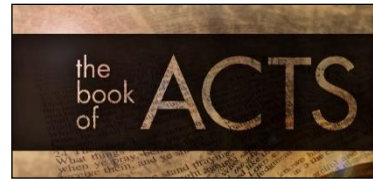


ACTS – Fall 2025 D-Groups

For Wednesday, September 17

Acts 2:42-4:37



The Big Picture - ACTS as a Whole

Up to this point in Acts, Luke has captured the transition from Jesus' direct ministry on earth (the Gospel of Luke through Acts 1:11) to His ongoing role through the Holy Spirit as His representative/agent and His Church. By 2:41, this new phase is now fully unfolding. All on the Day of Pentecost, Jesus pours out His Spirit as had been promised, empowering His followers for their mission; and, as a result, new people are being added to their number through conversions. In fact, it's common to hear Acts 2 referred to as "the birthday of the Church." To extend that metaphor, then, Acts 2:42 onward shows its new life as the fledgling community of believers finds its place.

From here onward - and especially in chapters 2-4, we're going to see a back-and-forth between the Church's community life together and its external mission in the world. Both parts matter in the "backstory" and should matter to us still today. In fact, both parts help contribute to the other in reciprocal fashion. Through the Church's community, the believers are strengthened and equipped for their mission, the work in the world flowing out of what happened together (as in 2:1-41, really). Likewise, through that external mission, the Church experiences growth as new believers become a part of the community and become invested in that life together. On and on it goes from there.

The Close-Up for September 17 - Acts 2:42-4:37

A note: now that we've arrived at this section, past the important preliminaries of the first two chapters, we're going to pick up the pace as there's a lot of ground to cover. For example, for this week, we're picking up in 2:42 and extending through the end of chapter 4. That means there is a bunch of material we're covering each week; in light of that, we'll be hitting the high points and providing more of a summary of larger chunks. ***As always, though, what matters most is reading the text itself (perhaps even 2-3 times).***

Some notes on the overall flow of this section:

2:42-47 ... a "summary statement" (we find these brief pauses along the way where Luke stops the action to add an important note - see also 4:32-37 and 6:7) in which we see the priorities of the early Church in their life together. They were "devoted to" - a word of deep commitment - the following: **(1) the Apostles' teaching, (2) fellowship**, an emphasis on a shared life as in vv. 44-45, **(3) the breaking of bread** - meals, particularly involving the Lord's Supper and **(4) prayer**, a key theme throughout Acts. These are still appropriate pillars today.

3:1-26 ... We see further evidence of the Spirit's work through Jesus' Name in this chapter. First, through verse 11, there's the miracle itself which Peter does "in the name of Jesus Christ" - bringing physical renewal as an expression of the Kingdom (similar to Jesus' own miracles). Then, that leads to another public message from Peter emphasizing Jesus as the power behind this in 3:12-26. Within the message, there is further focus on His death and

resurrection which they were witnesses of (as in chapter 2) and which the Prophets had foretold, as well as His future return for a time of refreshing and restoration. There's a further call to faith in Him and a response of repentance in this message.

4:1-22 ... This miracle and resulting proclamation of Jesus leads, not surprisingly, to a response from the Jewish leaders. This is the first indication of what becomes a prominent theme in Acts: **OPPOSITION** from authorities, in this case, the very Jewish authorities who were directly responsible for turning Jesus over to Pilate. As with Peter's message in chapter 3, the back-and-forth centers around Jesus' Name as the power behind the miracle. Peter again proclaims Jesus' death - for which they were directly responsible - and resurrection. In verses 11-12, there is a clear declaration of His place of importance as the *only* Name under Heaven that can bring salvation. The Spirit's empowerment is obvious (see 4:8) as are the boldness and impressiveness of Jesus' followers: unschooled, ordinary men who had been with Jesus ... and, it was obvious! The scene resolves with threats from the Jewish council and a resolute defiance from Peter and John (4:20).

4:23-31 ... The response from Peter and John after their release was to re-gather with the Church and pray. It's a powerful prayer appealing to God's sovereignty and, catch this, not so much for protection, but **for boldness and God's power to be on display**. A prayer that is answered in 4:31, then continually through their ongoing external witness.

4:32-37 ... Yet another "summary" statement" (as in 2:42-47) with a focus on community.

Some of our KEY THEMES specifically on display in this section (we're not repeating the chart every week; however, there are separate sheets available with it if you would like one):

The emphasis on JESUS ... an ongoing focus on His Name, His death/resurrection as the core message of the Church's witness and His involvement as the power behind what's happening.

The HOLY SPIRIT's activity (see 4:8 and 4:31 specifically).

The Church's COMMUNITY life together *and* its external WITNESS in the world ... their life together (2:42-47 and 4:23-37) bookends the mission focus in-between (3:1-4:22). That's an important interplay showing the connection between the two.

The ANTAGONISM/OPPOSITION from outsiders and boldness in the face of it (4:1-22).

The priorities of the early Church with a focus on PRAYER (see 2:42 and 4:23-31).

Some additional questions to reflect on leading-up to next week's D-Group:

- *How does this text continue to highlight Jesus as the ongoing center of the Church?*
- *Reflect on each of the key themes highlighted above. How can we bring forward and implement these elements from our "backstory" in Acts into the church's life today?*
- *What stands out when it comes to the interplay between the Church's community life together and its external mission? How should each feed/influence the other? What can that look like in the life of a church today where both matter? Reflect on each of the two.*

A Challenge for this Week: *find a way to be more intentional about investing in the together life of your church family/community.*