

Acts 1:1-11

Introduction To Acts & Our Mission While Waiting

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the background facts and purpose of the book of Acts.
- Talk about our mission while waiting on God's timing, both for the disciples and for us today.

Pray for your time together as a group.

Read Out Loud: Introduction to Acts

Acts was written between 63 and 70 A.D. by Luke. He addresses the book to the same person as the Gospel of Luke, Theophilus. "Theophilus" literally means "Friend of God," or "Love of God," which leads some theologians to believe it's a term referring to all Christians. It's also possible that he was a real individual. Acts records the events of the early church starting right after Jesus' ascension. It follows the disciples, mainly Peter and Paul, as they go through the phases of spreading the Word. Acts provides a history of the growth of the early church through persecution, hardship and trials.

Leaders' Note: Choose one of the following questions as an icebreaker:

? What is something you are waiting for, even though you don't know when it will happen?

? Have you ever felt God was asking you to do something when you were unsure of the outcome?

What happened?

Read Out Loud: Acts 1:1-11 (NIV)

¹In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach ²until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. ³After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. ⁴On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." ⁶Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." ⁹After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. ¹⁰They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into

the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

? Luke's reference to his "first book" in verse one connects the Gospel of Luke with the Book of Acts.

What significance is there in viewing these two books as an unbroken history?

Possible Answers: There is significance in reading about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and then, without interruption, seeing the history that followed it. Jesus' life and works directly result in the explosive growth of the early church.

? Why was it important for Jesus to prove that He was alive, and how does that reality affect the future ministry and mission of the disciples?

Possible Answers: The reality of the resurrection was the culmination of their entire message about who Jesus is. It was crucial for the disciples to be witness to the resurrection as fuel for their ministry and as the key to all the amazing claims they would make.

? What does Jesus command the disciples to do, and what does He promise them?

Possible Answers: Jesus commands the disciples to wait in Jerusalem and await the gift of His Father. He promises them that they will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on them, and that they will be His witnesses all through the Earth.

? The disciples ask Jesus about the restoration of the kingdom of Israel. His answer in verses 7 and 8 show the greater aspirations Jesus has for them, namely receiving the Holy Spirit and spreading the Gospel. What distracts us from recognizing the greater aspirations Jesus has for us?

Possible Answers: unbalanced attentions, interest in our own affairs, allowing our life to be overflowing with distractions, being focused on our own glory and desire for power; wanting Jesus to fulfill our plans, rather than allowing Him to shape and mold us to be obedient to His plans, etc. etc.

? In verse 11, two angels appear and speak about Christ's return. Do you think the angels' words to the disciples are encouraging or discouraging, and how do their words motivate the disciples?

Possible Answers: The words might be encouraging because Christ is coming back, or they might be discouraging because the disciples have to wait an undisclosed time until the promise was fulfilled. Their words motivate the disciples to go and do what Jesus had called them to do.

Leaders' Note: It may be helpful to divide your group into four smaller sub groups to discuss the following four verses and question. They're short verses, so if you do decide to group off, have people pair with those sitting next to them.

? In each of the Gospels Jesus gives the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15, Luke

The Great Commission in the Four Gospels

Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV) ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Mark 16:15 (NIV) He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

Luke 24:46-49 (NIV) ⁴⁶ He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

24:46-39 and John 20:21). In light of Acts 1:8, what is the heart of Jesus, and what are main themes found in the overall mission He gave the disciples?

Possible Answers: Jesus is primarily concerned about people knowing Him as Lord. He is sending them, they are to be His witnesses and to go and make disciples, preach the Gospel, and that the Holy Spirit will empower them and Jesus will be with them

? As we wait for the return of Christ, what does it mean to be His witness?

Possible Answers: Jesus calls us to speak and to share about what we have seen and experienced. We should be actively participating in the mission of Jesus by sharing with others the ways He has changed our life and how we have experienced Him.

? Jesus calls us, as He did the disciples, to be His witnesses to "the ends of the earth" (vs. 8). We may tend to think of this as only global missions, but how can we reframe our thinking to see the great commission in those around us?

Possible Answers: the ends of the earth doesn't allow for any prejudice, discrimination or segregation. The Gospel is for ALL people, all ethnicities, backgrounds,

etc. etc. We have people of all types around us, and the Gospel is for them and our mission is to testify to who Jesus is, to them.

For Discussion And Accountability

? What is distracting you from God's mission?

? In what way is God be calling you to be a witness for Him?