



# ***ADULT BIBLE STUDY IN BASIC ENGLISH***

## **Acts:**

**Telling God's Good News  
to Everyone**

Written by

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BAPTISTWAY

Dallas, Texas

**ADULT BIBLE STUDY IN BASIC ENGLISH**

**ACTS: TELLING GOD'S GOOD NEWS TO EVERYONE**

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# The Book of Acts:

## Telling God's Good News to Everyone

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*Adult Bible Study  
in Basic English*

### Unit 1

Lesson 1: Witnesses? Who? Us? (Acts 1:1-14)

Lesson 2: Given power by the Spirit? Who? Us? (Acts 2:1-16, 22, 24, 36-41)

Lesson 3: Helping others? Who? Me? (Acts 3:1-10)

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Lesson 12: How to serve God faithfully (Acts 20:17-37)

Lesson 13: How to carry out your mission in life (Acts 28:16-31)

## An introduction to the book of Acts

**T**he Book of Acts tells of a growing group of Christians. God helped them do some wonderful and mighty things. But they had some things to learn. They were not perfect, and there were some things they didn't understand.

These early Christians had to understand that the gospel was for all people. It was not only for Jewish people like them. It was for people everywhere. Before Jesus rose to heaven after the crucifixion, He said, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes into your life. You will tell about Me in the city of Jerusalem and over all the countries of Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

The disciples thought Jesus' command meant that they were to be witnesses only to the Jews. (A witness is someone who tells what they have seen.) As they grew as Christians, they understood what Jesus meant. Jesus meant something much more. He meant that they were to tell the good news of His love to everyone, not just to the Jews. The Holy Spirit led them to see that Jesus was sending them to be His witnesses to all people everywhere.

The Book of Acts tells how God helped the early church to share God's Good News with everyone. And if we look carefully, we will see that the Book of Acts tells us how we are to reach out to others. Some of us find it hard to talk about Jesus to friends or neighbors. And it can be hard to talk about Jesus with a stranger. But the book of Acts shows us that we must be ready to share Jesus' love with everyone.

The Bible verses for each lesson will help you understand the truths from the Book of Acts.



*Adult Bible Study  
in Basic English*

### Bible Text

Acts 1:1-14

### Memory Verse

Acts 1:8

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes into your life. You will tell about Me in the city of Jerusalem and over all the countries of Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.”

### Word List

**attorney:** a lawyer

**encourage:** to help

**international:** a person from another country

**jury:** people who give an answer to questions brought in a court case

**prosecutor:** public officer in court who brings charges against the one on trial

**testimony:** to tell what you know to be true

**witness, witnesses:** a person who tells what they have seen

## Unit 1 Introduction Who? Us?

**T**he Book of Acts is a most amazing book. When we open its first pages, we find a small group of people. They were followers of a crucified carpenter. They were members of a small secret sect. They must have been very afraid.

By the end of Acts we see the growth of their group. A small group of 120 people grew to many thousands. They boldly took the message of Christ to the known world. One of their leaders (Saul/Paul) preached in the capital of the Roman Empire (Acts 28:31).

This was the beginning of the most powerful movement in human history. How did such a movement begin? What can we learn from it? And how can we do the same? We find the answers in Acts. We see the courage of the first Christians. We can study how to follow in their footsteps.

These four lessons are meant to help churches. Think about how you are like the early church members. We will study:

Lesson 1: witnessing (Acts 1:1-14),

Lesson 2: being given power by God’s Spirit (2:1-16, 22, 24, 36-41),

Lesson 3: helping others (3:1-10), and

Lesson 4: being faithful (4:1-20).

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## Unit 1, Lesson 1 Witnesses? Who? Us?

**R**eny Madfarska is from Sofia, a city in the country of Bulgaria. She moved to Texas to become a student at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, Texas.

One day, Reny came to the **International** House, which is very near the college campus. People from many countries come to the **International** House. It is like a “home away from home.” They can study English at the **International** House. They can make friends. They know they are welcome. Sometimes, they study the Bible.

Reny met David and Courtland Hendricks. They were the host and hostess at the **International** House. They made Reny feel welcomed. She was glad to enjoy activities with other **internationals**.

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*This lesson was written by Carolyn Cree of Fort Worth, Texas.*

### Acts 1:1-14

- 1 Dear Theophilus, in my first writings I wrote about all the things Jesus did and taught from the beginning
- 2 until the day He went to heaven. He spoke to the missionaries through the Holy Spirit. He told those whom He had chosen what they should do.
- 3 After He had suffered much and then died, He showed Himself alive in many sure ways for forty days. He told them many things about the holy nation of God
- 4 As they were gathered together with Him, He told them, "Do not leave Jerusalem. Wait for what the Father has promised. You heard Me speak of this.
- 5 For John the Baptist baptized with water but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."
- 6 Those who were with Him asked, "Lord, is this the time for You to give the nation back to the Jews?"
- 7 He said, "It is not for you to know the special days or the special times which the Father has put in His own power.
- 8 "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes into your life. You will tell about Me in the city of Jerusalem and over all the countries of Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth."
- 9 When Jesus had said this and while they were still looking at Him, He was taken up. A cloud carried Him away so they could not see Him.
- 10 They were still looking up to heaven, watching Him go. All at once two men dressed in white stood beside them.
- 11 They said, "You men of the country of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This same Jesus Who was taken from you into heaven will return in the same way you saw Him go up into heaven."
- 12 The followers went back to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, which is close to Jerusalem.
- 13 When they came into the city, they went up to a room on the second floor where they stayed. The followers were Peter and John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Canaanite, and Judas the brother of James.
- 14 These all agreed as they prayed together. The women and Mary the mother of Jesus and His brothers were there.

Reny wanted to learn about Jesus. She began to attend the Bible lessons. One day Reny became a Christian. Her life was changed. Reny was like a new person.

Now Reny goes to school at **Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary** in Fort Worth. A seminary is a school where people study the Bible and learn more about God. Reny plans to spend her life telling others about Jesus. Her face glows when she talks about Him.

David and Courtland were also students at the Seminary. When they finished their studies, they moved away. Reny became the hostess at the **International House**. Now she has large groups of people from all over the world at her Bible lessons. She has become a **witness** for Jesus.

### Witnesses for Jesus

Jesus came to earth to build God's kingdom. When we believe in Him, we become His **witnesses**. What is a **witness**? A **witness** is a person who has seen something. A **witness** is a person who knows about something. A **witness** can tell others what they know. A **witness** can spread the news about God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Are you afraid to **witness** to other people? Some believers tell others about their faith easily. But it is hard for some of us. We feel that we are "on trial." But we are not.

Jesus is the one on trial: The Holy Spirit is the defense **attorney**. Satan is the **prosecutor**. The unsaved person is the **jury**.

Your job is to go to the **witness** stand and tell what you know. (A **witness** stand is the place in a courtroom where a witness is seated as he/she tells her story.) You must leave the results with God. You may hear the **jury's** verdict. But, you may never know what the **jury** decided. That is not up to you. Your job is to be a **witness**.

Jesus has called each of us to that **witness** stand. What will happen when you go there?

### God's holy nation

God's holy nation was Jesus' main interest. What is this

nation?

Jesus taught us to pray, “May Your holy nation come. What You want done, may it be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).

God’s nation comes when and where His will is done. When you and I make God our King, we enter His holy nation. When we lead others to do the same, we build His holy nation.

This is why Jesus came to earth: to build the holy nation of God.

### Jesus’ last words

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes into your life. You will tell about Me in the city of Jerusalem and over all the countries of Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

We cannot bring people to God by our own power. We must receive the power of the Holy Spirit. Think about those first Christians. They were a very small group. But they were given the task of bringing millions of people to Christ.

No beautiful buildings, no great preaching, no great music can show people their sin. Only the Holy Spirit can save their souls. Only the Holy Spirit can do that.

The Spirit of God helps us build His holy nation on earth. This is why prayer and worship are so important.

### Where do we begin?

The world is a big place. Where should we begin to share God’s Good News? The answer is easy: we begin where we are.

The early disciples started in Jerusalem. This was their home. Then they went into Judea and Samaria. Later, they went into the whole world. Then, they began their witness in Rome. Rome was “the ends of the earth” to them.

We begin where we are, with the people we know.

### What is your plan?

First, begin sharing God’s Good News today! Do not wait! The angels gave the Christians only a little time before they said, “You men of the country of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This same Jesus Who was taken from you into heaven will return in the same way you saw Him go up into heaven” (Acts 1:11). In other words, get busy!

Second, join others. Find other believers. Join them. Pray with them. **Encourage** them and be **encouraged** by them.

Third, invite others to join you in service. Ask God to show you the Christians He wants you to **encourage**. You may be the answer to their prayer, too.

### What does God expect?

You know that Jesus died for you. You know that God raised Him from the dead. You believe in Him as your Lord and Master. But you’re not sure what to do next. What does God expect of you?

You go to church. You serve any way you can. You give your money. You pray and study your Bible. What else should you do?

The answer is simple. God wants you to make His holy nation your highest goal. He wants you to be His faithful child. He wants you to help others make God their King. He wants you to be His witness in all you do. He wants you to begin where you are with the people you know. And He wants you to start now! Right now!

### Things to think about

1. What is your main purpose in life?
2. What should you do to make your life what Jesus wants it to be?



*Adult Bible Study  
in Basic English*

### Bible Text

Acts 2:1-16, 22, 24, 36-41

### Memory Verse

2 Timothy 1:7

“For God did not give us a spirit of fear. He gave us a spirit of power and of love and of a good mind.”

### Word List

**tornado, hurricane:** a great storm with strong winds

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## Unit 1, Lesson 2

# Given power by the Spirit? Who? Us?

**T**he people who believed in Jesus were given power. Then Peter asked the crowd of people to repent and be baptized. They could then receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, too.

What is power? This word has many meanings. It can mean the electric power that lights the darkness. It can mean your ability to do or act. Power means strength. It can mean control over others. Power can mean control over ourselves. Power is a powerful word.

Power is energy. A powerful person is a strong person. Long ago, the Holy Spirit gave power to the disciples. They spoke to people from many countries without an interpreter, yet everyone understood what the disciples said. That was because the Holy Spirit gave them power.

Today the Holy Spirit still gives power to Christians. But the Holy Spirit gives us power in different ways than what the disciples received. When I speak to the internationals in my English class, they do not always understand my words. We sometimes need an interpreter. But they know my love for them. They know what I do for them comes from my heart.

Jesus gives us the power to minister to people from all over the world. We need Jesus' power to carry out His ministry. In this study we will find the one thing we must do to be His witnesses: We must live in agreement with His Spirit.

This study will help you learn how to make this decision. It will explain why it is so important to your life and your witness.

### When were believers first “filled” with the Holy Spirit? (Acts 2:1-11)

The early Christians had not been “filled” with the Holy Spirit yet. They were still in Jerusalem because Jesus had told them to stay there. Everyone knew it was a holiday called Pentecost.

“Pentecost” comes from the word for “fifty.” This was a feast marking fifty days after the first fruits of the wheat harvest. It took place during the Passover (Leviticus 23:10, 15-16).

During Passover, people came to Jerusalem from all over the Roman

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*This lesson was written by Carolyn Cree of Fort Worth, Texas.*

### Acts 2:1-16, 22, 24, 36-41

- 1 The followers of Jesus were all together in one place fifty days after the special religious gathering to remember how the Jews left Egypt.
- 2 All at once there was a sound from heaven like a powerful wind. It filled the house where they were sitting.
- 3 Then they saw tongues which were divided that looked like fire. These came down on each one of them.
- 4 They were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they began to speak in other languages which the Holy Spirit made them able to speak.
- 5 There were many religious Jews staying in Jerusalem. They were from every country of the world.
- 6 When they heard this strange sound, they gathered together. They all listened! It was hard for them to believe they were hearing words in their own language.
- 7 They were surprised and wondered about it. They said to each other, "Are not these Galileans who are speaking?"
- 8 How is it that each one of us can hear his own language?
- 9 We are Parthians and Medes, Elamites and from the countries of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and in the countries of Asia,
- 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene. Some have come from the city of Rome. Some are Jews by birth and others have become Jews.
- 11 Some are also men of the countries of Crete and Arabia. They are speaking of the powerful works of God to all of us in our own language!"
- 12 They were all surprised and wondered about this. They said to each other, "What can this mean?"
- 13 But others laughed and made fun, saying, "These men are full of new wine."
- 14 Then Peter stood up with the eleven missionaries and spoke with a loud voice, "Men of the country of Judea and all of you who are living in Jerusalem, I want you to know what is happening. So listen to what I am going to say.

*(Bible verses continued on page 3)*

world. Pentecost was a day to celebrate a great harvest of grain. But on this day of Pentecost, it ended with the celebration of many people trusting Christ as Savior.

The believers were in much danger. The people who crucified Jesus were watching them. But Jesus had told them to wait there for the power He had promised to send (Luke 24:49, Acts 1:5, 8). So they waited.

What happened next changed the world forever. As the Christians were together in prayer (Acts 1:14, 2:1), they heard a great noise. It was like a **tornado** or **hurricane**. The sound filled the whole house.

The sound was one way God let the Christians know something different was happening. The sound of great winds meant the Holy Spirit was coming to the believers.

### How are we "filled" with the Spirit?

This "filling" was so important that Paul ruled it for all Christians. "Do not get drunk with wine. That leads to wild living. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18).

How do we become "filled?"

(1) Make Jesus your Lord. When we ask Christ to be our Savior and Master, we receive the Holy Spirit.

(2) Admit that you need the power of the Spirit. We can do nothing by ourselves. It is the Holy Spirit which makes anything possible.

(3) Stop sinning. To be "filled" by the Spirit is to let the Holy Spirit guide you. The Spirit cannot "fill" a sinful heart.

(4) Give your will to God. We must give God control of all our plans. We must give Him control of our lives.

(5) Ask the Spirit to control you. This must be done by faith. The Bible does not say how it feels to be controlled by the Spirit. We must ask for and receive it by faith.

(6) Do this every day. We only need to receive Christ once to be saved. But we need to let the Spirit "fill" our lives every day.

### Have you witnessed in the power of the Spirit?

When we depend on ourselves, we cannot do anything. But several things happen when we let the Spirit lead us. This is especially true in telling other people about Christ.

First, some people will be confused. They will not

*(Bible verses continued from page 2)*

- 15 These men are not drunk as you think. It is only nine o'clock in the morning.
- 16 The early preacher Joel said this would happen.”
- 
- 22 “Jewish men, listen to what I have to say! You knew Jesus of the town of Nazareth by the powerful works He did. God worked through Jesus while He was with you. You all know this.”
- 
- 24 “But God raised Him up. He allowed Him to be set free from the pain of death. Death could not hold its power over Him.”
- 
- 36 “The whole Jewish nation must know for sure that God has made this Jesus, both Lord and Christ. He is the One you nailed to a cross!”
- 37 When the Jews heard this, their hearts were troubled. They said to Peter and to the other missionaries, “Brothers, what should we do?”
- 38 Peter said to them, “Be sorry for your sins and turn from them and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and your sins will be forgiven. You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- 39 This promise is to you and your children. It is to all people everywhere. It is to as many as the Lord our God will call.”
- 40 He said many other things. He helped them understand that they should keep themselves from the sinful people of this day.
- 41 Those who believed what he said were baptized. There were about 3,000 more followers added that day.

understand. Do not let this upset you. The same thing happened to the first Christians. Everyone did not listen.

Second, some people will make fun of you. Jesus warned us: “If they made it very hard for Me, they will make it very hard for you also” (John 15:20b).

Third, we will gain courage when we witness to others. When you are afraid to tell someone about Jesus, ask the Spirit to give you His boldness. And He will. “For God did not give us a spirit of fear. He gave us a spirit of power and of love and of a good mind” (2 Timothy 1:7).

Fourth, we will feel compassion for others when we are filled with the Spirit. Compassion is the feeling we get when we are sorry for another person’s problems. We want to stop their pain. We want to help make things better.

### Have you seen the power of the Spirit?

When you give your witness to others, some will not hear. But many will. “When the Jews heard this, their hearts were troubled. They said to Peter and the other missionaries, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’” (Acts 2:37).

Many of those who hear the message of the Holy Spirit will come to know the Lord. And they will be happy, so they will tell others. The church will grow larger by the power of the Spirit of God.

### Ask yourself these questions

First, have you asked the Holy Spirit to fill you with His power? Have you done this today? Why not do it now?

Second, are you telling other people about Christ? If not, ask the Spirit to help you. Right now.

If you are not sure about all this, ask God to help you. Ask the Spirit to give you His compassion for those who don’t know Him. Someone will be very happy that you did.

### Things to think about:

1. We need Jesus’ power in our lives.
2. We must give God control of our plans and our lives.
3. We need to receive Christ only once to be saved. But we need to give Him our lives every day to be “filled.”
4. Ask the Spirit to give you His compassion for those who don’t know Jesus as Savior.



*Adult Bible Study  
in Basic English*

**Bible Text**  
Acts 3:1-10

**Memory Verse**  
Acts 3:19

“But you must be sorry for your sins and turn from them. You must turn to God and have your sins taken away. Then many times your soul will receive new strength from the Lord.”

**Word List**

**antique, antiques:** very old things which cost a lot or are special for other reasons  
**compassion:** a feeling of sorrow for someone’s trouble

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## Unit 1, Lesson 3

# Helping others? Who? Me?

**T**he Monday night after Christmas was a night like any other night. Our daughter, Janet, and our 17-year-old granddaughter, Cari, were at home in their computer room. They were having a good time talking to friends on the Internet.

Then, they heard the smoke alarm. Janet went to see what the problem was. Half the house was on fire. She called 911. Janet and Cari were able to get their dogs out of the house. They were able to move one car out of the garage.

Then the house was in flames. The fire marshal said that in 30 seconds they would not have been able to get out alive.

They stood barefoot in the cold December night. They watched their house burn. Janet’s jewelry, her grandmother’s **antiques**, everything in the house was gone. But they were not hurt. We thank the Lord for that.

The tragedy left the family in shock. So many things had to be done, such as finding a new place to live. Clothes and household goods were gone, so new things had to be bought. Some things can never be replaced, like her grandmother’s **antique** furniture.

At times like these, we realize God’s goodness in tragedy. God’s people came forward to help in many ways. A friend loaned them a motor home to live in. Janet’s Sunday School class gave Cari almost \$500 to buy new clothes. My husband’s Sunday School class took a collection, too. Janet works at a bank, and her friends there collected money, too. The people of God are the best people in the world. They are the first to give help when it is needed.

In this lesson, we will learn how Peter and John helped a hurting man. Jesus still helps people who are hurting. If we do what the disciples did, we are pleasing God.

### **“Beautiful Gate”**

Peter and John were going to the temple in Jerusalem for the afternoon prayer time. The Jews who lived near the temple went to three services—9:00 a.m., noon, and 3:00 p.m.

Peter and John were walking through the temple gate named “Beautiful” when they passed a beggar.

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*This lesson was written by Carolyn Cree of Fort Worth, Texas.*

### Acts 3:1-10

- 1 Peter and John were going to the house of God about three o'clock. It was the time for prayer.
- 2 Each day a certain man was carried to the Beautiful Gate of the house of God. This man had never been able to walk. He was there begging for money from those who were going in.
- 3 He asked Peter and John for money when he saw them going in.
- 4 Peter and John looked at him. Then Peter said, "Look at us!"
- 5 The man who could not walk looked at them. He thought he would get something from them.
- 6 Peter said, "I have no money, but what I have I will give you! In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!"
- 7 Peter took the man by the right hand and lifted him up. At once his feet and the bones in his legs became strong.
- 8 He jumped up on his feet and walked. Then he went into the house of God with them. He gave thanks to God as he walked.
- 9 All the people saw him walking and giving thanks to God.
- 10 They knew it was the man who had been sitting and begging at the Beautiful Gate. They were surprised he was walking.

They were not surprised to see him. Many beggars were there. This man was always at the gate. He was crippled since birth. He begged for help for over 40 years. Peter and John probably saw him many times.

Today was different. Peter and John looked at the man. They listened. Why? The answer is that the Spirit of Jesus "filled" them.

Many times Jesus showed **compassion** to those in need. Peter and John were guided by His Spirit. They could see this one man who needed help.

### The name of Jesus

Just seeing a person in need is not enough. We must do something to help. Peter and John did.

"Peter said, 'I have no money, but what I have I will give you! In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!'" (Acts 3:6).

The beggar had hoped for money (Acts 3:3, 5). But Peter and John had no money to give. They give him something better. They healed his legs. He was healthy. He could now earn his own money. The beggar began to thank God as he walked on his new legs. Peter and John healed the man by calling on "the name of Jesus" (Acts 3:6).

### Power in a name

What is this "name"? Why is it so full of power?

Jesus promised that when believers "are gathered together in My name, there I am with them" (Matthew 18:20). To speak in His name (Acts 4:18-20) means to speak for Him. So, to heal in His name means to heal by His power.

Peter and John had no power of their own. They could not heal this man's body or save his soul. But they knew Jesus could. So, in Jesus' name they made the beggar well. And the man was healed.

### **Think about it...**

What do you see?

Do you see someone eating lunch alone? Do you see the new neighbor near you? Do you see the student at school who does not seem to have a friend?

Jesus sees them. If you are "filled" with His Spirit, you will notice them, too.

**Think about it...**

When did you last help someone in pain?

When did you help someone in trouble?

Do you want to help others?

Ask Jesus to show you how and when to help.

This happened because two disciples saw the hurting man. Peter and John showed **compassion** to the man. They helped him by using the power Jesus gave them.

**We can do what they did**

Hurting people are still all around us today. They have all kinds of needs. Those

needs may be problems of the body. Their needs may be problems of the mind or soul.

But the answers are still the same. We must see the one person and his or her needs. We must trust the name of Jesus to give us power. We must touch people who are hurting. We can show **compassion** to the hurting. We can care for people just like Peter and John did.

And Jesus still helps hurting people today. He will do what he did for the crippled beggar. He will give them a new life. But we must do what Peter and John did: We must care enough to touch the hurting person.

**Jesus helps the hurting**

The people of God are helping my daughter, Janet. They are helping her to pick up the pieces of her life. Food, clothing, furniture—everything she needs is being brought to her.

The fire was a terrible thing. But Janet will be able to go on. The people of God are making that possible. Their goodness is unending.

Jesus sees you right now. He knows your name. He knows more about you than you know about yourself. If you call on Jesus' name, He will help your

hurt. And He will show you how to help someone else who is hurting.

**Things to think about**

1. Who helped you come to know Christ?
2. What things make a person "crippled" today?
3. What keeps us from seeing the hurting person?
4. Do we sometimes give money instead of giving ourselves to help someone? Why?
5. Do you want to become more helpful to others? List three things you can do to be more helpful to other people.



*Adult Bible Study  
in Basic English*

### Bible Text

Acts 4:1-20

### Memory Verse

Acts 4:12

“There is no way to be saved from the punishment of sin through anyone else. For there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we can be saved.”

### Word List

**cult:** a religious group whose beliefs are not based on the Bible

**persecution:** hurting people for their religious beliefs

**crisis:** a big problem we face in life

**courage:** to be brave during a hard time

**punish, punishment:** action taken against someone for what they have done wrong

**crucifixion, crucified:** A way to **punish** someone by nailing them to a cross. This slowly kills the person.

**Sanhedrin:** the highest Jewish court in Israel

## Unit 1, Lesson 4

# Always faithful? Who? Us?

**I**t is easy for some of us to be faithful to God. We live in a place where there are many Christians. We see many churches in our town. It is easy to be a Christian when you are one of many.

But it is not an easy thing to be a Christian when you are alone.

Have you ever had problems because of your faith in Christ? What did you do?

Hard times come to all people. It is the way of life. Facing problems makes some Christians bitter. It makes others better. Some people forget their faith during hard times. Others become more bold in their faith. The choice is ours.

### Expect problems (Acts 4:1-4)

The early Christian church was a great success. Three thousand people became Christians in one day (Acts 2:41). A crippled man was healed. The whole city was amazed at Peter’s preaching after this miracle (Acts 3:11-26).

But Jesus had warned them that everything would not always be easy: “If they made it very hard for Me, they will make it very hard for you also” (John 15:20). They soon saw that His words were true. They were true then, and they are true today.

Jewish leaders came to talk to Peter and John. The leaders were angry that Peter and John were teaching that Jesus rose from the dead. The leaders did not believe that this could happen.

Why were the leaders angry? They each had their reasons. The leaders had planned the **crucifixion** of Jesus. They thought His teachings were a danger to the nation. They did not want Jesus’ disciples spreading his teachings. They thought the Christians were a dangerous **cult**. They had to be stopped.

“So they took them and put them in prison until the next day because it was evening” (Acts 4:3). The day had started well for Peter and John. They had worshiped in the temple. They healed a crippled man. Many people believed. But the day didn’t end well.

Jail in those days was not like it is today. It was just a holding place.

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*This lesson was written by Carolyn Cree of Fort Worth, Texas.*

### Acts 4:1-20

- 1 The religious leaders and the leader of the house of God and some of the religious group who believe no one will be raised from the dead came to Peter and John while they were talking to the people.
- 2 They were angry because Peter and John had been teaching the people and preaching that Jesus had been raised from the dead.
- 3 So they took them and put them in prison until the next day because it was evening.
- 4 But many of those who heard what Peter and John said put their trust in Christ. The group of followers was now about 5,000 men.
- 5 The next day the leaders of the court and the leaders of the people and the teachers of the Law came together in Jerusalem.
- 6 Annas the head religious leader was there. Caiaphas and John and Alexander were there also and all who were in the family of the head religious leader.
- 7 They put the missionaries in front of them and asked, "By what power or in whose name have you done this?"
- 8 Then Peter, having been filled with the Holy Spirit, said, "You who are leaders of the people,
- 9 are you asking us today about the good work we did to a man who needed help? Are you asking how he was healed?"
- 10 You and all the Jews must know that it was by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the One you nailed to a cross and God raised from the dead. It is through Him that this man stands in front of you well and strong.
- 11 Christ is the Stone that was put aside by you workmen. But He has become the most important Stone in the building.
- 12 There is no way to be saved from the punishment of sin through anyone else. For there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we can be saved."

*(Bible verses continued on page 3)*

- 13 They were surprised and wondered how

Court could only take place during daylight hours. The next day, Peter and John could be set free. Or they could be whipped or killed. The **persecution** of Christians had begun.

A great promise of the Bible is found in the Old Testament book of Isaiah. "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. When you pass through the rivers, they will not flow over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned. The fire will not destroy you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, Who saves you" (Isaiah 43:2-3a).

Note that God says, "When" you pass through the waters. Not "if," but "when." All through the Bible, God's people face problems. And God is always there to help. Know that God will be with you in times of trouble.

My family has had many trials. We have had many illnesses. We have spent many days in the hospital. But all through our problems, God has been there. Because God has been with us, we have been able to go on. We knowing that God always watches over us.

### Speak boldly for Jesus (Acts 4:5-13)

Everyone has **crisis** times in their lives. It would be nice if we never had troubles. But we do. **Crisis** times ruin some people. But a **crisis** can be a time to show that we belong to Jesus. It can be a time to show other people the way to faith in Jesus. We must show how faith in Jesus helps us in crisis.

The next morning, "the leaders of the court and the leaders of the people and the teachers of the Law came together in Jerusalem" (Acts 4:5). These three groups made up the **Sanhedrin**. The **Sanhedrin** was the Jewish high court in the land. There was no higher court in all of Israel.

Peter and John were now to stand trial before the **Sanhedrin**. Peter and John faced the most important people in Israel. What would these two Christian men do? Would they try to save their lives? Would they promise to stop speaking in Jesus' name? Would they forget all that Jesus did and taught? What power did two simple fishermen have before the Jewish leaders?

Peter and John must have been scared. But they had a power greater than their own. Peter was "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 4:8). He spoke with bold **courage**. He told the leaders that their good works were done in Jesus' name. Peter

*(Bible verses continued from page 2)*

easy it was for Peter and John to speak. They could tell they were men who had not gone to school. But they knew they had been with Jesus.

- 14 They were not able to argue about what Peter and John had said because the man who had been healed was standing with them.
- 15 The religious leaders told Peter and John to leave the court so the leaders could talk together.
- 16 They said, "What should we do with these men? Everyone living in Jerusalem knows a powerful work has been done by them. We cannot say that it did not happen.
- 17 Let us tell them with strong words that they must not speak again to anyone in this name. This will keep the news from going out among the people."
- 18 Then they called them in and told them they must not speak or teach anymore in the name of Jesus.
- 19 Peter and John said, "If it is right to listen to you more than to God, you decide about that.
- 20 For we must tell what we have seen and heard."

reminded the leaders that they had crucified Jesus. He also reminded them that God had raised Jesus from the dead.

Peter began to preach. "There is no way to be saved from the **punishment** of sin through anyone else. For there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we can be saved" (Acts 4:12).

This was the same court and same men who **crucified** Jesus a few months before. But the people "were surprised and wondered how easy it was for Peter and John to speak. They could tell they were men who had not gone to school. But they knew they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

Peter and John had studied the Scriptures. Jewish boys were made to study the Jewish books of Law. But Peter and John had not been to the Jewish schools for harder studies. They were normal men. They were fishermen. And yet they spoke the truth about Jesus with wisdom.

Peter and John knew this moment was important. They preached the Good News of Jesus to the most powerful Jewish leaders in Israel.

### A few final thoughts

Every **crisis** is a chance to witness for Jesus. Are you before a "**Sanhedrin**" today? Give your **crisis** to the Lord. Ask Him to fill you with His Spirit. Trust Jesus to use your words and witness. He will.

The next time you think of giving up, look back to these verses in Acts. Before you give up, remember how God used the faithfulness of two fishermen. Then look to God. He will do it again. God will give you **courage** in your **crisis**.

### Things to think about

1. In times of trouble, will you be faithful? Will you ask God to help you?

2. God will be with you as you face trouble.



*Adult Bible Study  
in Basic English*

## Unit 2

Lesson 5: Let nothing stop the Good News (Acts 8:4-8, 25-39)

Lesson 6: Chosen to carry the Lord's Message (Acts 9:1-22, 26-29)

Lesson 7: Seeing a bigger world (Acts 10:1-5, 9-17, 23-48)

Lesson 8: Don't be afraid to change for God (Acts 11:1-4, 15-26)

Lesson 9: Love all people the way God does (Acts 15:1-22)



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### Bible Text

Acts 8:4-8, 25-39

### Memory Verse

Acts 8:37b

"I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

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## Unit 2 Introduction

# Let nothing stop the witness

**T**he lessons for this unit will help us want to share the Good News of Jesus with everyone. God's plan from the beginning was for His followers to take His message to all the world.

The church in Jerusalem was growing. Stephen was the first believer killed because of his bold faith. Other believers had to leave Jerusalem.

We learn in **Lesson 5** how God showed Philip what to do. Philip took the message of salvation to the people of Samaria. Then he took God's Good News to the man from Ethiopia (Acts 8:4-8, 25-39).

In **Lesson 6**, we see how God changed Saul. His job was to find, jail, or kill believers. Then he met Christ while walking down the road. Saul then wanted to do what God wanted (Acts 9:1-22, 26-29).

**Lesson 7** shows us how Peter learned that the Good News was also for those who were not Jews. God spoke to Peter in a dream and wanted him to share the Good News with Cornelius. Peter became sure that God could also save those who were not Jews (Acts 10:1-5, 9-17, 23-48).

In **Lesson 8**, we learn about church leaders in Jerusalem. They learned that God wanted them to take the Good News to people who were not Jews (Acts 11:1-4, 15-26).

In **Lesson 9**, the church leaders agreed that God wanted the church to reach out to all people, even non-Jews (Acts 15:1-22).

Much time has passed since the days of Acts. God still wants us to tell the Good News to people all over the world. We are to love all people as God does. We must let nothing stop us from telling God's Good News.

## Unit 2, Lesson 5

# Let nothing stop the Good News

**W**hen we love Jesus, we want all people to know about God's love. It will not matter that they are different.

My church has a Sunday Bible study for internationals. The group has people from five different countries. In other times and other places, their countries might have made them enemies. Now they study the Bible together. Some have become Christians. The class wants everyone from all countries to know about Jesus.

### From Jews to Samaritans (Acts 8:4-8)

The **Holy Spirit** was working. New believers were becoming part of the church in Jerusalem every day. Then, the enemies of Christ planned trouble for the church in Jerusalem. They killed one of the followers named Stephen.

*The writer of this lesson is Phyllis Merritt. She lives in San Antonio, Texas. She has taught English and Bible studies for internationals for 30 years. The first place she taught was in New York City. One of her dreams is to visit the home country of every student she has ever taught. Her email address is: JPMerritt1@cs.com.*

### Word List

**baptize, baptized, baptism:** a religious act for new followers of Christ

**Good News:** the Gospel. The news that God sent Jesus as the way for people to have their sins forgiven and to live with God forever.

**Holy Spirit:** Another way that God makes Himself known to men and women. God shows Himself to humans in three ways: as the Heavenly Father, as the Son of God (Jesus Christ), and as the Holy Spirit. In the Bible, the Holy Spirit is also called the Comforter, the Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit does God's work among the people in the world.

**persecute, persecuted:** to hurt or do painful things to a person because of their religious beliefs

### Acts 8:4-8, 25-39

- 4 Those who had been made to go to other places preached the Word as they went.
  - 5 Philip went down to a city in Samaria and preached about Christ.
  - 6 The people all listened to what Philip said. As they listened, they watched him do powerful works.
  - 7 There were many people who had demons in their bodies. The demons cried with loud voices when they went out of the people. Many of the people could not move their bodies or arms and legs. They were all healed.
  - 8 There was much joy in that city.
- 
- 25 Peter and John went back to Jerusalem after telling what they had seen and heard. They had preached the Word of the Lord also. On the way they preached the Good News in many other towns in the country of Samaria.
  - 26 An angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Get up and go south. Take the road that goes down from Jerusalem to the country of Gaza. It goes through the desert."

*(Bible verses continued on page 3)*

But Stephen's death did not stop the church from growing. The evil people would go into homes of believers and take away men and women. Followers of Christ were put in jail. The evil people **persecuted** the believers.

The believers were afraid. They had to leave their homes in Jerusalem. They left, but they took the message of Jesus with them everywhere. The church grew even though believers were **persecuted**. God used these hard times to send the **Good News** to new places.

Philip was one of the leaders of the church in Jerusalem. He had to leave. He went to the country of Samaria. Samaria was between Galilee on the north and Judea on the south. Samaria had a

different culture, a different religion, and different ways of doing things. Jews and Samaritans hated each other and did not trust each other. The Jews thought they were better than the Samaritans. They would have nothing to do with the Samaritans (John 4:9).

But Philip told the people in Samaria about Jesus. Philip told them that Christ lived, Christ died, and Christ arose. Philip told them that Christ wanted to be their Savior. The **Holy Spirit** gave Philip the power to heal and to make demons leave people. They were ready to believe (Acts 8:6-8). Many became followers of Christ. When they believed, they were **baptized**.

Some Samaritans may have heard about Jesus earlier from the woman at the well (John 4). Jesus had gone to Samaria and met a woman getting water from a well. Jesus showed His followers that it was good to care about people who are different.

Jesus also told His followers about the Good Neighbor (Luke 10:25-37). The Good Neighbor was a Samaritan man who cared for a man he found beaten and bleeding. Jesus did not say it would be easy to care for people different from us. But He promised to go with us and help us (Matthew 28:20).

The church in Jerusalem heard about Philip's work. They sent Peter and John to help Philip. When Peter and John were returning to Jerusalem, they also stopped to preach in many Samaritan villages (Acts 8:25).

The Samaritans became followers of Christ. Then they

### **Think about it...**

An angel from God sent Philip to the man looking for truth. That man was ready to receive the Gospel. God still sends people today to tell others about Jesus.

Can you think of a time you obeyed God and told someone about His love?

God could have made the angel tell the Ethiopian man about the Good News. But this is not God's way of working. It is His plan that men and women are to tell other men and women about what God can do.

*(Bible verses continued from page 2)*

- 27 Philip got up and went. A man from the country of Ethiopia had come to Jerusalem to worship. He had been made so he could not have children. He cared for all the riches that belonged to Candace who was Queen of Ethiopia.
- 28 As he was heading back home, he was sitting in his wagon reading about the early preacher Isaiah.
- 29 The Holy Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to that wagon and get on it."
- 30 Philip ran up to him. He saw that the man from Ethiopia was reading from the writings of the early preacher Isaiah and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?"
- 31 The man from Ethiopia said, "How can I, unless someone teaches me?" Then he asked Philip to come up and sit beside him.
- 32 He was reading the part in the Holy Writings which says He was taken like a lamb to be put to death. A sheep does not make a sound while its wool is cut. So He made no sound.
- 33 No one listened to Him because of His shame. Who will tell the story of His day? For His life was taken away from the earth.
- 34 The man from Ethiopia said to Philip, "Who is the early preacher talking about, himself, or someone else?"
- 35 So Philip started with this part of the Holy Writings and preached the Good News of Jesus to him.
- 36 As they went on their way, they came to some water. The man from Ethiopia said, "See! Here is water. What is to stop me from being baptized?"
- 37 (Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." The man said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.")
- 38 He stopped the wagon. Then both Philip and the man from Ethiopia went down into the water and Philip baptized him.
- 39 When they came up out of the water, the Holy Spirit took Philip away. The man from Ethiopia did not see Philip again. He went on his way full of joy.

received the **Holy Spirit**. This showed they were the same as other believers in Christ. Philip had learned how to share the **Good News** with people who were not like him.

### Philip meets one Ethiopian (Acts 8:25-39)

Philip had done a good job. It would have been easy to stay in a place where many people wanted to believe in Christ. It is not easy to leave a place where sharing about Jesus is going well. Change is not easy.

But God had a new job for Philip. God sent an angel to lead Philip to another person who needed Jesus. Perhaps Philip wondered why he was being sent away. He had to go past Jerusalem to the desert road between Jerusalem and Gaza. God had a man there He wanted Philip to meet. God saves one person at a time. Later, this one man returned home to tell people in his country about Jesus.

This man from Ethiopia had been worshiping God in Jerusalem. He was an important man, the treasurer of his country. Now he was returning to his country and trying to find answers in the Old Testament book of Isaiah. He did not learned about Jesus in Jerusalem. So God brought the **Good News** to this man. God brought the **Good News** to this man through Philip.

The **Holy Spirit** sent Philip to the wagon the Ethiopian was riding in. Philip could hear the man reading from the book of Isaiah. Philip asked if he understood what he was reading. The man said he needed a teacher to help him understand.

Philip knew he was sent to help. He said the book of Isaiah was written hundreds of years before Christ was born. Philip explained that Jesus is the Savior that Isaiah wrote about. Philip told the Ethiopian man about faith in Jesus.

This man wanted to become a follower of Jesus, and he wanted to be **baptized**. The Ethiopian man asked if anything could stop him from being **baptized**. He was not a Jew. He could not go to the temple in Jerusalem because he was a foreigner. He was a man who had been made not to have

### What is baptism?

Baptism shows that a person has become a follower of Christ. But baptism does not make a person a Christian. Baptism comes after the person knows he is a sinner, is sorry for his sins, asks Jesus into his heart, and tells others that Jesus is now his Lord.

When a new believer is baptized, he is quickly dipped under the water and brought up again. It is a picture of Jesus' death, burial, and being raised to life. Baptism is a way to show: (1) burying the sinful person, (2) rising to new life as Christ arose from the dead, and (3) having a new hope of eternal life and the return of Christ.

children. But now he was a believer, and none of those things mattered. They found a place with water, and Philip **baptized** him.

Then the Ethiopian man was “full of joy” (Acts 8:39). He started his journey back to his home country. Many people believe he began the first Christian church in his country.

The **Holy Spirit** took Philip to preach the **Good News** in other cities. The message of Christ was going to more and more places. When the followers obeyed, nothing could stop the **Good News**.

### And the Good News goes on...

I once taught English to students from Ethiopia. They had names like “Gabre-mariam” or Gabre-Eyesus.” These are names from the Bible. *Gabriel* is the name we use for one of God’s angels. *Mariam* is the name for Mary, the mother of Jesus. *Eyesus* is the same name as Jesus.

They had these names because they are Christians. The man from Ethiopia heard the **Good News** almost 2,000 years ago and returned to tell others. And through the centuries, the **Good News** has been told again and again in Ethiopia.

### Things to think about

1. Why was Philip so good at taking the **Good News** to different people and places?
2. Have you ever done anything like Philip did?
3. What does your church do to take the **Good News** to all people?
4. Have you ever taken the **Good News** to someone who was very different from you?
5. Do you know anyone who has taken the **Good News** to people when it was difficult?



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### Bible Text

Acts 9:1-22, 26-29

### Memory Verse

Acts 9:6b

“What do You want me to do, Lord?”

### Word List

**Messiah:** The promised Savior, Jesus. God’s Son. The same word in Greek is *Christ*. Jesus means *Savior*.

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## Unit 2, Lesson 6 Chosen to carry the Lord’s message

**G**od used Saul to carry the Good News to the people who were Jews and also to those who were not Jews.

Once, Saul had been an enemy of the Good News. Then he met Jesus on the road to Damascus. He became a great missionary. He wrote many books in the New Testament.

Every person who becomes a believer should want to share what happened to them with other people.

### An Enemy of Jesus (Acts 9:1-2)

Who was **Saul**? Saul was born in the city of Tarsus in country called Cilicia. Tarsus was a Roman city known for learning. Saul was a Roman citizen. His family was Jewish, and he followed the teachings of the Old Testament. He wanted to hurt anyone who believed that Jesus was the **Messiah**. Saul stood in the crowd and watched as people killed a Christian named Stephen (Acts 8:1).

Saul hated Christians. His job was to put them in jail. He wanted to destroy Christian churches. He received letters that gave him the power to go to the city of Damascus. He could bring back any Jews who believed in Christ. They would be beaten and put in prison.

Damascus was about 140 miles from Jerusalem. It would take about six days to travel there. Saul was glad to go to Damascus because he wanted to hurt the believers.

### Saul becomes a follower of Christ (Acts 9:3-9)

Saul wanted to get to Damascus quickly. He was even traveling in the heat of the noon sun. Suddenly, a very bright light came from the sky. The light was brighter than the sun (Acts 26:13). Saul fell to the ground (Acts 9:4). He saw the light and heard Jesus speak to him.

Jesus called out Saul’s name two times, “Saul, Saul, why are you working so hard against Me?” Saul had two questions, and Jesus answered them (Acts 9:5-6). First, Saul asked, “Who are You, Lord?” The answer came: “I am Jesus, the One Whom you are working against” (Acts 9:5). This meant that when Saul hurt the followers of Jesus, Saul was also hurting Jesus. The name of Jesus means “Savior.” Saul now knew that Jesus was the Savior.

Saul’s second question was, “What do You want me to do, Lord?” The answer came again: “Get up! Go into the city and you will be told what to do” (Acts 9:6).

When Saul got up from the ground, he could not see. Saul needed help to finish going to Damascus. His friends took him to the city.

Saul had planned to come to the city and take prisoners. Instead, he

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*This lesson was written by Phyllis Merritt. She lives in San Antonio, Texas. She has taught English and Bible studies for internationals for 30 years. The first place she taught was in New York City. One of her dreams is to visit the home country of every student she has ever taught. Her email address is: JPMerritt1@cs.com.*

Acts 9:1-22, 26-29

- 1 Saul was still talking much about how he would like to kill the followers of the Lord. He went to the head religious leader.
- 2 He asked for letters to be written to the Jewish places of worship in the city of Damascus. The letters were to say that if he found any men or women following the Way of Christ he might bring them to Jerusalem in chains.
- 3 He went on his way until he came near Damascus. All at once he saw a light from heaven shining around him.
- 4 He fell to the ground. Then he heard a voice say, "Saul, Saul, why are you working so hard against Me?"
- 5 Saul answered, "Who are You, Lord?" He said, "I am Jesus, the One Whom you are working against. You hurt yourself by trying to hurt me."
- 6 Saul was shaken and surprised. Then he said, "What do you want me to do, Lord?" The Lord said to him, "Get up! Go into the city and you will be told what to do."
- 7 Those with Saul were not able to say anything. They heard a voice but saw no one.
- 8 Saul got up from the ground. When he opened his eyes, he saw nothing. They took him by the hand and led him to Damascus.
- 9 He could not see for three days. During that time he did not eat or drink.
- 10 In Damascus there was a follower by the name of Ananias. The Lord showed him in a dream what he wanted him to see. He said, "Ananias!" And Ananias answered, "Yes, Lord, I am here."
- 11 The Lord said, "Get up! Go over to Straight Street to Judas' house and ask for a man from the city of Tarsus. His name is Saul. You will find him praying there."
- 12 Saul has seen a man called Ananias in a dream. He is to come and put his hands on Saul so he might see again."
- 13 Ananias said, "But Lord, many people have told me about this man. He is the reason many of Your followers in Jerusalem have had to suffer much."
- 14 He came here with the right and the power from the head religious leaders to put everyone in chains who call on Your name."

*(Bible verses continued on page 3)*

was the one who was taken. For three days, he did not eat or drink. He prayed.

Saul had planned to come to Damascus to hurt people. Now he did not want to hurt believers. He was Christ's follower now.

### Ananias helps Saul (Acts 9:10-19a)

Ananias was a believer who lived in Damascus. God gave Ananias and Saul dreams about each other. God told Ananias to help Saul. At first, Ananias was not sure it was a good idea to help Saul. Saul had been trying to hurt the believers. In the dream, Ananias was told to find a man named Saul. God told Ananias that Saul was expecting a man to come and help him see again.

Ananias told God, "He came here with the right and the power from the head religious leaders to put everyone in chains who call on Your name" (Acts 9:14). Ananias heard what God wanted him to do. He just wanted to be sure.

We are like that sometimes. We do not always have enough faith to believe that God knows what is best for us.

God said, "Go! This man is the one I have chosen to carry My name among the people who are not Jews and to their kings and to Jews" (Acts 9:15). Ananias went to find Saul.

When Ananias saw Saul, he called him "brother." Ananias told Saul that he had been sent by Jesus. Ananias placed his hands on Saul and something like a covering fell from Saul's eyes. Saul could see again. He got up and was baptized.

Later, Saul wrote a letter to the Christians in Rome. In his letter, he explained the meaning of baptism (Romans 6:1-4). He said it shows a picture of being buried. The person who was a sinner is "buried" in the water. Then, the person who is baptized is raised out of the water. That is the same as when Christ arose from death and the grave. This shows the new life the person has in Christ. It is a picture of the hope of life that lasts forever.

Ananias learned in his dream about the job God had for Saul. Saul would preach to kings and to those who are not Jews. Saul would also preach to Jews. Saul would suffer much because of his faith in Christ.

Read the rest of the book of Acts to see what happened in Saul's life. (Later, Saul's name changed to Paul.) Saul's ministry was just as Ananias had been told in his dream.

### Telling the Good News in Damascus (Acts 9:19b-22)

Saul had the education, citizenship, and family to go to all kinds of people with the Good News. He began right where he

#### Think about it...

Every person needs to ask and answer the same questions that Saul asked: "Who is Jesus?" and "What does Jesus want me to do?"

When we believe Jesus is the Savior, we can be a follower of Christ. Then we can learn what Jesus wants us to do. We hear God calling, and we act on His calling.

*(Bible verses continued from page 2)*

- 15 The Lord said to him, “Go! This man is the one I have chosen to carry My name among the people who are not Jews and to their kings and to Jews.
- 16 I will show him how much he will have to suffer because of Me.”
- 17 So Ananias went to that house. He put his hands on Saul and said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus has sent me to you. You saw the Lord along the road as you came here. The Lord has sent me so you might be able to see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”
- 18 At once something like a covering fell from the eyes of Saul and he could see. He got up and was baptized.
- 19 After that he ate some food and received strength. For some days he stayed with the followers in Damascus.
- 20 At once Saul began to preach in the Jewish places of worship that Jesus is the Son of God.
- 21 All who heard him were surprised and wondered. They said, “This is the man who beat and killed the followers in Jerusalem. He came here to tie the followers in chains and take them to the head religious leaders.”
- 22 But Saul kept on growing in power. The Jews living in the city of Damascus wondered about Saul’s preaching. He was proving that Jesus was the Christ.
- 
- 26 When Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the followers. But they were afraid of him. They did not believe he was a true follower of Jesus.
- 27 Then Barnabas took him to the missionaries. He told them that Saul had seen the Lord on the road. He told them also how the Lord had spoken to Saul and how he had preached without fear in Damascus in the name of Jesus.
- 28 After that he was with them going in and out of Jerusalem.
- 29 He preached without fear in the name of the Lord. He talked and argued with the Jews who spoke the Greek language. They kept trying to kill him.

was—in Damascus. He went to the Jewish place of worship and told them that “Jesus is the Son of God.”

The people who heard Saul were very surprised. They knew he had come to destroy the people who put their trust in Jesus. Now he was telling them to believe in Jesus. Saul was proving Jesus was real. Saul had seen Jesus on the road to Damascus. He had talked with Him and learned about a new way of life from Him. Saul changed because he met Jesus.

### Telling the Good News in Jerusalem

#### (Acts 9:26-29)

Later Saul went to Jerusalem. He wanted to be a part of the believers there. They were not sure he had changed. They were afraid of him. He needed a friend.

In Damascus, God sent Ananias. In Jerusalem, God sent a man named Barnabas to help Saul. Barnabas was a friend to Saul. Barnabas’s name means “son of encouragement.” Barnabas spoke and said a good word for Saul.

Barnabas brought Saul to the church leaders and told them that Saul had seen the Lord on the road to Damascus. He explained how the Lord had spoken to Saul. Then he told them that Saul had preached for the Lord without fear to the people in Damascus. So Saul stayed with the followers and preached everywhere for the Lord. He had no fear. When the religious leaders in Jerusalem wanted to kill Saul, the believers took him to another city.

Saul started out trying to hurt the believers of Jesus. He had been an enemy of the truth. But he became a believer. He was chosen by God to take the Good News to more people and places than anyone else. People who were not Jews would hear about Jesus. Kings and rulers would hear about Jesus. Saul wrote more books of the New Testament than anyone else.

God has a plan for all who believe. He wants every believer to tell others about His love.

#### Things to think about:

1. God chose Saul for a special work. Do you know what special work God wants you to do?
2. God gives jobs to His followers. Ananias had one thing to do. Saul had another. What are you able to do for God?
3. Paul obeyed God. Have you obeyed God?

#### To do this week:

Read another place where Saul (Paul) told how he became a follower of Jesus: Acts 22:6-21.

#### **Think about it...**

Have you ever had a friend like Barnabas who helped you when times were not easy?

Have you ever been a friend to someone who was having a hard time?



*Adult Bible Study  
in Basic English*

### Bible Text

Acts 10:1-5, 9-17, 23-48

### Memory Verse

Acts 10:34-35

“Then Peter said, ‘I can see, for sure, that God does not respect one person more than another. He is pleased with any man in any nation who honors Him and does what is right.’”

### Word List

**dreams:** visions used by God to speak to people. Cornelius and Peter both had dreams as God worked with them. Sometimes the Lord spoke in the dream, and some times He used angels.

**Non-Jews:** all persons who are not from the family of Abraham. Also called Gentiles.

**persecute, persecuted:** to hurt someone because of their religious beliefs

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## Unit 2, Lesson 7 Seeing a bigger world

**P**eter’s eyes needed to be opened. He had to learn that people who were not Jews also needed to hear about Jesus.

Do you remember that Saul’s eyes were blinded when he first saw Jesus? God sent Ananias to help open Saul’s eyes.

Now Jesus opened Peter’s eyes. And the same thing happened to Peter as happened to Saul. Both began to tell others about Christ.

I once saw two men on a park bench in New York City. One wore a good suit and was reading a newspaper. The other wore old clothes. He had no socks. His jacket was torn. He had no home.

Which man needed most to know about Jesus? Some people say, “The homeless person.” But the right answer is that both men needed to know about Jesus. All people need to hear the Good News—the rich or poor, the old or young, and people from all countries.

The book of Acts shows God’s plan to take the Good News to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and all the world (Acts 1:8). God’s plan was working.

First, the church in Jerusalem preached to Jews in Jerusalem. Acts 2 tells of 3,000 who were baptized. By chapter 4, there were about 5,000 Christian Jews. Then the church members were made to go to other places or they would be **persecuted**. They preached wherever they went.

Philip preached in Samaria. Then Philip told the Good News to a man from Ethiopia (Acts 8:26-39). That man believed and was baptized before he went back to his country.

Now, in Acts 10, Peter learns God wants him to preach to those who are not Jews. This lesson tells how the Lord taught Peter that he should tell a non-Jewish person about Jesus. Peter’s eyes were opened. He began to see a bigger world.

### The dream of Cornelius about a Jew named Peter

#### (Acts 10:1-8)

Who was Cornelius? He was a soldier in the Roman army and was in charge of 100 men. He lived in a non-Jewish city called Caesarea. It was a city by the sea where ships came. It was about 50 miles from Jerusalem. Cornelius and his family knew about God. He gave money to help the poor. He prayed.

One day Cornelius had a dream during his afternoon prayer time. The

### **Think about it...**

Look around. Do you like to see beautiful flowers, wonderful sunsets, and tall trees? We enjoy seeing these things. But we do not like to see other things: the poor, sick, old, or the young who live in a different way than we like. Sometimes we want to look the other way. But that can keep us from seeing those who need Christ.

*This lesson was written by Phyllis Merritt. She lives in San Antonio, Texas. She has taught English and Bible studies for internationals for 30 years. The first place she taught was in New York City. One of her dreams is to visit the home country of every student she has ever taught. Her email address is: JPMerritt1@cs.com.*

## Acts 10:1-5, 9-17, 23-48

- 1 There was a man in the city of Caesarea by the name of Cornelius. He was a captain of an Italian group of the army.
- 2 He and his family were good people and honored God. He gave much money to the people and prayed always to God.
- 3 One afternoon about three o'clock he saw in a dream what God wanted him to see. An angel of God came to him and said, "Cornelius."
- 4 He was afraid as he looked at the angel. He said, "What is it, Lord?" The angel said, "Your prayers and your gifts of money have gone up to God. He has remembered them."
- 5 Send some men to the city of Joppa and ask Simon Peter to come here."

- 9 The next day they went on their way. About noon they were coming near the town. At this time Peter went up on the roof to pray.
- 10 He became very hungry and wanted something to eat. While they were getting food ready to eat, he saw in a dream things God wanted him to see.
- 11 He saw heaven open up and something like a large linen cloth being let down to earth by the four corners.
- 12 On the cloth were all kinds of four-footed animals and snakes of the earth and birds of the sky.
- 13 A voice came to him, "Get up, Peter, kill something and eat it."
- 14 Peter said, "No, Lord! I have never eaten anything that our Law says is unclean."
- 15 The voice said the second time, "What God has made clean you must not say is unclean."
- 16 This happened three times. Then it was taken back to heaven.
- 17 Peter thought about the meaning of the dream. The men that Cornelius had sent came. They were standing by the gate asking about Simon's house.

- 23 Peter asked them to come in and stay with him for the night. The next day he went with them. Some of the brothers from Joppa went along.
- 24 The next day they came to the city of Caesarea. Cornelius was looking for them. He had gathered all his family and close friends at his house.
- 25 When Peter came, Cornelius got down at his feet and worshiped him.
- 26 But Peter raised him up and said, "Get up! I am just a man like you."

*(Bible verses continued on page 3)*

angel told him to send men to the city of Joppa where Peter was staying. The angel did not preach to Cornelius. The angel told him how to find a man who will tell him about Jesus. God's plan is for people to tell other people.

Cornelius sent three men to find Peter.

## The dream of Peter about a non-Jew named Cornelius (Acts 10:9-17)

At the same time, Peter was praying in the town of Joppa. Peter and the other believers did not yet understand that they were to reach out to people besides Jews. God sent Peter a dream to show him that the Good News is for all the world.

Peter was praying while sitting on the flat roof of a house. He had a dream. A large cloth came down from heaven with all sorts of four-footed animals and snakes and birds. Some people think the four corners of the cloth show the four ways to carry the Good News—to the north, south, east, and west.

God told Peter to eat. Peter said the Jewish laws would not allow him to eat anything that was dirty.

Jewish laws had rules about many things. God told him again to eat. In the dream, Peter heard a voice say that what God has made clean, Peter must not say is dirty (Acts 10:15).

God showed Peter the dream three times. Peter learned what the dream meant. It was not about food. It was about people. Peter would obey God and not call any man unclean. Peter learned that the Good News was for all men and women, not just for Jews.

The men sent by Cornelius came to Peter's door. Peter had learned his lesson. He would go and preach to non-Jews. He invited these men who were not Jews to stay that night. They would leave the next morning.

## Peter preaches in the home of Cornelius (Acts 10:23-48)

Cornelius had prayed at his house, and Peter had prayed where he was. God planned that they would meet.

Peter went with Cornelius's soldiers and servant to Caesarea. Cornelius and his family were waiting for them. He fell at Peter's feet, but Peter would not let him stay there. He explained that he also was just a man. Peter said that the

### **More about Peter**

Peter was one of Jesus' followers. He was chosen by Jesus to be a leader of the early church when he was still a fisherman (Luke 5:1-11). He had not always been a strong leader. At the trial of Jesus, Peter said three times that he did not even know Jesus. Later, Peter was sad that he said those things. But Peter loved Jesus, and Jesus trusted Peter.

Jesus returned to heaven. Then, He sent the Holy Spirit to help believers. The Holy Spirit helped Peter preach in Jerusalem. Three thousand believers were added to the church (Acts 2:41) because of his boldness.

*(Bible verses continued from page 2)*

- 27 As Peter spoke with Cornelius, he went into the house and found a large group of people gathered together.
- 28 Peter said to them, “You know it is against our Law for a Jew to visit a person of another nation. But God has shown me I should not say that any man is unclean.
- 29 For this reason I came as soon as you sent for me. But I want to ask you why you sent for me?”
- 30 Cornelius said, “Four days ago at three o’clock in the afternoon I was praying here in my house. All at once, I saw a man standing in front of me. He had on bright clothes.
- 31 He said to me, ‘Cornelius, God has heard your prayers and has remembered your gifts of love.
- 32 You must send to Joppa and ask Simon Peter to come here. He is staying at the house of Simon, the man who works with leather. His house is by the sea-shore.’
- 33 I sent for you at once. You have done well to come. We are all here and God is with us. We are ready to hear whatever the Lord has told you to say.”
- 34 Then Peter said, “I can see, for sure, that God does not respect one person more than another.
- 35 He is pleased with any man in any nation who honors Him and does what is right.
- 36 He has sent His Word to the Jews. He told them the Good News of peace through Jesus Christ. Jesus is Lord of All.
- 37 You know the story yourselves. It was told in all the country of Judea. It began in the country of Galilee after the preaching of John the Baptist.
- 38 God gave Jesus of Nazareth the Holy Spirit and power. He went around doing good and healing all who were troubled by the devil because God was with Him.
- 39 We have seen and heard everything He did in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. And yet they killed Him by nailing Him to a cross.
- 40 God raised Him to life on the third day and made Him to be seen.
- 41 Not all the people saw Him but those who were chosen to see Him. We saw Him. We ate and drank with Him after He was raised from the dead.
- 42 He told us to preach to the people and tell them that God gave Christ the right to be the One Who says who is guilty of the living and the dead.
- 43 All the early preachers spoke of this. Everyone who puts his trust in Christ will have his sins forgiven through His name.”
- 44 While Peter was speaking, the Holy Spirit came on all who were hearing his words.
- 45 The Jewish followers who had come along with

Jewish laws said a Jew was not supposed to be in a non-Jew’s home. But God had shown Peter in the dream that no man is unclean. Every person is the same in God’s eyes. Every person needs to hear the Good News of Jesus.

Peter began telling the people about Jesus. This is what he said (Acts 10:34-43):

1. God has spoken to the Jewish people. Peace has come through Jesus Christ.
2. God gave Jesus the Holy Spirit and the power to do good.
3. Jesus healed people and set them free from those who were troubled by the devil.
4. Jesus was crucified.
5. God raised Jesus from the dead.
6. Jesus told the believers to preach.
7. Jesus will judge the living and the dead.
8. Everyone who trusts in Jesus will be forgiven.

While Peter was speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came to all those who were listening. Peter had obeyed God. He went into the home of a non-Jewish person. He preached. They believed.

The Jewish believers who came with Peter from Joppa were surprised. They could hardly believe that these non-Jews could also receive the Holy Spirit. Peter said, “We cannot refuse to allow these people to be baptized.”

Peter’s eyes had been opened to see that the whole world needed the message of Christ.

### Things to think about:

1. What are some good things Cornelius did before his dream?
2. What did Peter’s dream mean?
3. How did Peter change after his dream?
4. How can we bring the Good News to all people?

### To do this week:

Write down what you would tell someone about what you believe:

1. What my life was like before I met Christ.
2. How I received Christ.
3. How Jesus gives meaning to my life every day.

Peter were surprised and wondered because the gift of the Holy Spirit was also given to the people who were not Jews.

- 46 They heard them speak in special sounds and give thanks to God. Then Peter said,
- 47 “Will anyone say that these people may not be baptized? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.”
- 48 He gave the word that they should be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for some days.



*Adult Bible Study  
in Basic English*

### Bible Text

Acts 11:1-4, 15-26

### Memory Verse

Acts 11:18b

“They thanked God, saying,  
‘Then God has given life also to  
the people who are not Jews.  
They have this new life by being  
sorry for their sins and turning  
from them.’”

### Word List

**change, changed:** not to be the  
same; to be different  
because of something that  
has happened.

**missionary, missionaries:** men  
and women chosen by God  
to be His special helpers.

**religious act of becoming a Jew:**  
(circumcise) to cut off a  
male’s foreskin. This was  
done to every Jewish baby  
boy. It was a way to show  
the agreement God made  
with Abraham (Genesis  
17:9-14).

## Unit 2, Lesson 8 Don’t be afraid to change for God

**I**t is not easy to **change**. The churches at Jerusalem and Antioch **changed** so they could take the Good News to all people. Today, some churches have stopped growing. Some churches do not tell people in their area about Jesus. Churches must **change** so they can reach the people who live around them.

I once attended a church that was not very friendly to new people. Church members thought only people like themselves could come to that church. But many new and different people moved into the neighborhood. Very few new people came to the church. So the church members decided to **change**. They decided to help the new people. They started a clothes closet, food pantry, and English classes. Now many of the new people come to church.

### Peter on trial in the church (Acts 11:1-4)

God’s plan for taking the Good News to all the world was going well. Jesus had told His followers that the Holy Spirit would give them power. The believers told the people in Jerusalem. Now they began telling people all over Judea, Samaria, and every part of the world (Acts 1:8).

The **missionaries** and followers in Jerusalem learned that non-Jewish people had become believers. Until this time, the only believers were born Jews or they became Jews so they could be a part of the church.

How did they become Jews if they were not born Jews? They went through the **religious act of becoming a Jew**. Some believers thought the non-Jews should go through the **religious act of becoming a Jew**, too.

So they sent for Peter to come and explain why he had gone to the home of Cornelius and preached to non-Jews. Peter told the Jews that God had saved these non-Jews because of their faith. He told them what happened when he went to the home of Cornelius.

The Jewish believers were not happy that Peter went and ate in the home of a non-Jew. They thought he broke food laws written in the Old Testament (Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14).

Yes, Peter broke the food laws in the Old Testament. But God had told him to do it.

Peter was bold because he told the Good News to non-Jews. He broke down the wall between Jews and non-Jews. Christians today must learn how to take down any walls that divide us from non-believers.

We can learn from Peter. He told the truth but also showed love to his fellow church members. He made a report with two parts: (1) how the Lord had **changed** him, and (2) how the Holy Spirit had come to the non-Jews. He explained what happened to him and what God had done.

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*This lesson was written by Phyllis Merritt. She lives in San Antonio, Texas. She has taught English and Bible studies for internationals for 30 years. The first place she taught was in New York City. One of her dreams is to visit the home country of every student she has ever taught. Her email address is: JPMerritt1@cs.com.*

### Acts 11:1-4, 15-26

- 1 The missionaries and followers who were in the country of Judea heard that the people who were not Jews had received the Word of God.
- 2 When Peter went up to Jerusalem, the followers argued with him.
- 3 They said, "Why did you visit those people who are not Jews and eat with them?"
- 4 Then Peter began to tell all that had happened from the beginning to the end. He said,
 

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- 15 "As I began to talk to them, the Holy Spirit came down on them just as He did on us at the beginning.
- 16 Then I remembered the Lord had said, 'John baptized with water but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'
- 17 If God gave to them the same gift He gave to us when we put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, how could I stand against God?"
- 18 When they heard these words, they said nothing more. They thanked God, saying, "Then God has given life also to the people who are not Jews. They have this new life by being sorry for their sins and turning from them."
- 19 Those who went different places because of the trouble that started over Stephen had gone as far as the cities of Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch. They had preached the Word, but only to the Jews.
- 20 Some of the men from the cities of Cyprus and Cyrene returned to Antioch. They preached the Good News of Jesus Christ to the Greek people there.
- 21 The Lord gave them power. Many people put their trust in the Lord and turned to Him.
- 22 The news of this came to the church in Jerusalem. They sent Barnabas to the city of Antioch.
- 23 When he got there and saw how good God had been to them, he was full of joy. He told them to be true and faithful to the Lord.
- 24 Barnabas was a good man and full of the Holy Spirit and faith. And many people became followers of the Lord.
- 25 From there Barnabas went on to the city of Tarsus to look for Saul.
- 26 When he found Saul, he brought him back to the city of Antioch. For a year they taught many people in the church. The followers were first called Christians in Antioch.

### The work of the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:15-18)

Peter told the church that he and six other believers went to the home of Cornelius. Peter said God showed He was pleased by sending the Holy Spirit. God showed them that non-Jews can be saved and have the Holy Spirit. There was no difference between them and the Jews.

This is what Peter said:

- a. The Holy Spirit came to the believers at the home of Cornelius.
- b. This was the same thing that happened when Peter preached to the Jews in Jerusalem. Three thousand new believers were added to the church at that time.
- c. Jesus had told them this would happen.
- d. It was God Who gave the same gift to Jews and non-Jews. So, how could anyone say anything against that?

No one could say anything after Peter had spoken. They could not be against the coming of the Holy Spirit to the non-Jews. They could not be against the baptism of non-Jews. If they did, they would be against God. The Jews were learning that God had given life eternal to the non-Jews also.

Today, some believers do not want to reach out to others. They want things to stay the same. Other believers must have the courage to stand against them. Peter was brave and faithful. We must be, too.

After Peter spoke, the people could say nothing more. They gave thanks to God. They said, "Then God has given life also to the people who are not Jews. They have this new life by being sorry for their sins and turning from them" (Acts 11:18).

### The church grows (Acts 11:19-26)

Antioch was another place where God was working. Antioch was the third largest city in the area where Rome ruled. Only the cities of Rome and Alexandria were bigger. Antioch was about 240 miles north of Jerusalem. Many different religions were in Antioch. People in Antioch were always looking for ways to sin.

Greek-speaking Jewish believers had come to Antioch. The new believers talked about God's love in Christ. At first, they only talked with those who were Jews. Then, believers from Cyprus and Cyrenia came and began to talk to others who did not believe.

Many people put their trust in the Lord (Acts 11:21). The new believers did not become Jews first.

The believers in Jerusalem heard about this. This time they wanted the new believers to feel they were a part of the church. They sent Barnabas, the one whose name means "to encourage." He saw how good God had been to the new believers in Antioch. He told them to be true and faithful. This good man was full of the spirit of God (Acts 11:24). Many people became followers of the Lord in Antioch.

Then Barnabas went to look for Saul. Saul would be a help in this city. Saul knew the Jewish ways. Saul knew about Greek culture. Barnabas brought Saul to Antioch, where the church was growing and people were sharing their faith. For a year, Saul and Barnabas worked together teaching the many people in the church.

In Antioch, Jewish and non-Jewish Christians shared in the church. This is the city where the believers were first called Christians (Acts 11:26). Other people saw the new believers and said they were acting like Christ. They were Christians.

I have seen churches that did not grow. When I was a college student, I served as a **missionary** for one summer in Illinois. A **missionary** there showed me a church with its doors nailed shut. He told me that this was a church that was happy with just the members it had. They did not invite anyone else to come. They did not go and tell others about Jesus. Finally, all the people in that church got old and died. No new members were there to take their place. The church doors were closed.

I have never forgotten how sad I felt when I saw that church. We must never let our churches be this way. We must keep the church doors open to everyone.

### Things to think about:

1. When Peter returned to Jerusalem, why did the Jewish believers argue with him?
2. What was the church in Antioch like?
3. How could you be like Barnabas today?
4. How can your church be like the church in Antioch?
5. How can churches today make sure that nothing keeps us from reaching all people?



*Adult Bible Study  
in Basic English*

### Bible Text

Acts 15:1-22

### Memory Verse

Acts 15:11a

“We believe it is by the loving-favor of the Lord Jesus that we are saved.”

### Word List

**advice:** to help tell the right thing to do

**idol:** a false god that the non-Jewish people worshipped. Not the one true God.

## Unit 2, Lesson 9 Love all people the way God does

**T**he believers in the Jerusalem church were being arrested, beaten, and jailed. Some believers moved away to avoid being arrested. When they moved, they took the Good News with them.

The Jerusalem church had seen God at work in Samaria, Antioch, and other places. Jews from a Greek background became Christians. Non-Jews became believers, too.

Some people in the church still believed non-Jews must go through the religious act of becoming a Jew before they could be saved. Leaders came to talk about this in Jerusalem.

It is important to understand that every believer becomes right with God because of faith alone. Eternal life is a gift from God given to people who believe in His Son, Jesus Christ. Nothing else is necessary. People do not need to go through the religious act of becoming a Jew. The early church had to learn this.

### A problem in Antioch (Acts 15:1-3)

Some men from Jerusalem decided to go tell the Christians at Antioch what to do. They taught the believers there that they could not be saved unless they first became Jews.

Paul and Barnabas said this was not so. As Paul said later to a non-Jew, “Put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and you and your family will be saved from the punishment of sin” (Acts 16:31). Paul did not tell the non-Jew that he must first become a Jew.

This problem had to be solved. The work of the church could not go on without an answer to the questions:

(1) Did non-Jews have to become Jews to be saved?

(2) Could Jewish Christians visit and eat in the home of a non-Jewish Christian?

Both groups decided to take the problem to the church leaders in Jerusalem. On the way, Paul, Barnabas, and other believers stopped to meet with Christians. They traveled through the countries of Phoenicia and Samaria. They told them how non-Jewish people turned to God. This made them very happy.

### What can we learn from this?

1. Sometimes when things are going well for the church, Satan tries to divide or destroy the work.
2. It is necessary to speak for the things that we know are right.
3. We can ask for help from others.

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## Acts 15:1-22

- 1 Some men came down from the country of Judea and started to teach the Christians. They said, “Unless you go through the religious act of becoming a Jew as Moses taught, you cannot be saved from the punishment of sin.”
- 2 Paul and Barnabas argued with them. Then Paul and Barnabas and some other men were chosen to go up to Jerusalem. They were to talk to the missionaries and church leaders about this teaching.
- 3 The church sent them on their way. They went through the countries of Phoenicia and Samaria and told how those who were not Jews were turning to God. This made the Christians very happy.
- 4 When they got to Jerusalem, the church and the missionaries and the church leaders were glad to see them. Paul and Barnabas told them what God had done through them.
- 5 Some of the Christians there had been proud religious law-keepers. They got up and said, “Doing the religious act of becoming a Jew and keeping the Law of Moses are two things that must be done.”
- 6 The missionaries and church leaders got together to talk about this.
- 7 After a long time of much talking, Peter got up and said to them, “Brothers, you know in the early days God was pleased to use me to preach the Good News to the people who are not Jews so they might put their trust in Christ.
- 8 God knows the hearts of all men. He showed them they were to have His loving-favor by giving them the Holy Spirit the same as He gave to us.
- 9 He has made no difference between them and us. They had their hearts made clean when they put their trust in Him also.
- 10 Why do you test God by putting too heavy a load on the back of the followers? It was too heavy for our fathers or for us to carry.
- 11 We believe it is by the loving-favor of the Lord Jesus that we are saved. They are saved from the punishment of sin the same way.”

*(Bible verses continued on page 3)*

## Warm greetings and cold questions

### (Acts 15:4-6)

Paul and Barnabas made a report of what God had done through them. The Christians in Jerusalem greeted them.

Some believers in Jerusalem had proudly kept the religious laws. They followed Jewish laws and customs. They stood up and said, “Non-Jewish believers must go through the religious act of becoming a Jew. They must keep the Law of Moses.”

The leaders decided to get together and talk about the problem. All the church was there to listen.

### Peter speaks (Acts 15:7-11)

Peter and the others from Antioch did not speak first. Peter let other people say what they thought.

Peter was loved and respected by all. He was one of Jesus’ closest followers while Jesus was on earth. He had preached in Jerusalem when 3,000 people believed and were baptized. One time, Peter and John went to pray at the temple. A beggar who could not walk asked them for help. They made him well (Acts 3). A crowd gathered, and Peter preached to them. Later Peter learned that God wanted him to speak to Cornelius. All of Cornelius’s family became believers.

Peter was important enough in the church that he could have spoken first. Still, Peter waited to speak. At an earlier time in his life, he would not have been so patient. Now he gave others time to say what they wanted. Then Peter spoke to the group.

Read Acts 15:7-8. He talked about the three persons of God—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This is what Peter told them:

1. God had chosen Peter to speak to non-Jews. The non-Jews became believers.

2. The work of telling the Good News is God’s work. God knows the heart of those who are sorry for their sins. He makes their hearts clean. He gives them the Holy Spirit. Believers should look at how we are all the same, not at how we are different.

3. The law is too heavy a load for Jews. They could never obey all the laws. Why should Christian Jews make non-Jewish believers obey something they could not?

4. Salvation is a free gift. God gives it to everyone who believes in Jesus.

### Barnabas and Paul give a report (Acts 15:12)

These two missionaries now spoke to the people. They told of the powerful works they saw God do among the non-Jews.

The Jewish Christians could not argue with this. Earlier, Paul had tried to destroy the church and all believers. Now it was Paul who was trying to hold the church together.

*(Bible verses continued from page 2)*

- 12 All those who were gathered together said nothing. They listened to Paul and Barnabas who told of the powerful works God had done through them among the people who are not Jews.
- 13 When they had finished speaking, James said, "Brothers, listen to me.
- 14 Simon Peter has told how God first visited the people who are not Jews. He was getting a people for Himself.
- 15 This agrees with what the early preacher said,
- 16 'After this I will come back and build again the build of David that fell down. Yes, I will build it again from the stones that fell down. I will set it up again.
- 17 Then all the nations may look for the Lord, even all the people who are not Jews who are called by My name. The Lord said this. He does all these things.
- 18 God has made all His works known from the beginning of time.'
- 19 "So we should not trouble these people who are not Jews who are turning to God.
- 20 We should write to them that they should keep away from everything that is given to gods. They should keep away from sex sins and not eat blood or meat from animals that have been killed in ways against the Law.
- 21 For the Law of Moses has been read in every city from the early days. It has been read in the Jewish places of worship on every Day of Rest."
- 22 Then the missionaries and the church leaders and the whole church chose some men from among them. They were to be sent to the city of Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas Barsabbas and Silas. These men were leaders among the Christians.

In our day we also can tell others what God has done in our lives. This is how the church grows.

### James speaks (Acts 15:13-22)

James was the brother of Jesus. He wrote the book of James in the New Testament. He was not one of the first disciples. Jesus did have a disciple named James, but it was not His brother James. James the disciple was the brother of John and the son of Zebedee.

James (the brother of Jesus) called himself a "servant owned by God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (James 1:1a). He was a leader of the Jerusalem church.

James reminded the church what Peter had said. God showed His love for non-Jewish people. Then James helped them remember what the early preacher had said, "Then all the nations may look for the Lord, even all the people who are not Jews who are called by My name" (Acts 15:17).

James said the church should not make it hard for non-Jews to come to God (Acts 15:19). He meant this: You should not make the non-Jews obey Jewish laws.

God was choosing a new people, made up both of Jews and non-Jews. Later, Peter wrote that this new people would be a chosen nation, a holy people (1 Peter 2:9-10). The church would continue to preach the Good News to all. It did not matter where they were born or what color they were or what language they spoke.

James and the church wrote letters to the non-Jewish Christians. These letters gave **advice** to the non-Jewish Christians:

(1) The letters talked about some matters of food and what to do. They said no believer should eat food that had been offered to an **idol**.

(2) The letters said not to eat blood or eat animals that had been choked.

(3) The letters said to keep away from sex sins (Acts 15:20).

The non-Jews accepted this **advice**. The church had made the right decision. Being saved comes by God's free gift, not from obeying many laws. Everyone agreed with each

### **A glimpse of heaven**

My husband and I were missionaries in New York City. We had church services in an apartment. A Christian from Brazil led the singing. A friend from Japan played the piano. One Sunday school teacher was from Africa, and another was from France. Others came to worship from England, Thailand, Korea, and China.

Those church services made me think of how heaven will be. Christians from all over the world who will worship together.

other: Now the Good News could be taken everywhere.

Paul and Barnabas were on the side of truth.

Only faith in Jesus will save us. Paul and Barnabas wanted peace among the brothers. Jesus is the Prince of Peace and He wants His followers to be at peace.

Paul and Barnabas were happy to tell the Good News that God saves us freely.

### Things to think about

#### **1. Going out two-by-two**

\*In Jerusalem, two of Jesus' followers worked together: Peter (one of the first twelve) and James (Jesus' brother).

\*Paul and Barnabas were missionary partners.

\*Judas Barsabbas and Silas were sent with the letter to the new Christians (Acts 15:22).

Are you serving God alone? Sometimes it helps to do things with another person. Do you have someone who can pray with you and visit with you? Try to find someone who will help you do God's work. Set a time each week to pray and visit. Then you can go out two by two.

#### **2. What if**

\*What if God offered salvation only to the Jews?

\*What if God planned salvation for all people, but the Jewish Christians had not told non-Jews about salvation?

\*What if the believers in Jerusalem had not listened to Peter, Paul, Barnabas, and James, but insisted that everyone must first become a Jew?

\*What if you had never heard about Jesus?

#### **3. Our job today: Agree or disagree?**

\*Reaching out to others can begin with one person in the church. Agree or disagree?

\*We can tell the Good News to others. It does not matter what language or color. Agree or disagree?

\*The best thing we can do is to tell what Jesus has done for us. Agree or disagree?



*Adult Bible Study  
in Basic English*

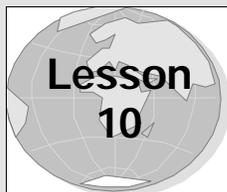
### Unit 3

Lesson 10: How to have new life  
(Acts 16:11-15, 22-34)

Lesson 11: How to tell religious  
people the truth about God  
(Acts 17:16-34)

Lesson 12: How to serve God  
faithfully (Acts 20:17-37)

Lesson 13: How to carry out your  
mission in life (Acts 28:16-31)



*Adult Bible Study  
in Basic English*

### Bible Text

Acts 16:11-15, 22-34

### Memory Verse

Acts 16:30-31

“As he took them outside, he said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ They said, ‘Put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and you and your family will be saved from the punishment of sin.’ ”

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## Unit 3 Introduction Lessons for Christian living

**T**he four lessons in this unit tell us more about Paul’s missionary work. They teach some important lessons about Christian growth and service.

**Lesson 10**, “How to have new life” (Acts 16:11-15, 22-34), is about two people in Philippi, a city of Macedonia. One was Lydia, a business woman. The other person was a man who watched the prison (a jailer). Their stories show that anyone may find new life through faith in Jesus.

**Lesson 11** is titled, “How to tell religious people the truth about God” (Acts 17:16-34). We find Paul preaching in Athens, the city of idols. Paul found ways to tell the truth to very religious people.

**Lesson 12** is “How to serve God faithfully” (Acts 20:17-37). It tells about Paul’s last goodbye to the church leaders from Ephesus. Paul’s life of ministry is a good example for Christian leaders.

**Lesson 13** is called, “How to carry out your mission in life” (Acts 28:16-31). This lesson is about Paul’s visit to Rome. Even though Paul was a prisoner, he was able to preach and teach freely. Part of Paul’s life mission was carried out at “the center of the earth.”

This unit finishes our Bible study in Acts. These 13 lessons help us see how the early Christian church learned to reach their world with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

## Unit 3, Lesson 10 How to have new life

**F**ang was a teacher from another country. She was in our city for about a year. Fang visited the Neighbors International Program in our church. She wanted to learn about the classes and workers. Fang (not her real name) said she would write about them when she went back to her country

Fang did not understand that our workers were **volunteers**. These 50 church members help in the program but do not get paid. They teach English and other free classes each week. Women and men from 27 countries come to the classes. Many **volunteers** drive the students to class and help them in other ways.

One day Fang asked, “Why do all of you give so much time to help others?” We answered, “Because we have put our trust in Jesus Christ. We follow His way of loving and serving others.”

In this lesson, you will learn about some people who put their trust

*This writer of this lesson is Ann Pitman of Waco, Texas. She and her husband, Dr. Gene Pitman, were medical missionaries in Nigeria in the 1960s. When they returned to the United States, Ann helped start the Neighbors International Program in their church in 1970. She has been director, teacher, or English-as-a-second-language (ESL) coordinator in the program since that time. Adults from more than 75 countries have been in classes over the years.*

### Word List

**baptize, baptized, baptism:** a religious act for new followers of Christ. Baptism shows that the person has become a follower of Christ. Baptism does not make a person a Christian. It is a picture of Jesus' death, burial, and being raised to life.

**earthquake:** a sudden shaking or moving of the earth

**punishment:** a penalty for doing wrong

**volunteers:** people who do helpful work without pay

### Acts 16:11-15, 22-34

- 11 We took a ship from the city of Troas to the city of Samothracia. The next day we went to the city of Neapolis.
  - 12 From there we went to the city of Philippi. This was an important city in Macedonia. It was ruled by the leaders of the country of Rome. We stayed here for some days.
  - 13 On the Day of Rest we went outside the city to a place down by the river. We thought people would be gathering there for prayer. Some women came and we sat down and talked to them.
  - 14 One of the women who listened sold purple cloth. She was from the city of Thyatira. Her name was Lydia and she was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to hear what Paul said.
  - 15 When she and her family had been baptized, she said to us, "If you think I am faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my house." She kept on asking. Then we went with her.
- 
- 22 Many people had gathered around Paul and Silas. They were calling out things against them. The leaders had the clothes of Paul and Silas taken off and had them beaten with sticks.

*(Bible verses continued on page 3)*

in Jesus Christ. One was Lydia, a woman who sold costly purple cloth. Another person was a man who watched the prison in Philippi. See how their lives changed when they trusted in Jesus.

### From Antioch to Philippi (Acts 15:36 to 16:10)

Paul and Barnabas wanted to visit the churches in the cities where they had preached before. They agreed to go different ways. Barnabas took John Mark with him. Paul chose Silas who was also a preacher. They met Timothy in Lystra and took him along. Later, Luke joined them at Troas. Paul and his friends went from city to city making the churches stronger in the faith.

Paul had a dream in Troas. A man spoke to him in the dream. He said, "Come over to the country of Macedonia and help us!" (Acts 16:9b). They followed God's leading and left for Philippi.

Today, God does not often lead through dreams. We read the Bible and pray to God when we need help. But I know someone who had a dream that changed her life.

Rosa was from Spain. She married a Texan and was living in our city. I drove Rosa and her two boys to our church every Thursday morning. She studied English and learned how to sew. Rosa and I had good talks about how someone can trust in Jesus. Two years passed, and Rosa moved away. I kept praying for her.

More than ten years later, Rosa wrote to me from California. She was home alone on Christmas night. As she was sleeping, she saw Jesus standing by her bed. He spoke to her and told her many things. Rosa wrote, "Now I understand the things you told me. I told my sins to God and He forgave me. Now I trust in Jesus Christ and have a new life."

I have not seen Rosa again. I know I will see her in heaven one day. God promises that everyone who trusts in His Son (Jesus Christ) will live forever in heaven.

### Women praying by the river (Acts 16:11-15)

Philippi was an important city in Macedonia. Leaders of Rome ruled the city. Many old Roman soldiers lived there. The people were proud to be Roman citizens.

No Jewish temple or place of worship was in Philippi. Paul and his friends could not worship at a Jewish temple on their Day of Rest (also called Sabbath). So Paul and his friends went outside the city. They found a group of women praying by the river. Paul and Silas sat down and talked with the women about Jesus.

The writer of Acts does not tell us all that Paul and Silas said to the women. But we can guess that Paul probably told them how Jesus had spoken to him on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-19). He probably told of Jesus' death on a cross and how Jesus rose from the grave. Paul probably said that Jesus is coming again. Finally, Paul probably told the women that

*(Bible verses continued from page 2)*

- 23 After they had hit them many times, they put Paul and Silas in prison. The soldiers told the man who watched the prison to be sure to keep them from getting away.
- 24 Because of this, they were put in the inside room of the prison and their feet were put in pieces of wood that held them.
- 25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing songs of thanks to God. The other men in prison were listening to them.
- 26 All at once the earth started to shake. The stones under the prison shook and the doors opened. The chains fell off from everyone.
- 27 The man who watched the prison woke up. He saw the prison doors wide open and thought the men in prison had gotten away. At once he pulled out his sword to kill himself.
- 28 But Paul called to him, "Do not hurt yourself. We are all here!"
- 29 The man who watched the prison called for a light. Then he ran in and got down in front of Paul and Silas. He was shaking with fear.
- 30 As he took them outside, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"
- 31 They said, "Put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and you and your family will be saved from the punishment of sin."
- 32 Then Paul spoke the Word of God to him and his family.
- 33 It was late at night, but the man who watched the prison took Paul and Silas in and washed the places on their bodies where they were hurt. Right then he and his family were baptized.
- 34 He took Paul and Silas to his house and gave them food. He and all his family were full of joy for having put their trust in God.

people should turn from their wrong-doing by trusting in Jesus.

Lydia was one of the women listening that day. She was a business woman. The purple cloth she sold cost a lot of money. When Lydia heard the words about Jesus, she put her trust in Him. She must have brought her whole family with her. They also heard and believed. They were all **baptized** together. Lydia was the first person in Europe to become a Christian.

Lydia was so happy that she begged Paul and his group to stay at her house. They agreed. Lydia accepted the best gift anyone could have. It was the gift of new life in Jesus Christ.

Lydia's home was probably the meeting place for the first Christian church in Europe. Later, Paul wrote a letter from Rome to the church at Philippi. The book of Philippians is that letter. Paul called the members his "dear Christian brothers" and his dear friends. He also wrote, "You are my joy and prize" (Philippians 4:1).

### From the river to the jail (Acts 16:22-28)

Paul healed a young servant girl in the city of Philippi. The girl was making money for her owners. The owners were angry. Since Paul healed the girl, the owners could no longer use her to make money.

The owners told the leaders that Paul and Silas had broken the law. This was not true. They dragged Paul and Silas to the center of the city. The leaders ordered that Paul and Silas be beaten. Then they put them in the safest part of the prison (jail).

The head jailer knew that the soldiers would kill him if one of his prisoners got away. So he guarded his prisoners well.

At midnight, Paul and Silas prayed and sang in the jail. The other prisoners listened. God sent an **earthquake** which shook the prison. Doors flew open and chains fell off. All the prisoners were set free!

It was dark in the prison. The head jailer was afraid that the prisoners had run away. He knew the soldiers would kill him for losing the prisoners. So he decided to kill himself. The jailer pulled out his sword and was ready to kill himself. Paul stopped the jailer by calling out, "Do not hurt yourself; we are all here!" (Acts 16:28).

### Think about it...

What about you? Have you put your trust in Jesus?

If you have not, read the verses listed below from the Bible. New life is waiting for you!

Bible verses to read:

John 3:16  
 John 1:12  
 Romans 3:23-24  
 Romans 6:23  
 Romans 5:8  
 Romans 10:9  
 Luke 13:3  
 1 John 1:8-9

## Another life is changed forever

### (Acts 16:29-34)

The jailer ran to Paul and Silas and took them out of the prison. He asked them the most important question of his life. He said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Paul and Silas answered, "Put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ." The answer to the jailer's question is the same for everyone.

Acts 4:12 says, "There is no way to be saved from the **punishment** of sin through anyone else. For there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we can be saved."

John 14:6 says, "Jesus said, 'I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one can go to the Father except by Me.'"

Paul spoke God's words to the jailer and his family. The jailer took Paul and Silas to his house. He fed them and washed their hurt bodies. The jailer and his family were full of joy. They put their trust in Jesus Christ. They found new life in Him.

## The rest of the story

Remember Fang, the teacher? Let me tell you the rest of her story.

She visited the Sunday Bible class in our church. She was given a Bible written both in English and her language. She started reading it. A few days before she left to go back to her country, she came to our house for a meal. Fang was excited. She said, "I have faith! I have faith! Now I believe!"

I have not heard from Fang since she left, but I pray for her. Her life is not easy now, but I know she has a peace in her heart because she is trusting Jesus.

## To think about:

1. Why did Paul want to visit the churches where he had preached before?
2. How did Lydia show that she had put her trust in Jesus?
3. Do you think Paul and Silas were treated fairly in Philippi?

Would you want to live there? Why or why not?

4. How did the jailer know that God was with Paul and Silas?

How was he kind to them?

What did his question to Paul and Silas mean?

What Paul's answer mean?



*Adult Bible Study  
in Basic English*

### Bible Text

Acts 17:16-34

### Memory Verse

Acts 17:24

“The God Who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth. He does not live in buildings made by hands.”

### Word List

**altar, altars:** a special place to worship

**god, goddess:** a being or thing that people think or hope has power. A god is male, and a goddess is female.

**idol, idols:** a thing that is worshiped; it may be made of wood, gold, stone, or anything.

**jealous:** to want something very badly that someone else owns. A jealous person can be angry and not trust other people.

**temple:** a building used for a special purpose, usually for religious worship.

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## Unit 3, Lesson 11

# How to tell religious people the truth about God

### Paul’s joys and troubles (Acts 17:1-15)

In the last lesson, Paul and Silas were freed from prison by an earthquake (Acts 16:25-26). Then the leaders at Philippi learned that Paul was a Roman citizen. They were sorry they had put him in prison. Before leaving Philippi, Paul met with the Christians and comforted them (Acts 16:38-40). Paul, Silas, and Timothy then went on to visit churches in other cities.

Paul preached to Jews and to those who were not Jews. He showed them that Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. Paul said to the people, “I preach this Jesus to you. He is the Christ” (Acts 17:3). Many Greek people and some leading women became Christians.

In Thessalonica, the **jealous** Jews made it hard for the preachers. They had to leave that place and go on to Berea.

In Berea, the Jews were glad to hear the Word of God. When the **jealous** Jews arrived, Paul’s Christian friends sent him away. Silas and Timothy did not go. The friends took Paul to the city of Athens in Greece.

In Athens, Paul was troubled and sad. He saw the whole city worshipping false gods (Acts 17:10-15).

### Athens, the city of idols (Acts 17:16-21)

Athens was an old, important city. It was the center of learning, art, and religion in that part of the world. Athens had many **altars** to false gods.

Paul saw the **idols** made by men’s hands. The people of Athens were strong in their beliefs and religious practices. The sad thing was that they did not worship the true and living God. Seeing people worship **idols** and false gods made Paul very sad.

In Athens, Paul talked with the Jews in their place of worship. He spoke with other people in the market place. Many came daily, wanting to hear some new idea or belief.

Two groups argued with Paul. One group followed the teachings of a man named Epicurus. He taught that happiness was the main thing to find in life. They believed that death was the end of everything. The other group followed the teachings of Zeno. They said that wisdom and self-control made people happy. They worshiped many gods.

Most people did not understand how Jesus could be raised from the dead. But some wanted to hear more of Paul’s teaching. They invited him to speak to the court on Mars’ Hill.

### Paul preaches on Mars’ Hill (Acts 17:22-32)

*This writer of this lesson is Ann Pitman of Waco, Texas. She and her husband, Dr. Gene Pitman, were medical missionaries in Nigeria in the 1960s. When they returned to the United States, Ann helped start the Neighbors International Program in their church in 1970. She has been director, teacher, or English-as-a-second-language (ESL) coordinator in the program since that time. Adults from more than 75 countries have been in classes over the years.*

## Acts 17:16-34

- 16 While Paul was waiting for Silas and Timothy in Athens, his spirit was troubled as he saw the whole city worshipping false gods.
- 17 He talked to the Jews and other people who were worshipping in the Jewish place of worship. Every day he talked with people who gathered in the center of town.
- 18 Some men from two different groups were arguing with Paul. The one group thought that men might as well get all the fun out of life that they can. The other group thought that wisdom alone makes men happy. Some of them said, "This man has lots of little things to talk about. They are not important. What is he trying to say?" Others said, "He preaches about strange gods." It was because he preached of Jesus and of His being raised from the dead.
- 19 Then they took him to Mars' Hill and said, "We want to hear of this new teaching of yours.
- 20 Some of the things you are telling us are strange to our ears. We want to know what these things mean."
- 21 The people of Athens and those visiting from far countries used all their time in talking or hearing some new thing.
- 22 Then Paul stood up on Mars' Hill and said, "Men of Athens, I see how very religious you are in every way.
- 23 As I was walking around and looking at the things you worship, I found an altar where you worship with the words written on it, TO THE GOD WHO IS NOT KNOWN. You are worshipping Him without knowing Him. He is the One I will tell you about.
- 24 "The God Who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth. He does not live in buildings made by hands.
- 25 No one needs to care for Him as if He needed anything. He is the One who gives life and breath and everything to everyone.

*(Bible verses continued on page 3)*

When Paul preached on Mars' Hill in Athens, the people listened. Paul talked first about the city and their worship of many gods. He had seen many places and things of worship in Athens. He had even seen an **altar** with these words carved on it: "To the god who is not known."

Paul told the people about that "unknown" God Who made the world and everything in it. Paul said, "You are worshipping Him without knowing Him. He is the One I will tell you about" (Acts 17:23).

Here is what Paul said about the true and living God:

1. God is the Lord of heaven and earth. (**Idols** have no power.)

2. God does not live in buildings made with men's hands. (A large **temple** in Athens, the Parthenon, was used for the worship of Athena, **goddess** of wisdom.)

3. No one needs to care for God. He needs nothing from men. (The people of Athens had many **altars** where they offered sacrifices to their **gods**.)

4. God is the One Who gives life and breath and all things. (A piece of wood or stone that has been carved into an **idol** does not have life or breath.)

5. God made all the people of all nations. He guides them.

6. God is not far from any of us. He is the reason we keep on living.

7. We are God's children. We are not like the gold or silver **idols**. (**Idols** have no life. God does have life.)

8. God now tells all people to be sorry for their sins and to stop sinning.

9. God will send Jesus Christ one day to judge the world.

10. God raised Jesus from death. That shows that Jesus is God's chosen One.

### Idols of today

When I was in my last year of nursing school, I went to Nigeria, West Africa, as a missionary for a summer. The Baptist Student Union of Texas sent me.

I had never seen people worship idols, rocks, rivers, and trees. I worked in the Baptist clinic for women and children in Ire for six weeks. The clinic was built on a hill, just below a large rock.

Some people from the town would lay food at the bottom of the rock. Then, they would pray to the god they thought was in the rock. They hoped the god would give strong, healthy babies to the women.

An older missionary told me that the Yoruba people worshiped 401 different idols or gods. Many of their houses had a room for the family idols. I loved the people, but the idols made me very sad. I think Paul must have felt the same way when he was in Athens.

*(Bible verses continued from page 2)*

- 26 He made from one blood all nations who live on the earth. He set the times and places where they should live.
- 27 “They were to look for God. Then they might feel after Him and find Him because He is not far from each one of us.
- 28 It is in Him that we live and move and keep on living. Some of your own men have written, ‘We are God’s children.’
- 29 If we are God’s children, we should not think of Him as being like gold or silver or stone. Such gods made of gold or silver or stone are planned by men and are made by them.
- 30 “God did not remember these times when people did not know better. But now He tells all men everywhere to be sorry for their sins and to turn from them.
- 31 He has set a day when He will say in the right way if the people of the world are guilty. This will be done by Jesus Christ, the One He has chosen. God has proven this to all men by raising Jesus Christ from the dead.”
- 32 Some people laughed and made fun when they heard Paul speak of Christ being raised from the dead. Others said, “We want to listen to you again about this.”
- 33 So Paul went away from the people.
- 34 Some people followed him and became Christians. One was Dionysius, a leader in the city. A woman named Damaris believed. And there were others also.

### Not all was lost (Acts 17:32-34)

Paul told the truth to the people of Athens. He was faithful in his witness. Some laughed at Paul and his beliefs. A few people put their trust in Jesus. No church was started there.

I am glad to say that millions of people in Nigeria have left their **idols**. They now put their trust in the true and living God. Today, there are a number of large churches in Ire and thousands of churches in the country. Few people pray to the rock for healthy babies. A missionary said that nearly half of the people in Nigeria are now Christians. We thank God for all He is doing in that great country.

Let us pray that every person will follow the true and living God. Let us pray that everyone will put their trust in Jesus Christ, God’s Son. “He is not far from each one of us” (Acts 17:27b).

#### **Think about it...**

What idols do you have in your life?

What do you worship or put ahead of God?

How important to you are money, job, learning, power, and fame?

These and other things can become idols if you let them.

#### To think about:

1. How did Paul feel when he saw the people of Athens worshipping false gods?
2. Which two main groups argued with Paul? What did each one believe?
3. When Paul preached on Mars’ Hill, he gave several facts or truths about God. Which truths do you agree with?  
  
Which ones do you not agree with?
4. Why did some of the people not believe that God raised Jesus from the dead?

Is it hard for you or someone you know to believe that? Why?



*Adult Bible Study  
in Basic English*

### Bible Text

Acts 20:17-37

### Memory Verse

Acts 20:24b

““I do not think of my life as worth much, but I do want to finish the work the Lord Jesus gave me to do.”

### Word List

**danger:** to be at risk for being hurt

**example:** a pattern or guide

**retire, retired:** to stop working at a job after many years

**reunion:** a meeting that brings together old friends

## Unit 3, Lesson 12

# How to serve God faithfully

**B**rother Starnes came to work with our church leaders. He was the pastor’s helper or assistant. Brother Starnes had been pastor of several Baptist churches in Texas. At age 70, he **retired** from his full-time job and started working part-time.

Every church member loved Brother Starnes and his wife. They were kind and loving. Their smiles and caring ways brought them many friends. Both of them loved the Word of God and were good Bible teachers. They prayed often for others. Brother and Mrs. Starnes also asked God to lead them. Brother Starnes visited sick people. He was always busy serving God.

At age 85, Brother Starnes decided to **retire** again. They moved to another city to be near their children. Our church members were sad and did not want them to leave. Some people cried. They knew they would not see Brother and Mrs. Starnes again.

This Bible study shows Paul saying goodbye to the church leaders from Ephesus. Paul was like a father who had taught them the Christian faith. Paul knew it was their last time together. His parting words were important ones. The leaders were sad when they heard that they would not see Paul again.

### One more time (Acts 20:17-24)

Paul was at Miletus, some 30 miles from Ephesus. He was waiting for his ship to sail. Members from several churches were with Paul. They were taking money to the needy Christians in Judea. Paul wanted to see the church leaders from Ephesus one more time. He sent a message and asked them to come to Miletus.

It must have been a happy **reunion** when Paul saw his friends again. He had so much to say to them. But he did not have much time. Paul spoke humbly and without pride. He thought of the joys and sorrows they had shared. All of them had served God together in Ephesus.

Paul spent between two and three years in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-41; 20:31). He started a church there and trained its members. God used Paul to do powerful works or miracles. People were healed of their diseases (Acts 19:11). Many people who did witchcraft burned their books in front of everyone. Trouble from the Jews brought Paul many trials and tears. But Paul worked day and night to teach, preach, and help others.

Paul preached to both Jews and Greeks in Ephesus. He taught in open meetings. Sometimes he taught by going from one house to another house. Paul’s teachings were helpful and needed. His main message was, “Turn from your sin to God and put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

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*This writer of this lesson is Ann Pitman of Waco, Texas. She and her husband, Dr. Gene Pitman, were medical missionaries in Nigeria in the 1960s. When they returned to the United States, Ann helped start the Neighbors International Program in their church in 1970. She has been director, teacher, or English-as-a-second-language (ESL) coordinator in the program since that time. Adults from more than 75 countries have been in classes over the years.*

Acts 20:17-37

- 17 From Miletus he sent word to Ephesus. He asked the leaders of the church to come to him.
- 18 When they got there, he said to them, "From the first day that I came to Asia you have seen what my life has been like.
- 19 I worked for the Lord without pride. Because of the trouble the Jews gave me, I have had many tears.
- 20 I always told you everything that would be a help to you. I taught you in open meetings and from house to house.
- 21 I preached to the Jews and to the Greeks. I told them to turn from their sin to God and to put their trust in our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 22 "As you see, I am on my way to Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit makes me go. I do not know what will happen to me there.
- 23 But in every city I have been, the Holy Spirit tells me that trouble and chains will be waiting for me there.
- 24 But I am not worried about this. I do not think of my life as worth much, but I do want to finish the work the Lord Jesus gave me to do. My work is to preach the Good News of God's loving-favor.
- 25 "All of you have heard me preach the Good News. I am sure that none of you will ever see my face again.
- 26 I tell you this day that I am clean and free from the blood of all men.
- 27 I told you all the truth about God.
- 28 Keep a careful watch over yourselves and over the church. The Holy Spirit has made you its leaders. Feed and care for the church of God. He bought it with His own blood.
- 29 "Yes, I know that when I am gone, hungry wolves will come in among you. They will try to destroy the church.
- 30 Also men from your own group will begin to teach things that are not true. They will get men to follow them.
- 31 I say again, keep watching! Remember that for three years I taught everyone of you night and day, even with tears.

*(Bible verses continued on page 3)*

Paul said the Holy Spirit had told him to go to Jerusalem. He knew that troubles and chains waited for him there. Being in **danger** did not worry Paul. He knew that nothing could keep him away from the love of God (Romans 8:38-39). Paul's concern was for the churches. He was sure they would face many trials when he was gone. Paul wanted to finish the work the Lord had given him to do.

Paul's words to the church leaders(Acts 20:25-31)

Again, Paul told the leaders that he had spoken nothing but the truth. He had done all that he could. Now, it was their time to serve. Paul said that the Holy Spirit had made them the leaders. The Holy Spirit would guide them.

The leaders were to keep a careful watch over themselves and the church. Their lives should be pure and honest. The leaders should be good **examples** for others to follow. They were to feed and care for the church of God like a shepherd cares for his sheep. The leaders also were to guard the church from **danger**.

Paul told them to watch out for false teachers. The false teachers would teach things that were untrue. Paul said they would be like hungry wolves trying to destroy the church. They might come from outside the church or they might be church members. The leaders must try to protect the church.

The family of Christ

Christian love binds together brothers and sisters in Christ. A person born half way around the world is still part of our family in Christ.

Recently, a young man from Korea put his trust in Jesus Christ. He was later baptized in our church. Soon after that, he moved to another city. My husband and I were his friends. My husband had been his Bible study teacher.

As he left, we encouraged the young man to read his Bible daily. One of the main ways God leads people today is through His Word. Another way He leads is through prayer. We knew that God's Word and prayer would make him strong in his faith. We did what Paul did in verse 32. We gave our brother over to God and His word of love. The young man wrote to us, "I believe God has a special plan for my life."

A sad goodbye (Acts 20:32-38)

Paul loved his brothers in Christ. He asked nothing from them. His hands had worked to buy whatever he needed. Paul had served faithfully!

Paul said his last goodbyes to his friends from Ephesus. He got on his knees and prayed with them. The leaders cried

*(Bible verses continued from page 2)*

- 32 “And now, my brothers, I give you over to God and to the word of His love. It is able to make you strong and to give you what you are to have, along with all those who are set apart for God.
- 33 I have not tried to get anyone’s money or clothes.
- 34 You all know that these hands worked for what I needed and for what those with me needed.
- 35 In every way I showed you that by working hard like this we can help those who are weak. We must remember what the Lord Jesus said, ‘We are more happy when we give than when we receive.’”
- 36 As he finished talking, he got down on his knees and prayed with them all.
- 37 They cried and put their arms around Paul and kissed him.

and put their arms around Paul. It was a sad time for them all. They were sorry they would never see him again.

### A glad reunion

It was a sad goodbye, but it was not the *last* goodbye. Paul preached that Jesus was raised from the dead. He said that those who put their trust in Jesus would be raised from the dead, too. Paul knew that he would see his friends again. He would see them in heaven. That is the wonderful promise of God.

The **reunion** in Miletus was a happy one. The **reunion** in heaven will be a happy one. Let us thank God for His love. It has made a way for us to be a part of that great **reunion** one day. Let us also thank God for faithful leaders. They love us, teach us, and guide us in our Christian walk.

### To think about

1. In what ways did Paul serve God faithfully?

2. What was Paul’s main message?

3. Do churches need to worry about false teachers today?

What kinds of messages do false teachers give today?

4. In what ways do people serve God today?

How will you serve Him?



*Adult Bible Study  
in Basic English*

### Bible Text

Acts 28:16-31

### Memory Verse

Acts 28:28

“I want you to know that the Good News of God of knowing how to be saved from the punishment of sin has been sent to the people who are not Jews. And they will listen to it!”

### Word List

**confused:** not able to think clearly

**mission:** a special work that God leads a believer to feel they must do

**trial:** a court hearing

## Unit 3, Lesson 13

# How to carry out your mission in life

### On mission for God

**T**he newspaper story was about a 100-year-old woman. She was born in Texas in 1899. Soon after she was born, her family moved to California. An older brother died when she was 12. A few days later, she was angry and confused. She decided to go to church. When she left, she was a different person. She was filled with faith.

When the woman was 24, she visited a local jail with her pastor. At first, she was afraid. Then she saw that the women in jail were sad and lonely. She began praying with them and talking to them. She has led a prayer service at the jail every week for 75 years. The woman said that God called her to help the women and give them hope. That has been her **mission** in life.

This Bible study is about Paul and his **mission** in life. Before Paul met the Lord, his **mission** was to hurt Christians or put them in prison. When Jesus called to Paul while he was walking to Damascus, the Lord gave him a different **mission**. (Paul’s name was Saul at that time.) The Lord told Paul to take the Good News to people who were not Jews. Paul’s life was changed forever.

Paul preached and taught in many places. He started churches in different cities. But he wanted to go to Rome most of all. Paul wrote a letter to the Christians in Rome. (Paul’s letter is the book of Romans in the Bible.) He said he planned to visit them. Paul finally made it to Rome, but it was not as a teacher or preacher. It was as a prisoner!

Paul probably wondered why God let him go to Rome as a prisoner. God’s ways are not our ways. It is hard to understand why God lets some things happen in our lives. But we must trust God to work out the details in our lives.

### The long, hard trip to Rome (Acts, chapters 21-26)

In the last lesson, Paul was on his way to Jerusalem. He was taking money to needy Christians there. His friends told Paul that he would face danger.

Paul said to them, “I am ready to be put in chains in Jerusalem. I am also ready to die for the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 21:13b).

Jews from Asia made the people in Jerusalem turn against Paul. They said he broke the Jewish law by bringing a Greek man into the

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**Acts 28:16-31**

- 16 When we got to Rome, Paul was allowed to live where he wanted to. But a soldier was always by his side to watch him.
- 17 Three days later Paul asked the leaders of the Jews to come to him. When they had gathered together, he said, “Brothers, I have done nothing against our people or the way our early fathers lived. And yet, I was tied with chains in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans.
- 18 I was put on trial, but they found no reason to put me to death. They would have let me go free.
- 19 But the Jews did not like this. So I had to ask to be sent to Caesar. It was not because I had anything against my people.
- 20 The reason I have asked you to come is to tell you this. It is because of the hope of the Jewish nation that I am tied in these chains.”
- 21 They said to Paul, “We have had no letters from Judea about you. No Jew who has come here has ever said anything bad about you.
- 22 We would like to you from you what you believe. As for this new religion, all we know is that everyone is talking against it.”
- 23 They planned to meet him on a certain day. Many people came to the place where he stayed. He preached to them about the holy nation of God. He tried to get them to put their trust in Jesus Christ by preaching from the Law of Moses and from the writings of the early preachers. From morning until night he spoke to them.
- 24 Some of them believed his teaching. Others did not believe.
- 25 As they left, they did not agree with each other. Then Paul said, “The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your early fathers through the early preacher Isaiah.
- 26 He said, ‘Go to these people and say, “You will hear and never understand, you will look and never see,

*(Bible verses continued on page 3)*

house of God. The people cried out against Paul and beat him. They would have killed him, but the soldiers came. Roman soldiers took Paul away to protect him.

The people and some of the rulers heard Paul speak for himself. Later, the Jews planned to kill Paul, but the plan failed. Paul knew he would not get a fair **trial** in Jerusalem. As a Roman citizen, Paul asked to be sent to Caesar, ruler of the Roman world (Acts 26:31-32).

The trip to Rome was long. Storms at sea made the trip hard. But even in the storms, Paul showed his faith (Acts 27:22-26, 35). The ship was wrecked on an island. After a snake bit Paul, the people waited for him to die. Instead of dying, Paul healed many sick people. He told them about Jesus Christ and His love.

Paul found some joys during the trip, too. In some places where they stopped, Christians came to meet him. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage. He knew that the Good News was being preached, and believers were growing in their faith.

One of God’s greatest blessings in life is Christian friendship. We share joys and sorrows, and we draw strength from one another.

**Rome at last! (Acts 28:16-28)**

After years of wanting to go, Paul finally made it to Rome. He was able to live in a rented house, rather than in a prison. A soldier was chained to him day and night. Paul lost no time in beginning his **mission** in Rome.

After three days, he called the Jewish leaders to come to him. Paul was a Jew. He loved the Jewish people. In all of his travels, Paul always preached to the Jews first. He did the same thing in Rome.

The Jews of Rome had heard nothing bad about Paul. So Paul told them why he asked them to come to him. He said, “It is because of the hope of the Jewish nation that I am tied in these chains” (Acts 28:20b). The Jewish leaders asked to come at another time to hear about “this new religion.”

Many people came to hear Paul preach. He spoke to them all day. Paul wanted the Jews to put their trust in Jesus Christ. He knew that Jesus Christ was their only hope. Paul showed how God had spoken through the Law of Moses and the early preachers (prophets). God had promised to send Jesus to save people from being punished for their sins. Some of them believed Paul’s teachings, but others did not.

Before the people left, Paul spoke words from the prophet Isaiah. Because the Jews had turned away, the Good News was being preached to those who were not Jews (the Gentiles). “And they will listen to it!” Paul said (Acts 28:28b).

How sad Paul must have felt when his own people turned away from God.

*(Bible verses continued from page 2)*

- 27 because these people have hearts that have become fat. They do not hear well with their ears. They have closed their eyes so their eyes do not see and their ears do not hear and their minds do not understand and they do not turn to Me and let Me heal them.”
- 28 “I want you to know that the Good News of God of knowing how to be saved from the punishment of sin has been sent to the people who are not Jews. And they will listen to it!”
- 29 After he had said these things, the Jews went away and argued with each other.
- 30 Paul paid money to live in a house by himself for two years. He was happy for all who came to see him.
- 31 He kept on preaching about the holy nation of God. He taught about the Lord Jesus Christ without fear. No one stopped him.

### To the ends of the earth (Acts 28:30-31)

Paul was free to teach and preach during the two years he was in Rome. Paul also wrote letters which we have today. Those letters are part of the Bible. They have shown Christians how to live for more than 1,900 years.

Before Jesus went back to heaven, He told His followers to tell others about Him in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). In those days, everyone thought Rome was the center of the earth. By going to Rome, Paul went “to the ends of the earth.” Paul completed the **mission** Jesus had given him.

Have you thought about your **mission** in life? What has God called you to

do? God has a perfect plan for every person. True happiness in life comes from finding that plan. The first step is trusting in Jesus Christ. Paul spent many years of his life following Jesus Christ and telling others about Him. Paul was on **mission** for God wherever he went. His life made a difference! Your life can make a difference, too.

### **On mission for God**

About 40 college students from our church go on a special **mission** trip each year at Easter. They visit six or eight prisons in Texas. Some of the students sing for the prisoners. Others tell what God has done in their lives. The visits make the prisoners happy. They write letters to thank the students. The prisoners say the visits make a difference.

This is just one of many ways Christians today can be on **mission** for God.

### To think about

1. Paul’s early **mission** in life was to get rid of all Christians on the earth. What did Paul do after the Lord called to him?
2. Paul’s call was to preach to the non-Jews (Gentiles). Why do you think Paul kept on preaching to the Jews also?
3. How can you find out what your life **mission** is?
4. How can your family and church be a part of your life **mission**?