



1. If you have studied the book of Acts before, share with the group one thing in the book that you are really looking forward to studying again. If you have never studied Acts before, or don't remember much about it, first listen to what the other group members share, and then pick one of their topics that you would like to learn about.
2. Acts is the second volume of a two-book series in the New Testament. What clue from Acts 1:1 tells us which gospel account was the first volume? (Skim the first 3 verses of each gospel to find the same recipient.) At the end of 1:1, what does the author tell us was the key message of that first volume? How do you think Acts will build on that?
3. Review the ending of the first volume (Luke 24:44-53). From these verses, what "orders" (or instructions, or commandments – Acts 1:2) do you see Jesus giving to the apostles? Which verses in today's Acts passage mention those same "orders"? See also Acts 10:42 – what did Peter see as his marching orders from the Lord?
4. This first passage from Acts focuses on the 40-day period from Christ's resurrection to the day He was taken up into heaven; how does Luke summarize what Jesus did then (1:3)? What are some specific events that took place during that time period? (Ask different group members to skim Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20-21, and 1 Corinthians 15:5-7 to find these and report back to the group.)
5. What promise does Jesus make in Luke 24:49? Who or what does this promise refer to (Acts 1:4-5)? When the promise is sent, what impact will that have on Jesus' followers (compare Luke 24:49 with Acts 1:8)?
6. What main topic did Jesus speak about with His disciples during those 40 days (1:3)? Given that, why do you think Jesus declined to answer their question to Him about that topic (1:6-7)? What does He want His disciples to focus on instead (1:8)?
7. Many Christians struggle with the idea of witnessing for Christ. What two essential things do we need from the Lord to be Christ's witnesses (1:8)? How have you seen the Lord help you be Christ's witness in your own life with these two life aids?
8. Application: Relate the geographic areas listed in verse 8 with your personal geography. What areas might be your Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, and how will you reach them? How might you help reach even the remotest part of the earth?



Big Event Coming – Holy Spirit Empowering Christ’s Followers to Witness

Leader Notes for Acts 1:1-8

Two volumes of Scripture were written to a man named Theophilus. While the name means “lover of God,” the only other thing we know about him was that he was addressed as “most excellent” Theophilus in Luke 1:3, so he probably held a high position. His name is a clear connection between the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. While Luke’s gospel focused on what Jesus did and taught while He was on earth, Acts will focus on what the Holy Spirit will do after Jesus is taken up into heaven.

Jesus gave “orders” (NASB) to the apostles during his 40 days back on earth. Other Bible translations call these “commandments” or “instructions.” We get a glimpse of these at the end of Luke, in verses 24:47-49. This is Luke’s version of the Great Commission! Many other things that Jesus did during those 40 days are written about in the last chapter (or two) of each gospel, along with an important passage in 1 Corinthians 15 that talks about some of His appearances as the risen Christ.

It is interesting to note that the disciples are not to head out on their own right away, but are to wait for the Lord’s empowerment through the arrival of the Holy Spirit. Jesus refers to the Spirit as “the promise of the Father” in both Luke and Acts. The Spirit’s coming will be different – they will be “baptized” with the Holy Spirit, an expression that means He will come to live inside them. This is the only time this phrase “baptized with the Holy Spirit” is used in Acts, except for one other time when Peter recalls what Jesus said here, in 11:16. For the apostles this baptism will take place soon, in chapter 2; for us, it takes place when we first believe in Christ.

The major topic Jesus spoke about during those 40 days is “the kingdom of God.” The disciples thought of that as Israel’s kingdom, but Jesus doesn’t answer their question about God’s timing. They were concerned about when that event would occur, and that isn’t what Jesus wanted them to think about. Instead, He wanted them to be His witnesses to the whole earth by the power He would give them through the Holy Spirit. We need to remember this focus He gave us when we tend to get too caught up in the timing of future events!

In many ways we can see Acts 1:8 as an outline for the whole book of Acts. The disciples stayed in Jerusalem for the first seven chapters, then they began moving out to places like Samaria and Judea in chapters 8-11. They continue to expand their reach after that, to places like Cyprus and Antioch, from where the apostle Paul gets sent out by the Holy Spirit.

The second half of Acts focuses on reaching the remotest part of the earth, as Paul travels westward into areas known today as Turkey, Greece, and Italy. While Acts doesn’t cover much about what the other disciples did, we know from history that they headed in other directions, guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit, and reached many parts of the known world in their generation. In our day the rest is up to us!

