

DAILY BIBLE READING

ACTING ON ACTS (ACTS 1-15)

Tim Blagg

Read. Ask. Live. Love

Daily Bible Reading

What?

Sometimes we find it hard to read the Bible, don't we? At church we hear it all the time: "*read the Bible more.*" But how? Some of the devotionals on offer seem to have less Bible than story. Some of the Bible reading plans seem too big to take on all at once; what should I think about? How can I possibly know what questions to ask as I read through God's word?

It's in light of these questions that these daily bible readings have come into existence! The aim is to help you read God's word for yourself and ask some of the questions to comprehend what God is saying to you today through his living and active word, with the hope asking these sorts of questions for yourself as you read through the Bible in bigger doses that this has to offer. It's a tool, and hence it's only as valuable as our use of it.

My prayer for you as you use these - whether by yourself or with your family around the dinner table - is that God will work through his word to grow you into the fullness of Christ and bring you joy as you come to know him through his word.

How?

The way to approach it every day (as recommended) is:

- 1) PRAY to God; it is his word we're reading, so ask him to help you understand it.
- 2) READ the passage once or twice.
- 3) ASK: Go through each question, looking back at the bible to think through them.
- 4) PRAY about what you have learned; ASK God's help, LIVE out the applications for today and in it all, LOVE God even more.

Want more?

If you want more studies like these ones, check out our online database at www.trinitycity.church/youth - just follow the links. Alternatively, if you're looking for more in depth bible reading plans, many can be found in study bibles or online. Chat to your bible study group leader or pastor for more information.

In Christ,

Tim

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Week 1

Day 1

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 1
- Answer the following questions:
 - What stands out to you in these 26 verses? Why?
 - What do these 26 verses tell you about Jesus?
 - Does the fact that Jesus ascended into heaven encourage you? Why/why not?
- To Act on today:
 - Do you recognise that Jesus has beaten death and sin? That Jesus is now actually the King over everyone and everything? Take a few minutes today and write down a list of what it means if Jesus is really King over everything. What does it mean for how we live?

Day 2

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 1:1-2
- Answer the following questions:
 - Read Luke 1:1-4. What similarities do you notice between the two different introductions?
 - What has Luke provided for Theophilus so that he might have certainty?
 - How does Luke describe the book of Acts and how it relates to the Gospel of Luke?
- To Act on today:
 - There's an interesting word that Luke uses in his introduction in v1. It's the word "began". The gospel of Luke was all about what Jesus began to do and teach. This means that Acts is "part 2" - the continuation of what Jesus teaches and does. This time, it's especially through his disciples that Jesus will do and act. Which means that if you're a Christian, Jesus acts through you. How does this make you feel? Talk to God about this now.

Day 3

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 1:3-5
- Answer the following questions:

- What does Luke mean when he writes "after his suffering" about Jesus? How did Jesus suffer?
- What 'convincing proofs' did Jesus give to show He was alive? (read through Luke 24 to see some of these)
- Why did Jesus tell his disciples not to leave Jerusalem as yet?
- To Act on today:
 - Why does it matter that Jesus was alive? It's one of the biggest questions for followers of Jesus to come to terms with. If Jesus was never raised from the dead, then there's no point in being a Christian. But if Jesus is alive. If Jesus is king. Then we have a big promise that God will also raise us who follow him to eternal life. Which means death isn't the end. Perfect relationship with God and his people forever. How great! Today, thank God that Jesus is alive! You might like to thank God by listening to songs about Jesus' resurrection and praying long with them.

Day 4

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
 - Read Acts 1:6-8
 - Answer the following questions:
 - What question do the disciples ask Jesus? Why do you think they ask this question?
 - What does Jesus say the Holy Spirit will empower his disciples to do?
 - Where are the disciples going to witness? Who do you think this includes? Is there anyone it doesn't include?
 - To Act on today:
 - Take the time today to memorise Acts 1:8 - "...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." This is God's great plan to get everyone to meet Jesus! And if you're a follower of Jesus, you also have the Holy Spirit. What God's word makes clear to us is that we can't witness to Jesus without his Spirit's help. God is the one who saves. Take some time to ask him to help you witness to others about Jesus. If you can, write down three names of people who you want God to save, and pray for them now.
- 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____

Day 5

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 1:9-11
- Answer the following questions:
 - How do you think the disciples felt when they saw Jesus leave?
 - What do you think it means for Jesus to be in heaven now?
 - Will Jesus return again? What makes you think that?
- To Act on today:
 - Jesus ascending to heaven is a big deal. It's like the moment when a king or queen is crowned. Jesus is now at his rightful place of headship over the whole world - right next to God. He is in charge of everything. And it's in Colossians 3:1-3 that we are told that we have been raised with Jesus - that our eternal lives are with Jesus now while he's in heaven. We are then encouraged to set our minds on things above - on who God is, on what God is doing, and on who we now are. Read through Colossians 3:1-4 today, and pray in light of it.

Day 6

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 1:12-26
- Answer the following questions:
 - What do Jesus' followers do after Jesus ascends into heaven? Why do they do this?
 - Was Judas Iscariot's betrayal of Jesus outside of God's control?
 - Why do the apostles say that they need someone to take Judas' place as an apostle of Jesus?
- To Act on today:
 - Verse 26 is the last time in the Bible that lots are cast. Casting lots - in the way that's described here - is a way of trusting God. However, after Acts 1 is finished, God sends his Holy Spirit. And God's way of helping us make decisions changes too! We don't need to cast lots or dice. Instead, we read God's word and pray to him, trusting him to reveal his will to us. Do you want God's guidance when making decisions? Talk to him about it. Pray to God about the decisions you make. Read the Bible. And talk to other Christians, who also have God's Holy Spirit. Today, ask God to help you make wise decisions. If you have a decision you're trying to make, pray about it today.

Day 7

- Church Service/Youth Group - Passage Covered:_____

- What was the talk about?:_____

- What do I need to change?_____

Week 2

Day 8

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 2
- Answer the following questions:
 - What stands out to you in these 47 verses? Why?
 - Look back at Acts 1:8 again. Practice memorising it. Of Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, how far have Christians taken the good news of Jesus so far?
 - How is God in control of saving people into relationship with himself?
- To Act on today:
 - Who is responsible for saving people into relationship with God? In this chapter, we see that *God* is responsible. Jesus is the one who died for our sins. God is the one who pours out his Holy Spirit to help Christians share the gospel. And God is the one who *calls* people to be saved, and saves people (see v39 and 47). But we also see that *people* are responsible. Christians have been entrusted with the gospel of Jesus to share it with people in order for them to be saved. Christians get to speak the gospel! What does it mean for you to have this responsibility? Pray to God about this - ask him to help you see where you can share the good news of Jesus.

Day 9

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 2:1-13
- Answer the following questions:
 - What happens on the day of Pentecost to the Christians? Should this be a surprise? (look back at Acts 1:4-8)
 - Who is around Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost?
 - What do they hear when the Christians start speaking in different languages?
- To Act on today:
 - People from all different peoples and languages hear God's name praised in their home language! It's an incredible thing. And, as they point out in v7, they are Galileans. They aren't well travelled or scholars! They are locals. This power is the power of God through the Holy Spirit to equip his people to share his good news to the world! Isn't it encouraging to know that God empowers us to do the job he

gives us? Thank God for the Holy Spirit, who he has given us to share his gospel with the world.

Day 10

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 2:14-21
- Answer the following questions:
 - Why does Peter need to explain what they are doing (besides people thinking they're drunk)?
 - How does Peter explain their ability to speak in many languages? Who is responsible for it?
 - According to the prophecy from Joel, what does their ability to speak in tongues mean?
- To Act on today:
 - Back in 2:12, we see that everyone who is around (from many different languages! But they are all Jews) is asking "what does this mean?" They don't doubt what is happening, but they want to know what it means. Some Christians want to speak in tongues (mostly tongues of angels) in order to be impressive. Others think it's important for all Christians to be able to speak in tongues of angels. But in this case, speaking in tongues just means speaking in other languages! Why? To share the good news of God! This speaking in tongues is actually a sign that invites "...everyone [to] call on the name of the Lord..." in order to be saved. How would you talk to a Christian friend who says that Acts 2 means every *true* Christian should be able to speak in tongues?

Day 11

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 2:22-36
- Answer the following questions:
 - Who is responsible for Jesus' death? (can be more than one person!)
 - What does Peter say about King David's Psalm (Psalm 16) when David says "... you will not let your Holy One see decay..."
 - Who is Jesus?
- To Act on today:
 - In these 15 verses, we see a quick snapshot of what is called the "gospel message". It's not a list of "do's" and "don'ts". It's a person. It's Jesus. Jesus was a man who was accredited by God. Jesus was killed - according to God's purpose, as well as our sin. Jesus was raised to life by God - as promised by the scriptures,

and as witnessed to by many people. Jesus now sits at God's right hand and is the King of all. The gospel is good news because our sin *can be* forgiven. The gospel is good news because *death doesn't have to be the end*. The gospel is good news because *Jesus is the good King we need*. These are just three of the things we get told by the gospel. Do any of them stand out to you? Write down what it means for you to believe this. _____

_____.

Day 12

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 2:37-41
- Answer the following questions:
 - How do the people respond to Peter's sermon?
 - How many laws does Peter say they need to keep, or how much good stuff does Peter say we need to do, in order to have our sins forgiven? What does he say we can do to be forgiven?
 - Who is this offer of salvation for?
- To Act on today:
 - The gospel is good news. It's great news! It's news of how we can be saved. But news is pretty useless unless we do something about it. You could hear that a tsunami is coming to hit you. But unless you actually get away from the beach and to higher ground, that news has been useless to you. For people who haven't accepted Jesus as their King, there is only one response. Repent - do a u-turn, saying that the way you've lived without Jesus as King is wrong. Be baptised, and say "I want Jesus to be my King, no matter what." This is how we get saved. By accepting the good news. If you have already accepted this good news, fantastic! Have you considered being baptised/publicly declaring your faith to tell others this decision? Maybe you were baptised as a baby, and haven't publicly declared that you are a Christian as an adult yet. On the other hand, if you haven't accepted Jesus as your King, why not? What's holding you back? Talk to your youth leader/pastor about this today and plan out what comes next for you in response to the good news of Jesus.

Day 13

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 2:42-47
- Answer the following questions:

- How do followers of Jesus respond to being saved?
- What kind of words would you use to describe what these early Christians were like?
- How did they grow in numbers?
- To Act on today:
 - Christians respond to being saved in a large number of ways here! They keep learning more about God by what the Apostles teach (which is something we can still do by reading the Bible). They share meals together. They pray together. They share money with people who need it. And they keep meeting in the Temple in Jerusalem, sharing the news about God. And God uses this time to save more people! This must have been a bit of a taste of heaven; great Christian community, being free to talk about Jesus and God with people who thought about them as well. It's never a bad thing as Christians to look forward to this. But, as we'll see in the upcoming chapters, it's short lived. What reasons can you think of, good or bad, for why a church like this perfect one might split up? Is there ever a good reason for someone to leave a good church?

Day 14

- Church Service/Youth Group - Passage Covered:_____
- What was the talk about?:_____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- What do I need to change?_____
- _____

Week 3

Day 15

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 3:1-4:31
- Answer the following questions:
 - What stands out to you in these 57 verses? Why?
 - Look back at Acts 1:8 again. Practice memorising it. Of Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, how far have Christians taken the good news of Jesus so far?
 - Back in Acts 2:43, we are told that the Apostles did many miraculous signs (like Jesus did!). Why do you think we hear about this man who was crippled and a beggar?
- To Act on today:
 - In 3:16, Peter says that it was by *faith in the name of Jesus, this man* (the crippled man) *was made strong*. This man was pretty well known to everyone who visited the Temple. They knew he was crippled. And yet here they see him standing healthily in front of them! How? Through faith in Jesus that this man has been healed. Faith in Jesus alone which brings salvation and healing. This man was healed of his physical problems. But even more importantly, he has received Jesus as His Lord. He has been healed of his sins (v19), which is what Jesus came to heal *everyone* of. Some people look at stories of healings like this one, and say that it's a promise from Jesus that *anyone who has enough faith* can be healed. But it doesn't say that. It's a description of what physical healing one man received. It does, however, promise spiritual healing for *anyone* who trusts Jesus. How do you feel being healed spiritually by Jesus? Thank God for this healing now in prayer.

Day 16

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 3:1-10
- Answer the following questions:
 - The man who is crippled is sat down outside the Temple, next to the gate called beautiful. What's special about the Temple for the people of Israel? (think back through the Bible - maybe even read through 1 Kings 8:27-30).
 - How did God want the Israelites to treat the poor? (Hint: read Deuteronomy 15:4, 7-8). How well were they doing this as a community of people? How did the Christians treat the poor?
 - How was this man healed? What evidence was there?

- To Act on today:

- What happens to this man is incredible. He is healed! Not just healed; he can walk and jump. His response isn't to say how great Peter and John are. His response is to praise God. There is plenty of skepticism around about miracles recorded in the Bible, like this one. But is there any other explanation for what has happened in this man's life aside from an intervention by God's power? This great God who raised Jesus from the dead. If he could do that, there is no miracle too difficult for him! Why don't we take some time today to thank God for his power? Thank God that he can work miracles, like this one. If you know someone who is deeply unwell, pray and ask God to heal them. While God doesn't heal everyone we pray for here and now in a mental, emotional or physical sense, he might choose to heal this person. And 100% of the prayers we don't pray are never answered!

Day 17

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 3:11-26
- Answer the following questions:
 - How is what happens in the rest of Acts 3 similar to what happened in Acts 2 with the praising-God-in-different-languages-event?
 - What does Peter say the Israelites did to Jesus?
 - What response did Peter say the Israelites should have to the good news about Jesus?
- To Act on today:
 - One of the big things Peter talks about in this sermon is how God keeps his promises. God promised that his chosen King, the Christ, would suffer. God promised that he would raise up a prophet like Moses, which he did - Jesus. God promised that his servant, Jesus, would first bless the Jewish people, which he did. And God promised that he would restore *everything* through Jesus one day - that he would create a new heavens and a new earth. Do you think God will keep this promise? God is a promise-keeping God with a great track record. Thank him today for keeping his promises so far. And pray that he will keep the other promises he has made soon!

Day 18

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 4:1-4
- Answer the following questions:

- The Sadducees didn't believe in resurrection - they believed that death was they end. (That's why they were "Sadd - u - cees") Why do you think they were disturbed by what Peter was preaching?
- How did the Sadducees respond to Peter and John's preaching of Jesus being God's Chosen King?
- How did the crowds respond to Peter and John's preaching of Jesus being God's Chosen King?
- To Act on today:
 - God does the miraculous. He takes a man who could never walk and gives him legs; he can walk and jump! He takes people who *killed* Jesus and he gives them eternal life! He wipes away all their sins. God can save people who hear the truth about Jesus. People like us. People like our friends. People like our families. Who do we know that has rejected God, and hasn't yet heard the good news about Jesus? Pray for them. Pray that God will share His good news with them. How are the people you wrote down and prayed for on Day 4 going? Pray for them again today, and make an active effort to catch up with them. Get something in the diary. One good option could be to invite them to hang out with you and your friends from church at the beach / park / board game cafe.

Day 19

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 4:5-21
- Answer the following questions:
 - What question to the rulers ask Peter and John? How do they answer?
 - v12 is a great verse! Memorise it today. Read it. Then re-read it. Then cover it and repeat it. Then write it down. Put it on your mirror.
 - How do the rulers respond to Peter and John?
- To Act on today:
 - Jesus promised his followers that they would face persecution because they followed him (John 15:20-16:4). This is normal. Chances are, if you are a follower of Jesus, you too will face persecution. This might involve being put on trial and facing a court. It could mean being beaten or even killed. In our part of the world, though, right now it looks more like social persecution. It looks like being unfriended or left out by people who don't like our Jesus. It looks like being pressured not to speak up about who Jesus is. It looks like being ridiculed for being a Christian in a biology class. Are you ready for persecution? Talk with your small group this week about any persecution you all might be facing now. Pray that God will make you stronger in the face of persecution. Pray that you will be

able to present the good news about Jesus to those who don't know him yet, despite persecution.

Day 20

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 4:22-31
- Answer the following questions:
 - What was the response of the Christians to the threats of persecution against Peter and John?
 - In vv25-26, they quote Psalm 2, which was written by David. How do they say Psalm 2 was fulfilled in their time?
 - What do they pray for God to do in response to this persecution?
- To Act on today:
 - God equips his people to achieve his task. Did you notice in v31 how it talks about the disciples being filled with God's Holy Spirit and speaking the word of God boldly? This doesn't mean that the disciples didn't have the Holy Spirit anymore, or that he left them after Acts 2 with Pentecost. But they asked God to specially equip them to keep speaking the good news about Jesus boldly in response to this persecution. God responded by empowering them even more by his Spirit. And this is an important way that God works in his people: he gives special gifts to help build up his church. As you go to school/work this week, pray and ask God to help you to speak his word boldly. Then start speaking his word boldly.

Day 21

- Church Service/Youth Group - Passage Covered:_____
- What was the talk about?:_____

- What do I need to change?_____

Week 4

Day 22

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 4:32-5:42
- Answer the following questions:
 - What stands out to you in these 48 verses? Why?
 - Look back at Acts 1:8 again. Practice memorising it. Of Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, how far have Christians taken the good news of Jesus so far?
 - How do you see God's people acting in this chapter out of love for Jesus? How do you see people who don't love Jesus opposing God?
- To Act on today:
 - As we talk about actions, it's cool to see how God is actually the one who is really acting and in control! At the end of today's passage, we saw Gamaliel - a pretty important religious leader in that day - stand up and talk about the gospel of Jesus. He said "*...if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.*" The gospel message is still around nearly 2,000 years later! Everything that is happening in the book of Acts - and today - is under God's control as he acts to bring his gospel to everyone on Earth. And nothing can stand against God's plans to achieve this. Isn't that great? Take some time to reflect on this today. Check out operationworld.org and pray for two countries today, giving thanks for how God's word has spread in them, and praying that God will continue to reach the unreached peoples of these countries.

Day 23

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 4:32-37
- Answer the following questions:
 - Take a moment to peek back at Acts 2:42-47. Do you see any similarities between that section and this one?
 - The Christians in the early church in Jerusalem continued to listen to the gospel under the apostles, like Peter. In response to the amazing grace of Jesus, how do they live? What actions do they do?
 - In v36-37, we are introduced to Barnabas. What do you know about Barnabas from this passage? Sneak a peek ahead to Acts 11:19-26. What else do we find out about Barnabas?
- To Act on today:

- You might have heard of the idea of communism - made especially famous by a philosopher named Karl Marx. One way which communism is meant to work is that people don't have possessions, but rather everyone shares what they have for the good of society. The aim is to do this so that people can be united and get rid of barriers. But the way it works in God's family is the other way around; we are united by becoming Christians - by being united to Jesus in his death - so we can share what we have for the good of others without being worried that we're missing out. So when it comes to our money. Maybe pocket money, or maybe our income from a job. It's not a bad thing to save, or to buy video games or go out with friends. But is it the best thing we can be doing with our money? Is it the best way for us to go when it comes to living out our Christian lives? Write out on a piece of paper how much money you're making each week, and where it goes. What evidence is there that you are honouring God with your money? That you're valuing people more than stuff? If you're up for it, talk with an older Christian about how you use your money this week.

Day 24

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 5:1-11
- Answer the following questions:
 - What do Ananias and Sapphira do with their land and the money they make from it? Why do you think they do this? (Hint: look back at Barnabas?)
 - How do they act towards Peter and other Christians? Towards God?
 - Twice in this section we see that "great fear" came on everyone who was there. Why do you think they were afraid?
- To Act on today:
 - God cares a lot about how his people live and act. He cares about how we think. He cares about our attitudes in what we do. We might be keen to get involved in helping other people because it makes us look good. Or we might be eager to help out at church, but only as long as people know we're helping. Or we might want to brag about how much money we give to God. Maybe we feel really good about ourselves when we pray longer than others, or get more "mm's" or "yeah's" during our prayer. But this isn't the heart that cares about what God thinks. And guess what? We are all going to struggle with stuff like this until Jesus gets back. Talk to God today and ask him to help you see where you are still a hypocrite - where you still reject him. Let's ask him to change us by his Holy Spirit.

Day 25

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 5:12-18
- Answer the following questions:
 - How are the Christians regarded in city of Jerusalem by the people? How do most people approach them?
 - Who is responsible for the Church growing in v14? Why do you think more people are becoming Christians? (hint: look back through Acts 2-4 and see how this has happened so far).
 - Back in chapter 4, the Sadducees arrested Peter and John because they disagreed with their teaching about the resurrection. Why do the Sadducees (including the High Priest) arrest the apostles this time?
- To Act on today:
 - There are two big words that some Bible nerds use - "continuationism" and "cessationism". They are both to do with how we think God continues to work to spread the gospel in his world. Continuationists believe that God's Holy Spirit works exactly the same today as he did 2000 years ago: that Christians today can and should heal, speak in tongues and many other spiritual gifts. Cessationists think that he has stopped working in some ways. Both views have very smart Christians who believe them. These are important to think through. But, as we've already seen in Acts, God gives his gifts to grow his Church. To bring people to know Jesus as Lord, and to grow them in their faith. Just because God chooses to act in one way at one point in time in history, doesn't mean he always will act that way. But it also could mean that he likes to act that way and does so from time to time. What do you think? Write out how you think God works in the world today, and back it up from the Bible.

Day 26

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 5:17-26
- Answer the following questions:
 - What instructions does God give to the apostles when they are released from prison in the middle of the night?
 - Do you think the priests expected this? Why, or why not?
 - How do the apostles respond to all these threats from people and persecution?
- To Act on today:

- There's a phrase that pops up a few times in these passages: teaching/telling. The apostles were told to tell the people the full message of this new life (in Jesus). They began to teach the people. The person who reports to the Sanhedrin in v25 says he saw the apostles teaching all the people in the temple courts. The gospel - the good news of Jesus - is being taught faithfully. Which means that people can't just guess the gospel by watching how you live. The good news about Jesus needs words. People need to learn it. It needs to be taught. Who taught you the gospel? Remember the three people you're praying for from Day 4? How well do they each know the gospel right now? What might be the next part of the gospel that they need to be taught?

Day 27

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 5:27-42
- Answer the following questions:
 - What do the Sadducees complain about the apostles doing in their preaching?
 - How do Peter and the other apostles respond to these accusations and commands by the Sadducees?
 - What does Gamaliel say to the rest of the Sanhedrin about why they shouldn't oppose the gospel of Jesus?
- To Act on today:
 - How do the apostles respond to being attacked and flogged? They rejoice! They are thanking God that they suffer for the name of Jesus. And they continue to teach the good news of Jesus to all they can. Doesn't this seem strange? To thank God for suffering? But it makes sense when we think back to what Jesus said. Looking back at Matthew 5:11-12, Jesus says *"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven..."* Do you think you would have the same attitude as the apostles if you suffered for your beliefs? What about when things don't go your way in general? Today, rejoice in God. No matter what the circumstances of your life look like right now, rejoice in God's good provision for you. Thank him for saving you. Ask him to help you set your eyes on heaven.

Day 28

- Church Service/Youth Group - Passage Covered: _____
 - What was the talk about?: _____
-

- What do I need to change? _____

Week 5

Day 29

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 6:1-7
- Answer the following questions:
 - What's the problem that appears at the start of this passage? Why do you think this could be a problem?
 - How do the apostles respond? Do you think it worked? Why?
 - Look back at Acts 1:8 again. Practice memorising it. Of Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, how far have Christians taken the good news of Jesus so far?
- To Act on today:
 - There are lots of great things that Christians can do today. We can be involved in defending the defenceless, or providing food to people who can't afford it themselves, or helping to heal sick people. Jesus did many of these things, so it makes sense for us to do them. But there's one thing that, if Christians don't do, it won't be done. It's sharing the message about Jesus Christ. Do we realise the importance of sharing God's word? How else will God's word spread (v7)? Take some time now and list some of the good things that might distract you from doing the most important thing a Christian can do - share Jesus with others. Ask God for his help in keeping the main thing, the main thing.

Day 30

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 6:8-15
- Answer the following questions:
 - Who is Stephen? (hint: look back at v3-5).
 - What did those opposing Stephen do when they realised they couldn't "out-debate" him? Why?
 - Look at the accusations made by the false witnesses in v13-14. What are they accusing Stephen of doing?
- To Act on today:
 - Before we hear Stephen's response, it's worthwhile us reflecting on what has just happened. Stephen is a man who is wise. He has God's Spirit on him. He is full of faith. He is doing great wonders and signs and telling people about Jesus. He is a super-Christian! And how do people respond? They argue with him. They trump up false charges against him. And they kill him. They don't reason, they don't try to understand the message he has been telling them. They choose to reject him and

kill him, just like Jesus. True Christians have the privilege of seeing people respond to God's word. People coming to know and love Jesus. But there will also be people who refuse to listen to God's word. People who don't listen to us. People who really don't like us because we love Jesus. True Christianity will always bring opposition. And we can't expect others to "fight fair". Are you prepared for this kind of opposition? Back in Matthew 28:20, Jesus makes this promise "*I am always with you, to the very end of the age.*" What does it mean to you that Jesus makes this promise? Talk to God about this opposition, and Jesus' support, today.

Day 31

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 7:1-43
- Answer the following questions:
 - Look at yesterday's passage again - specifically 6:13-14. What were the charges against Stephen?
 - Reading through Stephen's answer, do you think he opposes the law of Moses? Why, or why not?
 - Who do you think has opposed the law of Moses? Why do you think that?
- To Act on today:
 - There are some amazing descriptions of God in this short chunk of history. v2 - He is the God of glory; he is very important and deserves worship. v5 - God promised (and down in v17, God fulfilled his promise). v6 - God spoke. God revealed himself and has spoken to us; he hasn't been distant or silent. And, on a scary note, God turns away from those who have rejected him (v42). And, above all these things, God is the one in control of history. What does it mean for you to know that God is the one in control? Does it feel like God is in control to you? Why, or why not? Talk to God about this today.

Day 32

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 7:44-50
- Answer the following questions:
 - Look back at Acts 6:13-14. What were the charges against Stephen?
 - Reading through Stephen's answer in today's passage, do you think he opposes the Temple? Why, or why not?
 - Who do you think has opposed the meaning of the Temple? Why do you think that?

- To Act on today:

- God is much bigger than any temple. This is a paraphrase of what Solomon declared when he prayed to God on the day of finishing building the first Temple in Jerusalem. God is not confined to a building. He is so much bigger! He is everywhere. The teachers of the law had made the temple into a way of trying to “keep God under control”. Isn’t it great that we get to meet with God without having to travel to a specific building? This also means that God is *always* with us. There is no such thing as a “private” moment to do things we wouldn’t do when people are watching. God is always with us. Is there anything you’re doing which you wouldn’t if someone was with you? Why not bring this to God? The temple was there so sinful humans could be with the perfect God, and have their sin dealt with. And with Jesus’ death on the cross, we don’t need a temple anymore. We can talk to God and confess our sins. Take some time today to do just that.

Day 33

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.

- Read Acts 7:51-53

- Answer the following questions:

- Who does Stephen accuse the Sanhedrin of being like? (look back over v39-42 again)
- How did the forefathers receive Moses? (look at v25-27) How did the Sanhedrin receive Jesus? (look at v52). What are the similarities?
- What is Stephen’s final accusation against the Sanhedrin?

- To Act on today:

- Stephen’s charges the Sanhedrin: they have so much privilege, but have rejected God. They had the history: the right parents, the history that was taught to them at a young age. They had the Temple: the place where they could meet with God and not die! They had the law of Moses. They had God’s promises. And they rejected God. They disobeyed him. They killed Jesus. What’s scary to realise is that many people today have even more privilege. Many people in our churches and youth groups have grown up going to church. We’ve had God’s word and promises told to us from a young age. We have even heard all about who Jesus is. How will we respond? How will we help one another to see Jesus? How can we “...*encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day* (when Jesus returns) *approaching.*”? (Hebrews 10:25). Think about the other people in your youth group/bible study group. Who can you encourage today to see Jesus and what he has done for us? Encourage them. Write a card, or an email, or send through a text to encourage them to keep following Jesus.

Day 34

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 7:54-8:1
- Answer the following questions:
 - While Stephen is being killed by the Sanhedrin, what comforts Stephen?
 - How does Stephen respond while he is being killed? What do you think enables him to respond this way?
 - Look back at Acts 1:8 again. Practice memorising it. Of Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, how far have Christians taken the good news of Jesus so far?
- To Act on today:
 - What's your perspective? When you see the assignment or exams coming up. When you see the bullies? When you are feeling lonely and rejected? When you're worried about your health, or a family member's health? When people reject you because you're a Christian? There is one big perspective that will always help. Jesus is King. Jesus is good. And Jesus is in control. He knows what he's doing. Stephen's death? He died following Jesus. And the good news about Jesus spread even further over the whole world because of Stephen's death. Up until now, the gospel hasn't gone too far from Jerusalem. But now, it's exploded into the world! Jesus is good, and Jesus is in control. Today as you go to school or work. Jesus is good, and Jesus is in control. Read over 7:56 again. *"I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."* Jesus is good, and Jesus is in control. How can you remind yourself of this truth today? This week?

Day 35

- Church Service/Youth Group - Passage Covered: _____
- What was the talk about?: _____

- What do I need to change? _____

Week 6

Day 36

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 8
- Answer the following questions:
 - What stands out to you in these 40 verses? Why?
 - Look back at Acts 1:8 again. Practice memorising it. Of Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, how far have Christians taken the good news of Jesus so far?
 - Acts 8 predominantly follows the story of Philip - one of the seven men who was chosen to care for the widows back in Acts 6. What do we learn about Philip in Acts? Look at 6:3-5 and also Acts 21:8-9 to see everything we find out about Philip.
- To Act on today:
 - The good news of Jesus is going out quickly to all people. In Acts 8, we have Samaritans and eunuchs (men who couldn't have children - in this guy's case as a way of devoting himself to serve the Queen of Ethiopia) getting to hear and respond to God's gospel. These were people that *no-one* thought would be included in God's family. But God's good news is for *everyone*. God's good news is for the whole world. Think about the people in your life today - people at school, or at sport, or at dance. God's good news is for them. This week choose just *one* person - any one person - who doesn't normally come to church. Pray: *"God, I pray for _____. You love them and want them to hear the good news about Jesus. Please give me opportunities to share this good news with _____. And help me to be courageous enough to take them. Amen."* Pray this each day this week. And be courageous.

Day 37

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 8:1-4
- Answer the following questions:
 - What broke out against the church in Jerusalem when Stephen was killed?
 - How did godly men react when Stephen was killed? How did Saul react?
 - How did the gospel spread when Stephen was killed?
- To Act on today:
 - There's a famous saying in Christian circles, originally said by Tertullian (a follower of Jesus from the 3rd Century AD). It's *"The blood of martyrs (Christians who keep faithful to Jesus till the point of death) is the seed of the church."* This weird saying

means that the church grows when Christians witness to Jesus, even when they are attacked. Looking at Acts 8:1-4, we can see this has always been true. And around the world today, the countries where heaps of people are becoming Christian are the countries where it's dangerous to be Christian. Go to opendoors.org.au today and pray for one of the top five countries in the world for persecution. Pray for the Christians in this country to continue to be bold in sharing their faith. Pray for those who persecute them, to come to faith in Christ.

Day 38

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 8:5-13
- Answer the following questions:
 - What signs did Philip do in Samaria?
 - How did the crowds respond to his signs?
 - What did Philip say to the crowds? How did they respond?
- To Act on today:
 - There's a world that for many of us, we aren't familiar with. The supernatural world. Spirits. Demons. Angels. Magic. We may not even be comfortable talking about it - and even like to think that it isn't real. But God's word doesn't shy away from talking about the spiritual world, and spiritual forces. C.S. Lewis - the author of the Chronicles of Narnia - had this to say: *"There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them."* We cannot disbelieve the existence of the spiritual world; Jesus believed in it! And we should not fear the spiritual world - Jesus is King over it all! In this part of Acts, we see that the news about Jesus is more powerful than all the magic and demons in Samaria. Isn't that good news? Thank God for his power today.

Day 39

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 8:14-25
- Answer the following questions:
 - Why did Peter and John go down to Samaria? Do you think they believed that the Samaritans could become Christians?
 - Do you think it was important for Peter and John to see the Holy Spirit coming on the Samaritans? Why, or why not? (hint: look back at Acts 1:8 and 2:1-4, and think about what proof there was that someone had become a Christian in the early days of the church).

- Why does Peter rebuke Simon?
- To Act on today:
 - Every now and again in the Bible we meet a character who we just have to ask "*Why are they here?!*" And Simon (the sorcerer) seems to be one of these characters. He sees how God's Spirit comes on people in power, and treats this power like magic. He wants the power to put the Holy Spirit onto other people. Before we write him off and say "he's just crazy!", are we ever tempted to be similar? Do we think that the way God works in us is unimpressive? Do we ever wish that we could speak in tongues of angels? Or that we could preach to tens of thousands of people at a time? Or that we could be as impressive as a high-profile Christian celebrity? Maybe we need to learn a lesson from Simon, and ask God to help us be humble. Thank God for how he has gifted you, and ask him to help you to honour him in your situation with the gifts he has given you.

Day 40

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 8:26-35
- Answer the following questions:
 - One of the things we learn about this Ethiopian man is that he is a eunuch who was coming from Jerusalem to worship God. Look back at Deuteronomy 23:1. What would this mean for him being able to worship God in Jerusalem at the Temple?
 - What was the Ethiopian reading? Have a quick read of the entire passage now (Isaiah 52:13-53:12)
 - What did Philip do to share the gospel news about Jesus with the Ethiopian?
- To Act on today:
 - Who is responsible for this Ethiopian man hearing the good news of Jesus? God. And Philip! Firstly, God. God was already doing business with this Ethiopian man long before Philip came onto the scene. The Ethiopian man was a follower of God through Judaism (even if he wasn't allowed to do everything a Jew could do). He had just been to Jerusalem. He was reading the Bible - a section that was a prophecy pointing to Jesus. And God made sure Philip met with the Ethiopian. And it was also Philip's responsibility. He needed to share the good news of Jesus with the Ethiopian. So what about us? Our friends and family - those who don't know Jesus yet. God is already doing business with them. He is the one responsible for them becoming Christians. And he has put us in their lives for a reason - to share the good news of Jesus with them. Pray for those three people again from Day 4.

What Christian event could you invite them to this week? Could you invite them to come to church/youth/bible study with you?

Day 41

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 8:36-40
- Answer the following questions:
 - What does the Ethiopian man say when he sees the water?
 - How does the Ethiopian man respond when he believes the good news about Jesus?
 - What does Philip do after baptising the Ethiopian man?
- To Act on today:
 - Baptism. Lots of Christians have lots of debates about baptism. Who should be baptised? When should we do it? How much water should we use? And the list goes on! But these aren't the questions that the Bible asks and answers. The Ethiopian man believes that Jesus is Lord and Saviour. And he is baptised in response to believing. He didn't have to be perfect to be baptised - he didn't have to get rid of all sin. The point of baptism isn't about having it all together. The point is to say "I believe that this is who Jesus is, and I want this truth to impact my life." For some of us, our parents made this declaration on our behalf when we were very young, hoping that we would make the decision one day to follow Jesus. They might have said they hope one day we make the decision for ourselves. And for others of us, our parents might not have even thought about it. What matters is us taking it on ourselves to trust in Jesus. So have you done this? Do you trust Jesus? What evidence is there in how you live that Jesus is your king - no matter what your parents believe?

Day 42

- Church Service/Youth Group - Passage Covered: _____
- What was the talk about?: _____

- What do I need to change? _____

Week 7

Day 43

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 9
- Answer the following questions:
 - What stands out to you in these 43 verses? Why?
 - Look back at Acts 1:8 again. Of Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, how far have Christians taken the good news of Jesus so far?
 - How do we see God in control, even when his church is under attack (Acts 8:1 - a great persecution against the church)?
- To Act on today:
 - Acts 9 is one of the big turning points in the Bible. Saul (Paul) being converted from being a very passionate Jewish man who wanted to honour God, to being a Christian who wanted to honour God as he has revealed himself in the man, Jesus Christ. Saul's conversion is talked about in Acts 9, Acts 22 and Acts 26 (and he also talks about it in many of his letters, including 1 Corinthians 15 and Galatians 1). Christians in Australia today owe a lot to Saul; we probably wouldn't be Christians without God's work through him! One of the things his conversion reminds us of is that *no one is too far away from God*. God saved Saul, and not even the apostles would believe it at first! *No one is too far away from God*. God can save anyone. When talking to God today, let's thank him for Saul. And let's pray for those who don't know God yet in our lives. *No one is too far away from God*. Have you ever thought of someone as being too far away from God to be saved? Ask God to forgive you for thinking that way.

Day 44

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 9:1-9
- Answer the following questions:
 - How passionate was Saul about killing Christians? How can you tell?
 - What stops Saul in his tracks?
 - Why does Jesus say "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute *me*?" if Saul is killing Christians?
- To Act on today:
 - Some people say that to get to God, it doesn't matter what you believe in, as long as you are sincere. Saul deeply, passionately, and sincerely believed that he was honouring God by killing Christians. And when Jesus appears, he doesn't say "Saul, Saul, thank you for serving me with your sincerity." No; Jesus instead shows

Saul that he has been wrong! Sincerity in what you believe doesn't make it right. Only believing in Jesus as God's Son can lead to God. Pray for those you know who sincerely believe in another religion or God (or even deeply believe in no religion). Pray that God will break through to them with the truth about Jesus Christ. Maybe you could ask them whether they would let you share what you believe with them.

Day 45

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 9:10-19
- Answer the following questions:
 - How do we see God in control of what happens to Saul in these verses?
 - Why is Ananias reluctant to help Saul? How would you have responded if God asked you to do what Ananias did?
 - What does God say his special task is for Saul?
- To Act on today:
 - The day Paul became a Christian, he was given a special mission from God. To be God's chosen apostle to the Gentiles (non-Jewish people of the world). This was a once-off, never-to-be repeated job that God had for Paul specifically. However, the call God gives for us to be Christians - to believe in Jesus and to depend on him as our saviour - is the same call for us to follow Jesus. Back in Luke 9:23-27, Jesus even says that if we want to be his followers (i.e. Christians), we are to follow him in our lives. This means that a genuine Christian is turning away from sin, is loving others fully, is depending on God, and is telling others about Jesus. The day we became Christians, we were given a mission from God: to follow Jesus with all our lives. And for some Christians, this might mean leaving behind other jobs to spend as much time as possible sharing the good news about Jesus, whether at church or for another Christian organisation. In fact, every Christian should ask "Why not me?" Why shouldn't you leave behind whatever job/study you are doing and instead be better equipped with God's word to teach it to others? Talk about this with your small group leader/pastor. Ask them what they think. And ask God to help you discern how you can best serve him with all your life.

Day 46

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 9:17-25
- Answer the following questions:
 - What did Saul do after Ananias healed him?

- What did Saul preach in the synagogues? Why do you think people were astonished at what he preached?
- Why did the Jews in Damascus try to kill him?
- To Act on today:
 - In 2 Timothy 3:12, Saul (Paul) writes "...everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted..." Based on what happens in Acts 9 we can see that this also applies to Saul! Being a genuine Christian will, sooner or later, attract persecution. It might look like having a friend reject you. It might look like not getting invited to hang out with a certain group of people at parties or going out. It might actually look like people deliberately bullying you for what you believe. And in many parts of the world, genuinely following Jesus is a death sentence. Why follow Jesus then? Because he is the Son of God. He is the Messiah. He is our King, who will one day make everything right. Pray to God; ask him to protect you when you are attacked for your faith. Ask God that when you are persecuted by others for living life as a Christian and sharing the gospel, he will keep reminding you that he is holding onto you no matter what.

Day 47

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 9:26-31
- Answer the following questions:
 - Why do you think the disciples in Jerusalem were afraid of Saul? What convinces the disciples that Saul isn't a danger to them?
 - How does Saul live while in Jerusalem?
 - Look back at Acts 1:8. How would you assess how the good news of Jesus is spreading?
- To Act on today:
 - We first got to meet Barnabas back in Acts 4. His name was actually Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus. The disciples named him Barnabas ("son of encouragement"). In this chunk of Acts 9, we can clearly see why he was called son of encouragement! He testified about how God saved Saul and what God had been doing through Saul in Damascus. There's plenty more to Barnabas' story in Acts. But to get started: Barnabas trusted God's work in someone else's life. Barnabas didn't let Saul's past affect what God had done in Saul's life. He showed real forgiveness to someone who had hurt some of Barnabas' closest friends. And what about us? How do we see others who are Christians? Do we hold their own sins against them? Or do we show them the same forgiveness and acceptance that God has already shown them? If there's someone who you need to forgive,

do it today. If there's someone you need to ask for forgiveness from because of how you've treated them, ask them today.

Day 48

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 9:32-43
- Answer the following questions:
 - How does God work through Peter in these verses?
 - What are the results of Peter healing Aenas and Tabitha/Dorcas for the people of Lydda and Joppa?
 - Go online today and find a map which shows everywhere the gospel goes in Acts. Where are Lydda and Joppa? Find them on that map.
- To Act on today:
 - Do you believe in miracles? What about your friends and family? The fact is that the Bible is unashamed about miraculous deeds - things like people being healed, or followers of Jesus speaking in different languages. If you're a Christian, you are saying you believe that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. So take some time today and think it through: how would you explain to a friend that you believe in miracles? How would you explain that you believe that Jesus was raised to life from the dead?

Day 49

- Church Service/Youth Group - Passage Covered:_____
- What was the talk about?:_____

- What do I need to change?_____

Week 8

Day 50

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 10:1-11:18
- Answer the following questions:
 - What stands out to you in these 66 verses? Why?
 - You've memorised Acts 1:8, right? Of Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, how far have Christians taken the good news of Jesus so far?
 - When the Bible wants us to pay attention to something, it gets repeated a couple of times. What events or details are repeated in these verses?
- To Act on today:
 - The story of Cornelius and his family becoming followers of Jesus is a big turning point in the story of the gospel going to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Cornelius' family isn't on the outer: they are included in the centre of God's plans for his people. As Peter says in 10:34-35, "I now realise how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right." God doesn't show favouritism: he offers salvation in Jesus to everyone equally, whether Jewish or Gentile background. Whether born into a Christian home or a Buddhist home, God's offer of salvation is out there for everyone. Those friends you've been praying for - thank God today that his offer of salvation is for them too!

Day 51

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 10:1-8
- Answer the following questions:
 - What do we know about Cornelius?
 - Being devout and God-fearing means that even though Cornelius and his family liked God, they didn't fully commit to being Jewish (that means no circumcision!). How did God view Cornelius?
 - Do some quick research using a map from the time of Acts. Where was Cornelius based? Where was Peter?
- To Act on today:
 - In v4, the angel says to Peter that his prayers and gifts are a *memorial* offering before God. Back in Leviticus 2, we see what the memorial offering actually was: in Leviticus, the Israelites were meant to bring fine flour as a memorial offering, presenting it with oil and salt. The purpose of this offering was to be one of three offerings presented to God. The first offering (Leviticus 1) was the offering of

drawing near to God, or the approach offering. The second offering (Leviticus 2) was the memorial offering, the offering which caused a “pleasing aroma to the Lord.” The memorial offering was a cry to God to remember you as one of his people. And the third offering (Leviticus 3) was the fellowship or peace offering, which was an animal like the approach offering, but unlike the approach offering, wasn’t to be completely burned up. Instead, parts of it were to be eaten (Leviticus 19:5-8) to demonstrate the fellowship that God’s people had with God. Cornelius’ actions of service to God were a memorial offering - an appeal to God to see him as one of his people. Through Jesus, we today are God’s people. Thank God today that he knows you as one of his people. If you have time, check out Hebrews 13:15 and Philippians 4:18, and think about what kind of “memorial offering” we can make today as God’s people.

Day 52

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 10:9-23
- Answer the following questions:
 - What appeared on the sheet that Peter saw from heaven?
 - Check out Leviticus 11:1-8, 29-31, 41-45. Peter would have been familiar with these passages. Why do you think he reacted how he did when God told him to kill and eat?
 - Why do you think God gave Peter this vision?
- To Act on today:
 - While food laws don’t seem like a big deal to us today, they were huge for the Jewish people and for Jewish Christians. There’s too much to cover in such a short amount of time, but suffice it to say that the laws about what was clean and what was unclean were there in part to call God’s people to realise that *all* of life was about serving God. Whether in what we eat, or what we wear, or how we react when sick, or when having children, or when facing death. Everything in our lives is about serving God. This is the core of it, so much so that Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:31-33, ³¹ *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* ³² *Give no offence to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God,* ³³ *just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved.*” As a follower of Jesus today, you might not need to spend too much time thinking hard about what you’re eating. But do you treat every part of your life as something to serve God? Today,

start by giving thanks to God for food, and asking him to help you to serve him as you eat and drink. All of life is about serving God.

Day 53

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 10:24-35
- Answer the following questions:
 - How did Cornelius respond to Peter's arrival? How did he prepare for Peter to come?
 - How do you think Peter felt when he walked into a room filled with Gentiles? Why do you think he felt that way?
 - What was Cornelius' attitude to hearing the news about Jesus from Peter?
- To Act on today:
 - Cornelius knew that God had something big and important to tell him. Too big and important for Cornelius to keep to himself; this was news for everyone. And he made sure that everyone he could get to come was able to come and hear God's message alongside him. The news about Jesus is too important to keep to ourselves. Not only that, but Cornelius worked hard to prepare for Peter to come. Admittedly, no one at church is on the same level as an apostle! But when it comes to inviting people to an evangelistic event, or over to your house to talk about Jesus, how do you feel? Check out the church calendar. What events or services are coming up that could be a good opportunity to invite one of those three friends you're praying for to come and hear about Jesus? If there are none, what event could you run out of your home? (That's not to say events are the only way to do evangelism!). Plan for this. When will you invite them? What will you say when you invite them? Put this into practice today.

Day 54

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 10:36-48
- Answer the following questions:
 - In verse 34, we read that Peter *began* to speak to tell them the good news. What things did he tell Cornelius and co. about Jesus?
 - What interrupted Peter while he was speaking?
 - What astonished the Jewish Christians who were with Peter?
- To Act on today:
 - Peter makes a key statement here in v47: "They have received the Holy Spirit *just as we have*." This gives us a clue as to what it meant that the Gentiles were

speaking in tongues and praising God. Look back at Acts 2:4-12 to see where Peter and many Jewish believers received the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. Speaking in tongues meant declaring the praises of God because of what he had done through Jesus, and declaring them in other *human* languages which were recognisable. And the Gentiles received them in the same way! As Peter said in v47, they had received the Holy Spirit. God accepted them without them having to become Jewish, and God gave them irrefutable proof. Why do you think this is important? (It is! It'll be repeated a couple of times in Acts).

Day 55

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 11:1-18
- Answer the following questions:
 - How did some of the believers in Judea respond to hearing about Gentiles becoming Christian?
 - How does Peter defend his actions?
 - How do you think the Jewish Christians felt to hear that God accepted Gentiles into his family through repentance?
- To Act on today:
 - "So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God's way?" (v17). Are there hoops you're tempted to think others need to jump through before they can "really" become Christians? Ask God today to help you see hurdles you place in others' way before accepting them as members of his family.

Day 56

- Church Service/Youth Group - Passage Covered: _____
- What was the talk about?: _____

- What do I need to change? _____

Week 9

Day 57

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 11:19-30
- Answer the following questions:
 - Recite Acts 1:8 today. Now look back at Acts 8:1,4. How has the good news about Jesus spread in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth?
 - How does the church in Jerusalem respond when they hear about the growing numbers of Christians in Antioch?
 - How did the church in Antioch respond to the prophecy of a famine which would particularly affect poor Jewish Christians in Judea?
- To Act on today:
 - Speaking practically, what does it look like for you as a member of your church to care for Christians who are more materially poor than you are (as Antioch did for Judea)? To care for Christians who are more leadership poor than you are (as Jerusalem did for Antioch)? What role do you play in this? Talk to your pastor or small group leader today, and find out. Ask what you can do to get more involved. Maybe it looks like praying for a partner missionary who is involved in a more leadership poor part of the church than Adelaide. Or maybe it looks like financially partnering with a church that is less financially well off than your current one (such as a church associated with Bush Church Aid). Follow this up today.

Day 58

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 12:1-19
- Answer the following questions:
 - King Herod Agrippa I (who ruled in Jerusalem from 41-44 AD) was the grandson of Herod the Great (King from 37-4 BC) - the Herod who tried to kill Jesus as an infant. How did Herod Agrippa I react to the leaders of the church? What kind of leader is Herod?
 - How did Peter escape from Herod?
 - John, who is called Mark (the same one who wrote down Mark's Gospel), makes his first official appearance in passing here in v12. What do we find out about Mark's family?
- To Act on today:
 - James, the brother of John, one of Jesus' twelve disciples, and one of the tight-knit circle of three disciples who went with Jesus and saw him transfigured, and

who were asked by Jesus to pray when he was in the garden of Gethsemane, is dead. No extended information. We read v2, and find out that Herod Agrippa I put him to death by the sword for political points (v3). God didn't save James this day. And yet, God saved Peter! This is an important point for us to see through the Bible: God doesn't always save us from disease, or from suffering, or from death. Sometimes he does, such as with Peter, and sometimes he doesn't, like with James. It's not like Peter was loved more by Jesus than James! Both were his closest mates. Which means that we should definitely pray, like Peter did, and ask God to save us from danger. And we should also know that God is the one who is in control, and whether or not he chooses to save us, he is good and is our God. How do you feel when you think about this? Pray to God today, and ask him to prepare your heart for when you suffer, that you will trust him no matter what.

Day 59

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 12:20-24
- Answer the following questions:
 - What was going on between Herod Agrippa I and the people of Tyre and Sidon?
 - How did Herod respond when the people worshipped him?
 - How did Herod's opposition to the church growing end up? Was God's church destroyed?
- To Act on today:
 - This account of Herod Agrippa I's death is also talked about by a Jewish historian, Josephus - why not take some time to look it up today? In both Luke and Acts, Luke works hard to provide the historical details surrounding the events, and this is one such case. Do you feel confident in the historicity of the Bible? This week, why not get your hands on a book like Scott Petty's Little Black Book *The Bible*? Or check out the Centre for Public Christianity's website, and look for videos about the trustworthiness of the Bible. Work to grow in your trust in God's Word.

Day 60

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 12:25-13:3
- Answer the following questions:
 - What mission were Barnabas and Saul working on when they went to Jerusalem? (hint: check out 11:30)
 - In 13:1, we hear about Herod the Tetrarch. This was Herod Antipas, the same Herod who was at Jesus' trial in Luke 23:6-12 and the same Herod who killed

John the Baptist (Mark 6:14-29). He was one of Herod the Great's sons. What does this tell us about Manaen's social status?

- What does the Holy Spirit call for the church in Antioch to do?

- To Act on today:

- *Fasting*. It's written as a throw-away fact which we can easily skip over. But fasting was an important part of worshipping God for all Christians (e.g. check out Matthew 6:16-18). Have you ever fasted? Not in a "I need to skip meals before getting a procedure done" kind of way, nor in a "I got caught up watching TV/playing video games and didn't even realise I skipped a meal" way. Fasting by planning ahead for a day (or part of a day) when you can fast. Fasting by, when you are hungry, using that physical appetite to drive you to pray and worship God. Fasting by reminding yourself that you don't live by food alone, but by God's Words which give life (Deuteronomy 8:3 and Matthew 4:4). Fasting to teach yourself that Jesus is the true bread of life (John 6:35-40), who will sustain you. Talk to your small group leader and ask them to fast for a part of a day with you. Set the date. And keep it. Practically, plan not to physically exert yourself when fasting. Be conscious of any health problems too! And use this time deliberately to pray, to read God's Word, and to worship him.

Day 61

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.

- Read Acts 13:4-5

- Answer the following questions:

- Where were Saul and Barnabas sent by the Holy Spirit?

- Look back at Acts 4:36-37. What did we find out about Barnabas back there? Where was he from?

- Who was with them as a helper?

- To Act on today:

- How does the Holy Spirit guide Christians? Maybe this is a question you have asked before. Or maybe you've asked a similar one: "What is God's will/plan/calling for my life?" Funnily enough, in Acts 9 we were told what God's mission for Saul was: to take the good news of Jesus to the Gentiles. Saul has a process for this, which always starts with going to the synagogues first with the gospel, before going to the Gentiles. But why start on Cyprus? We don't have any evidence that the Holy Spirit said explicitly "Go to Cyprus, then to Pisidian Antioch, then..." (even though he could have!). But we do know that Barnabas was from Cyprus originally. Chances are he had a heart for his homeland, and that he felt that they deeply needed the gospel. He was uniquely suited to take the gospel to his homeland.

How does the Holy Spirit guide us? He might guide us explicitly by saying exactly what he wants us to do. But he might also, and usually does, work through our own backgrounds and life circumstances to guide us to serve God more richly. So think about your life. Who might God have uniquely placed you to reach? Your ensemble band? Your classmates? Your co-workers? Ask God to help you see, and to take up these opportunities. You can bet that it's God's will for your life to see you share the good news of Jesus with those around you in the circumstances God has placed you!

Day 62

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 13:6-14
- Answer the following questions:
 - Why did Sergius Paulus send for Barnabas and Saul?
 - How did God endorse Paul and Barnabas' message to Sergius Paulus?
 - Get out a map again, and track Paul and Baranabas' journey so far.
- To Act on today:
 - Why did John Mark leave Paul and Barnabas? They had only just started their mission! There are some possible reasons why he might have left. One could be that Saul (from here on in goes by the name Paul) was now all of a sudden the 'boss' of the mission journey instead of Barnabas (Mark's cousin). Or maybe he didn't want to go any further. Or maybe, having tasted what opposition could look like to mission, he decided it was too hard.¹ Whatever reason he had for leaving, it was very serious to Paul (we'll come to that later). For us today, there will be all sorts of reasons we could have to stop serving God. Ask God to help you see these reasons for what they are: excuses not to serve him with all our lives.

Day 63

- Church Service/Youth Group - Passage Covered: _____
- What was the talk about?: _____

- What do I need to change? _____

¹ Marshall, I. Howard. *Acts*. TNTC. IVP: Leicester, UK; 1996: 222.

Week 10

Day 64

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 13:13-52
- Answer the following questions:
 - What stands out to you in these 40 verses? Why?
 - Recite Acts 1:8 again. Of Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, how far have Christians taken the good news of Jesus so far? Use a map if it's helpful!
 - How do you see the gospel of Jesus both attracting people and pushing people away in Acts 13:13-52?
- To Act on today:
 - Read 2 Corinthians 2:14-16. Here Paul describes how authentically presenting God's word will both attract and push people away. Are you prepared for this? Ask God to help you present his gospel faithfully. Ask God to help you see that some people will accept the good news as the fragrance of life, and that others will smell the stench of death in it. Pray that God will help you to trust him to take care of saving people as you present the good news of Jesus.

Day 65

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 13:13-25
- Answer the following questions:
 - Who does Paul address when he is speaking in the synagogue?
 - How does Paul show his audience he is trustworthy and someone worth listening to?
 - Why does Paul talk about John the Baptist?
- To Act on today:
 - Paul works pretty hard to show his audience that he is trustworthy and someone worth listening to. Jump back to those people you wrote down back on Day 4. What background stuff would help them to trust you as you share the gospel with them? What common history or cultural "story" do they belong to that you can bring up as you share the good news about Jesus with them? Plan this out today. Do extra research if you need!

Day 66

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 13:26-37

- Answer the following questions:

- How does Paul say the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem treated Jesus?
- What does Paul say is the good news?
- According to Paul, how is Jesus different from David? Why does this matter?

- To Act on today:

- It's interesting to compare how Paul preaches here in Pisidian Antioch to how Peter preached back in Acts 2:22-36 in Jerusalem. Back in Jerusalem, Peter said *"Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested **to you** by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him **in your midst**, as **you yourselves know** — this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, **you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.**"* (2:22-23) Peter doesn't pull any punches: he claims that the Jewish audience who were there on Pentecost were witnesses of Jesus' power and were accomplices in crucifying Jesus. On the other hand, Paul here in Acts 13 doesn't directly accuse his audience. Instead, his focus has been on how Jesus is the fulfilment of God's promises to his people through the prophets. When I was growing up, it was powerful and popular to talk about how *we* crucified Jesus. How when we sin, we are killing him on the cross. We are among the people who crucified Jesus. While there is an important truth for us to see in this, Paul *didn't* resort to this when he shared the good news about Jesus. Instead, he focussed on how God keeps his promises to his people through Jesus. For you today, thank God that he keeps all his promises in Jesus.

Day 67

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.

- Read Acts 13:38-43

- Answer the following questions:

- Through Jesus, what is proclaimed to Paul's audience?
- What warning does Paul leave his audience with?
- How did the congregation respond to Paul and Barnabas after they finished preaching?

- To Act on today:

- When it comes to sharing the good news of Jesus, how do you feel about the warning side of things? When it comes to warning people of what the consequences are for rejecting Jesus? There are helpful and unhelpful ways to warn people. But Paul doesn't beat around the bush. Instead, he lovingly presents a hard truth: if you reject the good news of Jesus, you will perish as a scoffer/

mockers of God (v41). So, what are the warning parts of the good news of Jesus that we need to share today? Think of those people you wrote down on Day 4. Have they heard the warning for what will happen if they don't accept Jesus as Lord? Pray and ask God to give you courage and wisdom to share this message.

Day 68

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 13:44-48
- Answer the following questions:
 - What happened on the next Sabbath?
 - How do the Jews (non-Christian) respond?
 - How do the Gentiles respond?
- To Act on today:
 - Throughout all of Acts, there is an underlying theme that we need to pay attention to, and it comes out here in v48: *"...all who were appointed for eternal life believed."* This theme is called "predestination" or "election." It means that God chooses the people he is going to save before they were even born yet. And from the rest of the Bible, we see that it's not because God knew they would accept the gospel. God actually chose them and made them able to accept the gospel of Jesus by sending his Holy Spirit into their hearts when they heard the gospel to help them to repent and believe. This isn't a doctrine/belief that's meant to make you afraid or unsure. Instead, it's a comfort for two reasons: 1) If you're a Christian, God chose to save you. He is in control of your salvation from start to end! No matter how uncertain you feel about the strength of your faith today, God has it covered. 2) God has chosen some people to be saved. This guarantees that when we share the good news about Jesus, there will be people who will accept it *eventually*. We don't necessarily know who they are; only God does. This prompts us to pray and to share the gospel with them. Talk to God honestly about this doctrine today. How does it leave you feeling? Talk to a pastor or small group leader if you're wrestling with this doctrine (or any doctrine!).

Day 69

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 13:49-52
- Answer the following questions:
 - Look again at Acts 1:8, this time side-by-side with a map of the Roman Empire in the 1st Century AD. Shade in all the parts that the gospel has reached so far.
 - How did the Jewish leaders respond to Paul and Barnabas?

- How did Paul, Barnabas and the other Christian disciples respond?
- To Act on today:
 - Revisit those friends you wrote down on Day 4. What do you think the next step looks like in inviting them to become Christians? Do they need to hear the gospel clearly? Ask God for wisdom. Ask an older Christian what they think would be the best next step in sharing your faith with your friend.

Day 70

- Church Service/Youth Group - Passage Covered: _____
- What was the talk about?: _____

- What do I need to change? _____

Week 11

Day 71

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 14
- Answer the following questions:
 - What stands out to you in these 28 verses? Why?
 - Rehearse Acts 1:8 again from memory. Of Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, how far have Christians taken the good news of Jesus so far?
 - What differences do you notice between Lystra and Iconium? What similarities do you notice?
- To Act on today:
 - When proclaiming the gospel to different groups of people, we need to use different strategies. Paul and Barnabas in Iconium, which had a Jewish population and a synagogue to go with it, were able to preach the gospel and to do signs and wonders (e.g. healing people) to confirm their message, and people understood that it was from God. However, when they got to Lystra (which wasn't very Jewish at all) they tried to perform signs and wonders (when Paul healed this man) and people *didn't* understand that it was from God. In fact, as Gentiles who were pagans, the people of Lystra believed that Paul and Barnabas were Hermes and Zeus respectively, two of the Greek gods come down in human form. They performed the same signs and wonders, and yet had very different consequences! When it comes to us today, we need to think clearly about who we're presenting the gospel to. What do they need to know? What, if we say it or did it, would be taken the wrong way? Look back again at the three names you listed on Day 4. What cultural or religious background do they have? What would help them to hear the gospel? What would hinder them?

Day 72

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 14:1-7
- Answer the following questions:
 - What did Paul and Barnabas do as usual in Iconium?
 - How did the people of Iconium respond?
 - How did God confirm Paul and Barnabas' message (i.e. the gospel)?
- To Act on today:
 - Expect opposition, and expect success. As we've seen time and time again through Acts, when the gospel of Jesus is proclaimed faithfully, there is a dual

response people have. Some people believe the gospel and become Christians. And some people refuse to believe and oppose you. Opposition and people refusing to believe doesn't mean you've failed or done the gospel wrong. Do you believe this? Pray today, and ask God to help you trust him as you proclaim the good news about Jesus. And then plan a time over the coming weeks when you will share the gospel with someone who doesn't know it yet.

Day 73

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 14:8-18
- Answer the following questions:
 - What do Paul and Barnabas do when they see the man who was lame from birth?
 - How do the crowds from Lystra respond to what Paul and Barnabas do?
 - How did Paul and Barnabas react to the crowds?
- To Act on today:
 - Paul's message is true, but perhaps isn't the most helpfully put. Read Acts 17:22-31, and compare Paul's message there (also to pagan Gentiles) with what he says to the crowd in Lystra. In both messages he talks about how there is only one true God who made everything and has, for a time, let the nations get away with not worshipping him. But the key difference between these messages is how direct Paul is in denying the existence of pagan gods. In Acts 14:15, Paul calls the pagan gods "worthless things," whereas in Acts 17:22-23 he affirms their religious behaviour, and in 17:29, he talks about how God is greater than idols. Admittedly, Paul is pretty keen to stop the crowds from sacrificing to him and Barnabas. But Paul actually ends up putting a barrier between himself and his crowds by not understanding the cultural and religious differences. So for us, here's something to act on: talk to a muslim, or a hindu, or a buddhist, or a catholic, and ask them why they do what they do. Maybe you have a friend you can talk to. Or maybe you need to get your small group leader to organise an excursion for your small group to visit a mosque/temple/church to ask a pastor there what people do and why they do it. Pray for your friends who you talk to. Ask God to help you to share his word with them in a way so that they can hear it.

Day 74

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 14:19-20
- Answer the following questions:
 - Who won the crowd over?

- What did the crowd do to Paul?
- Where did Paul and Barnabas go after they were in Lystra?
- To Act on today:
 - Read 2 Corinthians 11:16-33. What kinds of dangers was Paul exposed to during his ministry? Can you see where he refers back to Acts 14? In 2 Corinthians 11:30, Paul says, *"If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness."* What about you? Do you feel tempted to boast in things that make people think "Wow! They are really impressive/strong"? Like Paul, Christians are called to boast in Jesus and what he has done. Which means recognising that we are weak and unimpressive people. Paul looks back on being attacked in Lystra as one of many things that remind him just how weak he is, and how much he needs Jesus to lead him and work through him. Today, write down for yourself a reminder that you need God - that you depend on him for everything. Write down what Jesus has done for you that shows you that you are weak and need him. Then thank God for his strength.

Day 75

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 14:21-25
- Answer the following questions:
 - What happened in Derbe?
 - What message did Paul and Barnabas preach to the disciples in Lystra, Iconium and Pisidian Antioch? Why did they preach this message?
 - How did Paul and Barnabas appoint elders for the churches in Lystra, Iconium and Pisidian Antioch?
- To Act on today:
 - Appointing elders (or overseers) is one of Paul's big tasks for every church in every town. Elders are the leaders of each church, meant to shepherd God's people under their care. Many elders are responsible for preaching/teaching the word of God. And elders are responsible for protecting the church from false teaching. Today, depending on which church is your home church, you might not officially have "elders" but will have pastors. Or maybe you have a leadership team of teaching elders and non-teaching elders. Whatever it looks like, your church probably has someone or a group of people responsible for these things. Thank God for these men and women who lead in the church. And pray for them. Send them a message or an email today, asking how you can pray for them as they lead God's people.

Day 76

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 14:26-28
- Answer the following questions:
 - Where do Paul and Barnabas go after they are finished in Lystra, Derbe, Iconium, Pisidian Antioch, Pamphylia, and Perga? Check out the map!
 - Back in Acts 13:2-4, we saw that Paul and Barnabas were called by the Holy Spirit to do a particular work, taking them through Cyprus and the region of Galatia. What does Acts 14:26 say about this work?
 - What do Paul and Barnabas do when they arrive back in (Syrian) Antioch?
- To Act on today:
 - Paul and Barnabas had been set aside as missionaries from the church in Antioch
 - we saw this back in Acts 13. And one of the most important things about missionaries is that the sending church partners with them financially, in prayer and in practical support. This partnership means that when Paul and Barnabas returned, they shared with the church who sent them what God had done through them, and together they can give thanks for God's grace and his work through the church and their partner missionary. This is what we continue to do today! Who are your church's partner missionaries? Where in the world are they serving? When will they next be in town to hear about what they've been doing? Today, go through this process for just one of your church's missionaries. Look up the country they are serving in on the Operation World or Open Doors website (or book). Pray for this country. Pray for your link missionary. And plan for the next time they're in town to hear how God is working through them.

Day 77

- Church Service/Youth Group - Passage Covered: _____
- What was the talk about?: _____

- What do I need to change? _____

Week 12

Day 78

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 15:1-35
- Answer the following questions:
 - What stands out to you in these 35 verses? Why?
 - What is the big problem facing the church right now in Acts?
 - How does the church resolve this problem?
- To Act on today:
 - Acts 15 is one of those super-important chapters in the history of God's work in his people. There is a problem so big facing the church that it can't be resolved by any one person. In fact, it's such a big problem that, unless resolved, the church would be split or even destroyed. We'll look more at this problem over the rest of this week. But the way the church sets about resolving this problem is by calling a council. Calling for the elders and apostles in Jerusalem to meet together and consider the Bible and God's work in saving people. The Council in Jerusalem is important because it sets the precedent for the church that sometimes big decisions need to be made by getting together the leaders of churches from all over the world. And in the history of the church, we have had many of these Councils. Back in the 4th Century, there was a big heresy going around called "Arianism," which claimed that Jesus wasn't as important as God the Father, but was a lesser God. This was such a big problem and many Christians were confused about it. So the Council of Nicaea happened, in which elders from churches all over the world got together to resolve it. There were lots of points discussed at the Council of Nicaea, but one of the best things we have from Nicaea today is the Nicene Creed. Today, look up the Nicene Creed, and say it out loud. If there's anything in it you don't understand, chat about it with your small group leader.

Day 79

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 15:1-4
- Answer the following questions:
 - What were people from Judea teaching Gentile Christians in Antioch?
 - How did Paul and Barnabas react?
 - What did Paul and Barnabas share with the churches in Phoenicia and Samaria?
How did the churches react to this?
- To Act on today:

- These people who came from Judea are described in Acts 11:2 and Galatians 2:12 as the “circumcision party/group” (sounds like a terrible political party!). There seems to be two different groups going around at this point: 1) the circumcision party, who said that Gentile Christians had to keep the Jewish law (i.e. be circumcised) when they became Christians (i.e. it’s part of being a Christian to follow God’s law), 2) Judaisers, who said that Gentiles weren’t really saved until they were circumcised (i.e. Jesus’ death on the cross is no good to you unless you are circumcised). These Judaisers might be the ones in Acts 15:1 and are the ones described in Galatians. The two critical questions for the Church were “what do people have to do to be saved?” and “what is helpful for Gentile Christians to do to have real fellowship with Jewish Christians?” We’ll see how the Council in Jerusalem goes in discussing the second question later this week. For now, though, how would you answer those the first question? What do people have to do to be saved? That’s a gospel question. Answer using as much of the Bible as you can. What do the three people you are praying for from Day 4 need to do to be saved? Do they know this?

Day 80

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 15:5-11
- Answer the following questions:
 - What problem is put before the Council in Jerusalem by the circumcision party people?
 - Peter repeats (again!) what happened when he went to Caesarea to proclaim the gospel in Cornelius’ house. What facts does Peter bring up from this time?
 - How does Peter say we are saved, whether Jewish or Gentile?
- To Act on today:
 - Here we see Peter address that first question for the Council in Jerusalem: what do people have to do to be saved? And Peter claims that keeping the law of Moses was “...*a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear.*” The law, although it promised life for the one who kept it, was impossible to keep. Not because the law was bad. But because humans are sinful. And even though God provided a system for forgiveness - sacrifices - people even failed to follow through on the sacrifices properly! Peter’s point is clear: if people are saved by how well they keep the law, then no Jewish Christian is saved! Praise God today for the grace of our Lord Jesus, who saved you despite your failure to keep God’s

law. Write down how this grace makes you feel. Sing or listen to a song if it's helpful as you thank God.

Day 81

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 15:12-21
- Answer the following questions:
 - What did Paul and Barnabas share with the Council?
 - James (Jesus' half-brother, and author of the letter of James) was the senior elder in the church in Jerusalem. How does he show that God always planned to save Gentiles?
 - What things does James say Gentile Christians need to avoid?
- To Act on today:
 - As was mentioned earlier, the two big questions the Council in Jerusalem needed to address were "what do people have to do to be saved?" and "what is helpful for Gentile Christians to do to have real fellowship with Jewish Christians?" Even if Jewish Christians recognised Gentile Christians were saved by grace alone, there is still a big issue: Christ died for one Church, not two. Christian Jews and Christian Gentiles are meant to call each other "brother" and "sister." They are meant to share life together. They are meant to pray together. They are meant to eat the Lord's Supper together. But how can they do any of this when Christian Jews have strict laws they still follow about purity and cleanness? How can they eat dinner together when the Gentile Christian has roast beef that was sacrificed to Artemis yesterday up at the temple, with some blood trickling down? So James and the Jerusalem Council agree to ask Gentile Christians not to eat food sacrificed to idols, or blood, or strangled animals (i.e. non-kosher), and not to participate in sexual immorality (a requirement for all Christians anyway, but one which was very tied up with the pagan Gentile way of living). Not because these things would save the Gentile Christians. Instead, to make sure Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians could share life and church together. What about you? What things does your church do to promote fellowship? Have a think about this today. Maybe shoot your pastor an email and ask them what they think your church does to help people from different backgrounds fellowship together.

Day 82

- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 15:22-29
- Answer the following questions:

- Who did the apostles and elders at the Council of Jerusalem decide to send their letter with?
- Who did they write to?
- How does this answer the big problems facing the church in Antioch?
- To Act on today:
 - When it comes to making decisions and thinking about God's plans for your life, v28 is a great one to look at. *"It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us..."* In other words, the Council in Jerusalem worked hard. They used their reasoning and their understanding of God's word. They looked at the evidence. And based on all their thinking and praying, they decided what they would do. So when it comes to making plans for your life: who do you talk to? How are you reading God's word? How are you praying? God doesn't usually grab people by their ankles and drag them into a special job. God normally helps us by the church around us, and by the gifts he has given us, and by our own thinking, to direct us in serving him. What do you think God wants you to do with the rest of your life?

Day 83

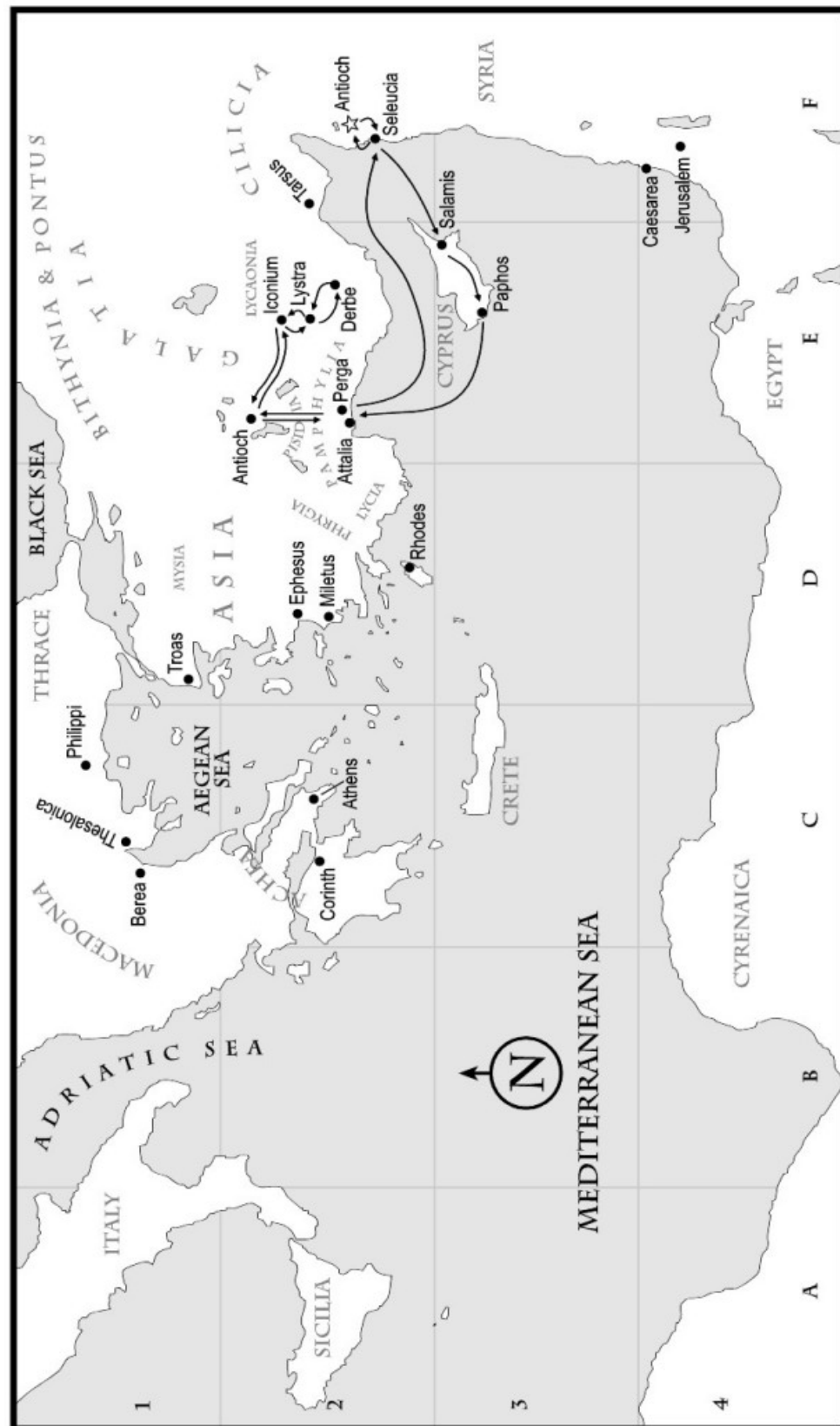
- Pray; ask God to help you hear what he's saying today.
- Read Acts 15:30-35
- Answer the following questions:
 - How did the church in Antioch respond to the letter from the Jerusalem Council?
 - What did Judas and Silas do in Antioch?
 - What did Paul and Barnabas continue to do in Antioch?
- To Act on today:
 - This is more or less a good half-way point in the book of Acts for us to stop and take stock of what God has done so far. What has God been teaching you from his word in Acts? How far has the gospel spread? Reflect today, and give thanks to God for his word.

Day 84

- Church Service/Youth Group - Passage Covered: _____
- What was the talk about?: _____

- What do I need to change? _____

Appendix 1: A Map of Acts 1-15



Biblical Studies Press. *The NET Bible First Edition Notes*. Biblical Studies Press, 2006.
Map of Paul's First Missionary Journey

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This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

