

This term we will be looking through the first 9 chapters of Acts

Our **Big Idea**

The good news of the risen King Jesus leads to the formation of communities where individuals from various backgrounds are treated with equality as they pledge their allegiance to Jesus and live according to his teachings.

Our small groups will look through the text, Acts 1-9, during the week PRECEDING our Sunday service. So when we gather on Sunday to hear God's word proclaimed, we will have already engaged with the Scripture and thought through some of the key points / implications.

The content should provide for around 30 minutes of reading / engagement / discussion; but obviously this can grow / be tailored as your group needs. Allow time each week for gathering, sharing – building community – as well as praying over the week that was and for opportunities for the week ahead.

We will be following the material provided by the **Bible Project**. It is free for usage by individuals and churches. Anyone who wishes to support the bible project – and I encourage you to do so – can give online as they are able. In some instances I (Jesse) have added questions for our weekly material based on the resources they have created.

Each week there are resources picked from their website – articles, bible readings, videos and questions which you're encouraged to engage in (you might like to do this in your own time) – you may even like to listen to the podcast series on the book of Acts as you commute to and from work (or potter in the garden).

<https://bibleproject.com/podcast/series/luke-acts-series/>

(starting at episode 5 and going all the way through to episode 13 – hey that's one a week for the next 9 weeks, if you want to go that way, then do it!).

There is also an app you can download in which videos, articles and more are available and totally worth engaging with! I find their material to be solid, reliable and most importantly focusing on a unifying narrative of the Scripture that leads to Jesus.

Throughout this material I've picked articles, videos and podcasts from various series. I'm hoping to do two things in this:

- 1) Whet your appetite for what the series that they sit inside are like – and encourage you to explore listening to whole series in podcast fashion
- 2) Open up your eyes to the treasure trove of free resources available here, and help you discover 'how to' engage with them to assist you in your own spiritual growth – and bring that into your small group, so you can consider using some of these in 2025 and beyond.

Wk 1 Mon Sep30 – Sun Oct 6

Read from the Bible: **Acts chapter 1**

Open – on your phone or computer the webpage

<https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-acts/>

Read the first two paragraphs on the webpage and then

Watch the first video embedded in the page – or click on this link directly:

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/acts-1-12/>

Question: Luke’s gospel is essentially Part 1. Part 2, “the acts of the Apostle” essentially are the ongoing Acts of Jesus, now by His Spirit, through the life of the apostles... how does renaming the book “The Acts of Jesus and the Spirit” change your reading of Acts ?

Read, the next section under heading **Acts 1: Jesus Commissions His Disciples and Ascends to Heaven** – or click on this link directly

<https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-acts/#acts-1-summary>

Questions :

1) Compare Jesus’ words in Acts 1:4-8 with John the Baptizer’s words in Luke 3:16-18 — remember that biblical authors often use chaff as an analogy for sin. According to John the Baptizer in this text, what is the purpose of fire? How is the purpose at work when the disciples receive God’s Spirit (see Acts 2:1-4, 2:38-39 Acts 2:1-4, Acts 2:38-39)?

2) Review Acts 1:6-8 What do the disciples want Jesus to do for their people in Israel? How does Jesus reply? What does he want them to receive and do while they wait for God’s timing?

3) Jesus spent 40 days teaching the disciples about the Kingdom of God. He instructed his disciples on what life in the Kingdom was like. How do we see this enacted in Jesus ascension and giving of the ‘mission’ (Acts 1:8) to the disciples?

Go deeper: the following article and video are well worth investing your time in:

<https://bibleproject.com/articles/the-ascension-of-jesus/>

Podcast: <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/acts-p1-startup-christianity/>

Week 2 Mon Oct07 – Sun Oct 13

Read from the Bible: **Acts chapter 2**

Open in your browser (phone or other) and **Read Acts 2-7: Pentecost in Jerusalem and the Birth of the Church**

<https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-acts/#acts-2-7-summary>

This is a summary of where we are going to be spending our time preaching and reflecting over the next four weeks. As we will be entering into our thanksgiving campaign during this term, we want to understand where the text is headed and the key themes that are looking out for, particularly around the great gift of God (the Spirit), the new people of God who together, constitute the new temple.

This week we have a sort of recap video – which deals with the theme of temple / holy spirit and is the catalyst for the formation of the new community (and explosive growth of the church).

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/gospel-acts-1/>

Questions:

1. What is one way this video encourages or expands your understanding of the book of Acts?
2. In the Hebrew Bible, God is repeatedly depicted as a fire. Why is this significant in the book of Acts?
3. In your own words, summarize the way Luke speaks of the two different temples (review 2:44-4:23 in the video)
4. In the Hebrew Bible, God's temple is the place where God dwells, and his presence is often depicted as fire. Notice the similarities and differences in Exodus 19:17-18. What is the significance of God's presence dwelling in many people instead of a single mountain or building?
5. Take some time to pray. Express your gratitude to Jesus. Tell him where you want to see his restoration in your life and community. Ask him for the courage to receive the refining power of his Spirit, so you can join in his restoration plans and spread his good news.

Go deeper: <https://bibleproject.com/articles/what-is-pentecost-and-why-is-it-important/>

Podcast <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/acts-e2-pentecost-and-expected-unexpected-spirit/>

Week 3 Mon Oct 14 – Sun Oct 20

Read from the Bible: **Acts chapter 3**

This week, we see the spectacular act of Jesus, by the Spirit, through the Apostle Peter and we read about how this results in a response – the spectre of persecution; but we're going to detour around the text perse.

This week we are leading up to our first thanksgiving Sunday. During thanksgiving we are invited to consider the generous nature of God – the ultimate gift giver.

As we consider God's CHARACTER (as a generous gift giving God) and the fact that he gives us the ultimate gift – Jesus; we're inviting you to participate in the go – deeper material and the pod cast. For those who find that too technically challenging 😊

Watch the video : <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/generosity/>

(the script is below the video on the same page for those who just want to read it).

Question: What are the things that the beggar was hoping to receive in our text today ?

What was it that the apostle gave him instead ? What was the greater gift ?

What did Peter then go on to proclaim that the people were 'heirs' of ? What is it that they ought to receive (vs 25-26).

We are encouraged to consider the generous nature of God – I implore you, push in, during your own time, into their material on generosity in the go deeper or podcast (below).

Go deeper: <https://bibleproject.com/articles/generosity-what-missing/>

Listen - Podcast <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/god-generous-host/> (note this is the opening podcast on a short series – five of; it does a great job on laying the platform for understanding God's generous nature).

Week 4 Mon Oct 21 – Sun Oct 27

Read from the Bible: **Acts chapter 4 and chapter 5**

This is our second Sunday in thanksgiving. During thanksgiving we are invited to consider the generous nature of God – the ultimate gift giver. Note particularly (as will be our focus in the coming Sunday) vs 4:32 – 5:11.

For those who are time poor this week – I strongly urge you to make the time to either listnen or just read the 'episode highlights' from the podcast section "Jesus the ultimate gift"... if nothing else... this is so good!

This week we are to consider God's holiness (another aspect of his character) and that his Holy Spirit is the gift given to His Church (both then, and now.) From our week 2

video, we were invited to consider the ‘new temple’ as the holy space that was equivalent to the old temple. We see how the same way the priests who didn’t take this holiness seriously died – on multiple instances – because ‘God’s holiness broke out and consumed them’.

Is it any surprise we see the same occurring here ?

From our go deeper article the following is explained:

Luke described the life of the early Church in the book of Acts, and he intentionally shaped his writing by using literary devices. In this blog, we’ll look at one example found in Acts 2:38-47. Here we see that Luke used a patterned structure of repeated ideas to identify four specific acts of devotion for which the early Church was designed:

1. Attention to God’s word and works
2. Shared participation and resources
3. Breaking of bread
4. Prayer and worship

Re read vs 4:32 – 5:11 and see for yourself – you might like to highlight 1,2,3 4 with different colours, and in fact, you’ll find this ‘paradigm’ occurring all the way through acts.

If that was the pattern for church growth... what does this mean we have to do (or change) if we want to see church growth ?

What does this mean for us, particularly with point 2, “shared participation and resources” ?

Go deeper: <https://bibleproject.com/articles/growth-of-the-church/>

Podcast: <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/jesus-ultimate-gift/>

Week 5 Mon Oct 28 - Sun Nov 03

Read from the Bible: **Acts chapter 6 and chapter 7**

Over the past two weeks we’ve considered God’s generous character and God as the ultimate gift giver. Our Thanks Giving offerings can be brought this coming Sunday – the third of November, where we will break bread together and remember the life of Jesus.

From Acts 5 forward we see the rising tide of persecution and in Acts 6 and 7 it reaches a high-water mark with the martyrdom of Stephen.

This week watch the video on martus (bearing witness)... remember Acts 1:8; you will be my witnesses...

Watch: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/martus-witness/>

What does it mean to ‘bear witness’ ?

The word *martyr* is a ‘transliteration’ of the Greek *martus* – in other words, we bring it straight over into English and so the word *martyr*, means witness; but we associate with those who like Stephen give their life for testifying to Jesus.

What empowered Stephen to speak with such boldness ?

How is it that Stephen – not a Jew, but from a Greek background – could have such a significant understanding of the whole Old Testament – and understand its critical theological themes (like the covenant that God made with Abraham)?

What does that tell us about our need to study God’s word today and not just ‘hope’ the Holy Spirit turns up ?

The last words of Jesus are a recapitulation of someone else ? Who ?

What pattern does his witnessing take ? what pattern does ours need to take ?

Notice the link between witness and church growth – the go deeper material this week is a continuation of last weeks – we are looking at the formation of the early church and how it grew... take the time to have a read and think it through.

Go deeper: <https://bibleproject.com/articles/fellowship-of-the-church-in-the-bible/>

Podcast <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/acts-e3-global-christianos/>

Week 6 Mon Nov 04- Sun Nov 10

Intergenerate is happening this Saturday at Emmanuel and Tammy Preston will be speaking with us on Sunday.

“Intergenerational ministry occurs when a congregation intentionally combines the generations together in mutual serving, sharing, or learning within the core activities of the church in order to live out being the body of Christ to each other and the greater community” Holly Allen and Catherine Ross (Intergenerational Christian Formation)

<https://www.intergenerate.com.au/>

Have a read of the following article

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/why-the-church-needs-intergenerational-friendships/>

Discuss the 3 application points in your small group and prayerfully consider where God is leading. What’s one thing you can do to be intentional in building intergenerational connections ?

Week 7 Mon Nov 11 – Sun Nov 17

Read from the Bible: Acts chapter 8

Throughout acts we see the bold witness (martus!) of Peter early in the book (Acts 2,3,4 etc), then Stephen, now Philip... and this seems to result in persecution which forces the disciples to flee... and so the movement of the Gospel continues.

Watch <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/gospel-acts-2/>

In the following section (chs. 8-12), Luke has collected a diverse group of stories that show how the mostly Jewish, Jerusalem-based community of Jesus became a multiethnic, international movement.

The first story is about Philip’s mission into Samaria, which is the land of Israel’s hated enemies. Many come to know and follow Jesus.

“In the world today, there are approximately two billion Christians. Of those, the largest contingent, about 530 million, live in Europe. Close behind is Latin America, with 510 million; Africa has about 390 million; and Asia has about 300 million. However, if we project that film forward into the future, the numbers change quite rapidly. By 2025, the title for the “most Christian” continent—the continent with the largest number of Christians—will be in competition between Africa and Latin America... If we move further into the future, however, there is no doubt that by about 2050, Africa will win. In terms of population distribution, Christianity will be chiefly a religion of Africa and the African diaspora, which will, in a sense, be the heartland of Christianity.” — Philip Jenkins, The New Faces of Christianity

Questions:

- 1) considering the global shift of the church, what does this mean for us as stewards of God’s resource?
- 2) What does it mean for us as we consider Australia as a multi-ethnic country which has nearly 50% of its adult population born overseas?
- 3) What are the implications for mission?
- 4) What are the implications for us as we gather as a church?

Go deeper <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/gods-global-family/>

(ok it’s a podcast also, but if you want to just read the summary, it’s a pretty helpful way of understanding what is happening with the text today and indeed throughout the formation of all these new communities in Acts).

podcast <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/series-gospel-p8-acts-e4-saul-subversive-christianity/>

Week 8 Mon Nov 18 – Sun Nov 24

Read from the Bible: **Acts chapter 9**

Next, we see the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, later and better known as Paul (ch9). He was the sworn enemy and even a persecutor of Jesus' followers until he personally met Jesus as the risen King. He went on to instead become a passionate advocate on Jesus' behalf.

In this text we have the only instance of the risen Lord Jesus 'appearing' post ascension and directly addressing someone – with direct speech.

In every other instance we see the disciples, and Paul, being lead 'by the spirit' of Jesus. What was so significant about this one off event ?

The content of Paul's preaching (vs 20-22) consisted of Jesus being, "the Son of God" and the "messiah" – essentially trying to prove from the Old Testament Scripture that this is who Jesus is.

Watch <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/messiah/>

What was it that Paul was proclaiming ? What does it mean for us to say Jesus is 'the messiah' ?

"Recall how Jesus saw himself as freeing people from slavery to the snake's influence (see Luke 13:16 and Acts 10:38). How does the rest of the New Testament describe that same freedom in the lives of Jesus' followers?"

If you want to **Go deeper** the study guide on Messiah is worth spending some time unpacking and work through the questions on page 10...

<https://d1bsmz3sdihlr.cloudfront.net/media/Study%20Notes/Messiah-Study-Guide.pdf>

Podcast <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/series-gospel-p9-acts-e5-nt-wright-interview-getting-know-apostle-paul/>