



Acts

of the apostles

PART SEVEN

WOMEN'S *Bible* STUDY

CALVARY CHAPEL SOUTHEAST



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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

October 26

November 2

November 9

November 16

November 23

ACTS 15:36-16:5

ACTS 16:6-21

ACTS 16:22-40

ACTS 17:1-34

BREAK

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



36 After some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are." 37 Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also. 38 But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. 39 And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. 40 But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord. 41 And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

16 Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek, 2 and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium. 3 Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. 4 Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe. 5 So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.

Paul's Second Missionary Journey



Day 01

Get to know the passage

01 Read the passage several times.

02 Who is in this passage and where are they?

03 Look for any words in the passage that you would like to clarify or understand on a deeper level. Use a dictionary or concordance and write the words and their definitions below.

04 List any repeated words and ideas.

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

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- 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;
- 5 Who satisfies your years with good things,
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle.

Day 02

01 In Acts 13:13 Mark abruptly left Barnabas and Paul. Here in vs. 38-40, Barnabas wants to take Mark along again, however Paul is unwilling. Explain why.

02 Does conflict happen in the church? What are two or three ways conflict is handled in the Bible?

03 How do you handle conflict and what do you do to try and resolve it?

Day 02

04 Barnabas left with John Mark. Paul continued on with Silas. In Luke 10 we see Jesus send the disciples out by twos. Why would the great Apostle Paul need a companion to travel with?

05 How important to Paul's ministry are his companions?

John Mark, the Evangelist

John Mark is the author of the Gospel of Mark, considered to be the first written gospel, and was a missionary of the early church. Scholars believe that Mark had a close relationship with Peter, who was a source for the material of Mark's Gospel. Peter refers to Mark as his son in (1 Peter 5:13), "She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark." Mark is first mentioned in (Acts 12:12), which reads, "And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and praying." It is thought that John Mark's mother, Mary, was wealthy because she had a servant and a house. Her house was well known among the Christians, as it was the first place that Peter came to after his release from prison.

John Mark's name is unusual and thought to be a combination of two first names. John was the most common Jewish male name and Mark was the most common Roman name. Scholars have concluded that many Jewish families gave their children a Jewish name and a Roman name, for example, Saul/Paul or Silas/Silvanus. Mark was a companion of Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, but abandoned them and returned to Antioch. When Paul and Barnabas had decided to go on their second missionary journey, they had a "sharp disagreement." Paul refused to take Mark along and instead chose Silas. Barnabas, on the other hand, chose Mark and traveled to Cyprus. John Mark was a cousin of Barnabas as stated in (Colossians 4:10).

Later, there was a reconciliation with both men. This is verified by Paul's statement to Timothy in (2 Timothy 4:11), "Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service." In addition, Paul mentions Barnabas in (1 Corinthians 9:6) in a positive light revealing a reconciliation between the two.

Brandon Beaty



Day 03

01 Define strengthening and list some of its synonyms and antonyms (opposites).

02 Why is strengthening others in the Lord and the Word crucial? What happens when you aren't strengthened in the Lord and the Word ?

03 Share a life changing experience you had with someone you encouraged in the gospel.

Day 03

04 In the Meriam-Webster Dictionary, character is defined as “One of the attributes or features that make up and distinguish an individual.” Character speaks volumes about a person. Why is a person’s character important?

05 What are some of your character qualities that are Christ-like? Share with your group the Christ-like character qualities you see in them.

Day 04

01 According to verse 3, what was the purpose of circumcising Timothy?
How did circumcising Timothy help to better minister?

02 Looking at verse 4, Paul's delivery of the instructions from the apostles and elders to the churches influences what vital element of a church? Check out John 17:21, Eph. 4:1-4 and explain why that element is vital.

Day 04

03 Looking back to chapter 15:1-2 and reflecting on our passage this week: How does Paul delivering the apostles and elders decree to the different churches strengthen them?

04 What is one of the spiritual lessons you were encouraged by in this week's passage? How will you apply this lesson to your life?

Devotion | Acts 15:1-16:5

Someone once told me that one of the things they love about the Bible is that it is filled with The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly. (Can't you just hear the soundtrack in the background?) I had to agree with her and we both decided that it makes it more believable to read about people who had similar faults that we do. We read in this week's passage about Paul and Barnabas having a strong disagreement over whether they should include John Mark on their second journey, since he had deserted them on the first journey. They both had valid concerns, but they couldn't seem to resolve the issue and ended up choosing new partners and going their separate ways.

Wait. What? Is this the same Paul who in Philippians 2:2 says to be like-minded and of one accord? How are we to respond when we find ourselves in a disagreement while serving in a ministry? Do we come across as judgmental or even worse, arrogant, telling others how something should be done? Most disputes have nothing to do with doctrinal matters but tend to be personal issues which can turn into pettiness (complaining about insignificant things). These issues, if not resolved can hinder our walk by putting up walls and causing division.

In Ephesians 4:2-3 we are reminded to bear with one another in love and to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

We can be like minded without agreeing on every little detail and still pursue unity. This reconciliation we work toward, so that we can be Christians so steeped in grace that we pursue true unity with others in the church.

Father God, help us to be like-minded in our daily walk with others. Remind us of your amazing grace to us so that we can't help but extend grace to those around us.

Sally Newson







Teaching Notes | Week 2



6 They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; 7 and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them; 8 and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. 9 A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." 10 When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

11 So putting out to sea from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the day following to Neapolis; 12 and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony; and we were staying in this city for some days. 13 And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled

14 A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. 15 And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

16 It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling. 17 Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, "These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation." 18 She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out at that very moment.

19 But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities, 20 and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, "These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, 21 and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans."

Day 01

Get to know the passage

01 Read the passage several times.

02 Who is in this passage and where are they?

03 Look for any words in the passage that you would like to clarify or understand on a deeper level. Use a dictionary or concordance and write the words and their definitions below.

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;
- 5 Who satisfies your years with good things,
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle.
- 6 The Lord performs righteous deeds
And judgments for all who are oppressed.

Day 02

01

God speaks to us in different ways. How do you recognize God's voice when you hear it? When have you wanted to go somewhere or do something, but the Spirit hindered you?

02

Sometimes it is hard to understand and wait on God's timing. Tell of an experience when you waited on the Lord and He showed Himself to be faithful in that situation.

Day 02

03 Luke has now joined the party of Paul and his companions by the change in pronouns used in verses 10-16: “we and us.” When have you seen the Spirit of God move and want to become personally involved?

05 These men sought out a place to pray on the Sabbath and saw some women coming together in prayer. Women coming together in prayer is not a new thing. (vs 13) Why do you think corporate prayer pleases God? What benefits have you received from gathering with other women of faith and praying?

Who was Lydia?

Lydia was from the city of Thyatira in the Roman province of Asia, one of the seven churches of Revelation, a city famous for its dyers of purple. This area of the Roman empire was formerly known as Lydia, thus her name is synonymous with that former region, and revealed the fact that she was Greek and not a Jew. Lydia was a business woman in Philippi, a seller of cloth that was dyed in purple, an independent woman with a house and servants. Because purple cloth was very expensive she would have traveled in the circles of the wealthy.

Purple dye was famous in the ancient world because it was very expensive to produce. It was made from murex sea snails that were harvested from the Mediterranean Sea. The Phoenician coastal city of Tyre was famous throughout the ancient world for producing it. It took thousands of these snails to make an ounce of dye. Purple was the “symbol of imperial authority and status.” Roman senators wore a purple stripe around their togas to denote their rank. It was so important that there were Roman laws against the common people wearing it. Later, purple became the color associated with the emperor so that the term “being born into the purple” was a reference to being an heir of the emperor.

Lydia, besides being a business woman, was a Gentile who feared God, and one that had attached herself to Judaism. She met for prayer and worship at the local river because Philippi did not have a synagogue. Paul and Silas met her there and the Lord opened her heart to the gospel, becoming Paul’s first convert in Europe. She then opened her house to Paul and Silas which became the nucleus of the first church in Europe. Lydia stands in bold relief to the other woman in our story: the demon possessed slave girl. Even though there was great social and economical disparity between the two women, they both had a great need that only the power of Jesus, the Savior could fill.

Brandon Beaty



Day 03

01 Jesus refers to Himself as “living water.” Read John 4:7-14. Draw or write your idea of what a stream of living water looks like in your life.

02 Lydia is introduced to us by her name, her profession, and her character as someone “who worshiped God” (vs 14). Our culture often puts more emphasis on names and what we do for a living. But our character as a worshiper is most important in the eyes of God. Are you known as a worshiper of God in your workplace or in your associations? Explain.

Day 03

03 God opened Lydia's heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. (NKJV)
Look up the word "heed" in the dictionary. What does it mean? How do you heed God's word in your heart?

04 What was the evidence of her new faith and following Jesus? What does Lydia's actions teach us about showing hospitality and supporting ministry?

Day 04

Challenge yourself

01 A different encounter begins as they gather corporately to pray again (vs. 16). A fortune telling demon-possessed slave girl shouted at them, calling them servants. The demon in her recognized the truth about Paul and his companions. Read Luke's account of the demon possessed man in Luke 8:26-33. How do both of these demons refer to God?

02 Why do you think that ordinary people don't or won't recognize "the Most High God" when even the demons will recognize it?

03 Write down Leviticus 19:31 from one or two different versions then read Galatians 5:19-20. How are we Christians to view fortune telling and other things related to sorcery? How have you seen this creep into the Christian culture?

Day 04

Challenge yourself

04 Why do you think Paul waited a few days before confronting the demon in the slave girl? What name did he invoke for healing her?

05 What were the consequences of Paul's actions? Do you see this same type of reaction today when someone loses income from an evil practice? Name some examples of this.

06 What can you do when you see people "enslaved" to evil and pagan practices?

Devotional

YEILDING TO THE SPIRIT THROUGH THE ACT AND ART OF LISTENING

The definition of “listen” according to Webster’s 1828 Dictionary:

- 1.To hearken; to give ear; to attend closely with a view to hear.
- 2.To obey; to yield to advice; to follow admonition.

There are 12 definitions of the word “hear” in the same dictionary, but the first definition is: to perceive by ear; to feel an impression of sound. So, what’s the difference between hearing and listening? Even though both of these words are mainly used as verbs, a listener is a “hearkener” with a more focused meaning but to hear has many broader general definitions regarding how a person takes in information.

James 1:22-25 reminds us to not just be hearers of the word but doers of the word: “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.”

To be a “doer,” you first had to hear, then listen (hearken,) then obey (act.) It made me think of a flow chart: Hearing leads to listening, listening leads to yielding, yielding leads to obeying, obeying leads to acting on what the Spirit prompts me to do or say – or what NOT to. That in turn leads to God’s blessing - either immediate or in the future. And the Spirit is always aligned with God’s will and character!

It’s also worth noting that not all listening is done with our ears, sometimes our hearts and our eyes “listen” too, so be open and sensitive to what the Spirit is imparting to you!

What kind of listener are you? If I’m honest, I’d rather be the one talking instead of listening! It’s pretty hard to talk and listen at the same time.

I find the act of listening to be a very challenging discipline. It takes intention and practice to be a good listener. Listening is a skill – no it’s an art! It requires me to be present in the moment, bringing full attention and focus, shutting off distractions and then discernment to respond to what I have read from His Word or in my conversations with others.

I also need to be careful of what I “listen” to. Is it God’s will, His way, or His say? Learning the act -then the art - of listening to His Spirit and then obeying Him and His way will keep me aligned with Him.

Prayer: Father, please help me to have ears, eyes and a heart that is hungry to listen to Your Spirt so I can yield and obey Your will, Your way, Your say. Your grace is sufficient for me in this. In Jesus’ name. Amen

Robyn Homleid



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Teaching Notes | Week 3



22 The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. 23 When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; 24 and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

25 But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; 26 and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. 27 When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. 28 But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!" 29 And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, 30 and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

31 They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." 32 And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. 33 And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household. 34 And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.

35 Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent their policemen, saying, "Release those men." 36 And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The chief magistrates have sent to release you. Therefore come out now and go in peace." 37 But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out." 38 The policemen reported these words to the chief magistrates. They were afraid when they heard that they were Romans, 39 and they came and appealed to them, and when they had brought them out, they kept begging them to leave the city. 40 They went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia, and when they saw the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.

Day 01

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Who heals all your diseases;
4 Who redeems your life from the pit,
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion;
5 Who satisfies your years with good things,
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle.
6 The Lord performs righteous deeds
And judgments for all who are oppressed.
7 He made known His ways to Moses,
His acts to the sons of Israel.



Day 02

01 Why did the crowd rise up against Paul and Silas? How insulting is their accusation that Paul and those with him had "turned the world upside down?"

02 Was this punishment fair to Paul and Silas and how did they react?

03 How do you react when you are teased, mocked, insulted or persecuted for Christ?

Day 02

04 What did the jailer do to secure Paul and Silas? How did Paul and Silas respond to this treatment?

05 What truths about God would lead Paul and Silas to pray and praise? Who was listening and what would their likely reaction be?

Paul, a Roman Citizen

Acts 16:22-40

Paul was born a Roman citizen and it proved to be a helpful tool in preaching the gospel in the Roman empire. It gave him legal protection and right to travel freely about the empire. In addition, Romans citizenship prevented a person undergoing painful scourging, being whipped with a metal tipped lash, in the process of being examined for a crime. Roman citizenship was obtained in three ways: being born a Roman citizen, paying a high price for it, or serving in the army for 25 years. It is estimated that there were only 4 million citizens out of 45 million inhabitants of the Roman empire at the time of Paul.

So, if Paul and Silas were both Roman citizens and exempt from this horrific punishment, why did they allow themselves to be scourged in (Acts 16)? Why didn't they declare they were Roman citizens against the illegal actions of the Philippian magistrates? The New Testament doesn't give us an answer but the result of their great testimony of suffering and the attendant miracle of the earthquake. The jailer, his family and perhaps many prisoners heard the gospel and were saved. These new converts along with Lydia made up the nucleus of the new church in Philippi which Paul highly praised in his letter to the Philippians. Finally, when the magistrates discovered they were Roman citizens they begged them to leave because they knew their actions were illegal and they were afraid of the consequences. This gave the apostles the legal and moral high ground.

However, this entire episode stands in stark contrast to (Acts 22:25-29), (please read) when Paul was arrested in Jerusalem accused of starting a riot. In this instance, he informed the Romans he was a citizen and avoided being scourged. Again, he appealed to his right as a Roman citizen in (Acts 24), when he was imprisoned in Caesarea for two years. Rather than go to Jerusalem to be tried by the Jews, where he would most likely be put to death. He appealed to the court of Caesar to hear his case. Then he was taken to Rome as a prisoner to await trial. As a result, a great and effectual door of witness was opened up to him. (Acts 28:30) And, finally, as a captive in Rome, he writes to the Philippians declaring that even the household of Caesar has heard the gospel. In conclusion, whether Paul declared his Roman citizenship or not it proved a beneficial tool in the furtherance of the gospel.

Brandon Beaty



Day 03

01 Why do you think "the keeper of the prison" tried to "kill himself" then run and fall "down trembling before Paul and Silas?"

02 What did the jailer ask Paul and Silas and, according to them, what did he have to do?

03 Why did the magistrates change their minds about Paul and Silas?

Day 03

04 Why were the magistrates "afraid" and why did Paul refuse to leave secretly?

05 What was the last thing Paul and Silas did before they left the city?

Day 04

Challenge Yourself

01 When things were at their worst, Paul and Silas were reduced to using the only weapons at their disposal; and as it turns out, prayer and praise are enough to usher in a miracle! Can you think of a time when you were at your lowest and all you could do was look up? And in lifting your praise to God, you found him releasing you not from your suffering but in it? What did you learn?

02 Paul and Silas treated the jailer with incredible grace. Describe a time when someone showed you kindness or mercy when you didn't expect it or didn't deserve it. What was that like?

03 Would you risk being disowned, disliked, disrespected or even possibly killed for the Gospel? How do you think disciples in the early church got to a this place of willingness?

Devotion

In reading this week's passage we get a deep sense of the integrity of Paul and Silas. It can also be noted how even after being severely beaten and thrown in prison they prayed and praised God. It made me think about how often do I go straight to God and pray to Him and praise him in the midst of trials and persecution? Most of us have not had to endure this severe persecution, but how often do we get into a depression or pity party when we do endure even the slightest persecution or trial. Paul and Silas put aside their physical and emotional and mental anguish and went directly to God. As a result the jailer and his family were saved and then even when Paul and Silas were released they were more concerned about encouraging their brothers and sisters in Christ than immediately leaving to get out of harms way. May we look to God even in the midst of persecution and trials so that we will know the presence of God and His power to break the chains of bondage in our lives and in the lives of those around us.

Sheree Sturman



Teaching Notes | Week 4



17 Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2 And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3 explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ." 4 And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women. 5 But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people. 6 When they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also; 7 and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." 8 They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. 9 And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them.

10 The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11 Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. 12 Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men. 13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there as well, agitating and stirring up the crowds. 14 Then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy remained there. 15 Now those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they left.

16 Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols. 17 So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present. 18 And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, "What would this idle babbler wish to say?" Others, "He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,"—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.

19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming? 20 For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean.” 21 (Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.)

22 So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. 23 For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.’ Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. 24 The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; 25 nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; 26 and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, 27 that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His children.’ 29 Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. 30 Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, 31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer, but others said, “We shall hear you again concerning this.” 33 So Paul went out of their midst. 34 But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

Day 01

Get to know the passage

01 Read the passage several times.

02 Who is in this passage and where are they?

03 Look for any words in the passage that you would like to clarify or understand on a deeper level. Use a dictionary or concordance and write the words and their definitions below.

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;
- 5 Who satisfies your years with good things,
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle.
- 6 The Lord performs righteous deeds
And judgments for all who are oppressed.
- 7 He made known His ways to Moses,
His acts to the sons of Israel.
- 8 The Lord is compassionate and gracious,
Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.

Day 02

01 Who are “they” Acts 17:1?

02 In verses 6-7 Luke describes the early church as “men who have upset the world.” How did the Gospel turn the world upside down then? How does the Gospel still do this today?

03 Has there ever been a spiritual battle in your life, your neighborhood, or your 'Church'? Explain.

Day 02

04 When did many of the Bereans believe what "Paul and Silas" were preaching and what might the Jews from Thessalonica have concluded when Paul left Berea?

06 What do you believe is your role in evangelizing your community?

Paul on Mars Hill

Acts 17:1-34

In Acts 17, we find Paul preaching the gospel in Athens to the philosophers and city leaders on the Areopagus. Areopagus is Greek for the hill of Ares, the god of war or in Latin, Mars, so Mar's hill. It was and is an actual hill in the center of Athens and was the place the city council met. Athens was formerly a powerful city state, the acknowledged cultural and intellectual capital of the ancient Greco/Roman world.

In Athens, Paul came into contact with two famous sects of philosophers, the Stoics and the Epicureans. Stoics were pantheists, which the dictionary defines as "showing or holding a belief in many or all gods, or the belief that God exists in, and is the same as, all things, animals, and people within the universe." Stoicism believed all things were predetermined by fate and that the best recourse was to handle all life's situations with a calm dignity never losing control and showing emotion in the face of either joys or great sorrows a calm equanimity. On the other hand, Epicureanism comes from the name of their founder Epicurus. They were "some of history's first materialists. They believed that the world was made up only of atoms (and void), and that everything is simply a particular composition of these atoms. There were no gods, spirits, or souls (or, at most, they're irrelevant to the world as we encounter it)." The Epicureans advocated a life of pleasure; an eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die, philosophy. Both were very popular with Romans.

In contrast, Paul preached that God was the creator of the world and judge of all mankind. The heart of his message was the bodily resurrection of the savior, Jesus. His teaching was met with scorn because Greek philosophy from the time of Plato taught that spirit was good and matter was evil. Therefore, they thought the resurrection of a physical body was absurd, and as a result only a few were converted at his preaching. This scene in Acts 17, began a long interaction between Christian doctrine and Greek philosophy which, for the most part, has been very problematic, so much so that the famous North African church father Tertullian said, "What does Jerusalem have to do with Athens."



Day 03

01 Why was Paul's spirit provoked with Athens and its many idols?

02 In a glittering, sophisticated and idolatrous place or crowd, are you impressed or provoked? If provoked, do you share the Gospel with the sophisticates and warn them about their idolatry? Why or why not?

03 The people of Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens each responded differently to Paul's teaching. Take a look at the responses and write down the results.

Day 03

04 Paul is provoked to speak to the high council in Athens in regard to idol worshiping prevalent in their city. What can we learn from the way he connects with them?

05 Paul explains God's larger purpose to the council in verses 27-29. How does this provide hope for anyone seeking God?

Day 04

Challenge Yourself

01

Paul's spirit was stirred with a holy indignation when he saw a city given over to idols. But he was moved with compassion for the people; compelled to reason with all who would listen. Have you ever faced down evil as Paul did? Did you act on it?

02

What is the consequence of idolatry in the heart? Do you have idols in your heart? (You won't be asked to share them.) If so, what will you do about them?

- 03 Courage for Paul meant walking into situations where he knew it was just a matter of time before he experienced some kind of physical pain. While that may not be our experience in our country, what does it look like to be a courageous Christian in 2023?

Devotion

Jealousy's Dangerous Rampage | Acts 17:1-32

Jealousy is a repeated theme in the book of Acts.

In chapter 13, after nearly all of Pisidian Antioch turned out to hear Paul's teaching, its Jews became "filled with jealousy" (Acts 13:45), persecuted Paul and Barnabas, driving them from the city. Their jealousy drove them to pursue Paul 95 miles to the city of Iconium to prevent his preaching. Once there they fomented great division in that city. Paul barely escaped being stoned. These jealous Jews, now more in number, caught up with Paul preaching and healing 20 miles further, in Lystra. They stoned and left him for dead (Acts 14). Revived by the Holy Spirit, Paul and Barnabas continued to preach city to city for the remainder of their 1st missionary journey. Later JEALOUSY returned.

In our chapter this week we see it again. During three Sabbaths in a Thessalonian synagogue, Paul "reasoned from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead..." (Acts 17:2-3). Some Jews then believed. Many non-Jews came to faith. Certain disbelieving Thessalonian Jews became so "jealous" they corralled wicked men into a mob to force city authorities to oppose Paul's teaching, claiming intent to overthrow the government. Paul escaped their treachery.

Now at Berea, Paul's teaching was embraced enthusiastically. "Now these (Jewish brethren) were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so. Many of them therefore believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men." (v11)

The 1828 Noah Webster dictionary describes "noble" as "exalted, excellent, ready to receive truth".

"Examining" includes: to inspect carefully with a view to discover truth or the real state of a thing,

to compare facts with a view to form a correct opinion or judgment.

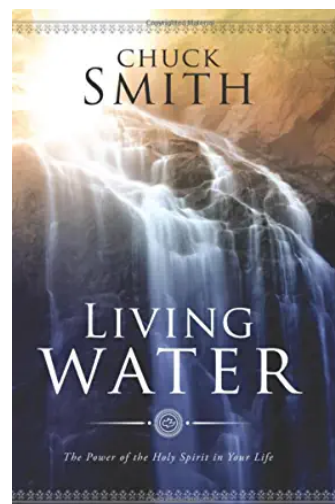
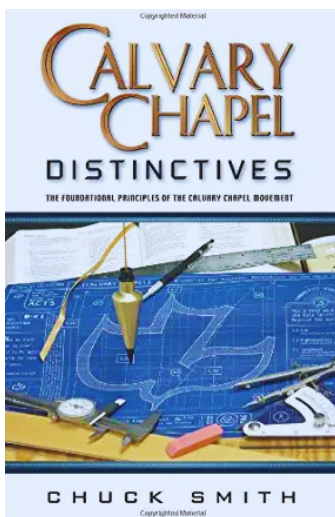
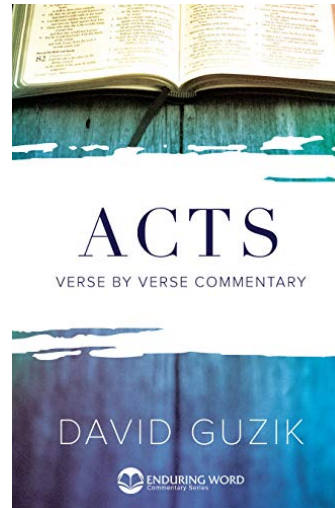
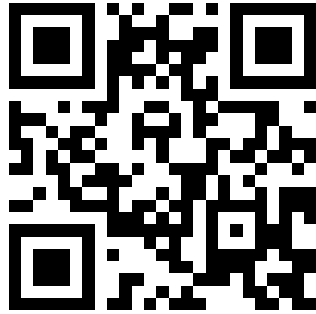
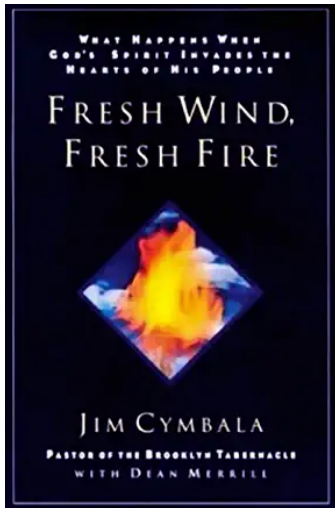
"Jealous" is defined as: suspicious (apt to imagine without proof), apprehensive of rivalry, or desiring of some good enjoyed by someone else! Jealousy kept them from the discovery of "whether these things were so". Jealousy kept them from seeing God unfurl His fulfilled promises...before their very eyes. Jealousy is a liability in our human hearts. Moses speaks of the Lord God's declaration of wrath towards His own chosen people in Deuteronomy 32:21 "They have made me jealous with what is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their idols." God's jealousy is for His own exclusive honor.

Holy Spirit, reveal all jealousy in me and cleanse me, that none may hinder Your plans!

Jeanine Lerten

Helpful Resources

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



And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming? For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean.”

Acts 17:19-20