evil plight to make believers renounce their faith in Jesus. God blinded Saul for three days, which evidently became a soul searching time, while repentance grew in Saul. Ananias, an ordinary man, was called by God to bravely teach Saul and help him regain his sight both physically and spiritually. Paul immediately began professing Jesus as Lord. The gospel spread and many more came to the Lord through the power of God and the comfort of the Spirit.

God beckoned Peter to a home in Joppa, the home of an 'unclean' Tanner. God raised Dorcas to life in the home, where later Peter received a vision from God. This vision exemplifies the barrier broken between men and women, of culture and tribe, of the unclean and clean. Jesus died and rose to bring eternal life to the Jew, to the Samaritan, and now clearly to Gentiles as well. The mission to the Gentiles began in the home of Cornelius after an angel appeared to Cornelius and the vision to Peter.

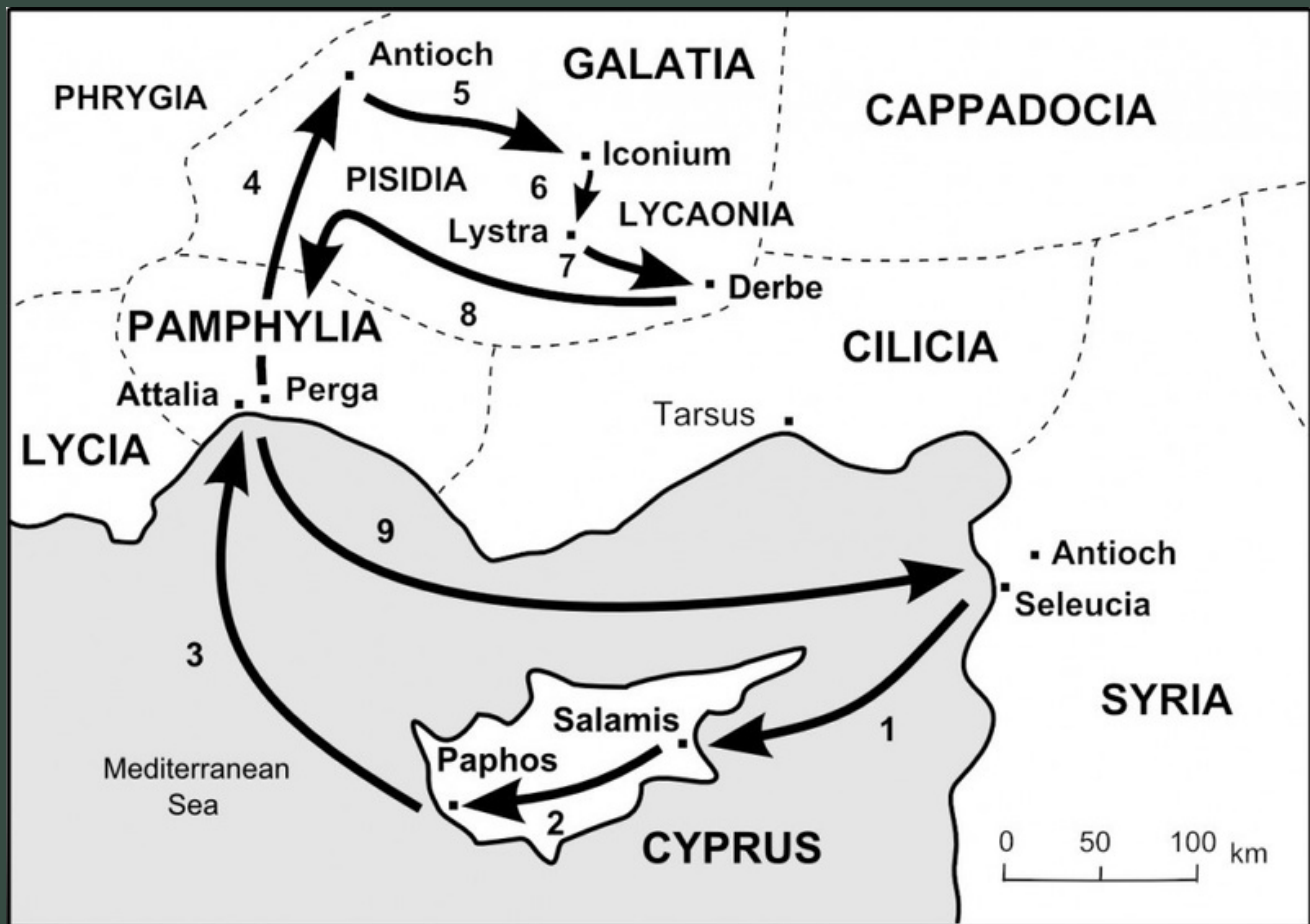
In Acts 11, the circumcised Jews scolded Peter for eating with the Gentiles, "the dogs" according to Jewish society. Peter vocally recounted how God met him on the roof of Joppa and how Jesus' heart for the Gentiles was revealed. Peter continued to explain how the Lord perfectly orchestrated Cornelius and Peter's meeting, and how the Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius' family, as had happened with the Jews and Samaritans. Peter stated to the skeptical Jews, "Who was I that I could stand in God's way?" Some believers proclaimed Jesus to the Greeks in Antioch. Barnabas traveled to confirm the grace of Jesus spreading in Antioch and this same trusted encourager sought out Saul to train him up in the Lord.

King Herod had James put to death for his faith in Jesus. The believers of the new way prayed earnestly as Peter was imprisoned. When an angel released Peter, he visited the praying believers at the home of Mary. Later in Acts 12, Herod received praise as a god, and God sent an angel to strike him down to then be eaten by worms.

Barnabas and Saul were sent as missionaries from the church of Antioch. The Holy Spirit led them from city to city, and John joined their missionary journey. Elymas, a sorcerer, opposed their teaching and Paul spoke against his heart as God struck him with blindness, a representation of the blindness of his heart. The proconsuls' heart saw and believed. In Pisidian Antioch, Paul presented the gospel message with the history of scriptures, pointing to Jesus' offer of salvation to the Gentiles. The Jewish leaders expelled Paul and Barnabas from the area, yet the disciples continued on, shaking the dust off their feet, filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit!

Joyce Janssen

Paul's First Missionary Journey



Historical Background: Jewish Diaspora

How did Paul know where to go?

The presence of a large Jewish diaspora in the Roman Empire was one of the greatest contributing factors to the spread of the gospel. "Diaspora" is a Greek word that translates to "sow or scatter." The dictionary defines it as the movement, migration, or scattering of a people away from an established or ancestral homeland. Jews who settled in the Greco/Roman cities of the empire came to outnumber those living in Judea, and could be found in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Asia Minor, Greece and Italy. They built places of worship known as synagogues, which is a Greek term meaning "a place of assembly." These synagogues were focal places for Jewish identity, and served many different functions such as prayer, studying the Torah, eating common meals and celebrating festivals. Diaspora Jews did not abandon the land of Israel but rather donated money to the temple and went on pilgrimage. Many of them were native Greek speakers and therefore the Old Testament was translated into Greek, known as the Septuagint. This became their Bible and was used both by the Jews and new converts to Christianity. Many of the Gentiles were attracted to Judaism, and became known as "God-Fearers," worshipping in the synagogues. The presence of these Jewish communities and synagogues throughout the entire Roman world, with both Jews and Gentiles in attendance and a common language, became fertile ground for the preaching of the gospel by Paul and Barnabas' and subsequent missionaries, as is evidenced in Acts 14.

Hellenism

Hellenism is the imposing of Greek culture: religion, literature, art, and politics on lands and peoples that were originally conquered by Alexander the Great in the Near East. The main focus was on the cities where the conquered local elites had to adopt Greek culture in order to participate in government.

Hellenism trickled down to the population of the countryside in varying degrees. It was so widespread that the Greek language became the "lingua franca" (a medium of communication between peoples of different languages) of the Eastern Roman empire. Thus the New Testament was written in Greek.

Hellenism was essentially the high culture of the world. The Jews struggled with this, both those in the diaspora and those in Israel. The Jews in Israel who were closely aligned with Hellenism were the Sadducees, because they owed their place to their Hellenistic lords. They were also enamored with the high culture of Hellenism. The Pharisees on the other hand sought to maintain what they saw as stricter obedience to the Torah, especially their oral version of it.

An example of this in American Christianity today would be the embracing of evolution, feminism, and homosexuality. It is in essence liberalism, which would be synonymous with embracing Hellenism.



Day 01

01 In Acts 1:8, Jesus told the disciples “. . . you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and Samaria, and as far as the remotest part of the earth. Have we seen that prophesy come to fruition?

02 In chapter 2, we saw the Holy Spirit come in power upon the disciples in the upper room. The crowd assumed they were drunk. Peter assured the crowd that the disciples were not drunk but God was working in a surprising and new way. Are you open to God working in ways that you are unfamiliar or uncomfortable with? Explain.

03 In chapter 3, Peter healed a paralyzed man on his way to the temple. Peter told the people that it wasn't his goodness that brought healing to the man. Tell about a time that you reminded yourself and others that it was the Lord who worked in/through you.

Day 01

04 The religious leaders were very disturbed by the healing of the lame man and questioned Peter in chapter 4. Why do some reject Jesus in the face of obvious evidence of His power?

05 On the other hand, Acts 4:4 tells us that many who heard the message believed. What can we assume about the power of the Word of God, even in the face of persecution? What makes the difference between the two responses?

06 Please work on the memory verse for this week on the next page.

Each week during this year's Bible study, we want to memorize a verse from Psalm 103, adding a verse each week and culminating with the whole Psalm by the end of the year.

1 Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And all that is within me, bless His holy name.



Day 02

01 Look up Acts 4:24-31. The believers gathered once again to pray in celebration of Peter and John being rescued by God from prison, we then see the believers filled once again with the Holy Spirit. What was the main content of their prayer?

02 How is your prayer life similar or different? What are some characteristics in the prayer of Acts 4 that you could include in your own prayer life?

03 Acts 4:32 says, “And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.”
How does your relationship with Jesus change how you view money and possessions?

Day 02

04 Acts 5:1-11 told us what happened to Ananias and Sapphira. Why do you think Peter accused them of lying to God? Do you believe their punishment was just? Why or why not?

05 How does God feel about lying? How seriously do you take that in your own life?

Day 03

01 Acts 5 continued the story of the apostles' rebellion to the religious leaders' mandate to stop preaching the name of Jesus. Peter responded, "We must obey God rather than men." The apostles chose to obey God even if it meant being put in prison. Are you willing to count and pay the price of following God no matter what? Explain.

02 Acts chapter 6 introduced to us the conflict within the Christian community. Read Acts 6:1-7. How did the complaints of the Hellenistic Jews affect the health and welfare of the church as a whole?

03 Doug Snow said, "Whenever the grace of God is moving among His people, be sure trouble is on its way." What does that mean in your life?

Day 03

04 Chapter 7 of Acts recountd Stephen's sermon and resulting death as a martyr. In vs. 51 he said, "You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did." What does stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears mean?

05 In what areas of your life are you stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears?

06 In chapter 8 God used the stoning of Stephen to drive the believers out of Jerusalem. Can you explain why persecution tends to spread Christianity and not quash it?

Day 04

01 In chapter 9, we saw that Paul was headed toward Damascus to persecute the Christians there, but met Jesus on the way. He was confronted in a dramatic way of his assumptions about Jesus and those who followed Him. What do you do when you realize you have been wrong about important things?

02 Acts 10 recounted the way the gospel was first introduced to the Gentiles. This was in direct contrast to the culture and customs of the Jews. Why were the circumcised believers astonished at what happened? When have you been surprised by the unexpected working of the Holy Spirit?

03 Acts 11:26 said that those who were disciples of Jesus were first called Christians in Antioch. Define Christian. Does that definition reflect Christianity in American culture? Explain.

Day 04

04 In Chapter 12 of Acts, we saw that Peter was once again arrested and rescued in a miraculous way when the church prayed for him. David Guzik commented that “Their prayer was earnest (vs.5,) but their faith was not overwhelming. Little faith can accomplish great things if it is placed in the great God.” Look up Matthew 17:19-20. Have you experienced little faith meeting a great God? Please elaborate.

05 Paul and Barnabas set out on their first missionary journey in Chapter 13. They preached to the Jew first, then to the Gentiles, only to be largely rejected by the religious communities they visited. Why is it so difficult for religious people to accept the freedom that Christ offers?

Acts 1:6-8 says, “ So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel? He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know the times or epoch which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem , and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

A good work of fiction will have character development throughout the story, often because of some kind of conflict. There is the antagonist and the protagonist, the bad guy and the good guy, all working against one another. The conflict culminates in the climax of a story, bringing about a perfect resolution where all the loose ends are neatly tied up, usually bringing a “happily ever after.” The book of Acts is no story of fiction. It is an historical account. We see the good guys and bad guys playing off each other, resulting in conflict. We also see the character development of the apostles. In the first few verses of chapter 1, the disciples still don’t understand the kingdom that Jesus was bringing to the world. They are still looking for a physical kingdom to come to Israel and rescue them from the oppressive Roman government. But Jesus admonishes them, reminding them that restoring the kingdom of Israel is God’s work and will be done when God says it is time. Jesus goes on to say that there is work for them to do when the Holy Spirit of God comes to them.

Throughout Acts we witnessed the power of the Holy Spirit in changing the hearts of men and women, so that they would bring to the world the message of His eternal kingdom. Through the work of the Spirit, the disciples were refined through conflict to stand firm in persecution, to speak boldly the name of Jesus, and to be unapologetic in the truth of the gospel. They had finally gained understanding of what all Scripture foretold: that the kingdom of heaven is available to all people through Jesus and His perfect sacrifice.

This lesson is not for the disciples only. We as followers of Jesus Christ must be concerned with our own character development. We must not be content to remain the same. Do we allow conflict and adversity to mold and shape us into who God intends us to be, or do we want to hide and escape the difficulties that God allows in our lives?

Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”

Philippians 1:6 says, “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”

The development of our character is the concern of God in our lives and is Spirit-led. Our job is to be willing to follow the example of the disciples and allow the Holy Spirit to fall on us, change us and then to follow where He leads.

Samantha Smith







Teaching Notes | Week 2

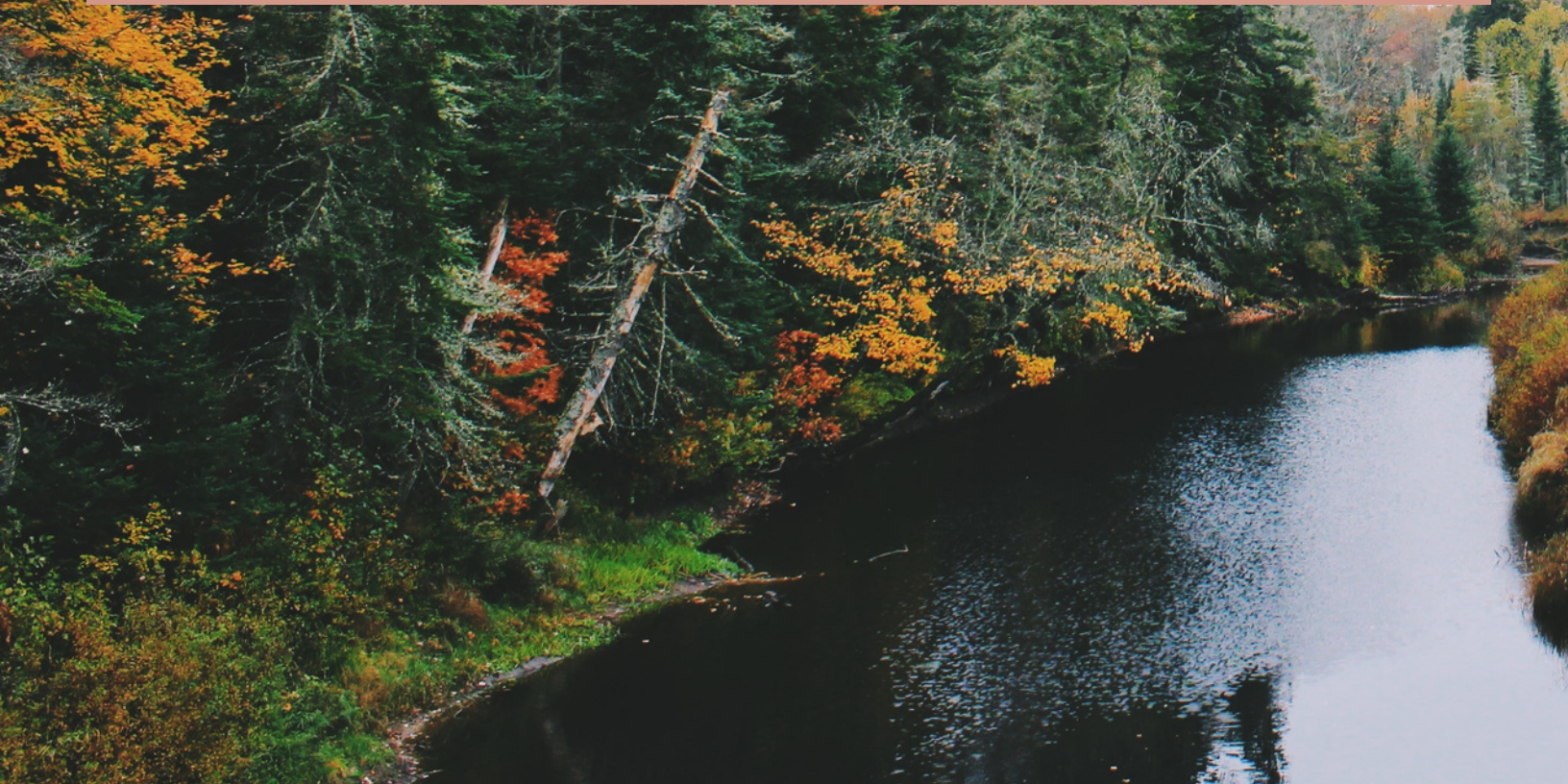


In Iconium they entered the synagogue of the Jews together, and spoke in such a manner that a large number of people believed, both of Jews and of Greeks. 2 But the Jews who disbelieved stirred up the minds of the Gentiles and embittered them against the brethren. 3 Therefore they spent a long time there speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord, who was testifying to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands. 4 But the people of the city were divided; and some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles. 5 And when an attempt was made by both the Gentiles and the Jews with their rulers, to mistreat and to stone them, 6 they became aware of it and fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the surrounding region; 7 and there they continued to preach the gospel.

8 At Lystra a man was sitting who had no strength in his feet, lame from his mother's womb, who had never walked. 9 This man was listening to Paul as he spoke, who, when he had fixed his gaze on him and had seen that he had faith to be made well, 10 said with a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he leaped up and began to walk. 11 When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they raised their voice, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have become like men and have come down to us." 12 And they began calling Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. 13 The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds. 14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out 15 and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. 16 In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; 17 and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." 18 Even saying these things, with difficulty they restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them. 19 But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. 20a But while the disciples stood around him, he got up and entered the city.

"Gentile" vs. "Greek"

The use of "Gentile" and "Greek" are interchangeable. Paul uses the term "Gentile" (which means the nations) as a generic term for all those who are not Jews. This would include actual Greeks and those who do not speak Greek (referred to as "barbarians" by Greek speakers). A barbarian was basically anyone who could not speak Greek. It did not have the connotation of someone who is totally uncouth or uncivilized, although the Greeks thought they were superior to everyone, even the Romans. Sometimes Paul uses "Greek", sometimes he uses "Gentiles," and sometimes he uses "barbarian," but basically they are all Gentiles, those who are not of the house of Israel.





Day 01

Get to know the passage

01 Read the passage several times.

02 Who is in this passage and where are they?

03 Write down the definitions of words on which you would like to have more clarity. Use a dictionary or concordance to define these words.

04 List any repeated words and ideas.

05 If you were going to give this passage a title, what would it be?

Each week during this year's Bible study, we want to memorize a verse from Psalm 103, adding a verse each week and culminating with the whole Psalm by the end of the year.

1 Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And all that is within me, bless His holy name.

2 Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And forget none of His benefits;

Day 02

01

What is the “therefore” there for in verse 3, and what can we learn about persevering in ministry?

02

Tell about a time you persevered in serving God in trying circumstances.

03

What is so divisive about the gospel?

Day 02

04 Why did the apostles finally leave Iconium?

05 What do Acts 13:44-52 and 14:1-8 have in common?

Day 03

01 Though there were signs, wonders and healings happening wherever Paul and Barnabas went, what was their main focus and what part did the miracles play?

02 It seems that Paul was not speaking to the man but he was overheard. What does this tell you about how the gospel can be presented?

03 In your opinion how did Paul know that the man had faith to be made well?

Day 03

04 What was the proof that Paul was right?

05 How has faith and healing been shown in your life?

Greek gods

The Greeks worshiped many gods and portrayed them as having human characteristics. They were jealous, envious, deceitful, and vengeful. They committed adultery and took mortals as their partners, even having children with them.

Zeus was the chief god, the father and protector, the god of thunder and lightning. Hera was his wife and was the “goddess of marriage, women and family, and the protector of women during childbirth.” Each God had a particular characteristic or function for which they were known. For example, Hermes was the messenger of the gods. Athena was the goddess of wisdom and handicraft. Apollo was the god of music and prophecy. Ares was the god of war.

The Greeks honored their gods by building many temples throughout the Mediterranean. The temple was where the god resided and included a cult statue. Only priests were allowed to enter the inner precincts of the temple. The sacrifices were performed outside on an altar. There were processions to the temple with the sacrificial animal in tow, bedecked with garlands as in Acts 14. Greeks as well as Romans, were very superstitious, and as a result, they had various priests that examined the flights of birds, the livers of animals, and omens in order to determine the will of the god.

The gods were known to disguise themselves as humans or animals in order to visit mortals. In addition, there was an ancient myth concerning the region in which Paul was preaching: Phrygia/Lycaonia in Acts 14. It told the story of Zeus and Hermes disguising themselves as humans and appearing in over 1,000 villages, being rejected by everyone except one old couple. As a sign of divine retribution, the whole area was flooded, destroying everyone. Many scholars think that when a divine miracle was performed by Paul and Barnabas, the people assumed that they were gods in disguise, and that they should perform a sacrifice to them or else. (Guzik) Finally, Paul and Barnabas tore their clothes as a sign of rejection of the intended pagan worship. They admonished the priests of Zeus and the people that only the one true God was worthy of worship.



Day 04

Challenge yourself

01 What was the difference between what Paul preached to the Jews and what he preached to the crowds wanting to make a sacrifice to him and Barnabas (vs. 15-17)?

02 Why did Paul and Barnabas feel such urgency to set the record straight?

03 Paul appealed to the crowd that nature itself shouts of God's glory and provision. This idea is often called "common grace." In what ways have you experienced "common grace"?

04 Why do you think the Jews were compelled to follow Paul and Barnabas from Iconium to speak against them?

05 Paul was preaching the Word of God to Jews and Gentiles alike, why did God allow him to be stoned?

The cost of discipleship can mean suffering for doing good.

Living in a world that is highly divided like ours can feel like walking on a tightrope. A quick tutorial on tightrope walking will tell you that the first thing you must do is to pick a focal point in the distance that you keep your eyes on continually as you mount and then walk the rope. Your eyes should not waver off that point or you will lose your balance. Without Jesus and His Word as our focal point, it is easy to lose our balance on the rope of our Christian walk. Jesus Himself told us that there will be a cost to being His disciple – we might even suffer for doing the right thing, but Paul reminds us in Romans 8:18:

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

It’s not likely that we will be physically harmed for holding up the truth of God like the Apostles, Paul and his companions, but can you think of a time when you felt that you could have spoken truth and grace, but kept silent because of what it could have cost you in that situation?

With truth and integrity in short supply in our public discourse, pray that the Spirit will help you keep your balance when you are “on the tightrope of life.” Pray and ask the Lord for boldness and discernment, keeping your eyes steadfastly focused on Him, and be ready to speak His truth and grace— regardless of the cost to yourself.

Robyn Homeleid





Teaching Notes | Week 3



20b The next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe 21 After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, 22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.” 23 When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

24 They passed through Pisidia and came into Pamphylia. 25 When they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. 26 From there they sailed to Antioch, from which they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had accomplished. 27 When they had arrived and gathered the church together, they began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. 28 And they spent a long time with the disciples.

1 Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” 2 And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue. 3 Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren. 4 When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. 5 But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.”

6 The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. 7 After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. 8 And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; 9 and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. 10 Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? 11 But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.”

12 All the people kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

Day 01

Get to know the passage

01 Read the passage several times.

02 Who is in this passage and where are they?

03 Write down the definitions of words on which you would like to have more clarity. Use a dictionary or concordance to define these words.

04 List any repeated words and ideas.

05 If you were going to give this passage a title, what would it be?

Each week during this year's Bible study, we want to memorize a verse from Psalm 103, adding a verse each week and culminating with the whole Psalm by the end of the year.

1 Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And all that is within me, bless His holy name.

2 Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And forget none of His benefits;

3 Who pardons all your iniquities,
Who heals all your diseases;



Day 02

01 Why does persecution seem to not hinder the spread of the gospel?

02 What does “strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith” mean in verse 22a?

03 What does “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.” in verse 22b mean?

Day 02

04 How do you see verse 22 play out in your own walk with the Lord?

05 Explain how suffering is used to further the kingdom of God in your life?

Food for thought: “It can and should be asked of each follower of Jesus, “What will it take for you to back down from doing God’s will? What kind of temptation or obstacle or opposition will do it?” Nothing stopped Jesus from doing God’s will on our behalf; as we look to Him, we won’t be stopped either.”

- David Guzik

Day 03

01 What does “commended the churches to the Lord” in verses 23 and 26 mean?

02 What was the value of Paul and Barnabas returning to the areas they had already been to spend so much time with the new disciples of Jesus?

03 In what way do you need to be strengthened in your soul?

Day 03

04 What hardships have you faced that ended up encouraging you in the Lord? How long did it take? Is your faith weaker and more fragile or stronger and more enduring? Explain

05 Ultimately, who was responsible for the health of these new churches?

-
- 01 Explain the difference between the message of Paul and Barnabas and the message of the Judaizers (vs. 1).
- 02 How does the message of the Judaizers strengthen or weaken the faith of those who might listen to their message?
- 03 Why is it important to know that we are not obligated to the law as the Judiazers claimed?
-

04 Why was Peter's speech important to the debate (vs. 7-11)?

05 Why does following the law seem so attractive, and how does it show itself in our culture?

What a mysterious God. In normal circumstances we tend to give up when things seem impossible or life-threatening. The natural man often does not like to be challenged. But when we walk by the Spirit, something supernatural happens. We step outside of the ordinary circumstances of life and we are able to call difficult things good and not bad. Beauty comes from ashes, the impossible becomes possible and life comes from death. God is full of paradoxes and enigmas.

- Samantha Smith

Which Antioch?

After the death of Alexander the Great, Seleucus, who was one of his generals, formed a large empire that stretched from the Mediterranean to India. He founded his capital city on the Orontes River in Syria. He named it Antioch in honor of his father Antiochus. It became one of the largest and most prestigious cities of the ancient world and had a large Jewish population as well as being the center of Gentile Christianity.

Successive Seleucid rulers continued to name other cities in this vast empire, Antioch. Resulting in over seventeen different cities being named Antioch. Pisidian Antioch was one of these, it was a strategically fortified city in Asia Minor on important trade routes in the territory of ancient Pisidia.

Paul and Barnabas visited more than one city named Antioch in the book of Acts, Syrian Antioch and Pisidian Antioch. On Paul's first missionary journey, he left from Antioch in Syria, his home base, and traveled to Antioch in the region of Pisidia, in Asia Minor and then returned to the center of Gentile Christianity, the church at Syrian Antioch.



"21 After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, 22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

Acts 14:21-22

The Gospel has captured us. By grace through faith, we have entered the kingdom of God and can see all that is here for us now. We are experiencing forgiveness, deliverance and healing as we are bathed in God's love and protection. His Holy Spirit gives us guidance and seals us as God's own for eternity.

His Word and promises are "Amen in Jesus". We're to continue and persevere in our faith and we must go through many tribulations {crushing, troubles, pressures and distress} as we enter the kingdom of God!

With the very presence of Jesus and the fullness of life in Him, we can glance at our current tribulations with gratitude and praise for the truth of His love for us. His glorious worth should leave us awestruck as we seek to remain close to Him and reflect His glory!

Lord, please help us to not falter at tribulations, but to keep our eyes steadfastly on You. Let us continue to gaze at Your glory and all that you make available in Your kingdom. Don't let us stumble or be distracted by troubles.

Let us be faithful to praise You in all things and to worship you in the fullness of your glory! Help us to carry the Gospel and the kingdom of God in us to everyone we meet. Let our lives testify to the victory of abiding in You.

Don't let our trials speak louder than the victory and joy of loving Jesus for eternity. Amen.

Mary Ann Schultz





Teaching Notes | Week 4





13 After they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, “Brethren, listen to me. 14 Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. 15 With this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written,

16 ‘After these things I will return,
And I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen,
And I will rebuild its ruins,
And I will restore it,

17 So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord,
And all the Gentiles who are called by My name,’

18 Says the Lord, who makes these things known from long ago.

19 Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, 20 but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood. 21 For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath.”

22 Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas—Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren, 23 and they sent this letter by them,

“The apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings.

24 Since we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with their words, unsettling your souls,

25 it seemed good to us, having become of one mind, to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

27 Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will also report the same things by word of mouth.

28 "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials:

29 that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell."

30 So when they were sent away, they went down to Antioch; and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. 31 When they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement. 32 Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message. 33 After they had spent time there, they were sent away from the brethren in peace to those who had sent them out. 34 [But it seemed good to Silas to remain there.] 35 But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching with many others also, the word of the Lord.

Day 01

Get to know the passage

01 Read the passage several times.

02 Who is in this passage and where are they?

03 Write down the definitions of words on which you would like to have more clarity. Use a dictionary or concordance to define these words.

04 List any repeated words and ideas.

05 If you were going to give this passage a title, what would it be?

Each week during this year's Bible study, we want to memorize a verse from Psalm 103, adding a verse each week and culminating with the whole Psalm by the end of the year.

- 1 Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And all that is within me, bless His holy name.
- 2 Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And forget none of His benefits;
- 3 Who pardons all your iniquities,
Who heals all your diseases;
- 4 Who redeems your life from the pit,
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion;

Day 02

01 Sum up the argument of the Judaizers.

02 How did God confirm to the apostles that the good news of the gospel was for the Gentiles as well?

03 Compare Amos 9:11-12 to Acts 15:16-17. What can we know about God's plan of salvation from the beginning?

Day 02

04 Look up Galatians 1:6-12, What does Paul have to say about the arguments of the Judaizers?

05 What is your understanding of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone? Do you agree with that doctrine, why or why not?

Day 03

01 What was the trouble that James referred to in verse 19?

02 Warren Wiersbe said, “. . . that all doctrine must lead to duty”. What does that mean to you?

03 What was the benefit of seeking guidance from the apostles in Jerusalem?

Day 03

04 What is fornication?

05 In your opinion, were the “essentials” that James and the council put forth reasonable? Why or why not? Why did they put forth these “essentials?”

If the decision was that one did not have to be Jewish to be a Christian, it must also be said clearly that one did not need to forsake the Law of Moses to be a Christian.

- David Guzik

Day 04

Challenge Yourself

-
- 01 Do the essentials or guidelines in vs.28-29 apply to us today? Why or why not?
-
- 02 If there was a council held for the American church at this time, what would you consider vital? Explain.
-
- 03 Why was the congregation encouraged when they read the letter from the Council in verses 30-31?
-

Day 04

Challenge Yourself

04 The book of Galatians was written by Paul defending salvation by grace alone. James writes about faith and works. In your understanding how do the two things work together or are they opposed?

05 Challenge: What is the difference between "salvation" and "justification" and how do you see those two ideas play out in your life? Are they ever confused in practicality?

ESSENTIALS

Acts 15 describes certain Jewish converts insisting that converted Gentiles be circumcised in order share in the faith. Paul, Barnabas and Peter disputed any such necessity. Having heard both positions, James, a convert and half-brother of Jesus, answers all assembled. He enumerates prophecies that nullify circumcision as a necessity for non-Jews. He proposes only FOUR prohibitions to be imposed on Gentile converts, as described in Acts 15:28-29.

“For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell.” NASB95

How do the Ten Commandments inscribed on stone by God (Exodus 20) become Two Commandments summarized by Jesus? (Matthew 22, Mark 12)

God’s math: ESSENTIALS. How do hundreds of statutes for Hebrews become four for Gentile believers? God’s math: ESSENTIALS.

Webster’s 1828 Dictionary defines “essential” as that which is necessary for the existence of a thing. Secondarily, that which is refined by repeated distillation (as in essential oils.)

What were the four things Gentiles were to abstain from?

Things sacrificed to idols. God’s “No other gods” prohibitions are detailed in His first four Commandments. His commands against theft, lying, and coveting (8-10th Commandments) reflect His own exclusive character and represent forms of the idolatry which He hates.

Blood. (Gentiles were accustomed to blood offerings, even consuming animal or human blood as part of ritual warfare). God placed a high value on blood. Blood is divinely purposed and ordained, connecting offspring to their parents, and individuals to one another as in the 5th-6th Commandments.

“Only be sure not to eat the blood, for the blood is life, and you shall not eat the life with the flesh.” (Deuteronomy 12:23)

Things strangled. “You shall not eat (blood); you shall pour it out on the ground like water....and the blood of your sacrifices shall be poured out on the altar of the LORD your God...” (Deuteronomy 12:24, 27)

“...for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.” (Leviticus 17:11b)

“..for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” (Matthew 26:28)

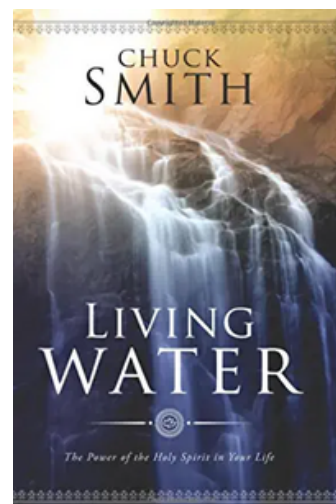
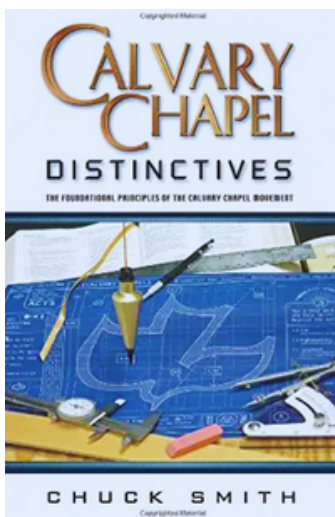
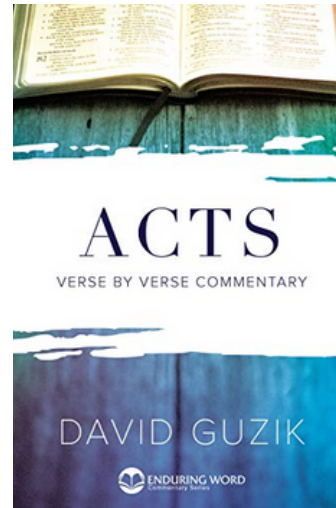
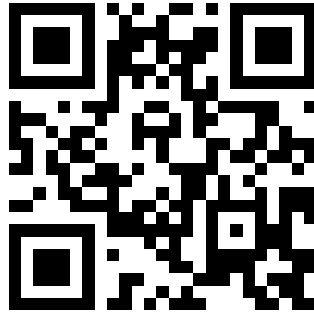
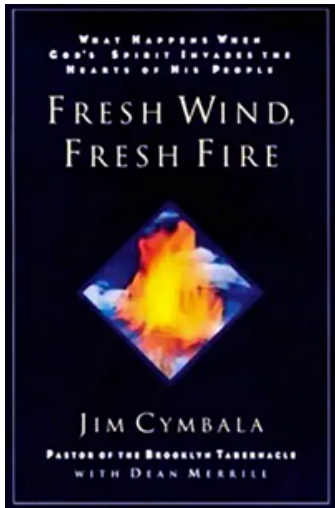
“And (Jesus) said to them, “This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.” (Mark 14:24)

Adultery, sexual sin and lewdness. Jesus expanded this to include mind and soul, (Matthew 5:28). God placed a high value on the sexual union of His man and His woman. Adultery was evidence of partiality, a half-heartedness prohibited by His 7th Commandment. Did God lower His standards for Gentiles? Oh, no! He made them visible, material, and understandable. As a Gentile believer, I’m beholden to God for His blood sacrifice and “no greater burden than these essentials.” I love God’s math!

Jeanine Lerten

Helpful Resources

Just point your smart phone camera at the QR code to link to the websites



The next day he went away with Barnanbas to Derbe. After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”

Acts 14:21-22