

# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

JUNIOR 1 YEAR 1 BOOK 4

J1 YEAR 1 BOOK 4

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

USGA

Teacher's Guide and Student Handouts

**Church Beginnings and the Arrival of the Holy Spirit**

Passages: Acts 1–2

*Memory Verse*

“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38)

<b>Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]</b>	<b>Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]</b>	<b>Good Works [Behavior]</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Water baptism is for the remission of sins.</li><li>2. God has promised the Holy Spirit as our Helper.</li><li>3. God wants the church to grow in love, in truth, and in unity.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. God is Spirit.</li><li>2. God is truth.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Rely on the Holy Spirit to strengthen us and help us as our personal Teacher.</li><li>2. After baptism, we must say “no” to sin and put on Christ.</li><li>3. We can be witnesses of the Lord by relying on the Holy Spirit.</li></ol>

*Overview*

**Events and Spiritual Teachings**

- A. Jesus’ Command, Promise, and Ascension (Acts 1:1–11)
- B. The Holy Spirit’s Arrival (Acts 2:1–13)
- C. Peter Speaks Boldly (Acts 2:14–41)
- D. The Church Grows (Acts 2:41–47)

**Life Application**

1. Why Do I Need the Holy Spirit?
2. Why Do I Need Water Baptism?
3. We Are All Witnesses of the Lord

**Memory Verse**

**Conclusion:** Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the apostles were able to perform many wonderful deeds to glorify God’s name, bringing many to know Him and receive baptism for the remission of sins.

## *Events and Spiritual Teachings*

---

### **A. Jesus' Command, Promise, and Ascension (Acts 1:1–11)**

Has there ever been a time when your best friend was about to move to another city or change schools? Or perhaps someone close to you was getting ready to leave? If yes, how did you feel? Sometimes, it can be frightening.

The twelve disciples spent three years with Jesus, learning about the kingdom of God and witnessing many miracles performed by Him. Then, at the end, Jesus gave Himself over to suffer a painful death on the cross. But He had promised His disciples that He would return (Mt 26:32).

Three days later, Jesus did as promised and rose from the dead. Not only did He present Himself to His disciples alive, He remained with them for forty days after His resurrection, teaching them of “the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). Jesus also gave His disciples a very important task. Do you know what that is? Let’s turn to Luke 24:46–49:

*Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”*

Jesus instructed His disciples to preach the remission of sins in His name to all the nations. But they first had to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit. Let’s read Acts 1:8: “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” When Jesus finished instructing His disciples, He ascended into heaven, and His disciples “looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up” (Acts 1:10).

Despite Jesus’ departure, His followers were not afraid, nor were they idle. Instead, they chose to obey His instructions and gathered in Jerusalem, praying and waiting for the time they would be “baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:5). Soon enough, the Holy Spirit descended to be with them wherever they went, and to give them power to carry out the important commission Jesus gave them.

### **B. The Holy Spirit’s Arrival (Acts 2:1–13)**

On the Day of Pentecost, all of Jesus’ followers were together, and “devout men, from every nation under heaven” had returned to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast (Acts 2:5). Suddenly a sound like a mighty wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where Jesus’ followers were gathered. Let’s read what happened in Acts 2:3–4.

The crowd of devout men were astonished. They marveled to each other, saying, “Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?” (Acts 2:5–12). Amazed, yet perplexed, they wondered, “Whatever could this mean?” God had opened the ears of these devout Jews to let them hear the disciples speaking in their own language. But those whose ears had not been opened mocked the disciples and thought them drunk. At that moment, Peter stood and addressed the gathered crowd.

### **C. Peter Speaks Boldly (Acts 2:14–41)**

This day was a turning point in the history of the church. Peter, empowered by the Holy Spirit, used the Scripture in his speech and quoted the prophet Joel before further explaining that they now, “having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear” (Acts 2:33). He then continued to preach boldly of God’s plan for salvation through the death of Jesus Christ, saying, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).

Those listening were cut to the heart upon realizing they had killed the Messiah they had been waiting for. They immediately asked, “What shall we do?” Peter told them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remissions of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Taking the message to the heart, about three thousand people were baptized and added to the early church that very day.

It was God’s plan that the Holy Spirit descend on the Day of Pentecost. He arranged it so that every devout man, in Jerusalem for the Pentecost, witnessed the downpour of the Holy Spirit. When the feast was over, they returned home to spread what they had witnessed, along with the gospel message.

#### **Understanding the Promised Holy Spirit**

From the very beginning of the church, God has promised that when we repent and are baptized, we shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. There are two important teachings regarding the Holy Spirit:

1. The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance in heaven (Eph 1:14)
2. Speaking in tongues is proof of the Holy Spirit’s abidance (Acts 10:45–47)\*

\*Receiving the Holy Spirit is something we can “see and hear” (Acts 2:33; 10:45–47). The event is audible and often visible.

#### **Understanding Water Baptism**

When we are baptized, the blood of Jesus washes our sins away (1 Jn 1:7). We are buried and raised with Christ (Rom 6:3–4), and we receive a new life (Jn 3:5).

#### **D. The Church Grows (Acts 2:41–47)**

The early church grew rapidly after the Holy Spirit’s descent. The Bible tells us that “the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). Let’s continue reading verses 41–47 and examine what the early church did and how it grew.

- Gladly received the word (v. 41)
- Continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine (v. 42)
- Came together in fellowship (v. 42)
- Broke bread together (v. 42)
- Prayed (v. 42)
- Many wonders and signs were done through the apostles (v. 43)
- Sold their possessions and divided among them, as anyone had need (v. 45)
- Gathered daily with one accord in the temple, and broke bread from house to house (v. 46)
- Had gladness and simplicity of heart (v. 46)
- Continually praised God (v. 47)
- Had favor with all the people (v. 47)

From these verses, we can see that there are many components to the growth of the church. Let's examine a few of these.

We know the apostles' doctrine is the complete gospel from Jesus (2 Tim 1:13; 1 Cor 15:1–3). The early church gladly received this gospel, and the believers were steadfast in the apostles' doctrine by studying the gospel and following its teachings. For both the early church and our church today, God's word is the foundation (Eph 2:20–21) and an incorruptible seed which "lives and abides forever" (1 Pet 1:23).

Another key component is that the early church not only studied the truth, but also abided in it. The Bible says that they had fellowship with one another (1 Jn 1:3) and partook of the Holy Communion in accordance with Jesus' command (Jn 6:47–58; 1 Cor 10:16–17). They also shared all they had with those in need, were in unity with one another, and were even held in favor with all the people around them. To dwell in unity and fellowship with others requires hearts of love and of prayer. We not only grow in character and faith through prayer, but God will also open the doors to the gospel, opening our hearts and minds to His will and His purpose so that we can dwell in unity (Col 4:2–4).

### *Check for Understanding*

---

- 1. After Jesus' resurrection, how many days did He stay to show Himself to the disciples?** Forty.
- 2. What was Jesus Christ's promise to the disciples?** He promised the coming of the Holy Spirit, who would empower them to be His witnesses.
- 3. What happened on the Day of Pentecost?** Jesus Christ's followers were together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a mighty wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. The Holy Spirit filled them, and they all spoke in tongues.
- 4. What are the two important teachings from the Holy Spirit?** The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance in heaven (Eph 1:14). Speaking in tongues is proof of the Holy Spirit's abidance in us (Acts 10:45–47).
- 5. Why were the people cut to the heart after listening to Peter speak? What did they ask Peter?** They realized they had killed the Messiah whom they had been waiting for. They humbly asked Peter, "What shall we do?"
- 6. Name five ways the believers grew after receiving the Holy Spirit and water baptism.** They gladly received the word (41); they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine (42); they came together in fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayer (42).

### *Life Application*

---

#### **1. Why Do I Need the Holy Spirit?**

From the moment we are cleansed through water baptism, we must follow God's commands to remain clean and obey Him. But it is a struggle to walk in Christ's footsteps when those around us are walking in the opposite direction. Determination alone will not help us overcome our sinful nature, which is why the Lord sent us the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit sets us apart as God's holy people, sealing us for salvation until the day we enter God's heavenly kingdom (Eph 1:13–14). There are many functions of the Holy Spirit, but we'll focus on just two today.

#### **The Holy Spirit Is Our Helper and Teacher**

Jesus called the Holy Spirit the "Helper" or "Counselor" or "Comforter" (Gk. *parakletos*).

*And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows*

*Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. [...] But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*

(Jn 14:16–18, 26)

Jesus has promised that the Spirit will dwell with us and in us, abiding with us forever. Isn't it comforting to know that God is with us every step of the way? More than that, He is much like our personal Teacher. When we study the word of God, He helps us understand its meaning. Further, when we are in need – when we are trying to make a decision, are talking to others about God, or are perhaps caught facing temptation – the Spirit will “bring to [our] remembrance” God's words. Whenever we are in need, He is ready to aid us as our Helper and Teacher.

The Spirit is a necessity for us in this world of chaos and confusion, where there is no absolute truth. We must allow the Holy Spirit not only to dwell in us, but also to help us so that we can grow in His grace and knowledge, and become equipped to do every good work.

**Discussion:** Share a time when you experienced the Spirit's guidance in your spiritual journey.

### **The Holy Spirit Strengthens Us**

In Ephesians 3:16, Paul asked that the believers be “strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man.” Is your “inner man” strong or weak? Sometimes, it can be weak in the face of our own desires. The Holy Spirit gives us the strength to overcome temptations, but we must pray and let Him grow within our hearts. We may be sealed with the Holy Spirit the moment we receive Him, but do we allow Him to guide us so that we can live according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh? Let's turn to Galatians 5:16–17. “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.”

When we receive the Holy Spirit, we let Him dwell within us, but only through prayer do we actually let Him fill and strengthen us. Then, through the Spirit's strength, we are able to overcome the desires of our flesh to serve God and to share the gospel with others. We can even change our own selves and control our negative emotions like anger or fear. All of this can only be done if we submit to the Spirit.

### **Testimony: Remembrance and Guidance Through the Spirit**

*When I was in high school, I was going through a rough time. My walk with God was not stable. There were times when I did well (especially after attending SSC) – I was filled with the Holy Spirit and praised God constantly. But there were downtimes, especially when I didn't have time or was too lazy to pray. I could see the vast differences.*

*One time, I was tempted to cheat on a test. I was about to cheat, but right then the Holy Spirit reminded me, “You're a child of God. God has bought you with a high price, so honor God with your body!” I didn't hear any voices nor did I see any visions. But a still, small voice kept echoing in my heart and reminding me of His words. I was totally taken aback by how powerful the remembrance of His word was. Because I feared God, I quickly gathered all my strength, said a prayer, and asked God to forgive me. Not only did I ask God to forgive me, I asked Him to strengthen me so that I would do well. Indeed, something miraculous happened. I was filled with the wisdom from above and was able to finish the test with a level of unknown strength.*

*This experience taught me an invaluable lesson: the Holy Spirit is indeed my Helper and Teacher. I could have chosen to ignore the voice of God, but I embraced it, and as a result was filled with joy and gladness. May God continue to strengthen me and help me in times of weak moments. All glory to God!*

– Anonymous

## **2. Why Do I Need Water Baptism?**

The Bible calls baptism the “washing of regeneration” (Tit 3:5) because it is a spiritual transformation. Our sinful being dies and is buried, and we are clothed with a new life—the life of Jesus Christ (Col 2:11–13). The Bible speaks of this as “putting on Christ” (Gal 3:27). The Lord Jesus takes off our filthy clothes and puts a robe of righteousness on us—a robe that is clean because of His perfect, sinless life. Water baptism has the following effects:

- a. Forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom 6:6–7)
- b. Regeneration (Tit 3:5; Rom 6:3–4; Jn 3:5)
- c. Baptism into Christ (Gal 3:27–29; Rom 6:3; 1 Cor 12:13)

### **Say “No” to Sin**

Paul reminds us that the free grace of God is not a license to sin: “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?” (Rom 6:1–2). Baptism teaches us to say “no” to sin and “yes” to God’s will. Now that we live in Christ and belong to Him, we must strive to be more like Him. But we can only overcome our weaknesses and trials with God’s help.

**Discussion:** Share a time when you struggled to say “no” to sin or overcame it with God’s help.

## **3. We Are All Witnesses of the Lord**

We all have a mission today. We must continue the work of the apostles and spread the gospel to the ends of the earth. Although spreading the gospel to the ends of the earth may seem like an insurmountable challenge, God has equipped us with His Holy Spirit to rise to the occasion. It is the Spirit’s power, wisdom, hope, and peace that turns people’s hearts from the world to God, from darkness to light, and from destruction to salvation.

### **Testimony: Receiving the Holy Spirit**

*I came across numerous questions about our faith during my time in the Dominican Republic (or “DR”), but whenever I was asked about the Holy Spirit, I became nervous and uneasy. How could I give an answer when I myself had not received the Holy Spirit? Nonetheless, the questions encouraged me all the more to pray for God’s will to be done and for me to be equipped for His service.*

*After being in the DR for over five months, my return to the US was delayed by a month due to a couple of unforeseen circumstances, one of which was to interpret for the next visiting preacher. Before his arrival, I had a couple of weeks to think, reflect, and pray. A little less than two years prior to this point in time, I had the first of three related dreams: While at an outdoor church service, I received the Holy Spirit during the prayer. It was so real that I felt very happy. Alas, it was only a dream. Within a year of the first dream, I had the second one. This time, I was attending a service inside the church. While praying, I suddenly started speaking in tongues. Of course I rejoiced upon receiving the Holy Spirit, but again it was just a dream. The third dream occurred during my extended stay in the DR. However, my reaction was significantly different from the previous two. I dreamt that*

*I was inside the church and when I knelt down to pray, I started speaking in tongues. Weeping and pleading with God for His forgiveness and mercy, I could only see myself as a sinner—arrogant, cowardly, disobedient, and self-centered. I then realized that in my previous dreams, I had desired the Holy Spirit for selfish reasons rather than for surrendering myself to God.*

*A couple of days after this third dream, I prayed to God to direct my footsteps. As soon as I felt my tongue start to move on its own, I stopped praying. I could not believe that I had truly received the Holy Spirit! At first, I thought I was only imagining my tongue moving, so the next few times I prayed by deliberately repeating “Hallelujah” very softly so that my tongue would not move freely.*

*When the preacher finally arrived, we prayed together. Afterwards, he immediately asked, “When did you receive the Holy Spirit?” By confirming that I indeed had received the Holy Spirit, my doubts disappeared and I was grateful beyond words to God for granting me His precious Spirit. As in my dream, I felt so unworthy of God’s love and mercy that I was moved to tears. I asked, “How could you grant Your Holy Spirit to such an undeserving sinner like me?” I recalled how God had shown me tremendous love throughout my life. Previously, I had only been praying to receive blessings for my own benefit, but did I truly believe, obey, surrender, or have faith in Him? What had I done with my life, but waste a good portion of it? I realize now that God does not need me—I need God! I love Him because He first loved me, and the best way I can show my gratitude is by denying myself and taking up the cross to travel on the path that God has allotted for me.*

*Being baptized and receiving the Holy Spirit are just the first steps of my journey with Christ. I am still a work-in-progress, in need of God’s forgiveness every day, and I ask for mercy and sanctification to grow in His likeness. As apostle Paul says in Philippians 2:12, “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”*

– Francisco Macías  
(Excerpt from *Manna 79*)

### **Memory Verse**

---

“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38)

### **Meaning**

1. To repent is to “think differently, to change one’s mind for the better.” Repenting means avoiding any conditions that led to the mistake, such as the environment, our peers, or our behavior.
2. The Holy Spirit is a promise from God. Anyone who prays with humility with an earnest heart will receive it.

### **Conclusion**

---

The Acts of the Apostles describes how the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost and helped the church to grow and aided in spreading the gospel. The apostles were empowered by the Holy Spirit and were able to perform many wonderful deeds to bring glory to God’s name, thus bringing many to know Him and receive baptism for the remission of sins. The early church was established through truth, love, submission to the Holy Spirit’s guidance, and humility; all are worthy examples for us to follow. It is not by our own might or power, but by the Spirit of God that we can accomplish anything.



## Lesson 1 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What steps are necessary to receive the Holy Spirit?  
*Truly repent—change your mind for the better—and receive water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. Then pray with humility and an earnest heart for the Spirit to abide within you.*
2. What did the disciples do after returning to Jerusalem following Jesus Christ's ascension? What can we learn from them?  
*After returning to Jerusalem, they gathered together to pray. We can learn from their obedience and their continued prayers.*
3. What are two key lessons we should remember regarding the promised Holy Spirit?  
*The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance in heaven (Eph 1:14); Speaking in tongues is proof of the Holy Spirit's abidance (Acts 10:45–47).*
4. What are the key components of the early church's growth?  
*The early church studied the truth and followed Jesus' teachings. Further, they abided in the truth by having fellowship with each other, partaking in Holy Communion, sharing with those in need, and acting in union with each other. These were only possible because of their prayer.*
5. What are the effects of water baptism?  
*Forgiveness of sins; regeneration; and baptism into Christ.*
6. Have you ever felt the power of the Holy Spirit guiding you? If you have not yet received the Holy Spirit, have you ever felt God's guidance at a particular time in your life?  
*Personal answers.*

**The Rise of Opposition**

Passages: Acts 3–5

*Memory Verse*

“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

<b>Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]</b>	<b>Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]</b>	<b>Good Work [Behavior]</b>
1. Be filled with the Holy Spirit. 2. Speak the truth despite oppositions.	God’s name is the only name under heaven by which we can be saved.	1. Be continually filled with the Holy Spirit. 2. Be bold in speaking God’s word.

*Overview*

**Events and Spiritual Teachings**

- A. A Lame Man Is Healed (Acts 3:1–19)
- B. The Rise of Opposition (Acts 4:1–31)
- C. The Second Opposition (Acts 5:17–42)

**Life Application**

- 1. Be Continually Filled with the Holy Spirit
- 2. Boldly Speak the Word of God

**Memory Verse**

**Conclusion:** Despite oppositions that we face, we must choose to obey God rather than men.

**A. A Lame Man Is Healed (Acts 3:1–19)**

Have you ever seen God’s healing power in your life? Or in the lives of your family and relatives? Or have you seen God demonstrate His power in church? (*Have students share.*) We’re going to look at a familiar story found in Acts of the Apostles. Let’s read the passage from Acts 3:1–16.

Every day, as worshippers entered the temple courts for the time of prayer, the lame man would ask them for alms. When Peter and John entered the temple to pray, he once again asked for alms. But Peter and John fixed their eyes on him and said, “Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk” (Acts 3:6). Then Peter took his hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. The healing power from God made a lame man walk! Can you imagine the joy this man must have felt after over forty years of laying on the mat (Acts 3:2; 4:22)? He was so happy that he entered the temple walking, leaping, and praising God! All the people were filled with amazement.

**1. How was this lame man healed?**

Upon seeing the people’s amazement, Peter preached to them of Jesus and His power. He explained to them the reason for the man’s healing, saying, “And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all” (v. 16).

**a. “And His name [...] has made this man strong”**

The power that healed this man was not from Peter or John, but from Jesus’ name. There is power in the name of Jesus Christ.

**b. “Through faith in His name [...] the faith which comes through Him”**

It was not the faith of the lame man, but the faith of Peter and John. They wanted to give him something much better than silver and gold. Money helps for a while, but it does not last. What does last is the power of healing from Jesus Christ and, more importantly, knowing Jesus.

So, we can conclude that Jesus’ name, and faith in His name, made the lame man well. Peter and John have taught us that when we speak in His name with faith, there is power. But Jesus’ name can do much more than heal us. Let’s read the following verses.

- Acts 4:12 – “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”
- Phil 2:9 – “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name.”
- Rom 10:13 – “For ‘whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’”
- Heb 11:1 – “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”
- Heb 11:6 – “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

**Testimony**

*I was born in 1984 in Hunan, China. In 2011, I contracted a severe illness. I was unable to walk. When I returned to the hospital on January 15, 2013, the doctor told me he could not heal me. On October 13, 2014, the hospital in Changsha concluded that I had a tumor in my brain. There was nothing the doctors could do. Toward the end of 2014, I was totally*

*paralyzed. I couldn't eat, couldn't go to the bathroom, and I was in severe pain. But my wife and my father-in-law prayed unceasingly for me, asking God for His mercy and healing. Every day, they prayed in the name of Jesus Christ. They also requested the church to intercede on my behalf. Miraculously, God healed me day by day. My sickness was cured by the power of intercession. Even the doctors could not believe how amazing this was. My health is back to normal and I can work. I'm so thankful to the Most High God. He is the One True God who lifted me out from the edge of death.*

–Wang Si-Jad, Hunan Church, China  
(From *True Jesus Church Amazing Grace Testimony Series #12*)

## 2. Peter's Sermon in Solomon's Porch

Let's read verses Acts 3:13–15.

*The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.*

Peter explains to the people Jesus' identity, and thus the reason for His power which healed the lame man. Peter teaches us the reasons Jesus Christ is worthy of our worship:

- a. He is the Holy One and the Just (v. 14)
- b. He is the Prince of life (v. 15)
- c. He is raised from the dead (v. 15)

## 3. The importance of repentance

Let's read verses Acts 3:17–19.

*Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.*

After declaring Jesus' identity and power and reminding the people of what they had done to Him, Peter then proceeded to teach them what they ought to do. They had made a grave mistake when they opposed, betrayed, slandered, mocked, and crucified the Prince of life. But Peter encouraged them with the good news: their sins can be blotted out as long as they repent. With repentance, they can have everlasting life.

### **Note: What are "times of refreshing"?**

This can mean freedom from sin and the blessings that come as a result of conversion (2 Cor 5:17; Rom 5:9–11)(*BSG: Acts, 14*).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> TJC Department of Literary Ministry, "Segment Analysis 3:19-26" *Bible Study Guide: Acts*, (U.S.A.: True Jesus Church, 2012), [https://bsg.tjc.org/tjc\\_bsg\\_lesson/acts-6/?guide\\_id=310](https://bsg.tjc.org/tjc_bsg_lesson/acts-6/?guide_id=310), 14.

## **B. The Rise of Opposition (Acts 4:1–13, 15–20, 23–31)**

Let's read Acts 4:1–13. Peter's teachings of Jesus' resurrection "greatly disturbed" the religious leaders, so they placed the apostles in custody until the next day. Despite this, many believed and the number of men grew to around 5,000! This was truly the power of the Holy Spirit moving the hearts of the people. The next day, Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and other rulers and elders questioned Peter and John. None could deny the healing of the lame man, so the leaders asked them, "By what power or by what name have you done this?" (Acts 4:7).

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said, "Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole" (Acts 4:10). As Peter declared, there is no other name by which we can be saved, only the name of Jesus Christ. Acts 10:43 says, "Through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins." Jesus' name holds the power to heal and forgive and is the only path through which we can come to God.

### **Note: Why did Peter quote Psalm 118:22?**

A chief cornerstone is the most important foundation stone upon which a building is built. Like the stone rejected by the builders, Jesus Christ was rejected by the religious authorities of His day. But God exalted Him, making Him our Lord and Savior and, in turn, the chief cornerstone upon which God's house is built. He is the foundation of our salvation (*BSG: Acts, 2c*).<sup>2</sup>

Let's continue reading Acts 4:15–20. The apostles were uneducated and untrained men, yet the council could not deny any of their words or their deeds. Moreover, an entire city had witnessed the healing of this lame man and glorified God for it. But instead of choosing to believe, the council commanded the disciples not to speak at all or teach in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:18).

## **C. The Second Opposition (Acts 5:17–42)**

Let's read Acts 5:17–42. Angry at the success of the disciples' ministry and the many miracles they performed in Jesus' name, the high priest and his fellow Sadducees imprisoned them. But at night, an angel of the Lord released them and commanded them to continue preaching in the temple.

The next day, the council found the prison empty and the apostles preaching in the same temple in which they had been arrested. The council confronted them again and said, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!" (Acts 5:28). But Peter and the other apostles answered, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:28). They went on to proclaim that God raised up Jesus and has exalted Him to be the Prince and Savior who offers repentance to Israel and the forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:31).

### **1. What can we learn from these oppositions?**

#### **a. No matter what opposes us, we need to preach the truth**

In response to the council's command, Peter and John replied, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the

---

<sup>2</sup> TJC Department of Literary Ministry, "Segment Analysis 4:5-12," *Bible Study Guide: Acts*, (U.S.A.: True Jesus Church, 2012), [https://bsg.tjc.org/tjc\\_bsg\\_lesson/acts-7/?guide\\_id=310](https://bsg.tjc.org/tjc_bsg_lesson/acts-7/?guide_id=310), 2c.

things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19–20). When Peter and his fellow apostles were later beaten by the council, not only did they rejoice for being “counted worthy to suffer shame for His name” (Acts 5:41), they also continued their efforts to spread the gospel.

The apostles had witnessed Jesus’ resurrection. They had seen His ascension. And before He left, they had received His instructions to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit. Then, on the Day of Pentecost, they experienced the downpour of the Holy Spirit, and their lives were transformed. Their experiences fueled their determination to testify in Jesus’ name, and their faith prompted their obedience to God, rather than man.

**b. Opposition strengthens our faith**

Let’s read Acts 4:23–31. From this passage, we can see that the believers believed in God all the more. They offered a prayer, and “the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31).

The opposition did not weaken the apostles. Rather, it made their faith stronger. They asked God to help them speak His word with boldness (Acts 4:29) and thanked Him for counting them worthy to suffer in His name (Acts 5:41). They understood that being able to suffer was a blessing in itself. We may face obstacles when we preach, but we don’t need to be afraid. All we have to do is call on the name of Jesus with faith. Opposition can paralyze us, but by relying on Jesus through prayer, we can have the boldness and the wisdom to face any threats and speak the truth.

*Check for Understanding*

---

- 1. What did Peter and John say to the lame man who wanted alms from them?** “Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.”
- 2. How was this lame man healed?** He was healed by the name of Jesus Christ and by the faith of Peter and John.
- 3. According to Peter’s sermon, what are the reasons Jesus is worthy of our worship?** He is the Holy One and the Just (Acts 3:14); He is the Prince of life (Acts 3:15); He is raised from the dead (Acts 3:15).
- 4. As a result of Peter and John being placed into custody, how did the early church grow?** The number of men grew to be around 5,000.
- 5. During the second opposition, what happened the night Peter and the apostles imprisoned?** An angel of the Lord opened the prison doors, brought them out, and commanded them to continue preaching in the temple.
- 6. What was the apostles’ response to the council’s order not to preach in Jesus’ name?** “We ought to obey God rather than men. And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him” (Acts 5:29, 32).

*Life Application*

---

*“Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.” And when they had prayed, the place where they were*

*assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.*

(Acts 4:29–31)

### **1. Be Continually Filled with the Holy Spirit**

When we pray for the power of the Holy Spirit, God will fill us with the Spirit. When we allow Him to fill us, He dwells and occupies every part of our lives, guiding and controlling our actions. Prayer is an outward action, but it is our innermost heart that is changed and transformed.

#### **How do we fill ourselves with the Holy Spirit?**

Receiving the Holy Spirit is just the start; Ephesians 5:18 commands us to be filled with the Spirit. But when we sin, we are ignoring Him, which leads Him to grieve within us (Eph 4:30). To be filled, we must yield ourselves completely to the Spirit. This means avoiding sin, which hinders the Spirit and our obedience to God. When we do sin, we should immediately confess, repent to God, and ask for forgiveness in prayer. Then, we will feel the presence and the filling of the Holy Spirit.

**Discussion:** Share a time when you felt that you were filled with the Holy Spirit.

### **2. Boldly Speak the Word of God**

The original Greek for “boldness,” *parrēsia*, translates into “freedom in speaking,” speaking “openly,” “frankly,” or acting with “free or fearless confidence.” Boldness isn’t being mean or pushy. Boldness from God is speaking what we have seen and heard with spirit-filled conviction. It can be very gentle or kind because it comes from a spirit-filled heart. It can also be a clear, compassionate, and compelling witness in bringing others to God.

Although Peter and John were uneducated and untrained men, they spoke with such boldness before the religious leaders that the listeners were reminded of Jesus, who had also spoken with authority and power. This boldness is from God, received through prayer. It is not something we gain by ourselves. The disciples prayed for this characteristic because they understood that with the power of the Holy Spirit, God would work His wonders by enabling them to speak the word of God with confidence.

We need to learn to speak the word of God with the same boldness the disciples had. That means we need to tell it all – there is no reason to hide God’s work in our lives. Of course, preaching God’s word is not without its challenges. Some will ridicule us, and others will actively oppose us. Opposition can come from anyone, even from family members. But if we fear such opposition, it is difficult to speak the word of God with boldness. If the apostles had succumbed to their fears, they would not have been able to transform the hearts of thousands of people. We need to remember that when the word of God is spoken with power, it transforms and changes people’s hearts. May God give us boldness so that we can be a clear, concise, and unwavering witness for God, even in the face of danger or opposition.

**Discussion:** Share a time when you were bold in speaking God’s word.

#### **Testimony: God Gave Me Boldness**

*Over the last couple of years, I have been praying for my unbelieving family, but when I think about my grandmother in particular, I cannot help but shed tears. My head kept imagining horrible scenarios of what would happen if she did not receive salvation before she passed away. I want more than anything else not to let that happen, but at the same time, there didn’t seem to be any good opportunities for me to talk to her about my faith. The times when my mother hinted or shared about our church, she didn’t show much interest and that discouraged me even more.*

*However, God is good. During Thanksgiving break, my grandmother came with me and my parents on an overnight trip to Napa. That night, while my mother and I were praying, I heard my grandmother come into the room, then walk out. The next morning, as my grandmother and I were eating breakfast, she asked me what we were doing the night before. I immediately grabbed this opportunity and explained our prayer and about the true God we believe in.*

*Thank God, she asked clarifying questions throughout my explanation, which meant she was interested in what I had to say. God gave me the boldness right there to share the gospel with her. Although the conversation did not go beyond that, I thank God for allowing me this precious opportunity for me to have had this meaningful conversation with my grandmother. It gives me faith that her salvation is not so far-fetched after all. I will continue to pray for her salvation, and with faith, I will trust that God will open the door of salvation to her.*

– T. H. (Sacramento Church)

### **Memory Verse**

---

“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

### **Meaning**

1. Peter, being filled with the Holy Spirit, understood that the miracle of the lame man took place because of the power of Jesus’ name and because of faith in Him.
2. Jesus’ name holds the power to heal, to forgive, and to save us. His name is the only path by which we can receive the precious hope of salvation. Since we can only be saved by the name of Jesus, we must therefore repent, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and pray in His name to be filled by the Spirit of God.

### **Conclusion**

---

Despite oppositions that we face, we must choose to obey God rather than men. Not only that, we must pray for the fullness of the Spirit so that we may continue to witness, proclaim, and preach the message of Jesus Christ with boldness and faith.



## Lesson 2 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What does the memory verse teach us about the power of Jesus' name?  
*His name has the power to heal, to forgive, and to save us. It is the only path through which we can receive salvation.*
2. What are the key lessons in Peter's sermon in Solomon's Porch?  
*Peter explains Jesus' identity, and thus the reason for His power which healed the lame man. He also teaches us that Jesus Christ is worthy of our worship because:*
  - a. *He is the Holy One and the Just (Acts 3:14)*
  - b. *He is the Prince of life (Acts 3:15)*
  - c. *He is raised from the dead (Acts 3:15)*
3. What was the apostles' response when the council forbade them from teaching in Jesus' name?  
*"We ought to obey God rather than men. And we are His witnesses to these things and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him" (Acts 5:29,32).*
4. What does it mean to be filled by the Holy Spirit?  
*It means that we have allowed the Spirit of God to fill us, and that He dwells and occupies every part of our lives, guiding our actions.*
5. What does it mean to be bold when speaking for God?  
*It means speaking what we have seen and heard with spirit-filled conviction. It can be very gentle or kind, for it comes from a spirit-filled heart. It can also be a clear, compassionate, and compelling witness in bringing others to God.*
6. What types of "prisons" do we face – physical, mental, or social – for sharing our faith? Knowing you may face these, do you think you can still share your faith?  
*Personal answers. (Students may need some guidance on answering this question.) Ex: Social stigma, bullying, loss of friendships, rejection from family, etc.*

**Stephen Is Killed**

Passages: Acts 5:12–42; 6:1–7; 6:8–8:1

*Memory Verse*

---

“But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: ‘We ought to obey God rather than men.’” (Acts 5:29)

<b>Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]</b>	<b>Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]</b>	<b>Good Work [Behavior]</b>
God wants us to be victorious over our inner weaknesses and external obstacles.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. God is a God of victory – He helps us overcome our obstacles, both internal and external.</li><li>2. God blesses those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Act on our faith, even in difficult situations.</li><li>2. Serve others with genuine love and compassion.</li><li>3. Preach regardless of the expected outcome.</li></ol>

*Overview*

---

**Events and Spiritual Teachings**

- A. Faith Against Opposition
  1. Peter
  2. Stephen
- B. Seven Workers for the Church
- C. Submit to the Spirit and Faith in Hardship

**Life Application**

1. Upholding Faith in Hardship
2. Serve with Love and Compassion
3. Preach Regardless of Outcome

**Memory Verse**

**Conclusion:** No matter the obstacles or circumstances – internal fears and struggles, or opposition from outside enemies – God wants us to have a faith that overcomes.

### A. Faith Against Opposition

In the Acts of the Apostles, many of God's chosen workers and followers were persecuted for their faith. They suffered, even to the point of death, in order to bear witness to others about Christ. By looking at the faith of the early church, we can be encouraged to act on our faith, even as we face our own weaknesses or a difficult environment. The early church experienced growing pains; yet, we learned last week that it became stronger even in the face of severe opposition.

Let's look at two examples of early church workers who overcame obstacles in order to share their faith.

#### 1. Peter

Peter was a chosen disciple of the Lord and called by the Lord Jesus Himself (Mt 4:18–19). But despite God's abundant grace upon Peter, he had many weaknesses. He mistakenly opposed Jesus' death and confidently proclaimed he would never stumble in his faith (Mt 26:31–33), yet later publicly denied Jesus three times (Mt 26:69–75). Peter let his own zeal blind him to the truth, and his pride later gave way to his fear of punishment. His inner weaknesses were obstacles to his faith.

Peter eventually overcame these weaknesses. The authorities strictly commanded Peter and the other apostles to stop teaching and preaching in Jesus' name. But they boldly replied, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29), and Peter did not stop spreading the gospel (Acts 5:42).

#### Overcoming Inner Weaknesses

Like Peter, our inner weaknesses may stop us from serving God or sharing the gospel. These may be weaknesses in our character, personality, or behavior. Perhaps we fear rejection, pursue our own self-interests, or are self-righteous or prideful about our wealth or status – possibly even our status as God's children. We may also have greed or lustful desires that turn us from doing God's work. All of these weaknesses within us can affect our service for God.

To preach the gospel, we too must overcome our inner weaknesses like Peter did. It's not easy to overcome our fear of persecution when we preach, but we have a personal responsibility to put in our best effort to transform ourselves into ambassadors for Christ. But this cannot be done purely out of self-determination. Transforming our character must be done with the work of the Holy Spirit within us (Eph 3:16).

When we surrender ourselves to God's Spirit, we allow God to transform us according to His will. If we resist, our weaknesses will often remain. Peter's life reflects this truth. After he surrendered himself to God, he joyfully accepted the imprisonment, beating, and shame that he suffered for Christ (Acts 5:18, 40–41). Eventually, Peter was even able to glorify God in his death (Jn 21:18–19).

#### 2. Stephen

Unlike Peter, very little about Stephen is recorded in the Bible, except for the difficult circumstances he encountered. The persecution of the early church, particularly of believers like Stephen, actually led to the spread of the gospel and the church's growth (Acts 8:4; 12:24). It may not make sense, but the difficult circumstances are what made the church grow.

Acts 6:5 tells us that Stephen was among the seven workers chosen to serve the early church. He is described as a man full of faith, the Holy Spirit, and wisdom (Acts 6:5, 10). Stephen did great signs and wonders through the Holy Spirit's power, showing that he was filled with God's Spirit (Acts 6:8). Stephen was a good witness for Christ, but he faced serious opposition when he tried to share the gospel. Acts 6:8–15 records how Stephen preached in the Synagogue of the Freedman. (Note: Here, Stephen likely preached to the Roman Jews. Roman Jews were Jews freed from slavery and given Roman citizenship by their Roman captors. Some of these Roman Jews, or their descendants, likely returned to live in Jerusalem and set up their own synagogue.)

When Stephen preached in the Synagogue of the Freedman, the listeners opposed Stephen and set about arresting him, bringing him before the Jewish council and falsely accusing Stephen with false witnesses (Acts 6:11–14). Yet, despite his difficult circumstances, the Bible says Stephen's face was like that of an angel in his trials (Acts 6:15). After angering the council with his address, Stephen was cast out of the city and stoned to death. He was thrown into a terrible situation, but his godly character – faithfulness, courage, and wisdom – can clearly be seen. Even when he was being stoned, Stephen did not harbor hatred or anger, but cried out, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin" (Acts 7:60).

### **Overcoming External Obstacles**

Today, we too may face difficult circumstances or a bad environment when it comes to sharing our faith with others. Some may persecute or mock us for our beliefs. Many people are deceived by Satan and often have false ideas about God and Christianity planted into their minds (Col 2:4, 8). Stephen's example teaches us how to overcome the hardships or trials we may face as we do God's work. How did Stephen overcome the persecution of his faith?

Stephen fixed his eyes upon God above. When Stephen was falsely accused and stoned to death for his words, the Bible says Stephen "gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55). The Bible teaches us to "set [our] mind on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col 3:2). When Jesus faced the excruciating pain of the cross ahead of Him, He looked to the joy of obeying and fulfilling God's will, which helped Him endure the temporary pain of the cross (Heb 12:2).

We too must fix our eyes upon Jesus and the many good examples left behind by others. If we fix our eyes on things above, the difficulties we face here on earth will seem small in comparison to the joy of obeying God. Like the apostles, we may even count it all joy to suffer for God's name (Acts 5:41).

### **B. Seven Workers for the Church**

Acts 6:1–7 records a complaint in the early church regarding unfair distribution of food among the Hebrew and Hellenic (Greek culture) widows (Acts 6:1). In response, the church appointed seven workers to serve and meet the needs of those who were being neglected, resolving the situation through their genuine love and compassion (Acts 6:2–5).

Besides having love, in order to lead and serve the church well, the church requires good and faithful workers. Acts 6:3 teaches us three important requirements for those who serve within the church: 1) be of good reputation; 2) be full of the Holy Spirit; and 3) be full of wisdom. What does it mean to be a person with these three characteristics?

Being of good reputation means being a good example for others. We are a good example to others when we reflect God's character and wisdom in our lives, something accomplished by being filled with God's Spirit. In our day-to-day life, we must try our best to be a good example to others. When we genuinely strive to do what is right even when it is hard, others see our good example and learn from us (Phil 2:19–22; 3:17). Paul told Timothy, "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim 4:12).

Being a good example to others starts in our daily conduct. It means actively seeking out God, putting effort into our spiritual cultivation, and as a result, bearing fruit in how we interact with others. Over time, our good reputation will be built upon our ability to handle different situations with godly wisdom. However, we must first receive God in faith, because without faith it is impossible to please God (Gal 3:2; Heb 11:6). There are many ways to receive God and reflect His character, but the most basic ways are through hearing, sharing, and learning from God's word, and through prayer. Wisdom must also be received from God, for God freely gives wisdom to those who ask Him for it in faith (Jas 1:5–7).

### **C. Submit to the Spirit and Faith in Hardship**

From the many examples left by the early church, we can see the importance of acting on our faith even against opposition. Stephen is a good example of such faith, teaching us that God will help us overcome even the most difficult of circumstances if we continue to do God's will.

Acts 6:9–10 says that Stephen preached the gospel with great wisdom and divine power. Those who heard Stephen's message and words could not resist the wisdom with which he spoke. Even after Stephen was arrested and given a chance to respond to his false accusers, Stephen calmly responded and witnessed for Christ with a great love for his accusers. Stephen's love was so great that he even asked God to forgive his persecutors for wrongly condemning and killing an innocent man (Acts 7:60).

Stephen's example and speech give us at least two important lessons. First, we must continue to witness for Christ and preach the gospel even in hardship. Second, we must not resist the Holy Spirit, but submit ourselves to the Spirit's will and guidance.

#### **Submit to the Spirit**

In Stephen's speech, recorded in Acts 7:2–53, Stephen explained to the Jews how God revealed Himself to His people throughout history. When God's people became slaves in the land of Egypt, He raised up a deliverer, Moses, to lead God's people out of Egyptian bondage (Acts 7:20–36). Stephen then admonished them, saying, "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you" (Acts 7:51). Just as the Israelites had rejected Moses, the Jews had also rejected the Messiah (Acts 7:52).

A key message we must learn from Stephen's speech is that we take care never to resist the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51). The Jews to whom Stephen preached resisted the Holy Spirit, and they eventually killed Stephen so that they would no longer have to listen to the truth.

The reason we often resist God's Spirit is because our own fleshly and sinful desires naturally suppress God's truth (Rom 1:18; Jas 4:1–2). We often deceive ourselves about what is valuable, exchanging the truth of God for the lie, because it's often easier to go along with the lie (Rom 1:25). Just as a person caught cheating on a test may lie to protect himself, we often lie to protect ourselves.

But Satan's deception can be overcome through reliance upon God and His Spirit, as well as by acting

upon God's word and submitting to the movement of God's Spirit within us. The more we surrender ourselves to God's will and Spirit, the more we are able to overcome any opposition that rises against us (Rom 6:13, 16–18; Gal 5:16). In contrast, the more we present ourselves to sin and lawlessness, the more we will live a life of constant sin and lawlessness (Rom 6:19). If we continue to surrender ourselves to sin, it will eventually lead us to death (Rom 6:23).

Because the consequences are so serious, Stephen warned his persecutors that they should not resist the Holy Spirit or the Holy Spirit's work. Unfortunately, those who heard Stephen's message could not accept it and stoned Stephen to death.

### **Share Our Faith**

The apostles were arrested and imprisoned when they tried to share the gospel (Acts 5:17–18), and Stephen was falsely accused before being stoned to death. Although we may not experience physical persecution, we may still face hardships when we try to preach the gospel. The opposition we face may be Satan's work or that of evil people (1 Thess 2:18). It can show itself in many forms, such as attacks – physical, verbal, or social – or persecution of our faith. The angel that freed the apostles told them, “Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life” (Acts 5:20). From the angel's deliverance and encouragement, we see that God wants us to share our faith even in difficult circumstances.

One of our greatest challenges is preaching to those who refuse to listen. The reason people often refuse to hear the truth is because they don't want to face the weight of their sins – the truth cuts them to the heart (Acts 7:54, 57). When people don't want to listen, it's difficult to continue to reach out to them. When God called Isaiah to speak His word, Isaiah asked, “Lord, how long?”, to which He replied, until His judgment comes (Isa 6:11–13). This means we must continue to preach even when others refuse to hear it. This requires our love for those who do not listen, for the lost can only receive eternal life when someone with enough love shares the truth.

It's easy to share our faith when there is no opposition, but the important lesson we must learn is to share our faith even when it's difficult to do so. When we face hardships, it is easier to give up or give in than to continue. But if we stop doing God's work when we face any obstacles, the church's work will soon completely stop in the face of opposition.

### *Check for Understanding*

---

- 1. What did Peter teach us about transforming our own character?** This cannot be done purely out of self-determination; transforming our character must be done with the work of the Holy Spirit within us. When we surrender ourselves to God's Spirit, we allow God to transform us according to His will.
- 2. What opposition did Stephen face in preaching the gospel?** When Stephen preached to the Roman Jews, they opposed Stephen and set about arresting him, bringing him before the Jewish council and falsely accusing Stephen with false witnesses. Later, he was dragged out of the city and stoned to death.
- 3. From Acts 6:3, what qualities are required for a good church worker?** 1) Be of good reputation; 2) be full of the Holy Spirit; and 3) be full of wisdom. Being of good reputation means being a good example for others by reflecting God's character and wisdom in our lives, something accomplished by being filled with God's Spirit. Being filled with the Spirit and with wisdom means receiving God in faith.
- 4. What lessons can we learn from Stephen's example and speech?** First, we must continue to witness for Christ and preach the gospel even in hardship. Second, we must not resist the Holy

Spirit, but submit ourselves to the Spirit's will and guidance.

- 5. What kinds of hardships might we face when preaching the gospel? How does God want us to respond to these challenges?** The opposition we face could be Satan's work or that of evil people, and can show itself in many forms, such as physical, verbal, or social attacks or persecution of our faith. God wants us to share our faith even in difficult circumstances.

### *Life Application*

---

#### **1. Upholding Faith in Hardship**

Most of us have not faced the same level of hardship as the early church workers, but we nonetheless can learn a valuable lesson from their example: we must act on our faith even in the most difficult of situations. Acting on our faith in the face of hardship is a conscious decision that we must make.

Jesus gave us the mission of being witnesses for Christ (Mt 28:18–20; Acts 1:8). As we try to fulfill this mission, we may face persecution or reproach for Christ. When this happens, it's always easier to give up. But we must remember that being persecuted or reproached for righteousness' sake is a blessing according to the Bible (Mt 5:10; Lk 6:22; 1 Pet 4:12–14).

It is hard to act when we face opposition against our faith. But that very same faith will help us to overcome our inner weaknesses and external hardships. We must believe that God's will and way always prevail, no matter the situation (Rom 8:28), and that God protects and delivers those who love Him (Dan 3:17). We must have faith that, even if God does not deliver us from physical persecution as in Stephen's case, God still has His good will for us. When we are guided by our faith in Him, God is well pleased.

#### **2. Serve with Love and Compassion**

Acts 6:2–5 teaches us about overcoming differences within the church through love and compassion for others. By showing a genuine love and compassion for those in need, the early church avoided further division within the church. Having freely received the gospel, we should freely share it with others regardless of their race, culture, or background. Although a particular church may have a majority of believers from one culture, that does not mean that other cultures should be neglected or treated differently. God's love and truth go beyond our cultural or other superficial differences (Gal 3:27–28).

Even knowing this, we may sense discord between church members based on differences in culture, gender, age, or social statuses. It is natural for people to focus on such differences, so visitors may also start to feel these gaps between church members. For example, if English and Chinese-speaking church members never interact during church worship services, visitors will sense that the members are disconnected. But if we have love and compassion for those who are different from us, we encourage ourselves and others to look beyond surface characteristics and connect back to God. This shows our unity in Christ and allows us to reach out to others more effectively (1 Cor 9:19–23).

It's not always easy to show love to those who are different from us, but if we truly have love, we will find a way to bridge the gaps that we feel between ourselves and others. For this reason, the Bible calls love the "bond of perfection" (Col 3:14).

#### **3. Preach Regardless of Outcome**

Stephen's willingness to witness to those who disputed with him about the gospel (Acts 6:9) shows that Stephen shared his faith regardless of whether his Jewish audience would convert. Stephen knew that his audience was stiff-necked, hard-hearted, and resisted the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51); yet, Stephen

continued to share the truth of the gospel with them in love. Today, we should do the same.

Stephen's example teaches us that we should not let the probability of conversion or the willingness of our audience determine whether or not we should preach. The Bible teaches us, "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Tim 4:2). Being ready "in season" refers to those times when we readily expect fruit. In contrast, "out of season" refers to those times when we may not expect fruit. This means that no matter the expected result, we must still take up the mission to do the work that the Lord Jesus gave to the church. This is our mission.

Our mission may be to preach, but the results are always in God's hands (1 Cor 3:6). Changing a person's heart is not something that we can control; only the Lord Himself can open someone to the truth of the gospel (Lk 24:45; Acts 16:14). Therefore, we must not allow the expected result to determine whether or not we preach. Instead, we should courageously share Christ with others, even if we do not think they will believe.

### *Memory Verse*

---

"But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: 'We ought to obey God rather than men.'" (Acts 5:29)

### **Meaning**

This verse tells us that Peter and other apostles continued to preach and share about Christ even when faced with difficult situations. They may have had some fears but, through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, they boldly continued to preach Christ and obey God's command to preach the gospel to the world, even in the face of severe opposition.

### *Conclusion*

---

We will face obstacles many times in our journey of faith. These obstacles may be our own internal fears and struggles, or opposition from outside enemies. But God's wants us to have a faith that overcomes no matter the circumstances. This can only be accomplished with the help of God's Spirit, who will transform us. When we are transformed by God and filled with His Spirit, we can become good examples to others of how to live by faith in Christ. We will become good and faithful workers of good reputation and filled with the Holy Spirit, the wisdom to know what is right, and the will to do it, even when it is difficult to do so.



### Lesson 3 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What does the memory verse teach us about how to preach the word of God?  
*We must continue to preach even if we face difficult situations. We may have inward fear but, through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, we can boldly continue to preach the gospel.*
2. What do Peter and Stephen teach us about overcoming our internal and external obstacles?  
*To overcome our inner weaknesses, we must surrender ourselves to the Spirit and allow God to transform us according to His will. To overcome external obstacles, we must fix our eyes upon Jesus.*
3. What stops us from submitting to the Spirit? How can we overcome this?  
*Our own fleshly and sinful desires naturally suppress God's truth. But the more we surrender ourselves to God's will, the more we are able to overcome any opposition that arises against us.*
4. Why is it important that we share our faith even when we face opposition?  
*Because the lost can only receive eternal life when someone with enough love shares the truth, and this is our mission from Christ.*
5. What does it mean to preach regardless of the outcome?  
*Stephen shared the gospel even knowing his audience were hard-hearted and resistant to the Spirit. Likewise, we should courageously share Christ with others even if we don't think they will believe.*
6. What kind of obstacles do you encounter in your faith? How can you overcome these?  
*Personal answers.*

**Saul's Conversion and Peter's Continuing Ministry**

Passages: Acts 9:1–31; Acts 9:32–10:23; 2 Tim 2:20–22

*Memory Verse*

“Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.”  
(Acts 9:15)

<b>Knowledge of God's Will [God's Word]</b>	<b>Knowledge of God [God's Divine Nature]</b>	<b>Good Work [Behavior]</b>
God establishes our plans and allows them to come to fruition.	God is sovereign over all of life's circumstances.	1. Trust and obey. 2. Imitate Christ to prepare ourselves to become chosen vessels of God.

*Overview*

**Events and Spiritual Teachings**

- A. Saul's Conversion (Acts 9:1–31)
  - 1. A Spiritual Blindness
  - 2. A Chosen Vessel
- B. Peter's Continuing Ministry (Acts 9:32–10:23)
  - 1. A Spiritual Healing
  - 2. A Spiritual Revelation

**Life Application**

- 1. Trust and Obey
- 2. Become a Chosen Vessel

**Memory Verse**

**Conclusion:** God has true dominion over our lives. We must learn to trust and obey.

### Introduction

When we think about where we want to go in life, we often try to envision what our life may look like in the near or far future. We may plan short and long-term goals to see the bigger picture of what we need to do to achieve the life that we want for ourselves. However, if we ask ourselves what our life may look like in a few years, none of us can be certain of anything other than what we see now. Only God knows what lies ahead, and only He knows the plans that He has prepared for us.

### A. Saul's Conversion (Acts 9:1–31)

A Roman citizen from a devout Jewish family in the city of Tarsus, Saul was a well-educated Pharisee who had concrete knowledge of the Law. But none of this could have prepared him for his encounter with the Lord. The story of how Saul met the Lord Jesus is recorded multiple times throughout the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 9:3–19; 22:6–16; 26:9–23). The many detailed accounts of this event show how important and meaningful it was for Saul. It was a personal testimony of a major turning point in his life and faith.

#### 1. A Spiritual Blindness

Let's read Acts 9:1–9 and see what happened during this encounter.

What would you do if you lost your sense of sight? Would you panic? Would you feel comfortable enough to take even one step? When the light shone down from heaven, Saul immediately fell to the ground. Can you imagine the shock from meeting the Lord? It was during this time that he began to realize his own spiritual blindness. The Lord called him, asking, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" (Acts 9:4). Having been blinded by the light, he had a sudden realization and asked, "Who are You, Lord?" (Acts 9:5).

Up until this point, Saul's confidence and self-assurance in his knowledge of the Law led to his resolve to persecute Christians. His question, "Who are You, Lord?", shows his new and sudden uncertainty as he began to see how foolish he was. It was as though someone had pulled the rug out from under him. Although Saul was full of knowledge of the Law, he did not truly know the Lord. The Lord had been a stranger to him all this time.

The Lord replied to Saul, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads" (Acts 9:5). To "kick against the goads" was a common expression that originated from farmers. A goad was a long wooden stick with a point at one end, a traditional tool that farmers used to guide or herd livestock, such as stubborn oxen. The more a stubborn ox did not budge, the more the farmer would use the goad to budge the ox. Occasionally, the ox would kick at the goad, but by making contact with its pointed end, the ox would inflict even greater pain on itself with the force of its kick.

The Lord used this saying to teach Saul about himself. Although it seemed as though this was a first encounter, the Lord had actually been goading Saul for quite some time now! As a Pharisee, Saul persecuted believers in the name of the Law, thinking that he was doing what the Lord wanted. However, he was unknowingly resisting the Lord, and in doing so, Saul was constantly "kicking against the goads" to his own detriment.

With physical blindness came insight into his spiritual blindness; Saul now understood that he was mistaken. He became fully aware of the Lord's sovereignty and fell to the ground in reverent fear

and submission to the Lord's will. He no longer had confidence in himself but began to recognize the Lord Jesus as his true Lord and Savior. He wanted to make things right. So, he asked, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" (Acts 9:6). Instead of relying on his own knowledge as before, he now sought to follow God's lead. He learned to rely on the Lord to help him move in the right direction.

By God's grace, many of us are able to receive a proper education and pursue our chosen career. But as a result, we often become driven by our ambitions and make decisions based on what we think we need to do to succeed in our goals. We become focused on our own priorities and become ignorant of how our actions affect our spirituality. Such ignorance makes us spiritually blind, and we become like Saul kicking against the goads.

The Bible tells us, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (Prov 9:10). When we no longer fear the Lord and are no longer sensitive to the teachings of the Bible, we forget about God's sovereignty over us. This leads to ignorance of our own spirituality and, in turn, to spiritual blindness. Therefore, to avoid spiritual blindness, we must not lose sight of what is truly important in our life: moving towards the kingdom of heaven according to God's guidance.

## **2. A Chosen Vessel**

Let's continue reading Acts 9:10–31.

Ananias' initial fears regarding Saul were understandable; Saul was well known for his persecution of the believers. He had thrown many believers and disciples in jail, and now he had the authority to imprison even more. How could such a man be trusted? However, the Lord reassured Ananias, and despite his own fears, Ananias trusted the Lord and obeyed His instructions. With a steadfast faith in the Lord, he went to receive Saul. When Ananias entered the house that Saul was staying in, he laid his hands on Saul and even called him, "Brother Saul" (Acts 9:17).

How many of us are able to call our enemies our brothers? Most believers would have feared to even lay a finger on a person like Saul, expecting to end up in prison, but Ananias obeyed God's instructions. He submitted to the Lord's directions, and as a result, Saul's sight was restored, and his strength renewed. Because of Ananias, Saul was able to be baptized and become a chosen vessel for God's work.

It is easy for us to think like Ananias and judge Saul for his past actions. However, Ananias' submission allowed God to use him to raise up another of God's chosen vessels. The Bible tells us that God has chosen the "foolish" and the "weak" so that no one can boast of their own accomplishments, but rather glorify God (1 Cor 1:26–31; Jer 9:24). Unlike man, God does not look at our outer appearances, our credentials, our worldly accomplishments, or our resume to determine whether we should be chosen as His workers. Rather, God looks at the heart and uses His infinite wisdom and insight to see the future potential of a worker. In Saul's case, his zeal for persecuting the disciples was transformed into a zeal towards preaching the gospel and furthering God's work instead.

Another key step of Saul's transformation was his repentance. Saul humbled himself to the point that he named himself the chief of sinners, even long after his conversion (1 Tim 1:15). After accepting baptism, he was no longer darkened by his past understanding or bound by his past sins.

Saul found a new nature in Christ and began preaching boldly in the name of Jesus Christ. Saul's dramatic transformation is an encouragement for us. We too are chosen vessels, so we must be renewed in the Spirit by putting on the new man according to God's righteousness and holiness (Eph 4:17–24; 1 Cor 11:1; Col 3:10; Rom 12:2).

## **B. Peter's Continuing Ministry (Acts 9:32–10:23)**

### **1. A Spiritual Healing**

Peter's experience with the Lord Jesus was vastly different from Saul's. Peter was with the Lord Jesus while He still walked the earth, and he personally learned from Jesus' teachings. After the Lord's death and following the many events that helped shape his faith, Peter became an abundantly useful vessel of God. He began preaching throughout all parts of the region, bearing witness to what he saw and heard.

Let's read about Peter's continuing ministry in Acts 9:32–43.

While passing through Lydda, Peter came across a man named Aeneas. Aeneas had been paralyzed for eight years, helpless and bedridden. When Peter passed through, he performed a miracle of healing and called upon the power of God to heal Aeneas. Peter deliberately says to Aeneas, "Jesus the Christ heals you," because he understood that he was just a vessel, useful for the Lord's purpose and good will (Acts 9:34). In this instance, Peter was fully aware that the Lord Jesus was his sovereign Lord, and that only He could grant the power to heal and change people's lives. As a result, many who witnessed the miracle turned to the Lord. Aeneas was healed physically, but the witnesses were healed spiritually.

Peter was then called over to Joppa to help a woman named Tabitha, also known as Dorcas. Dorcas had fallen sick and passed away, but those who loved her and were with her sent for Peter's help. When Peter arrived, the widows who mourned for Dorcas showed Peter the garments that she had made. Garments often represent our deeds, and Dorcas was certainly a woman of good reputation, as the Bible describes her as a disciple "full of good works and charitable deeds" (Acts 9:36).

Some people question why we cannot simply do good deeds to go to heaven, while others question why faith alone is not enough to go to heaven. Dorcas shows us that faith and good deeds go hand in hand. She shone the light of the gospel for Christ through her good deeds, and others were able to see her Christ-like character. When we grow in faith in the Lord, we experience an inward transformation by the Spirit that is reflected outwardly. Our speech and our actions become noticeably different, and those around us can see that change.

Miraculously, after Peter prayed, he said, "Tabitha, arise," and she opened her eyes and sat up (Acts 9:40). Once again, many came to believe in the Lord (Acts 9:42).

Like Aeneas' paralysis and Dorcas' death, it can be difficult for humans to understand why God allows certain things to happen. We know that God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent, but we still demand reasons for circumstances that we cannot accept or are beyond our control. The Bible tells us that God's understanding is above our understanding (Isa 55:8–9). It is impossible for us to understand God's plans because we, unlike God, are not all-knowing or all-powerful.

We need to recognize that only God has full control over all and learn to trust that He has our best interests in mind. Aeneas was bedridden for eight years, and Dorcas suffered an illness that led to

her death. But in both cases, the outcome of the miracles performed by Peter was not only a physical healing, but also a spiritual healing for those who witnessed them. As much as we try to plan for the future, only He can direct and allow events to unfold. Like Peter, Aeneas, and Dorcas, we are all just a small part of God's plan, and whatever out-of-control circumstances that may occur, we need to trust that God is guiding us.

## 2. A Spiritual Revelation

Although Peter had a great understanding of the truth, there was still more for him to see and learn from the Lord Jesus.

Let us continue reading Acts 10:1–23 about how God allowed Peter to see a vision.

Up until this point, Peter preached primarily to the Jews because it was unlawful for Jews to intermingle with people of other nations. Through the vision, God revealed to Peter a great mystery, and he pondered upon its meaning. When he was told of Cornelius the centurion, and how Cornelius wanted to meet him, all the pieces started coming together. He realized that the gospel was not just for the Jews, but also for the Gentiles (Acts 10:34). What a revelation! This was the great mystery that Saul (later called Paul) also came to understand and write about (Eph 3).

Oftentimes, we stay in our comfort zone because that is all we can see and understand, but God always finds ways to show us a greater scope than what we first imagined. Had Peter been narrow-minded, he may have missed out on this opportunity to preach the gospel further and shine the light for Christ. Seeing how vehemently Peter refused to eat the unclean animals in the vision, Peter must have been astonished to learn that God planned salvation for not just the Jews, but also for the Gentiles and for anyone who believes. This opened the horizon to greater possibilities, and Peter continued to grow in his faith.

### *Check for Understanding*

---

- 1. What is the significance of each of Saul's questions to the Lord?**
  - a. Who are You, Lord? – He recognized Jesus as his true Lord and Savior
  - b. Lord, what do You want me to do? – He submitted to the Lord's sovereignty with reverence
- 2. How did Ananias react to the Lord's instructions regarding Saul?** He was doubtful and hesitant to follow the Lord's instruction to meet Saul. However, he trusted in God and obeyed.
- 3. Who was Dorcas? What can we learn from her lifestyle?** She was a disciple of the Lord; a woman full of good works and charitable deeds. Although she fell ill and died, she was raised back to life. Dorcas shows us that faith and good deeds go hand in hand.
- 4. What did Peter see in the vision?** He saw an object like a large bound sheet descending from heaven containing all kinds of unclean animals, and a voice commanded him to kill and eat them. After his initial refusal, the voice told him, "What God has cleansed you must not call common."
- 5. What was the revelation behind Peter's vision?** Salvation is not just for the Jews, but also the Gentiles and all who believe.

### *Life Application*

---

#### 1. Trust and Obey

If we put ourselves in Saul's position, we may find that we are actually a lot like him. We spend our time trying to be as strong, intelligent, and versatile as we can. We go to school, try to ace our exams, aim for a reputable university, and eventually seek a good job that sustains our lifestyle. However, as we set out to

fulfill what we judge is best for ourselves, we will experience times of disappointment. Despite our best efforts, there are limitations to our abilities. Saul, later known as Paul, states that he'd rather boast about his infirmities because it is in his weakness that God's strength is seen clearly (2 Cor 12:9). When we are at a low point, we realize how much we need God in our life. It is during those times that we need to remember: we have a supreme God who takes care of us and watches over us.

It is one thing to know that God is all-powerful, but our actions and speech show whether we truly believe in our hearts that all is within God's control. When we come to know the true and living God, we must learn to trust and obey Him. This means accepting that God knows what is best. Just as we learn to trust that our parents know what's best for us, how much more then should we learn to trust and obey the absolute commandment and judgment from God? If we trust in God's sovereignty, then we will naturally obey His commands, just as Saul and Ananias did.

## **2. Become a Chosen Vessel**

How do we become vessels who can serve God? 2 Timothy 2:20–21 tells us, "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work."

We were all created differently according to God's plans, and He has given each of us a different purpose and use. However, we must prepare ourselves so that we can be ready to serve our Lord. Just as how Saul and Peter's experiences in serving the Lord were different, we each have our own specific uses for the Lord. But first we must cleanse ourselves of all filth because a dirty vessel cannot be used. To become faithful servants of God that are useful for all works, we need to walk worthy of the Lord's calling (Eph 4:1) and imitate Christ (1 Cor 11:1). We can imitate Christ by studying and understanding the word of God.

The word of God is the light that shines on our path and lights our way. The more we walk in the light, the more God can show us our weaknesses and what we should do (Ps 119:105). In this light, we can also see our strengths and the gifts God has given us so that we can use them in the right way. We can use it to illuminate our flaws and learn how we can become more like Christ. Just as how Saul had time to ponder upon himself while he was blind, we also need to take time to reflect upon ourselves. How do our actions and speech affect us? How do they affect those around us? Do they glorify God? Are we good representations of our Lord? If we know what we can improve on, then we can look towards Christ as an example and imitate the virtues that we lack.

### **Discussion**

- What virtues of Christ do you need to cultivate more in your daily life?
- What steps can you take towards learning to trust and obey God?
- In what ways can you be a useful vessel for God?

### **Memory Verse**

---

"Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel."  
(Acts 9:15)

### **Meaning**

We are all chosen vessels of God. He chose us because He loves us. We were created in His image and therefore, as His children, we are a representation of Him to the world. We are no longer of ourselves, but

of God. Having understood the loving sacrifice of our Lord Jesus, we must learn to imitate Christ and live a life worthy of His salvation so that our actions may bring others to know Him.

### *Conclusion*

---

Saul turned his life towards a completely different direction. Peter's ministry continued to reveal groundbreaking changes and realizations. Neither of these two could have guessed that these events would happen to them. Yet, God allowed it all to happen for the purpose of the gospel. God's omnipotence allows everything to happen under His control. No matter how we may struggle against or without Him, we will soon realize that we are helpless without His direction. We must not doubt the Lord's love nor His good intent for us.

When we stand amazed at the works of the Lord in our life, we understand who is truly in control of our lives. We learn to let go of our selfish and stubborn ways, and we learn what it means to truly know and serve our sovereign Lord. As His vessels we must trust and obey Him, and submit ourselves to be led by His Spirit. In doing so, we can let the word of God spiritually transform our hearts, our deeds, and our lives as chosen vessels in ways that we may have never imagined.



#### Lesson 4 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What does it mean to be a chosen vessel of God?  
*It means that God has chosen us because He loves us. As His children, we represent Him to the world and are no longer of ourselves, but of God.*
2. What does it mean to be spiritually blind?  
*It means relying on our own knowledge and being driven by our own ambitions and priorities instead of following God. When we are spiritually blind, we are ignorant of how our actions affect our spirituality. We no longer fear God or are insensitive to the Bible's teachings.*
3. What was Ananias' initial reaction to God's command? How did he act after God's response?  
*He doubted Saul's intentions and feared approaching him. After God's response, however, Ananias immediately went to carry out His command, and even called Saul "brother."*
4. How did God use Aeneas' and Dorcas' illnesses to further His purpose? What can we learn from these events about the circumstances that we might experience?  
*The miracles of their healing spread the gospel further among witnesses. We can learn that we are all a part of God's plan, and that since God's understanding is above our own, we ought to trust that whatever happens, He is in control and knows what is best for us.*
5. Do you think your actions show that you truly trust in the Lord? Why or why not?  
*Personal answers.*
6. How do you think you can serve God? How can you prepare yourself to be a chosen vessel for Him?  
*Personal answers.*

*Memory Verse*

“He said to them, ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’” (Acts 19:2a)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Work [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The gift of salvation is also for the Gentiles.</li> <li>2. The evidence for receiving the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues.</li> <li>3. Water baptism is for the remission of sins.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. God’s salvation is for all.</li> <li>2. God shows no partiality.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Show no partiality in preaching the gospel.</li> <li>2. Study and understand the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and be filled with the Holy Spirit.</li> </ol>

*Overview*

**Events and Spiritual Teachings**

- A. Cornelius Calls for Peter (Acts 10:1–33)
- B. Peter Preaches to Cornelius and His Household (Acts 10:34–43)
- C. The Gentiles Receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44–48)
- D. Peter’s Defense Before the Jewish Brothers (Acts 11:1–18)

**Life Application**

1. Treat Everybody Equally
2. Recognize the Holy Spirit
3. Pray to God for the Fullness of the Holy Spirit

**Memory Verse**

**Conclusion:** It is the will of God for the Gentiles to receive salvation. To be saved, we must believe and have faith in God, and be reborn of water and of the Holy Spirit.

## **Introduction**

Cornelius was a Roman centurion of the Italian troops, described as a devout man who gave alms generously and who prayed every day. One day, an angel of God appeared to him in a vision, telling him that his prayer and alms “have come up for a memorial before God” (Acts 10:4). The angel instructed Cornelius to send men to Joppa to bring Peter, who would tell him what to do next (Acts 10:5–6).

### **A. Cornelius Calls for Peter (Acts 10:7–33)**

#### **1. Peter sees a vision (Acts 10:9–16)**

Cornelius sent two of his servants to call on Peter, and during this time, Peter saw a vision during his prayer. In his vision, Peter saw heaven opened and “a great sheet bound at the four corners” coming down (v. 11). In this sheet were “all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air” (v. 12). During the vision, a voice spoke to Peter, instructing him to rise, kill, and eat (v. 13). Though the voice had given him this command, Peter refused, “Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean” (v. 14). At his refusal, the voice spoke again, “What God has cleansed you must not call common” (v. 15). This repeated three times before the sheet was taken up into heaven.

#### **2. Peter is taken to Cornelius’ house (Acts 10:17–23)**

As Peter pondered the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius arrived and called upon him. The Spirit told Peter, who was still deep in thought, “Behold, three men are seeking you. Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them” (Acts 10:19–20). Peter met the men, confirmed his identity, and inquired about why they came. After the men told Peter about Cornelius and the instructions given by the angel, Peter invited them in to stay with them. The next day, the three departed for Joppa, along with six brethren.

#### **3. Peter meets Cornelius (Acts 10:24–33)**

Meeting Cornelius would have been unusual for Peter and his companions because, as Peter explained, it was unlawful for Jews and Gentiles to meet like this. Many Jews also tended to treat Gentiles as lower than them due to such laws, as well as their long and bitter history with them in Mosaic times. But Peter forbade Cornelius from worshiping him, and from the moment they met, treated him as an equal. Peter continued, saying, “But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?” (vv. 28–29). Cornelius then explained his vision and added that he and the others that had gathered were ready to hear Peter speak.

### **B. Peter Preaches to Cornelius and His Household (Acts 10:34–43)**

#### **1. Peter’s message**

As those gathered listened intently, Peter began preaching. Let’s read Acts 10:34–43.

There are several key points in Peter’s message:

- a. God shows no partiality.
- b. The word of God, the gospel of peace, had been preached throughout Judea.
- c. Jesus died, resurrected, and appeared to chosen witnesses.
- d. The Lord commanded the disciples to preach the gospel and to testify that Jesus is the Lord over the living and the dead.
- e. Whoever believes in Jesus will receive remission of their sins.

## **2. What does it mean to show no partiality?**

From the gospel books and the Acts of the Apostles, we can see that Peter strictly abided by Jewish religious and social traditions (Jn 13:8; Acts 10:14). However, when it came to choosing between tradition and God's will, Peter did not hesitate to follow God's will. Let's read James 2:1–13.

To show partiality means to discriminate, prefer, or favor one over the other. We often treat others according to what we have learned, either from the past or from people we trust. Yet Jesus commands us to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Mk 12:31), and James 2:9 says, "But if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors." We likely are biased against certain groups of people or hold certain stereotypes about others, but we need to remember that God wants us to preach His gospel to all people. We have no right to withhold salvation from anyone, even if we dislike them.

So how do we become more objective towards those who are different from us, whatever those differences may be? Very often our bias is a result of ignorance or indifference to those who are not like us. Simply learning more about others makes us more friendly or sympathetic towards them. Other times, our bias is a result of our ego. When we believe we are smarter, wealthier, or even kinder or more generous than someone, we treat them differently. Yet everything we have comes from God (1 Chr 29:14), and God may take away anything that we have at any moment He wishes (Job 2:10). As Paul said, "What do you have that you did not receive?" (1 Cor 4:7). Knowing this, who are we to claim that we are better because of what we have?

## **C. The Gentiles Receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44–48)**

### **1. The Holy Spirit descends**

While Peter was preaching, the Holy Spirit descended upon all those who were listening. The circumcised Jews who accompanied Peter witnessed this outpouring, and were amazed that God had bestowed His Spirit upon the Gentiles, too. They recognized that the Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit because the Gentiles were speaking in tongues and magnifying God (v. 12). Since Cornelius and his household received the Holy Spirit, Peter saw no reason they should not receive water baptism, so he "commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (vv. 47–48).

### **2. Proof and necessity of the Holy Spirit**

There are many different beliefs regarding the Holy Spirit among Christians denominations. For example, some do not believe speaking in tongues is necessary. Others claim that to receive the Holy Spirit, you "learn" to speak in tongues, while others think that you receive the Holy Spirit immediately upon believing. How do we make them understand that speaking in tongues is not a foreign language, nor a tongue that can be learned, and that we can only receive the Holy Spirit when we are baptized correctly and pray to God?

The best way is to show them passages from the Bible. Acts 10:46 clearly states that Peter and his fellow apostles knew that Cornelius and his family received the Holy Spirit because "they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God." If the Holy Spirit comes to us quietly, how could the apostles have witnessed Cornelius' family and friends speaking in tongues? Later, Paul asks of some believers, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2). If we receive the Holy Spirit when we accept God as our Savior, why did Paul ask this question?

Some believe that good behavior is all that is necessary for salvation. But we need to understand that simply calling ourselves Christians or changing our conduct is not enough to save us. We are saved by being baptized in both water and the Spirit so that we can be reborn. Then, with the help of the Spirit and His guidance, we show our faith by reflecting God's will in our good deeds, for faith without deeds is dead (Jas 2:17). Cornelius' story reminds us that even a good person such as he needed to follow God's will and receive the baptism of water and the Spirit in order to be saved.

#### **D. Peter's Defense Before the Jewish Brothers (Acts 11:1–18)**

##### **1. Peter's defense**

Eating with uncircumcised people was a major offense for religious Jews (Gal 2:11–14), and baptizing Gentiles even more so. Thus, when Peter reached Jerusalem, the Jewish brethren confronted him (Acts 11:2–3). Let's read Acts 11:5–17 and examine the defense that Peter gave before them. There are several key points in his defense:

- a. God showed him a vision in which He told Peter not to regard things that He claimed clean as unclean. God has the ultimate authority to decide whom He wants to save.
- b. The Holy Spirit told Peter to go to Cornelius to preach the gospel to his family.
- c. Six Jewish brethren witnessed the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles.
- d. Peter remembered the Lord's command that to be saved, one needs to receive both the baptism of water and baptism of the Holy Spirit. So, since they had clearly been baptized in the Spirit, he went ahead and baptized Cornelius' family with water.

The two events of Peter's vision and the Holy Spirit's descent upon the Gentiles were so incredible that the brethren immediately agreed that it was God's will to open the door of salvation to the Gentiles.

##### **2. Following God's will**

If we are in a position where we have to make important decisions for the church, what attitude should we have in order to make the correct decisions? We need to put God's will first. But in order to do God's will, it is vital that the decision-makers know how to find out what His will is. So, before we can even be in a position of importance, we need to cultivate our spirituality constantly and make God our friend.

Part of God's nature is that He does not show partiality, as we have learned in this lesson. We should never take anything at its face value. Doing so will often lead to incorrect choices. A thorough study of the matter at hand and prayer for God's will are always necessary before making decisions.

##### **3. Learning God's will**

Jesus once said, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (Jn 20:29). We do not need to ask for wonders or miracles if none of these were shown to us. All we need is faith that as long as we continue searching, God has already prepared a way for us to understand His will. So, without signs and wonders, what other ways can we find out God's will in matters where we need to make decisions?

First, God's general commands are all written in the Bible. We can find out His will by studying

His word in the Bible and become proficient in it. Of course, this proficiency must be accompanied by wisdom from God, because without God's spirit, even the most authoritative biblical scholars are unable to fully understand His words (Eph 1:17; 1 Cor 1:24–25). Many brothers and sisters have testified of God revealing His will by moving them to turn to certain passages of the Bible, or by helping them to understand what they previously did not

Constant prayer will also lead us to God's will. As we know, prayer is a way to communicate directly with God (Heb 10:19–22). Jesus once said, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened (Mt 7:7–8). We should take advantage of this direct line with God and ask Him to reveal His will to us.

### *Check for Understanding*

---

- 1. What did Peter see in his vision? How many times was the vision shown to Peter?** Peter saw a large sheet coming down from heaven bound at its four corners. Bound in this sheet were all kinds of four-footed animals, beasts, and birds of the air. This vision appeared three times before the sheet was taken back to heaven.
- 2. What was the message in Peter's vision?** In this vision, God was teaching Peter that whatever God makes clean, he should not regard unclean.
- 3. What kind of man was Cornelius? What did the angel tell him?** Cornelius is described as a devout man who gave alms generously and who prayed every day. The angel instructed him to send men to Joppa to bring Peter, who would tell him what to do next (Acts 10:5, 6).
- 4. When did the Holy Spirit descend upon Cornelius and those gathered at his house? How did those present know that the Holy Spirit had truly descended?** The Holy Spirit descended upon Cornelius and those gathered at his house as Peter was still preaching the message of salvation. The Jewish brethren knew at once that the Holy Spirit had descended upon them, for they heard them speaking in tongues and magnifying God.
- 5. What convinced the brethren in Jerusalem to accept Gentiles as church members?** Peter spoke of God's abidance with the Gentiles by recounting the vision shown him and confirming that the Holy Spirit had descended upon the Gentiles. These two events were so incredible that they all immediately agreed that it was God's will to open the door of salvation to the Gentiles.

### *Life Application*

---

#### **1. Treat Everybody Equally**

When we encounter new people, we often judge these individuals or groups of people based on pre-existing stereotypes. These stereotypes may include anything from their weight, skin color, social status, wealth, education, lifestyle, fashion, and more. So how can we learn to avoid partiality or discrimination towards certain individuals?

Our biases and stereotypical beliefs originate from our experiences, the media, such as movies or the Internet, and our peers, such as friends and family. Therefore, it is critical that we have a firm foundation in biblical knowledge and spiritual wisdom to help us avoid acting based on these biases. Only when we rely on the truth can we discern between right and wrong when interacting with people. For example, the prophet Samuel quickly learned that it is not God's will for us to judge others by their appearances when God commanded him to anoint the smallest and youngest of brothers, David (1 Sam 16:7). All people are created by God, and it is God's will that all men be saved (1 Tim 2:4). Who are we to favor some while disliking others?

## 2. Recognize the Holy Spirit

The Bible describes the Holy Spirit as something that you can “see and hear” (Acts 2:33). The Acts of the Apostles teaches us clearly that the sign of receiving the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues. The Greek words *glossa*, “tongue,” or *glossai*, “tongues,” are used in the original text to describe this phenomenon:

- “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to **speak with other tongues**, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (Acts 2:4)
- “While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them **speak with tongues** and magnify God.” (Acts 10:44–46)
- “And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they **spoke with tongues** and prophesied.” (Acts 19:6)

In Acts 10, the circumcised brethren who had accompanied Peter to Cornelius’ house were astonished when they witnessed the Gentiles receiving the Holy Spirit. Later, when Peter returned to the church in Jerusalem, he reported how “the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning” (Acts 11:15), referring to the disciples’ own experience on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 15:8).

## 3. Pray to God for the Fullness of the Holy Spirit

The Bible describes being filled by the Holy Spirit in two contexts. First, a moment where the Holy Spirit fills a believer at a significant or critical moment, such as when they are:

- Filled at the moment they received the baptism of the Spirit (Acts 2:4)
- Conferred with boldness by the Spirit to witness for Jesus (Acts 4:8–13, 31)
- Empowered by the Spirit in specific circumstances (Acts 9:17–18; 13:9–11)

Second, an ongoing process in a life that is fully submissive to the direction of the Spirit, where the Spirit helps believers to live lives obedient to Him, so that they:

- Overcome the deeds of the flesh (Gal 5:16–21; Eph 4:30–32)
- Live godly lives and bear the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22–25)
- Are empowered with wisdom and faith for God’s work (Acts 6:3, 5; 11:24)
- Have joy and comfort, even in the face of persecution (Acts 7:55–56; 13:52)

Since pursuing the fullness of the Holy Spirit is a lifelong process, we must submit completely to His direction so that we continually walk in the Spirit (Gal 5:16; Rom 8:1, 5). Once the Holy Spirit becomes our source of spiritual power, we will be able to put off the deeds of the flesh with determination (Gal 5:19–21).

### Memory Verse

---

“He said to them, ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’” (Acts 19:2a)

### Context

Paul was asking the disciples in Ephesus about the Holy Spirit to understand the extent of their knowledge regarding the truth.

### Meaning

1. We do not receive the Holy Spirit simply by claiming that the Lord is our Savior or by receiving water baptism. (Though it is possible to receive the Holy Spirit during correct water baptism, the Bible does not state that you receive the Holy Spirit when you receive water baptism. Rather, the majority of believers receive the Holy Spirit by praying to God steadfastly.)
2. When the Holy Spirit descends, He can be seen and heard, for the sign of receiving the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues. This is the only evidence the Bible has provided for believers to discern whether the Holy Spirit has truly descended upon an individual.

### *Conclusion*

---

God has a wonderful salvation plan that does not follow man's traditions, and the spreading of the gospel of salvation to the Gentiles was part of this plan. This task carried such importance that God showed Peter a vision, teaching him that God had opened the door of salvation to the uncircumcised (Acts 10:15). Peter, a law-abiding Jew, did not hesitate to set tradition aside in favor of God's command, teaching us the importance of setting aside our own expectations and following God's will in the decisions we make.

After this event, Cornelius and his family became the first Gentiles to receive the Holy Spirit, proving that the door of salvation for Gentiles had been opened wide. But even Cornelius, a man who worshiped God fervently even before meeting Peter, needed to be baptized in water and the Spirit in order to be saved, proving to us that the Holy Spirit is necessary for our salvation. Our deeds alone can never save us, only the grace that we have received through faith (Eph 2:8).



## Lesson 5 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What does Paul's question in Acts 19:2 tell us about how one receives the Holy Spirit?  
*We do not receive the Holy Spirit simply by claiming that the Lord is our Savior or by receiving water baptism. When He descends, He can be seen and heard, for the sign of receiving Him is speaking in tongues.*
2. What was the Jewish custom regarding interacting with Gentiles? How did Peter react to God's instruction to go to Cornelius?  
*It was strictly against Jewish custom for Jews to interact with Gentiles. Peter immediately followed God's instructions without hesitation despite having followed Jewish tradition his entire life.*
3. What are two reasons we often show partiality to certain people or groups of people?  
*We are often biased because of ignorance or indifference to those who are not like us. Other times, our bias is a result of our ego. When we believe we are smarter, wealthier, or even kinder or more generous than someone, we treat them differently.*
4. How did those present know that the Holy Spirit had truly descended upon the Gentiles?  
*The circumcised brethren knew at once that the Holy Spirit had descended upon them, for they saw them speaking in tongues and magnifying God.*
5. What attitude should we have in order to make the correct decisions for the church?  
*We need to put God's will first. But in order to do so, we must set aside our own expectations and seek out the path that God wants us to follow. This means learning to avoid partiality, thoroughly studying God's word, and praying for His wisdom.*
6. Have you ever treated someone with partiality? How can you avoid this in the future?  
*Personal answer.*

*Memory Verse*

“And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.” (Acts 11:21)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Work [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The church needs good workers who are full of faith, the Holy Spirit, and good morals.</li> <li>2. The church grows when its members study and are led by God’s word.</li> <li>3. The church is characterized by its generosity and servitude.</li> </ol>	<p>God is Spirit, and He is with us when we follow His will.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Devote ourselves to God’s word by transforming our character, giving and serving, and spreading the gospel.</li> <li>2. Have a living and effective faith.</li> </ol>

*Overview*

**Events and Spiritual Teachings**

- A. The Church at Antioch
- B. The Grace of God
- C. Good Workers for Christ
- D. Relief for the Brethren in Judea

**Life Application**

1. Devoting Ourselves to God’s Word
2. A Living and Effective Faith

**Memory Verse**

**Conclusion:** God’s grace is truly evident in times of tribulation. God’s hand will always be with us when we do His work according to His will and have a living and effective faith.

### Introduction

The Acts of the Apostles details how the Christian movement and the works of the Holy Spirit spread from Jerusalem to Samaria, Syria, Greece, Rome, and beyond. During our last lesson, we saw how the gospel was spread to the Gentiles in Caesarea. In this lesson, we will see how the gospel was spread north along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea to the city of Antioch in Syria.

Antioch was the capital city in the Roman province of Syria. It was the third largest city in the Roman Empire with a population of more than a quarter of a million people, many of whom were Gentiles. It was widely known for its tolerant attitude towards different religions and cultures, which was probably why so many Christians that had been scattered by persecution settled there. This environment also made it favorable for preaching. Apart from that, Antioch was located on several of the most important trade routes of that time, making traveling to other parts of the Roman Empire easier and more efficient (*BSG: Acts, 97*)<sup>1</sup>.

### A. The Church at Antioch (Acts 11:19–26)

The Antioch church began with a small group of persecuted refugees, but soon exploded both in numbers and in reputation among believers and non-believers. Its growth was so remarkable that the Bible records in three separate verses how it grew.

- “And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.” (v. 21)
- “For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.” (v. 24)
- “And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.” (v. 26)

From these verses, we can see three things that contributed to the church’s growth: the hand of the Lord was with them, they had good workers to serve the church, and all the members were willing to study and be led by God’s word together. The members’ eagerness to study, share, and follow God’s word made the church a leading example in Christendom. But how was this Gentile church first established?

#### 1. Persecution and the Scattering of the Believers

It is amazing to know how this church started. Let’s read Acts 8:1–3:

*Now Saul was consenting to [Stephen’s] death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.*

Stephen’s death sparked a great persecution against Christians. For the first time since the

---

<sup>1</sup> TJC Department of Literary Ministry, “Did You Know...? 1”, *Bible Study Guide: Acts*, (U.S.A.: True Jesus Church 2002), 97

descent of the Holy Spirit, scores of believers were being actively and violently persecuted for their faith in Christ. This persecution drove the believers to flee from Jerusalem, scattering them across the country.

## 2. Spreading the Gospel

Let's now read Acts 11:19–20.

*Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus.*

Contrary to expectations, Stephen's death and the rise in persecution did not make Jesus' followers hide their beliefs; in fact, they seemed more determined than ever to spread the gospel wherever they went. These unnamed believers were neither disciples nor leaders of the church. They were simply brethren who wanted to share the gospel with others, and there were no limits to where or with whom they shared it. It may have felt like a dark time for the believers, but in truth, God used the chaos and the evil of the opposition to spread His word and strengthen the church more than ever.

### B. The Grace of God

God's grace becomes more visible in times of trouble. As we just learned, the gospel was introduced to Antioch because of persecution. Let's read verses 22–23: "Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord." Barnabas saw how the gospel had spread and called it the grace of God.

What is the grace of God? Let's examine a few passages from the Bible.

1. "[F]or all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Rom 3:23–24)
2. "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." (Eph 1:7)
3. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." (Eph 2:8–9)
4. "For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." (Jn 1:17)
5. "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age." (Tit 2:11–12)

The original Greek word for grace, *charis*, means, "favor" or "loving-kindness." But when it is used in the context of our salvation, it refers to how God offered His only Son to die in our place (2 Cor 5:21). God's grace is something we don't deserve. We did nothing, yet He gave us the precious Holy Spirit and an eternal home with Him (Jn 3:16–18). Because we live by grace, we must cling to Him and remain true to Him no matter what trials we encounter. We need to make a resolution to follow God, and God alone.

### C. Good Workers for Christ

The Antioch church's members and workers were a vital part of its growth. Upon arriving there, Barnabas realized that he needed help, so he traveled over one hundred miles to Tarsus to find Saul. The

two stayed with the Antioch church for an entire year and taught a great many people. Acts 11:24 describes Barnabas as “a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.” He practiced what he preached, and worked towards the growth of the church, not his own glory or prosperity.

But it was not just Barnabas and Saul who worked hard. The church’s reputation was such that it was in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians (Acts 11:26). Their lifestyle and conduct testified of God’s grace, distinguishing them from unbelievers and identifying them as followers of Christ (*BSG: Acts*, 251).<sup>2</sup> Good workers who are close to the Lord and who have the divine qualities of Christ are able to draw others to the Lord through their actions. The Lord also works with them to make their work effective. So, if there are many members who dedicate themselves to God’s word like in Antioch, then the church will grow (*BSG: Acts*, 250).<sup>3</sup>

#### **D. Relief for the Brethren in Judea**

Let’s continue with Acts 11:27–30.

*And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.*

When the believers in Antioch learned of the famine, they sent relief to Judea through Barnabas and Saul. Just as the Jerusalem church assisted the Antioch church by sending Barnabas to them, the Antioch church now helped their Judean brethren with provisions in a time of famine. The churches showed their love in their deeds (1 Jn 3:18). They trusted God’s guidance and gave what they had to meet their brethren’s needs (*BSG: Acts*, 251).<sup>4</sup>

The Bible records that the members sent relief “each according to his ability” (Acts 11:29). It would have been easy to delegate the task to a few wealthy donors, but every member, compelled by their love, each took up the responsibility to send aid. 2 Corinthians 8:12 says, “For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have.” When everyone in the church learns to take part in giving and offers the best they can, all believers can share in the blessing of giving (2 Cor 9:7–8) (*BSG: Acts*, 251).<sup>5</sup>

#### **Check for Understanding**

- 1. How far did the believers scattered by persecution travel to preach the gospel?** They went beyond Judea and Samaria and preached along the Mediterranean coast, going as far as Phoenicia and Antioch, and even crossing the sea to Cyprus.
- 2. What was Barnabas like?** He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. In other words, he had a strong relationship with the Lord and had excellent spiritual qualities.
- 3. When the church in Antioch grew large, what did Barnabas do?** He went to Tarsus to look for Saul and brought him back to Antioch to help him in the ministry.

---

<sup>2</sup> “Segment Analysis 12a”, *Bible Study Guide: Acts*, 251

<sup>3</sup> “Segment Analysis 8a”, *Bible Study Guide: Acts*, 250

<sup>4</sup> “Segment Analysis 13-1”, *Bible Study Guide: Acts*, 251

<sup>5</sup> “Segment Analysis 13-2”, *Bible Study Guide: Acts*, 251

4. **Why do you think the disciples in Antioch were called Christians?** Their lifestyle and conduct testified of God's grace, distinguishing them from unbelievers and identifying them as followers of Christ.
5. **What good example do we see in the believers in Antioch when they found out there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world?** The disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea.

### *Life Application*

---

#### **1. Devoting Ourselves to God's Word**

##### **a. Transforming our character**

It is life changing when we devote ourselves to God's word. When we choose to obey God, we become more like Jesus Christ. With their own distinct lifestyle that was so different from the diverse religions of the city, it is no wonder that the believers in Antioch were soon given their own name: Christians. Likewise, our lives should be a living demonstration of the spiritual qualities of our Lord Jesus Christ. We must learn to follow Jesus not only in our beliefs, but also in our conduct, speech, and lifestyle. A true and genuine Christian is someone who has been born as a new man so that others can see the changes in his life. Our lives should become marked by our love for others and obedience to God's word.

##### **Testimony: The Joy of Studying God's Word**

*When I was in J1 class, I didn't really enjoy reading God's word. I thought to myself, "I already know the Bible's teachings after listening to so many sermons." But once I entered grade twelve, my outlook changed, especially after attending the SSC. I began to ask God for help in understanding the true meaning behind each word in the Bible. I made a determination to devote myself to reading God's word. I began to spend ten to fifteen minutes each day reading a chapter or a passage before praying. I did not rush, but took my time reading God's word several times to ensure I understood the teachings of the day.*

*Sometimes, I would read the same passage repeatedly for a few days. I began to feel more joy, and I saw clearly how God's word changed my life. I began to look at my lifestyle, my words, and my actions, and examine whether or not they matched the teachings of God's word. After doing this for three months, I began to see significant changes in my life – God's word transformed me, and I saw God make my ways prosper! "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success" (Josh 1:8).*

– Anonymous

##### **b. Spreading the gospel**

We who have received His word also have the duty of sharing the gospel so that others can also be saved. If we depend on full-time ministers, the gospel's spread will be limited. Later in the Acts of the Apostles, we see that even when the church sent Barnabas and Saul to go on a relief mission to Jerusalem, the church continued to function and grow. It did not depend on Barnabas and Saul but operated because every believer did their duty.

To share the gospel, we need to depend on God's power, not on our own. The Antioch church grew only because of the Lord's guidance. Likewise, it is not our own eloquence or persuasion

that converts those to whom we preach. God’s hand is our divine help, and we need to depend on the Lord’s power to turn people’s hearts to the Lord (BSG: Acts, 249)<sup>6</sup>

**Testimony: The Joy of Sharing the Gospel**

*Last month during our evangelical service, I met a person who was curious to learn about our beliefs. He simply walked in and joined our service. Afterward, I knew God was telling me to share the gospel. The pastors always teach us that we need to depend on God's power, so I prayed before I went up to greet him. Sure enough, he was very touched by the message that day, and God gave me the courage to testify how I came to know the Lord.*

*I thought this person may not like me and I was afraid, not knowing how to start the conversation. But once I opened my mouth and started sharing, it wasn't as hard as I thought. Deep inside, I was praying to depend on His guidance, and true enough, I felt the abidance of God during the entire conversation. What a joy it is to know that sharing the gospel and leading others to know Him is truly God's will and our duty! "Sing to the LORD, bless His name; proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples" (Ps 96:2–3).*

– Anonymous

**3. Giving and serving**

The apostolic churches taught us two important characteristics of those devoted to God's word: generosity and servitude. 2 Corinthians 9:7 says, “So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.” When others see the willingness with which the members of a church give and serve, they see God’s grace. But these actions don’t have to be big or grandiose – they can be as small as giving our time to another member or cleaning up after someone else. Peter teaches us, “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Pet 4:10). Not every member is a Barnabas or a Saul, but we each have our own duties to help the church function.

What are some ways you can give and serve within your church?

**2. A Living and Effective Faith**

We studied how the members of the apostolic church preached the gospel not only with words, but also with their deeds. Barnabas in particular is a good example of a living and effective faith – a faith where he not only believed, but also lived out his faith.

Barnabas’ Faith	Our Faith
<b>a. Full of the Holy Spirit and of Faith</b>	
Barnabas was described as a “good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith,” (Acts 11:24) and also the “Son of Encouragement” (Acts 4:36). His close relationship with God helped Barnabas be an	We can only be an effective worker when we understand God’s will, which requires the fullness of the Holy Spirit and a firm faith in God.

<sup>6</sup> “Segment Analysis 2-2”, Bible Study Guide: Acts, 249

effective worker for the church, because he understood God’s will and followed His guidance.	
<b>b. Submissive to God’s Calling</b>	
When Barnabas was sent to Antioch, he did not simply look in on the church and immediately go home. After traveling miles to fetch Saul, he spent a year teaching and ministering the new brethren. Later, when he and Saul were sent out by the Spirit, Barnabas submitted completely to God’s direction.	For us, God’s calling may be something as simple as spending time with a new truth-seeker, or setting aside a week for SSC. Have you submitted to His calling? If He calls you in the future to do His work, will you be able to answer?
<b>c. Conscious of God’s Grace</b>	
At the time, Jewish members of the apostolic church may have been offended at the sight of Gentiles in the church. But when Barnabas came to Antioch, he rejoiced. Their knowledge and understanding of God’s word may have been imperfect as the church was newly founded, but Barnabas looked beyond the surface and saw only the goodness of God’s grace.	It is easy for us to criticize or even look down upon others. It is also easy to be angry or upset when things don’t go our way, or if we feel we have been wronged. But when we are close to God, we become clear-sighted and are able to see God’s grace, no matter the situation.
<b>d. Humble and Strong in God’s Word</b>	
One of the first things Barnabas did in Antioch was get help. He understood that he could not minister the church by himself, and he was humble enough to act on it. Further, he sought help from Saul, who had been known for his persecution of the church. But Barnabas chose to make use of Saul’s strong understanding of the truth (Acts 9:27) – something necessary in as new a church as Antioch’s, which needed workers knowledgeable in God’s word to help teach it to them.	It is important to remember that we cannot do everything by ourselves. Every church is built on its many members, not a single believer. But it takes humility to acknowledge our own lack and to be able to approach others for help. This is especially important when teaching others about God’s word.
<b>e. Trustworthy</b>	
Barnabas, along with Saul, was entrusted with the important task of delivering the relief Antioch had prepared for the churches in Judea. His time in Antioch established him among the members as one who was trustworthy and responsible enough to see the important task through.	When you are entrusted with a task, do you fulfill it to the best of your abilities? God loves those who walk in the Spirit and do good (Gal 5:16; 6:9–10). Further, when we live a Christ-like life, we can lead others naturally to God without speaking a single word.

**Memory Verse**

“And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.” (Acts 11:21)



**Meaning:**

1. The apostolic church grew so quickly due to God's presence. Because His hand was with the Antioch church, a great number believed and turned to the Lord. The more we abide with God, study God's word, and strengthen our prayer life, the more we will see the hand of the Lord with us. And there is little that is more valuable for us than to have God's instruction, discipline, and guidance in our lives.
2. To turn to the Lord means having true, genuine repentance and changing our ways to follow the Lord. This involves putting off the "old man" and putting on the "new man" (Eph 4:22–24). It means changing our mindset so that we no longer follow the values of the world, but the values of our Lord Jesus Christ who gave His life for us.

**Conclusion**

---

God's grace is truly evident in times of tribulation. God used the persecution following Stephen's death to spread His word across the land, and Barnabas, sent by the Jerusalem members to the new church in Antioch, clearly saw the grace of God at work in the growing numbers of the brethren. God's hand will always be with us when we do His work according to His will and have a living and effective faith.

## Lesson 6 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What does it mean to “turn to the Lord”?  
*It means having true, genuine repentance and changing our ways to follow the Lord. This involves putting off the “old man” and putting on the “new man” by changing our mindset so that we no longer follow the values of the world, but the values of our Lord Jesus.*
2. How did the gospel come to Antioch?  
*After Stephen’s death, a great persecution arose against followers of Jesus, leading to the scattering of the believers across the country, who preached as they went.*
3. Why were the believers first called Christians in Antioch?  
*Their lifestyle and conduct testified of God’s grace, distinguishing them from unbelievers and identifying them as followers of Christ.*
4. What does it mean to be a good worker for Christ?  
*Good workers are close to the Lord and have the divine qualities of Christ. They are able to draw others to the Lord through their actions.*
5. What are three ways we should devote ourselves to God’s word?  
*By transforming our character, spreading the gospel, and giving and serving.*
6. After studying Barnabas’ example, what particular areas of your own life can you improve so that you can have a living and effective faith? Explain how you can improve.  
*Personal answers.*

Junior 1 Year 1 Book 4 Lesson 7  
**Paul's First Missionary Journey**  
 Passages: Acts 13–14

*Memory Verse*

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” (Romans 1:16)

Knowledge of God's Will [God's Word]	Knowledge of God [God's Divine Nature]	Good Work [Behavior]
The Holy Spirit sent the apostles Paul and Barnabas on a missionary journey to preach to people, Jews and Gentiles alike, in distant regions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. God established the plan of salvation so that men can be saved through belief in the gospel.</li> <li>2. God desires for all men to be saved.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Understand the commission that the Lord Jesus has commanded us.</li> <li>2. Equip ourselves with general and spiritual knowledge.</li> <li>3. Share the gospel wherever we go.</li> </ol>

*Overview*

**Events and Spiritual Teachings**

- A. In the Footsteps of Paul
- B. The Challenges and Obstacles of Preaching
- C. Why Do We Encounter Obstacles?

**Life Application**

1. The Reasons We Preach
2. Preparing to Preach

**Memory Verse**

**Conclusion:** Take the name of Jesus with you wherever you go.

## Events and Spiritual Teachings

### Introduction

Jerusalem was the center of the church for the Jews. After the martyrdom of Stephen, the believers spread to other lands, bringing the gospel with them. Antioch of Syria was one of the places they went to (Acts 11:19). In the first century, Antioch was the third largest city of the Roman Empire and capital city of the proconsular province of Syria.

At the time, Antioch was populated by diverse groups of people, including Macedonians, Greeks, native Syrians, and Jews. It was an important trade junction with routes leading to Damascus, Palestine, Egypt and the Aegean, and was also a center of great architecture and learning. When the Gentiles received the gospel, Antioch eventually became the center for Gentile Christians. In fact, it was also in Antioch that the term "Christian" was first used (Acts 11:25–26). It was at this strategic city that Paul began his missionary journeys and returned at the end of each trip to give a report to the church there.

Before the Lord Jesus ascended into heaven, He gave the disciples the great commission: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Paul's first missionary journey was his first step to carrying out this important commission.

### A. In the Footsteps of Paul

Let's examine what happened to Paul and his companions on his first missionary journey. (*Teachers: See Figure 1.*)

Stop #1	Antioch in Syria	Acts 13:1–3	The apostles prayed and fasted. The Holy Spirit commissioned the journey.
Stop #2	Seleucia	Acts 13:4	They boarded a boat.
Stop #3	Salamis in Cyprus	Acts 13:5	They preached in synagogues and John Mark assisted.
Stop #4	Paphos in Cyprus	Acts 13:6–12	Elymas became blind and the proconsul accepted the gospel.
Stop #5	Perga in Pamphylia	Acts 13:13	John Mark left and returned to Jerusalem.
Stop #6	Antioch in Pisidia	Acts 13:14–50	Paul and Barnabas were driven out after preaching in the synagogue.
Stop #7	Iconium	Acts 14:1–5	They preached in the synagogue, but unbelieving Jews poisoned the minds of the Gentiles. An attempt was made to stone Paul and Barnabas.
Stop #8	Lystra/Derbe	Acts 14:6–20	Paul healed a crippled man and the people wanted to sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas as if they were gods; Paul was later stoned and thrown out of the city.
Stop #9	Derbe	Acts 14:20–21	Many believed in this city.

Stop #10	Lystra, Iconium and Antioch (Pisidia)	Acts 14:21–23	They strengthened the faith of the believers and appointed elders in the churches.
Stop #11	Pamphylia, Perga to Attalia	Acts 14:24–25	They journeyed from Attalia back to Antioch in Syria, after preaching in Perga.
Stop #12	Antioch in Syria	Acts 14:26–28	Reported all that God had done and how He opened the door for the Gentiles to accept the faith.

## B. The Challenges and Obstacles of Preaching

Sharing the gospel is one of the most meaningful and valuable experiences that we can have in our lifetime. The Bible tells us that a soul is more valuable than all the wealth of this world (Mt 16:26). The gospel opens the inner eyes of men so that they are no longer in darkness but walk as children of light (Eph 5:8). They are no longer slaves to sin, but to righteousness, and through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ their inheritance is no longer death, but life. And yet, preaching the gospel is not easy. Satan will not surrender a soul without a fight, and he seeks to prevent people from receiving and accepting the truth.

Due to Satan’s guile, Paul and his companions faced obstacles, persecution, and danger while preaching the gospel. Let us study the following passages to find out the devices Satan used to hinder the truth during Paul’s first missionary journey.

### 1. Acts 13:8–11

Elymas, a false prophet and sorcerer, tried to prevent Paul and Barnabas from preaching the word of God to the proconsul. Paul overcame this obstacle by rebuking Elymas through the power of the Holy Spirit. As an enemy of righteousness, the devil seeks to turn those who thirst for the truth away from the faith. He uses false teachings, philosophies, and incorrect values to confuse and lead people away from the truth. To fight against this, we must rely on the power of God instead of allowing our anger or frustration to lead us.

### 2. Acts 13:45

Satan used the Jews to oppose Paul by filling them with envy and jealousy when they saw the multitude that turned up to hear the apostles preach.

### 3. Acts 13:50

In an attempt to prevent the apostles from preaching, the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief leaders to persecute Paul and Barnabas and expel them from the city.

### 4. Acts 14:2

The unbelieving Jews did not want the Gentiles to believe, so they poisoned the Gentiles’ minds against the apostles. Satan uses unbelievers who are callous in their hearts to oppose our work and persecute us.

### 5. Acts 14:11–13

After the apostles healed the lame man, Satan tried to corrupt the apostles by making the

people worship them as gods. If the apostles had not been filled with the Holy Spirit, they may have accepted the people's worship, robbing God of His glory.

**6. Acts 14:19–20**

Paul and Barnabas did not succumb to the false worship, so Satan tried a more concrete tactic. In Lystra, the Jews from Antioch and Iconium stirred up the crowd, instigating them to stone Paul and drag him out of the city when they thought he was dead.

**C. Why Do We Encounter Obstacles?**

**1. We belong to different realms**

John 15:19 clearly tells us that those who believe in the Lord Jesus belong to God and are no longer under Satan's domain. Because we no longer belong to the world and Satan, the people of the world hate us and will persecute us. If they persecuted the Lord Jesus when He was on earth, they will also persecute His disciples.

**2. The people of the world do not want their wrong deeds exposed**

John 3:19–20 says that those who are in darkness practice evil and hate the light, because the light exposes their sin and shame. Satan blinds their hearts and minds, and they refuse to allow the light of the gospel to shine upon them. 1 Peter 4:3–4 also says that they find it strange that God's children do not follow in their evil lifestyles. As a result, they speak evil of us and persecute us.

**3. Different faiths**

Before Jesus came to the world, the Jewish nation followed the Law of Moses. When the Lord came down, preaching the gospel of the good news of the heavenly kingdom, the Jews considered Him a blasphemer, a lawbreaker, and a threat to their traditional faith. Consequently, they persecuted the Lord Jesus and His followers. They believed they were acting in faith and doing God's work when they carried out such deeds as isolating Christians, banning them from the synagogues, persecuting them, and even killing them (Jn 16:1–2).

**4. If we desire to live a godly life, we will suffer persecution**

In Acts 14:22, Paul exhorted the believers in the different churches by saying that "we must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God." As citizens of God's kingdom, trials and difficulties are a part of the spiritual warfare we wage, as well as a means of strengthening our faith (2 Tim 3:12). Therefore, we should not be disheartened, as we are not alone. We can be victorious through the power and strength of the Lord.

*Check for Understanding*

---

- 1. Why is it so important that we share the gospel?** The Bible tells us that a soul is more valuable than all the wealth of this world (Mt 16:26). The gospel opens the inner eyes of men so that they are no longer in darkness but walk as children of light (Eph 5:8).
- 2. How did Satan use Elymas to try and prevent the gospel from spreading?** Elymas, a false prophet and sorcerer, tried to prevent Paul and Barnabas from preaching the word of God to the proconsul.
- 3. Why do we encounter obstacles when preaching? Briefly explain each.**
  - a. **We belong to different realms:** Because we no longer belong to the world, people of the world will hate and persecute us, just as they persecuted the Lord Jesus to whom we belong.

- b. **The people of the world do not want their wrong deeds exposed:** Those who are in darkness hate the light because the light exposes their sin and shame.
- c. **Different faiths:** The Jews believed the Lord Jesus was a threat to their faith, and thus persecuted His followers.
- d. **If we desire to live a godly life, we will suffer persecution:** As citizens of God's kingdom, trials and difficulties are a part of the spiritual warfare we wage, as well as a means of strengthening our faith.

### *Life Application*

---

#### **1. The Reasons We Preach**

Paul was a key worker in bringing the gospel to the Gentiles in distant regions. The Bible records that he made three missionary journeys, none of which were easy. The missionaries faced many difficulties and dangers. In addition, Paul continued to support and build up the faith of churches established on his journeys. Despite the many hardships, Paul willingly persisted in the work. What compelled him to shoulder the work?

**a. He understood the sacrifice of love the Lord Jesus made for us all.**

"The life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal 2:20). In reaching this realization, Paul had come to understand that while he was a sinner, the Lord Jesus endured an agonizing death on the cross for his sake, all so that he could be saved. It was because of this understanding that Paul chose to live his life for God. God loved us and died for us while we were sinners. Has this knowledge spurred us to give to others what we have freely received?

**b. He was convinced of God's calling.**

Paul once wrote, "It pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles" (Gal 1:15). Like Paul, we are His chosen special people, and as such, God has blessed us with His provision in everything in our lives. Our education, experiences that have helped us to grow, and our different skills and talents are all from Him. More importantly, we have been given God's law for His purpose. God has fully equipped us to be His ambassadors in delivering the gospel to the world. Are you ready to answer His calling?

**c. Understand the gospel's power**

In the eyes of the law, Saul was an upright and admirable Jew with high social and religious status. But in the eyes of God, he was a sinner in need of deliverance. Paul recognized this and understood that the power of the gospel is such that those who believe in the Lord Jesus can be delivered.

#### **2. Preparing to Preach**

In order to preach, we must entrust the work into God's hands through prayer and understand to whom we are preaching so that we can be effective when preaching. However, effective preaching does not only require an understanding of your audience, but also a strong understanding of general and spiritual knowledge.

a. **General Knowledge**

i. Learn different languages (Act 21:37–40)

Language is vital to communication, and Paul was fluent in more than one. Growing up as a Jew, he learned their native languages—Hebrew and Aramaic. He was also fluent in Greek, which was commonly used throughout the empire and Asia Minor. His public messages and his letters to the different churches were given and written in Greek. His fluency in multiple languages enabled Paul to preach to his fellow countrymen, as well as to the Greek Gentiles he met during his journeys.

ii. Understand the world around us (Acts 17:16–31)

Paul was educated in Hebrew letters and learning and studied under the great teacher Gamaliel. He was also exposed to Greek literature, culture, and practices, which helped him in situations, such as when he addressed the philosophers who met on the Areopagus in Athens (Acts 17:28).

Write down and share at least three ways we can increase our general knowledge and apply that knowledge to our lives. (*Possible answers: Be conscientious in our schoolwork, learn a foreign language, be observant and attentive to people and things around us, be friends with people of different races and ethnicities, learn about the world, etc.*)

b. **Spiritual Knowledge**

i. Know the Bible (Acts 17:1–4; 8:26–35; 2 Cor 10:4)

To preach effectively, we need to have a thorough understanding of the Bible and our church doctrines. The workers in the apostolic times understood that it is not man’s education or eloquence that brings people to God, but the gospel of Christ and the power of God.

ii. Develop excellent spiritual character (1 Tim 4:12; 1 Pet 2:12)

Our every action can influence others. Someone may accept or reject the truth based on how we live our lives as Christians. Therefore, it is important to develop excellent spiritual character so that others not only hear the message of the gospel but also see Jesus through us. We can be a testimony for Christ without uttering a single word.

iii. Experience God (Acts 26:12–18)

A true and personal experience of God in our lives can motivate us to go out to preach to our friends and family, as our testimony will be alive, powerful, and passionate. The apostle Paul had personally touched Christ, and that experience completely transformed him and those who heard his message.

Write down and share at least three ways we can increase our spiritual knowledge. (*Possible answers: Read the Bible daily, attend services, take notes during sermons/lessons, fellowship with brothers and sisters, talk with God in prayer, etc.*)

**Discussion**

- Have you considered embarking on a missionary journey when you are older?
  - What are some difficulties you may face?
  - How do you think you can prepare yourself for this wonderful work?
- How can your studies prepare you to be a vessel useful for God’s purpose?



- What spiritual qualities do you have that you can start cultivating in yourself right now in preparation?
- What blessings can you receive from bringing the gospel to others (both physical and spiritual)?
- If you do not think you will embark on a missionary journey, how else can you contribute to the work of global evangelism?

### Overview

---

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” (Romans 1:16)

### Meaning

The word *gospel* is the translation of the Greek noun *euangelion*, meaning, "good news." Salvation means being delivered from the penalty of judgment and eternal death due to our sin. Therefore, the gospel is the good news that Jesus Christ gives us: repentance through the forgiveness of sins, and salvation given to us by the power of God. When we place our belief in Christ as our Savior and accept Him into our hearts, we put our faith in Him. There is nothing to be ashamed of. As long as we truly believe that the power of God leads to salvation, we will be saved.

### Conclusion

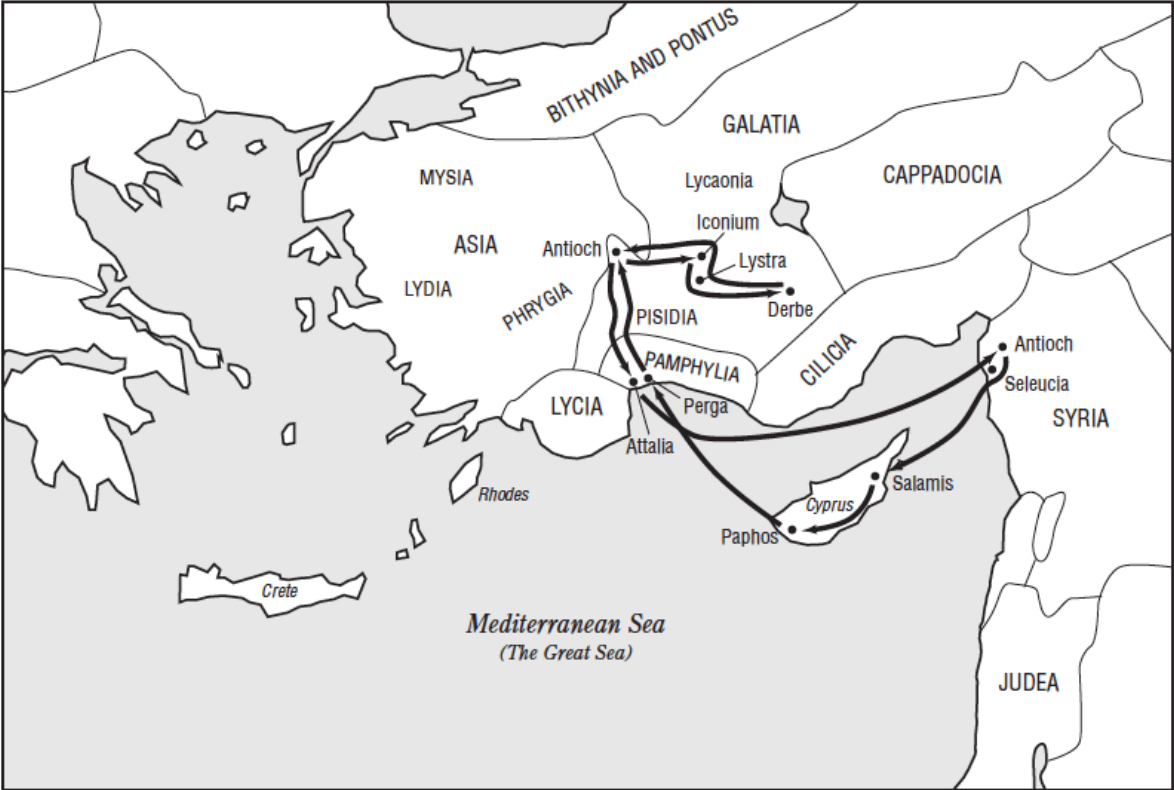
---

When life is comfortable, it is easy to forget that God has called us to be His chosen. As a result, we fall into a spiritual slumber. We become so busy with our studies and personal activities that we forget to think of the many people who have yet to be saved, whether nearby or far away. Paul’s journey reminds us that there is still a lot more evangelism that must be done. In all that we do, we must always remember the commandment of the Lord Jesus: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Mt 28:19–20).

## Lesson 7 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. According to the memory verse, what kind of power does the gospel hold?  
*The gospel holds the power of repentance through the forgiveness of sins, and of salvation given us by the power of God.*
2. What made Antioch of Syria a significant city?  
*It was the third largest city of the Roman Empire and the capital city of the proconsular province of Syria. It was also populated by diverse groups of people, was an important junction of trade, and a center of great architecture and learning.*
3. Name three obstacles that Paul and his companions faced during their missionary journey.
  - a. *False teachings (Acts 13:8–11)*
  - b. *Envy and jealousy (Acts 13:45)*
  - c. *Persecution and being expelled from the city (Acts 13:50)*
  - d. *Calloused hearts and minds poisoned against the apostles (Acts 14:2)*
  - e. *False glory (Acts 14:11–13)*
  - f. *Physical pain and abuse (Acts 14:19–20)*
4. What are two reasons we encounter obstacles?
  - a. *We belong to different realms*
  - b. *The people of the world do not want their wrong deeds exposed*
  - c. *Different faiths*
  - d. *If we desire to live a godly life, we will suffer persecution*
5. Name at least three different tools that we should have in order to preach.  
*General knowledge: Learn different languages; understand the world around us*  
*Spiritual knowledge: Know the Bible; develop excellent spiritual character; experience God*
6. How can you personally prepare yourself to answer God's calling and contribute to His missionary work?  
*Personal answers.*

Figure 1: Paul's First Missionary Journey



*Memory Verse*

“For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.” (Acts 15:28–29)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Work [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Jews and Gentiles alike are saved by the grace of God, not by observing the laws of Moses.</li> <li>2. The Jerusalem council decision was made by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.</li> </ol>	<p>God is the only God we should worship. He is a jealous God.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Seek the truth with discernment, boldness, and the Holy Spirit.</li> <li>2. Strengthen the unity of the church through submission to the Holy Spirit.</li> <li>3. Abstain from sexual immorality.</li> </ol>

*Overview*

**Events and Spiritual Teachings**

- A. The Dispute over Circumcision
- B. Understanding Circumcision
- C. The Meeting of the Jerusalem Council
- D. The Decision of the Jerusalem Council

**Life Application**

1. Seek the Truth with Discernment, Boldness, and the Holy Spirit
2. Submission to the Holy Spirit Leads to Unity
3. Abstain from Sexual Immorality

**Memory Verse**

**Conclusion:** The council concluded that God had already included Gentiles in His salvation plan, but it would be burdensome to the Gentiles to keep the law of Moses. This decision was made jointly between the Holy Spirit and the church.

### A. The Dispute over Circumcision

In its earliest days, the church was comprised mostly of Jews until God revealed through Peter that the Gentiles were also included in God's salvation plan. However, certain men from Judea came to Antioch and insisted that the Gentile believers needed to be circumcised in order to be saved. It was not simply a matter of circumcision, however. They were bringing into question whether faith alone was sufficient for salvation, or whether the laws of Moses also had to be followed. The resulting disagreement was no small matter, so Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem to settle the dispute. In this lesson, we'll learn how the apostles handled the conflict, and how the council came to a decision at the end.

### B. Understanding Circumcision

First, let's examine the reason behind the conflict: circumcision. Circumcision is a minor operation where the foreskin of the male organ is removed. According to Scripture, it was an important sign of God's covenant with Abraham. Let's read its origins in Genesis 17:10–14:

*This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. [...] He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.*

According to this passage, Abraham had to circumcise himself, his household, and his slaves as an everlasting covenant in their flesh. Any descendant of Abraham who was not circumcised was outside of God's covenant. Much later, when Isaac was born, "Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him" (Gen 21:4).

From that point, God repeatedly commanded His people to be circumcised as a sign of their covenant with Him. Hundreds of years after the patriarchs, when the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, God re-established this sign when He commanded that all who partake in the Passover must be circumcised, Israelite and Gentile alike (Ex 12:43–49). This sign was later formalized when the Mosaic laws were established (Lev 12:3), and before the Israelites enter the promised land, God commanded Joshua to circumcise the sons of Israel, "For all the people who came out had been circumcised, but all the people born in the wilderness, on the way as they came out of Egypt, had not been circumcised" (Josh 5:5).

As we can see, from the time of the patriarchs to the promised land, God commanded His people to perform circumcision. However, its importance was not physical in nature, but spiritual. In the wilderness, God said, "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer" (Deut 10:12, 16). Circumcision was a physical sign of a spiritual transformation and dedication to God.

### C. The Meeting of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1–31)

For generations, Jewish law demanded that to receive salvation, circumcision was necessary. It was clearly of great historical and spiritual importance for the Jewish people. Resolving the question of its necessity was no easy task. So, Paul, Barnabas, and certain others traveled to Jerusalem to present the question to the elders and apostles of the church. Let us examine how they dealt with the dispute.

**1. The dispute is presented before the apostles and elders (vv. 1–6)**

Upon their arrival in Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas first gave a report of the work God had done with them. They likely included a report of the Gentile believers, as it was then that some of the sect of the Pharisees stood and presented the conflict in clear terms, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise [the Gentiles], and to command them to keep the law of Moses” (v. 5). Then, the apostles and elders came together to consider the matter.

**2. The opposing argument is stated (vv. 7–11)**

After some time spent in debate, Peter rose to speak. He was an important witness as the first apostle sent by God to preach to the Gentiles, and he reminded his listeners of this. After establishing his authority, Peter then presented his argument. Let’s read Acts 15:7–11.

Peter made two very important points: first, that God purified the Gentiles’ hearts by faith (v. 9), and second, that all are saved through the grace of Jesus Christ, not by the law (v. 11).

**3. Supporting facts are presented by eyewitnesses (v. 12)**

Peter’s words changed the nature of the debate; it was no longer a matter of whether they had to follow the law, but how God had already transformed the lives of the Gentiles. Peter’s argument was supported by Paul and Barnabas. As apostles who were closely involved with the growth of the Antioch church and its Gentile believers, they would have been important witnesses in the dispute. The multitude “kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles” (v. 12).

**4. Conclusion and resolution drawn by a third party (vv. 13–21)**

Last to speak was James, the half-brother of Jesus. As one of the pillars of the church, he served as a neutral third party to resolve the conflict. It is important to note that James drew from the Scriptures to help resolve the conflict. Personal testimony alone was not enough – their resolution had to be in agreement with God’s word. He quoted from the prophet Amos concerning Gentiles who are called by God’s name, and pointed out that the words of the prophet agreed with Peter’s personal experience (*BSG: Acts, 262*)<sup>1</sup>.

James then moved to make a proposal before the council. The Gentile believers should not be troubled by Jewish laws, but rather should only abstain from these four things: (1) from things polluted by idols; (2) from sexual immorality; (3) from things strangled; and (4) from blood. These were common practices among the Gentiles of the time, and as such, believers would have needed to be extra vigilant against these specific sins so that they would not be polluted by the idolatrous and immoral practices around them (*BSG: Acts, 263*)<sup>2</sup>.

**5. The decision is made in unity (vv. 22–29)**

The members were willing to seek and submit to God’s will and were able to do so with the help of the Holy Spirit. In the end, their conclusion, based on testimony and study of the Scriptures, was made with the support of the whole church, not just the apostles and elders. The church

---

<sup>1</sup> TJC Department of Literary Ministry, “Segment Analysis 7”, *Bible Study Guide: Acts* (U.S.A.: True Jesus Church, 2004), 262

<sup>2</sup> “Segment Analysis 10a”, *Bible Study Guide: Acts, 263*

continued to show its unity by resolving the conflict and agreeing on a decision together.

**6. The decision is presented and supported (vv. 30–31)**

Upon reaching a resolution, the Jerusalem council sent Paul and Barnabas with their conclusions for the Antioch church. They also sent along two others, namely Judas and Silas, who would make a verbal report of the resolution. Sending the additional apostles would help to remove any doubt that skeptics might have had about the authenticity of the letter (*BSG: Acts, 264*)<sup>3</sup>, as well as the reasoning behind the conclusions reached by the church. Upon receiving the letter, the members “rejoiced over its encouragement” (v. 31).

**D. The Decision of the Jerusalem Council**

The four prohibitions that James suggested were all common practices among non-believers. As such, the members of the apostolic church would have needed to be extra wary of them. Let’s examine the guidelines set by the Jerusalem council in closer detail.

**1. Abstain from things offered to idols.**

It was common practice for people to worship many different gods, and in New Testament times, it was equally common for pagan temples to sell food that had been offered to idols or used for their festivals. As a result, it was normal for Gentiles to eat food offered to idols, making it a difficult – and important – practice for believers of Christ to guard against. Let’s read Leviticus 17:7. “They shall no more offer their sacrifices to demons, after whom they have played the harlot. This shall be a statute forever for them throughout their generations.” As followers of Christ, we must have no part with demons, as our God is a jealous God (1 Cor 10:19–22).

**2. Abstain from blood.**

When meat was first given to mankind for food, God commanded Noah, “Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. [...] But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood” (Gen 9:3–4). Hundreds of years later, Moses gave the same command to the Israelites. Let’s read Leviticus 17:10–12.

God gave blood the power to atone for our sins because blood represents life, and only through life can our sins be cleansed. The sanctity of blood is such that to eat the blood of a creature is a serious sin in God’s eyes.

**3. Abstain from things strangled.**

An animal that dies by strangulation has not had its blood drained out of the meat. The importance of avoiding blood is reiterated in the third prohibition set by the Jerusalem council. Let’s read Leviticus 17:13–14.

In addition to its power to atone for our sins, blood also sustains life itself, and therefore must be drained out of any creature that we eat.

**4. Abstain from sexual immorality.**

Sexual immorality was rampant in Greek society. Sexual immorality includes adultery (extra-marital sex), fornication (pre-marital sex), and homosexuality (sex between members of the

---

<sup>3</sup> “Segment Analysis 12, 14”, *Bible Study Guide: Acts, 264*

same gender), among others. Leviticus, chapter 18, describes what is abominable in the eyes of God (*BSG: Acts*, 263)<sup>4</sup>, but the main reasons He wants us to abstain from sexual immorality are:

- a. It defiles our bodies. Paul clearly warns us that sexual immorality is a sin against our own bodies, for our own body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and was bought at a price by Jesus Christ (1 Cor 6:13–20).
- b. It destroys the sacred institution of marriage (Gen 2:24). The marriage bed must be kept pure (Heb 13:4). Jesus also reminds us that in a marriage, “they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Mat 19:6).
- c. Those who commit sexual immorality cannot enter the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9–10; Gal 5:19–21).

Our body is not for our pleasure, but for the Lord’s purpose. Therefore, we must flee sexual immorality and glorify God with our body, which belongs to God. God instructs us in 1 Corinthians 7:2 that to avoid sexual immorality, “let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband,” and “if [the unmarried] cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion” (1 Cor 7:8–9).

Like the believers of the apostolic church, we also need to be aware of and avoid the sinful practices of non-believers around us. As God’s chosen workers, we have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, and are now citizens of heaven (Phil 3:20). Therefore, we no longer follow the laws of the world, but of God, and should not walk in darkness, but in light (2 Cor 6:14).

### *Check for Understanding*

---

- 1. In the Old Testament, in order to uphold his covenant with God, what did Abraham have to do?** Abraham had to circumcise himself, his household, and his slaves as an everlasting covenant in their flesh. Any descendant of Abraham who was not circumcised was outside of God’s covenant.
- 2. What points did Peter make during the dispute?** First, that God purified the Gentiles’ hearts by faith (v. 9), and second, that all are saved through the grace of Jesus Christ, not by the law (v. 11).
- 3. What was important about the conclusion that James made?** James drew from the Scriptures to help resolve the conflict; personal testimony alone was not enough – their resolution had to be in agreement with God’s word.
- 4. Why can we not eat blood or anything strangled?** Blood sustains life, and therefore must be drained out of any creature that we eat. Blood also represents life, and only through life can we receive atonement for our sins. Therefore, in addition to sustaining life, God gave blood the power to atone for our sins. The sanctity of blood is such that to eat the blood of a creature is a serious sin in God’s eyes.
- 5. What are the main reasons we must abstain from sexual immorality?** It defiles our bodies, which are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:13–20); it destroys the sacred institution of marriage (Gen 2:24; Heb 13:4; Mat 19:6); and those who commit sexual immorality cannot enter the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9–10; Gal 5:19–21).

### *Life Application*

---

#### **1. Seek the Truth with Discernment, Boldness, and the Holy Spirit**

The Jerusalem council followed logical steps, but unlike worldly debates, there were several additional factors involved in the decision-making process:

---

<sup>4</sup> “Segment Analysis 10b”, *Bible Study Guide: Acts*, 263



- a. The presence, power, and leadership of the Holy Spirit
- b. Peter's personal testimony, and eyewitness accounts from Paul and Barnabas
- c. The wisdom and discernment of James
- d. An understanding of God's word

From studying this event, we can see that when seeking out the truth, we cannot follow the world's logic. We must find the truth through the works of the Holy Spirit and the guidance of God through testimonies and understanding of the Scriptures. God is involved in every step. Then, we can overcome our different views when we truly allow the Holy Spirit to lead us.

Have you ever experienced, witnessed, or heard of a time when you or someone you know was unsure of how to proceed according to God's will? This can be anything from a personal issue, such as whether to accept a job, or a church-wide issue, such as how to expand or conduct Sabbath services. Let's look again at how the Jerusalem Council resolved the dispute:

- a. The church in Antioch sent workers to find help in seeking a solution
- b. All involved workers gave their reports (Peter, Paul, and Barnabas)
- c. James affirmed the reports and made the decision
- d. Everyone followed the guidance of the Holy Spirit and abided with the decision
- e. The church council sent a letter with delegates back to Antioch to report the decision

Let's now go back to our own experiences. What issue did you experience or see? Share what happened with the class. (*Teachers: You may want to prepare an example beforehand in case students cannot think of anything to share. Be prepared to mediate discussions and offer suggestions and guidance.*) Then, form a "J1 Council" and discuss how you would approach this issue as a class. What are some possible solutions, and what problems may accompany those solutions? How would they affect those involved? What does the Bible say about making such decisions? Do you have any closely related or similar personal examples that can help resolve the situation? Discuss, and try to come to a conclusion by following the same methods that the Jerusalem council used to resolve their dispute.

In reality, any disputes or disagreements in church need to be resolved. But all sides of the argument must be given a fair hearing. The final decision should be given to ministers and church workers who are filled with the Holy Spirit, wisdom, and have the spiritual discernment to make such decisions. Then, after that, each member should abide by the conclusion.

### **Seek the Guidance of the Holy Spirit**

Based on this discussion, when you make decisions in your life, do you easily submit to the leadership of the Holy Spirit? Or do you seek what you want? Why or why not? If we aren't sure where to start when making decisions, here are some guidelines that we can follow:

- a. Search the Bible to see what God has to say.
- b. Follow the teachings/principles in the Bible and submit to God's word.
- c. Pray over the matter for a period of time; avoid making hasty decisions.
- d. Seek God's guidance and keep your eyes and heart open to the Holy Spirit's direction.

### **Testimony #1:**

*A brother was laid off from his job. He was really anxious to find a new job, as he was financially desperate, and he needed to support his family. He came across a job offer, but the manager told*

*him he must work every Saturday. Upon hearing this, his heart sank. He knew God would not be pleased if he took this job. So even though he wanted the income, he returned home and sought after God's will through earnest prayer. He prayed and asked God to open another way for him. After, in submission to God's way, he let go of the job offer. Almost immediately, God then provided him with another job opportunity, and this time, the company did not require him to work on Saturdays. He knew that this was God's provision, and he praised God for His care. The guidance of the Holy Spirit was so evident that he gladly accepted the job's offer. May all the glory be unto God.*

– Anonymous

## **2. Submission to the Holy Spirit Leads to Unity**

An equally important application to learn from this event is what followed. When Peter, Paul, and Barnabas spoke up, they risked offending the converted Pharisees who believed that circumcision was necessary. For their part, the converted Pharisees could have continued arguing their case or become resentful. But the matter ended in unified agreement. As a result, the dispute, defense, and final decision strengthened the unity of the church through everyone's submission to the Holy Spirit.

The conclusion to this event teaches us that we not only have to stand up for the truth, but also submit to the truth. We should seek to please God instead of pleasing men or following tradition. Unlike human nature, God's truth and His moral standards will never change over time. So instead of being influenced, we need to become influencers by having the boldness to speak the truth, the wisdom and understanding to discern right and wrong, and the humility to submit to the Holy Spirit.

**Discussion:** When presenting the truth, we must never compromise it. What are some things that the world accepts but the Bible explicitly says are sinful and wrong?

## **3. Abstain from Sexual Immorality**

One of the conclusions that the Jerusalem council included in their letter was a warning against sexual immorality, which may very well be one of the most difficult sins to avoid (1 Cor 6:18). In a world where sexual freedom is not only permissible but also strongly encouraged, it can be a struggle for us as God's children to keep ourselves separate and pure. But with the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, as long as we determine to do so, we can remain pure and live in the light according to His word.

### **Testimony #2**

*When I was in high school, one of the growing trends was that many of my friends were becoming physically close, or even sleeping with the person they were attracted to. I am really thankful to my parents and the RE classes that I have been attending from a young age, as they laid a strong foundation in my faith, and helped to shape who I am today.*

*In my junior year, I became close friends with a non-Christian. He told me he really liked me, but I knew he did not share my faith, and outside of school activities and homework, I quickly realized he did not have the same moral values as me. I did not doubt his feelings, but God's word had never been planted in his heart. Initially, I liked him too and became a bit emotionally attached to him. But when I talked with other sisters at church, they told me I should quickly cut it off before I compromised my sexual purity. It was not easy, but I managed to do so with the power of the Holy Spirit and intercessions from my peers. I am so thankful God gave me the courage to say no to him. This could not have happened without the prayer and support from my church friends. Looking back, I am forever grateful that God surrounded me with godly sisters in church to be there for me in my spiritual weakness. May all the glory be unto God.*

– Anonymous

### Testimony #3

*During high school, I got to know a sister during a church event. My parents told me I was not ready to be married; I was unstable emotionally and spiritually, and far too young to be dating. They were right, of course. Nonetheless, we started texting each other, sharing our thoughts through texts. I soon realized that I spent a lot of time looking forward to her messages. As a result, my grades began to suffer. This upset me, and I became angry at myself. So, one day, after Sabbath service, I knelt in the chapel and asked God to give me the strength to say no to this friendship. I ended up not replying to her message. Deep down inside, I knew neither of us were ready for marriage, or even for dating. It is hard for this generation because technology makes it so easy to share our feelings. But if I continued, I knew I could be emotionally blackmailed into sharing physical intimacy. Now, I simply pray a lot and ask God to give me the strength to guide my heart and guard my purity until I'm truly ready.*

– Anonymous

### Memory Verse

---

“For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.” (Acts 15:28–29)

### Meaning

*(See Spiritual Teachings, Section D)*

### Conclusion

---

The question of circumcision and its necessity was a major controversy due to its historical and spiritual importance for the Jewish people. The dispute needed to be directed to Jerusalem, where the council dealt with the debate in a graceful and logical manner, all while remaining in unity with one another. Their conclusion – that Jews and Gentiles alike are saved by God’s grace, not by their abidance of laws of Moses – was a result of their submission to the Spirit’s guidance and their desire to seek out God’s will.

## Lesson 8 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. Why must we abstain from blood and from things strangled?  
*God gave blood the power to atone for our sins because blood represents life. The sanctity of blood is such that to consume it is a serious sin in God's eyes. Blood also sustains life itself, and therefore must be drained out of any creature that we eat.*
2. What was the importance of circumcision to the Jews?  
*For generations, Israelites had to be circumcised as a sign of their covenant with God, or else be cut off from it (Gen 17:10–14). It was a physical sign of a spiritual transformation and dedication to God (Deut 10:12, 16).*
3. What was important about the conclusion that James made?  
*James drew from the Scriptures to help resolve the conflict; personal testimony alone was not enough – their resolution had to be in agreement with God's word.*
4. What are the main reasons God wants us to abstain from sexual immorality?
  - a. *It defiles our bodies. Paul clearly warns us that sexual immorality is a sin against our own bodies, for our own body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and was bought at a price by Jesus Christ (1 Cor 6:13–20).*
  - b. *It destroys the sacred institution of marriage (Gen 2:24). The marriage bed must be kept pure (Heb 13:4). Jesus also reminds us that in a marriage, "they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Mat 19:6).*
  - c. *Those who commit sexual immorality cannot enter the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9–10; Gal 5:19–21).*
5. What are ways we can seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit?
  - a. *Search the Bible to see what God has to say.*
  - b. *Follow the teachings/principles in the Bible and submit to God's Word.*
  - c. *Avoid making hasty decisions but pray over the matter for a period of time.*
  - d. *Observe and seek God's guidance and the leading of the Holy Spirit.*
6. Has there been a time when you chose what you wanted over what God wanted? How can you avoid this in the future?  
*Personal answers.*

*Memory Verse*

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

Knowledge of God's Will [God's Word]	Knowledge of God [God's Divine Nature]	Good Work [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The gospel was spread to Europe under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.</li> <li>2. All the workers were prepared and ready to serve God's purpose.</li> </ol>	<p>God abides with and protects those who fear Him and faithfully do His work.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Be ready in and out of season – prepare ourselves for God's work.</li> <li>2. Hold on to faith in the face of tribulation.</li> <li>3. Work together to serve the Lord with love.</li> </ol>

*Overview*

**Events and Spiritual Teachings**

- A. Paul Revisits the Churches
  1. Division Over John Mark
  2. Timothy Joins Paul and Silas
  3. The Macedonian Call
- B. Paul in Macedonia
  1. Philippi
  2. Thessalonica and Berea
- C. Paul in Achaia
  1. Athens
  2. Corinth
- D. Paul Returns to Antioch

**Life Application**

1. Be Ready In Season and Out of Season
2. Faith in the Face of Tribulation
3. Fellow Workers in Christ

**Memory Verse**

**Conclusion:** We must prepare ourselves so that we are ready to serve when God calls us, and strive to do our utmost to serve to the best of our abilities, knowing that He is faithful to those who are faithful to Him.

## *Events and Spiritual Teachings*

---

### **A. Paul Revisits the Churches**

After an extended stay in Antioch, Paul was ready to depart on his second missionary journey. He proposed to Barnabas that they revisit their brethren in the churches that had been established during their first missionary journey (Acts 15:36).

#### **1. Division Over John Mark (Acts 15:36–41)**

Before they even departed Antioch, a problem occurred. Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them, but because Mark had departed from them at Pamphylia during their first journey, Paul refused. Their contention “became so sharp that they parted from one another” (v. 39). As a result, Barnabas took Mark with him to Cyprus by sea, while Paul took Silas with him through Syria and Cilicia.

#### **2. Timothy Joins Paul and Silas (Acts 16:1–5)**

When Paul and Silas came to Derbe and Lystra, the brethren at Lystra and Iconium recommended a disciple named Timothy to them. Timothy’s mother was a Jew, and his father a Greek. Upon meeting him, Paul wanted to bring the young man with him, and proceeded to take him to be circumcised. This was because the Jews in the area knew that Timothy’s father was a Greek; without circumcision, it would have been more difficult for Timothy to work for the Lord in the region.

#### **3. The Macedonian Call (Acts 16:6–10)**

As they traveled through the cities, Paul passed on the message set by the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:23–29; 16:4) and strengthened the brethren as they passed through. However, as they traveled through Phrygia and the Galatian region, the Holy Spirit forbade them from preaching in Asia and moved them to travel to the coastal city of Troas. There, Paul saw a vision at night, in which a Macedonian man stood and pleaded with them, saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us” (Acts 16:9). Immediately understanding that it was God’s will, they sailed to Macedonia.

### **B. Paul in Macedonia**

The first city they stopped in was Philippi, which was a commercial center for Macedonia.

#### **1. Philippi (Acts 16:11–40)**

##### **a. Lydia, a Seller of Purple, and the Demon-Possessed Slave Girl**

As was customary, Paul preached to the Jews there. God opened the heart of a woman named Lydia, a seller of purple. She and her household were baptized, and Lydia became the first European believer (vv. 11–15). They remained in her house for a time, but when they went to pray, a slave girl possessed by a spirit of divination followed them for days, crying out, “These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation” (v. 17). Paul, greatly annoyed, turned to her and cast out the spirit in the name of Jesus Christ.

##### **b. Paul and Silas in Prison**

The slave girl’s master, seeing that he had lost his source of profit, seized Paul and Silas and dragged them to the authorities (v. 19). The master falsely accused them of disturbing the peace by preaching foreign teachings. As a result, the multitude rose against them, and the magistrates commanded that they be stripped and beaten. After, they were thrown into

prison, and the jailer was commanded to keep them securely. Hearing this, he fastened their feet in stocks to ensure that they did not escape (v. 24).

Let's read verses 25–34. Under Roman law, a guard who allowed a prisoner to escape was normally put to death, hence his decision to kill himself; after all, what normal prisoner does not escape when offered the chance? Paul's call of reassurance must have been beyond belief, and further emphasized the mighty acts of God. But Paul's words did not only preserve the jailer's physical life; they led him to reconcile with God and offered the jailer and his family the spiritual life that is eternal salvation.

The next morning, the magistrates sent word that Paul and Silas be released. However, Paul refused to leave prison quietly. This would have made it seem like they agreed that they had done something wrong and, by extension, the Philippian believers. Not only were they innocent of any wrongdoing, but being Roman citizens, it was unlawful to beat or imprison them without due process. The magistrates were dismayed upon learning they were Roman citizens, so they came to escort them out of the city as a gesture of good will and public apology.

## **2. Thessalonica and Berea (Acts 17:1–14)**

After their release, Paul and Silas went to Thessalonica, where they preached in a Jewish synagogue. Many were persuaded, Jews and Gentiles alike. However, those Jews who were not persuaded, "becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all of the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason" (v. 5). Unable to find Paul and Silas, the Jews once again falsely accused them, this time of political revolution, so the brethren sent Paul and Silas away to Berea.

In Berea, many believed when they preached in the synagogue, but the Jews learned of their activities and once again attempted to disrupt them. The brethren sent Paul away a second time, this time to the sea, while Silas and Timothy remained.

## **C. Paul in Achaia**

Those who accompanied Paul brought him to Athens, and he remained there and sent word for Silas and Timothy to join him.

### **1. Athens (Acts 17:15–34)**

While waiting for Silas and Timothy, Paul's "spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols" (v. 16). Distressed by the city's state, he went to the synagogue to reason with the Jews and Gentiles. He also went to the marketplace daily to preach to passers-by. Hearing him, certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers became curious about his message. So, they brought Paul to the Areopagus, a place of philosophy, where religion and morals were discussed.

Paul immediately grasped the opportunity to preach. But rather than using the Scriptures as he normally would in the synagogue, he spoke in a way the citizens of the city would understand, even using one of their own monuments as an introduction to Jesus Christ, the living God and creator of the universe. Paul's sermon received mixed responses. Some mocked him while others showed interest. Some listeners, however, joined him and believed (v. 34).

## 2. Corinth (Acts 18:1–17)

Paul left Athens and went to Corinth, where he met Aquila and Priscilla. Because they shared an occupation as tentmakers, Paul stayed with them, working together with them while he preached in the synagogue every Sabbath.

When Silas and Timothy came to join Paul, Paul was compelled by the Spirit to testify to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ. However, the Jews opposed Paul, so he left the synagogue and preached to the Gentiles instead. Many Corinthians were baptized, including the ruler of the synagogue and his household.

During one night in Corinth, the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision, saying, “Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city” (vv. 9–10). So, Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half to teach the word of God.

### D. Paul Returns to Antioch

Eventually, Paul set sail for Asia again, this time passing through Ephesus, where Priscilla and Aquila remained. He then made his way back to Antioch in Syria, bringing his journey full circle.

Paul’s second missionary journey was a fruitful one. Despite constant persecution from the Jews, with God’s protection and guidance, Paul was able to preach of Jesus’ resurrection to both Jews and Gentiles in Macedonia and Achaia, resulting in many new European believers. His many methods of preaching are a valuable resource for those of us who wish to preach, especially his speech at the Areopagus, which is an exemplary sermon for us to learn from.

### *Check for Understanding*

---

- 1. Why were Barnabas and Paul divided over John Mark? What was the result?** Barnabas wanted to take Mark with them, but Paul was against it because Mark had left them previously in Pamphylia, during their first missionary journey. They parted ways; Barnabas took Mark with him, and Paul took Silas.
- 2. Why did Paul bring Timothy to be circumcised?** Because the Jews in the region knew that Timothy’s father was a Greek, and without being circumcised it would have been difficult for Timothy to serve the Lord in that area.
- 3. Why did the jailer try to kill himself? When Paul stopped him, what was the result?** Under Roman law, a guard who allowed a prisoner to escape was normally put to death. Paul’s words did not only preserve the jailer’s physical life; they led him to reconcile with God and offered the jailer and his family the spiritual life that is eternal salvation.
- 4. What so distressed Paul about Athens? What did he do?** He was distressed by the city’s idol-worshiping practices. He went to the synagogue to reason with the Jews and Gentiles, and also went to the marketplace daily to preach to passers-by.
- 5. What was different about Paul’s audience in the Areopagus as opposed to his audience in the synagogue? How did he adjust his speech for them?** They were not Jews, so they were unfamiliar with the Scriptures. Rather than using the Scriptures as he normally would have in the synagogue, Paul adjusted his speech by using one of their own monuments as an introduction to Jesus Christ.

### *Life Application*

---

- 1. Be Ready In Season and Out of Season**



*“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.” (2 Timothy 4:2)*

While on his missionary journey, Paul did not neglect any of his responsibilities: he pastored the churches, strengthened the brethren’s faith, taught the truth, and preached the gospel. No matter the location, the audience, or the opposition, Paul sought to fulfill all of his responsibilities wherever he went. He exhorted Timothy to do the same, and to be ready to uphold his duties “in season and out of season.” To do something “in season and out of season” means to be prepared to do it at any time, whether the circumstances are favorable or unfavorable.

An idolatrous city, Athens lacked an “ideal” audience willing to listen to Paul, yet he preached everywhere he could – in the synagogue, to the Gentiles, and even in the marketplace. His persistence in the face of overwhelming odds opened the opportunity for him to preach in the Areopagus. Once in the Areopagus, however, Paul faced a very different audience compared to in the synagogue; accustomed to preaching to Jews, who had knowledge of the Scriptures, Paul now had to preach to an audience who had none. Yet he was able to do so, because he had already spent years preparing himself to preach to the Gentiles, and as a result, some believed. This is what it means to do God’s work in season and out of season.

We often like to wait for the “right time” to do something. Whether it’s something as simple as buying a fruit in season or waiting for an opportune moment to jump into a conversation, it’s important for us to wait for the ideal moment to do so. However, when doing God’s work, we will never truly know when the “right time” is – only God knows. Because of this, we must prepare ourselves so that we are ready to do His work whatever the circumstances may be. Moreover, it is important that we do not attempt to judge for ourselves when the right time is, but instead learn to trust in God’s guidance. “But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Pet 3:8). “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” (Prov 3:5–6). We are only human, but God’s will and timing are perfect.

**Discussion:** What are some ways we can prepare ourselves so that we are ready to do God’s work “in season and out of season”?

## **2. Faith in the Face of Tribulation**

Paul and Silas faced persecution and many tribulations on their journey, but they were able to persist in their work because they held on to their faith in times of trouble. Their behavior when imprisoned is an example of this. They were able to pray and sing praises to God because they still had peace in their hearts despite the physical suffering they endured. Only those with faith are able to feel this peace because they know that God abides with them.

Paul wrote, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith’” (Rom 1:16–17). Paul clearly saw that the gospel is the power of God that leads us to salvation when we have faith. Paul lived out this faith by facing tribulations without fear, maintaining his strong hope that as long as he held on to his faith to the end, he would enter the kingdom of God.

Today, whatever tribulations or persecution we may face, we must hold on to our faith. But in order to

do so, we need to first cultivate ourselves, because a strong faith does not come to us overnight. Even Abraham was doubtful at first (Gen 17:17), but later did not hesitate to offer his son to God (Gen 22:10). As a result, God swore to him that “in your seed, all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice” (Gen 22:18). God has promised to protect and guide those who have faith in Him.

There will be times when we encounter difficult situations and face hard decisions. During these times, we must remember to hold on to our faith. No matter the situation, whether we are imprisoned, falsely accused, persecuted physically or mentally, or forced to choose between God and the world, faith is what gives us peace of mind in times of trouble, because we know that “he who endures to the end shall be saved” (Mt 24:13). We know that God has promised us that as long as we remain faithful, we will receive the crown of life (Rev 2:10).

**Discussion:** What kinds of tribulations have you faced, or think you will face? How can you overcome them?

### **3. Fellow Workers in Christ**

An important aspect of Paul’s missionary journeys is that he never undertook them alone. The Bible records that each time, Paul traveled with someone, and in this case brought with him more workers as he journeyed – Priscilla, Aquila, and Timothy. But these people did not simply follow Paul because they were friends with him; they willingly uprooted their lives for the sake of the gospel, their faith in God, and their love for their brethren in Christ.

#### **a. Serving the Lord in Love**

Paul demonstrates what it means to work with our brothers and sisters in church when he meets with Aquila and Priscilla. Together, they not only worked hard in their daily trade for sustenance, but also in preaching the gospel and ministering to the brethren. The three continued to travel together, and in his later letters Paul made note of their love and sacrifice for the Lord (Rom 16:3–4; 1 Cor 16:19). Clearly the three were not simply bound by their shared occupation, but by their love and faith in God.

We must always remember to do our sacred work out of love, for without love, our work is in vain (1 Cor 13:1). Newly baptized members often leave the church because they do not see the love that they expected to see. As God’s children, our love ought to reflect the love of our heavenly Father that is described in 1 Corinthians 13:4–7. When we strive to grow in this love, we will learn to serve the Lord in love.

#### **b. Working Together to Serve the Lord**

King Solomon wrote, “Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken” (Eccl 4:12). If we work together with our spiritual partners, the results will be much better than if we work alone. The benefit of working as a team can be easily seen and is of vital importance when serving God today. In fact, there is much work that simply cannot be done without the help of our brethren.

For example, some members who attended a medical school in Taiwan organized free medical services to those who lived in rural areas, and also organized evangelical services to preach the gospel in those same areas. As a result of their wonderful efforts, many were brought into the church. There are countless opportunities and many ways in which we can work together with

our fellow brothers and sisters.

As Junior 1 students, we may not have professional interests of our own yet, but we can still pray for God to guide us towards the work that He wants us to do. Once we discover our gifts, we should share the burden with members who have similar gifts, and work as a team whenever possible, so that we may support each other and strengthen the work.

**Discussion:** What are some ways we can show love towards our brethren in Christ? What work in the church requires working with others as a team, and which of those can you do today?

### *Memory Verse*

---

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

### **Meaning:**

1. As long as we love God, we can be assured that all events in our lives are in God’s hands, and that anything that happens to us, good or bad, is in accordance with His will. Knowing this, we can endure suffering with patience and with faith because we know that God is taking care of us and will always continue taking care of us. We are His chosen people, and God always wishes only the best for us as His children.
2. We who are His children have been called specifically by God. He chose us deliberately, for His purpose, and His purpose alone. No member in the church is useless. All are part of His body and serve Him in one way or another, so we must never neglect or belittle our fellow brethren in Christ but instead strive to work together with them to serve God.

### *Conclusion*

---

There are many lessons that can be learned from Paul’s second missionary journey, but foremost among them is the fact that all were ready to serve God when He called them. Despite his young age, Timothy had cultivated a faith strong enough to prompt Paul to bring him on his trip, and Priscilla and Aquila willingly uprooted their lives a second time to follow Paul on his journey. Later, because of his training, Paul delivered a profound sermon to the vastly different audience in the Areopagus.

Another important lesson is the fact that no matter the circumstance, Paul and his companions served the Lord to the best of their abilities. Barnabas and Paul, despite their dispute, set forth to minister to the churches; Timothy was young, yet he willingly followed Paul; Paul and Silas, despite enduring harsh physical sufferings, remained peaceful at heart and prayed and sang hymns in their prison cell. All of them fulfilled their duties as God’s chosen no matter what tribulations they faced. From our examination of Paul’s second missionary journey, we can see that God will always guide and protect those who faithfully do His work.

## Lesson 9 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What does the memory verse teach us about the lives of those who love God?  
*We can be assured that all events in our lives are in God's hands and in accordance with His will. Also, we have been called to serve Him, just as all of our fellow brethren in church have been.*
2. Why did Paul bring Timothy to be circumcised?  
*The Jews in the region knew that Timothy's father was a Greek, and without being circumcised, it would have been difficult for Timothy to serve the Lord in that area.*
3. Why were Paul and Silas thrown into prison? What did they do while imprisoned?  
*The master of the slave girl falsely accused them of disturbing the peace when they cast out the spirit and removed his chance of profit. They sang hymns and prayed to God.*
4. When Paul stopped the jailer, what was the result, beyond saving his physical life?  
*Under Roman law, a guard who allowed a prisoner to escape was normally put to death. Paul's words did not only preserve the jailer's physical life; they led him to reconcile with God and offered the jailer and his family the spiritual life that is eternal salvation.*
5. What gives us peace in times of tribulation? Why?  
*Faith, because having faith means that we know that he who endures to the end will be saved, and that God has promised us the crown of life as long as we remain faithful to Him.*
6. How can you prepare yourself so that you are ready to do God's work in season and out of season?  
*Personal answers.*

*Memory Verse*

“But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.” (Acts 20:24)

<b>Knowledge of God's Will [God's Word]</b>	<b>Knowledge of God [God's Divine Nature]</b>	<b>Good Works [Behavior]</b>
1. The gospel is for all, Jews and Gentiles alike. 2. The church has been purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ.	1. God is truth. 2. God is Spirit, and He guides the ministries of His holy workers.	1. Serve with humility. 2. Submit to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

*Overview*

**Events and Spiritual Teachings**

- A. Priscilla, Aquila, and Apollos' Ministry (Acts 18:24–28)
- B. Paul's Ministry in Ephesus (Acts 19)
- C. Paul's Ministry in Greece (Acts 20)
- D. Paul Returns to Jerusalem (Acts 21:1–17)

**Life Application:** Lessons from Paul

**Memory Verse**

**Conclusion:** We will face many challenges as we minister to God's church and preach the good news of salvation to others. Despite this, we must remain holy and steadfast in the Spirit.

## **Introduction**

Following his second missionary journey, Paul returned to Jerusalem and then went down to Antioch, the home base of his overseas missions. After spending some time in Antioch, he began his third missionary journey (A.D. 53–57), during which he traveled to Galatia, Phrygia, and Ephesus, to both strengthen the believers and preach about Jesus Christ.

Paul had many more coworkers on this journey. They include: Priscilla and Aquila, Timothy, Luke, Titus, Erastus, Gaius, Aristarchus, Apollos, Tychicus, Trophimus, Lucius, Jason, Sosipater, Phoebe, and Tertius (partial journey).

Journey (*See Figure 1*): Antioch in Syria, Galatia, Phrygia (Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Antioch of Pisidia), Ephesus, Macedonia (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea), Greece (Athens, Corinth), Macedonia (Berea, Thessalonica, Philippi), Troas, Miletus, Tyre, Caesarea, Jerusalem

## **A. Priscilla, Aquila, and Apollos' Ministry (Acts 18:24–28)**

### **1. Apollos**

In Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila met Apollos, an eloquent speaker. Well versed in the Scriptures and fervent in spirit, he spoke boldly, taught faithfully, and learned eagerly. However, up to that point, he had only heard of the baptism of John. Seeing this, Priscilla and Aquila took Apollos aside and taught him the truth more accurately. As a result, Apollos became a powerful teacher (Acts 18:24–28; 1 Cor 3:4–5).

### **Lessons from Apollos**

- **He was mighty in the Scriptures (Acts 18:24):** God's word, the sword of the Spirit, is living and powerful (Heb 4:12; Eph 6:17). We must be well equipped with the knowledge of the Scriptures to effectively persuade the unbelieving, convince the wavering, refute the critics, nourish the needy, strengthen the weak, and guide the lost.
- **He was fervent in spirit (Acts 18:25):** Fervency, both in our love for others and dedication to the Lord, should be the driving force behind our service and preaching.
- **He spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord (Acts 18:25):** We need to study the Scriptures diligently. Only then can we lead others on the correct path to salvation and present every believer perfect in Christ Jesus (Col 1:28).
- **He was willing to receive instruction (Acts 18:25):** Despite his eloquence and knowledge of the Scriptures, he humbly accepted the teachings of Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:26). The humble and those who are meek will receive the word (Jas 1:21; Mt 11:25). Unless we are humble enough to accept correction, we will not grow in the knowledge of God.
- **He spoke boldly (Acts 18:26):** If we are timid or are afraid of rejection or persecution, we will not be able to tell others about God. But courage enables us to declare God's word freely and faithfully.

### **2. Priscilla and Aquila**

It is clear that Priscilla and Aquila were well versed in the Scriptures, as they were able to accurately instruct someone as knowledgeable as Apollos. They paid close attention to the teachings of God's word and were able to discern when someone taught the word accurately. They were a loving couple who cared about God's work, as well as fellow workers like Paul and Apollos. That is why when they saw Apollos' errors, they made an effort to invite him to their

home and explain to him the way of God.

### **Lessons from Priscilla and Aquila**

- Priscilla and Aquila were not preachers and likely did not teach people in public. They served the Lord quietly, behind the scenes. Our Lord desires this type of servitude (Mt 6:3–4).
- They taught Apollos not because they wanted to humiliate him in public, but because they truly wanted what was best for him. When preaching to other Christians, we must share our understanding of the truth with humility and love. Our main purpose is not to prove others wrong or impose our will upon them but to bring others to the truth for their salvation.

## **B. Paul’s Ministry in Ephesus (Acts 19)**

### **1. True Baptism and Receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1–10)**

When Paul arrived at Ephesus, the first thing he asked the disciples was if they had received the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:2). Paul was interested to know whether they also shared the same experience as Paul in receiving the Holy Spirit. However, these believers had never received or heard of the Holy Spirit. When questioned further regarding baptism, the disciples replied that they had only been baptized into John’s baptism. Paul realized that their understanding of the truth was incomplete, so he educated them regarding true baptism.

After being taught more about Jesus Christ, they were baptized again, but this time, they received the complete cleansing effect of Jesus’ blood from baptism performed in the correct mode. Only after they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus were they able to receive the Holy Spirit. After this, Paul continued to preach there daily for two years, bringing the word of God to both Jews and Greeks in all Asia and speaking boldly in the synagogue.

### **2. Miracles of God (Acts 19:11–20)**

Paul’s preaching was not just in speech, but also in deeds with God’s power (1 Cor 2:4; 4:20; 1 Thess 1:5). God performed marvelous miracles through Paul “so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them” (Acts 19:11–12). Even exorcists tried to do the same miracle. In one instance, seven sons of a Jewish chief priest named Sceva tried to cast out an evil spirit in the name of Jesus, only for the evil spirit to question their identity. “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?” (Acts 19:15). As a result, the evil spirit caused the man to leap on and overpower them, and they fled the house naked and wounded.

Though the seven sons of Sceva called upon the name of Jesus Christ, they were unable to cast out the evil spirit. In a turn of irony, the evil spirit cast them out instead. This incident caused great fear in all the Ephesians and many who practiced magic came to the Lord. They even gathered their books and burned them for all to see. This further allowed the word of the Lord to prevail and grow in might (Acts 19:20).

What can we learn from the incident with the seven sons of Sceva?

- They likely had an ulterior motive in trying to exorcise the evil spirit, whether it was for financial gain or to win people’s respect.
- They did not believe in Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior, for they called Jesus “the Jesus whom Paul preaches” (Acts 19:13). They simply invoked the name of Jesus as if the words themselves would produce power.
- They used God’s name for personal gain and not for God’s glory. Knowing that God was not

with these self-proclaimed exorcists, the evil spirit had no fear of them.

- The name of Jesus Christ is to be honored.
- Believers must lead God-fearing lives and true faith. A believer cannot possibly call on the name of Jesus Christ while continuing to live in sin, as if God is not aware. If even an evil spirit could discern false believers from true, how can any hide their secret sins from God?

### 3. The Riot at Ephesus (Acts 19:21–41)

#### Did You Know?

The temple of Diana was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, and those from all over the Roman Empire would visit the temple. The Ephesians worshiped false gods like Diana, and believed their job was to guard the temple of Diana. The temple was large: 420 feet by 250 feet. It was also a treasure house, as they made and sold shrines of Diana within.

Demetrius, a silversmith, crafted silver statues of the goddess Diana to make money. He gathered other craftsmen and told them that Paul preached a message that could bring ruin to their business. Cleverly, he also said, “The temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed” (v. 27). He used the name of their goddess to stir up their emotions, filling them with wrath. Soon, a riot broke out.

Most of the crowd that had gathered had no idea why they had gathered; they were simply confused. After they spent two hours crying out, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians,” the city clerk quieted the crowd and reassured them that the goddess Diana’s reputation was not in danger, and that the two men were neither robbers nor blasphemers. He advised the crowd not to act rashly and reminded them of the proper judicial channels to pursue if they had a case. He then dismissed the crowd.

- **What can we learn from this riot?**
  - Satan does not want the gospel to spread and will launch attacks to prevent it from growing. The more the gospel advances, the more Satan will oppose it.
  - God is sovereign, and He will protect His workers against the opposition.

#### C. Paul’s Ministry in Greece (Acts 20)

After the riot in Ephesus, Paul continued on his journey and traveled to Macedonia, Greece, then Macedonia again, before ministering in Asia and joining others at Troas. While in Troas, Paul spoke to the gathered disciples the day before his departure. Paul loved the disciples dearly, so he wanted to spend as much time with them as he could to encourage them for the last time. However, his message continued “until midnight” (v. 7), causing a young man named Eutychus, who was sitting in a window, to be “overcome by sleep [and fall] down from the third story” (v. 9). He was taken up dead, but Paul went down and embraced him, reassuring the others that “his life is in him” (v. 10). Paul returned and they broke bread, ate, and continued to talk until dawn, when Paul departed.

Paul continued on his journey, both on land and on sea, and when he had arrived at a place called Miletus, he called for the church elders in Ephesus. Paul had sailed past Ephesus in a hurry to reach Jerusalem in time for the Day of Pentecost. Paul, knowing that he was leaving to face chains and tribulation in Jerusalem, encouraged the elders to take care of the flock in the church of God, which God purchased with His own blood (v. 28). Soon, the church would face persecution from the outside and apostasy from the inside (vv. 29–30). He wanted them to be fully aware of the danger that lay ahead, to



guard the believers and remember the examples left by him.

After Paul's encouragement, he knelt down and prayed with all of them. As he was readying to leave, they embraced him and kissed him, shedding tears for his farewell, knowing that they would not see him again.

#### **D. Paul Returns to Jerusalem (Acts 21:1–17)**

As Paul was on his way to Jerusalem, God made it clear to him that suffering and imprisonment awaited him in Jerusalem. But Paul's decision is clear:

*And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.*

(Acts 20:22–24)

Paul's traveling companions and the disciples that he met on his return to Jerusalem warned him not to continue. Even a prophet came before Paul and bound his own hands and feet, prophesying that Paul would be bound in the same way (Acts 21:11). However, Paul resolutely stated, "I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13).

Paul's resolve to go to Jerusalem was by the movement of the Spirit, not of his own will (Acts 19:21; 20:22). Paul knew that the suffering that awaited him was for the name of the Lord Jesus and understood that the Lord had a good purpose for him. His service to Christ was one of complete loyalty.

#### **Check for Understanding**

- 1. Why are Apollos' qualities important for the workers of God?** It is important for workers of God to understand and believe in the Scriptures fully, for only then can they preach with conviction and accuracy. Furthermore, when preaching, we must speak boldly, yet humbly, not allowing our personal emotions to cloud our judgment. We must also know when to receive instruction and accept it with humility.
- 2. Why happened when the sons of Sceva misused the name of Jesus Christ?** The evil spirit caused the possessed man to leap on the sons and overpower them, which led them to flee the house naked and wounded. This incident caused fear to fall upon all the Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus, and "many who believed came confessing and telling their deeds" (Acts 19:18). Many even brought their books on sorcery to be burned in public.
- 3. What happened during the riot in Ephesus, and what does it teach us?** Because of Demetrius' words, an angry crowd gathered and detained two of Paul's companions. However, a city clerk came to dismiss the crowd and Paul's companions were released. This teaches us that Satan does not want the gospel to spread. He will launch an attack when the gospel advances. But God is sovereign, and He will protect His workers against the opposition.
- 4. What was Paul's encouragement to the elders at Ephesus?** He encouraged them "to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).
- 5. What was Paul's attitude as he traveled to Jerusalem?** He was not swayed by warnings of suffering, nor did he count his life dear to himself, in order to finish the race with joy and testify to the gospel of the grace of God. He said, "I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the

name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13).

### Life Application

---

#### Lessons from Paul

What can we learn from Paul's conduct on his third missionary journey? Let's look at some of the ways he served God, and his attitude towards his faith and the church in general.

1. Paul served the Lord with humility
  - a. He endured the trials that came from the Jews (Acts 20:19)
  - b. He kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed to the believers the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:20, 27)
2. Paul sincerely cared about the well-being of the believers
  - a. Paul diligently encouraged the believers (Acts 20:2, 7–11)
  - b. He often toiled for the believers and taught them in tears (Acts 20:18, 31)
  - c. He cared about the believers' faith in the future, when he could no longer be with them, and earnestly exhorted the elders to shepherd the church of God (Acts 20:28–31)
3. Paul preached to all, Jews and Greeks alike (Acts 20:21)
  - a. He taught in public and from house to house, catering to the general as well as the specific needs of each believer (Acts 20:20)
  - b. He preached and taught through speech and personal conduct (Acts 16:25; 20:18, 33–35)
4. Paul submitted to the guidance of the Spirit
  - a. He submitted to the guidance of the Spirit, even when he did not know what would happen, other than that chains and tribulations awaited him (Acts 20:22–23)
  - b. He was faithful to God and had a clear conscience (Acts 20:26)

Have you served the Lord with humility, sincerely cared for your brothers and sisters in church, spread the gospel, and submitted to the Spirit's guidance? Share with the class any recent experiences that you have had as a way to encourage yourself and each other to follow Paul's example.

#### Testimony

*In December of 2016, a brother went to Zambia to serve the Lord. Despite the long journey and jetlag, the brother kept asking God to give him the strength to care for the Zambian brethren. Not every member or truth-seeker was focused on learning. Some had a hard time studying the Bible. Some youth and children had a hard time maintaining a reverent heart to seek after God. But he kept on asking God for grace and wisdom and toward the end, the members were able to focus and internalize the teachings. It was very satisfying to see them learning and growing.*

*In the Tagagun region, the truth seekers were ready to be baptized. There were about thirty to thirty-five truth-seekers who decided to get baptized that day. The walk is about forty-five to seventy minutes one way to get to the baptism site, yet the members sang the whole way there. Three people saw blood in the water when they were baptized and afterward, they had footwashing and Holy Communion.*

*During one evening prayer, an African brother came to him and shared how he saw a vision during prayer. He saw something like a shooting star, coming across the sky from the right to the left (east to west) and then stopping in front of him. The star then shone with a great brightness, moved down, and then moved back, and the vision ended with the clap that ended the prayer.*

*During another evening prayer, a few sisters were very moved and touched, so much that they did not want to stop praying after the prayer had ended and even continued trying to speak in tongues when seated.*

*In another prayer, one of the sisters experienced an attack from Satan. She was hysterical and scared. But the preacher explained to her that she needed to calm down first and accept Jesus as her personal Savior, and then he commanded Satan to leave her in the name of Jesus Christ.*

*For the other sisters, it seemed like they had experienced something in their prayer that they enjoyed so much that they did not want to stop; one sister said that she had seen heaven open and there was a choir singing a hymn. It was a very edifying moment.*

*After serving in Tagagan, he went to serve in the Mpika region, where about twenty truth seekers were baptized. After the baptism, they held footwashing and Holy Communion. Before he and other workers left the next day, one of the sisters who had been baptized received the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. Once again, the brother experienced the work of the Holy Spirit just as what was mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles.*

*During his missionary trip, not every moment was smooth sailing. Sometimes, the power was cut in the middle of service. At one location, it rained so much that on the drive back, the road had basically turned into a river, which was quite an experience to drive through.*

*He and other workers ended up getting some bricks to put under the back wheels and they pushed from the front, and eventually, the van was able to reverse out of the mud and drive around it. At one point, he felt ill due a stomach bug. With some rest and with lots of prayer, he completely recovered within a few days by the amazing grace of God.*

*Looking back at this missionary trip, he is filled with thanks and gratitude! God has called us to serve Him and not be passive spectators. And indeed, he experienced what it is like to be a servant. “Not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality” (Rom 12:11–13).*

*All glory belongs to God. Amen.*

– Anonymous

### **Memory Verse**

“But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.” (Acts 20:24)

### **Meaning**

1. To Paul, his life was less important than the commission that had been given to him by God.
2. His purpose was to preach the gospel of the grace of God.
3. His goal was to finish the race God had set for him.

When we truly adopt God's will as our own, we learn to value the opportunity to share God's salvation, even above our own comforts and our very life. "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age" (Tit 2:11–12). By looking beyond what is physical and temporary, we can take hold of the spiritual and eternal with the help of God.

### *Conclusion*

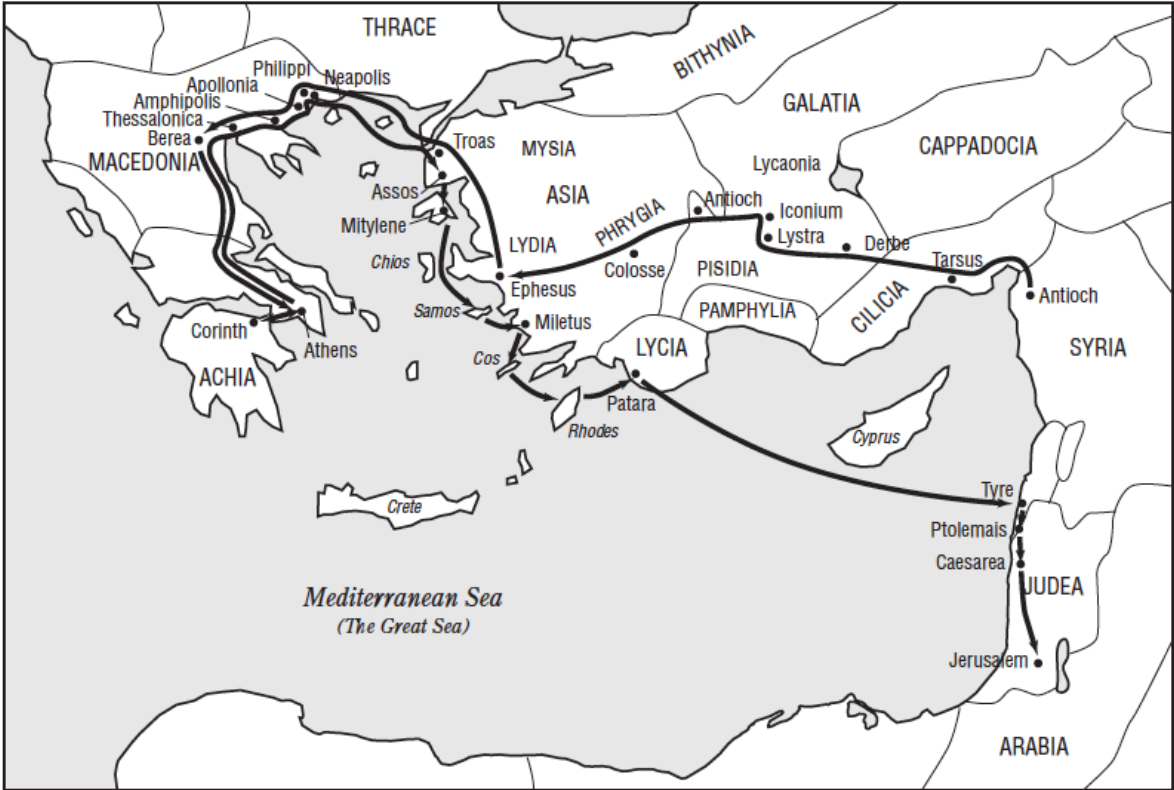
---

We will face many challenges as we minister to God's church and preach the good news of salvation to others. We must share the truth with love and serve the Lord with willing hearts. To do so, we must be steadfast in staying holy, and in being rooted in and led by the Holy Spirit.

## Lesson 10 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What happens when we truly adopt God's will as our own?  
*We learn to value the opportunity to share God's salvation, even above our own comforts and our very life. To Paul, his life was less important than the commission given by God.*
2. What kind of a person was Apollos, and how did he meet Priscilla and Aquila?  
*He was a man mighty in the Scriptures who spoke boldly of God's word. He met Priscilla and Aquila when they realized his understanding was incomplete and took him aside to instruct him.*
3. What can we learn from Priscilla and Aquila?  
*They shared a deep understanding of the truth and served quietly with humility and love. Their aim was not to prove others wrong, but to instruct out of love for the sake of the truth.*
4. What are the reasons the sons of Sceva failed to cast out the evil spirit?  
*They lacked belief, had ulterior motives, misused Jesus' name, and did not live God-fearing lives.*
5. In what ways do some people today resist or oppose the gospel?  
*For example, they may resist through bullying, calling Christians intolerant, misquoting or misinterpreting Bible verses, pointing to suffering as evidence of an unloving or powerless God, or by using worldly temptations to distract believers.*
6. Write down one lesson you learned from Paul's conduct on his journey. How can you emulate this?  
*See Life Application. Personal answers.*

Figure 1: Paul's Third Missionary Journey



*Memory Verse*

---

“For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.” (Acts 22:15)

<b>Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]</b>	<b>Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]</b>	<b>Good Work [Behavior]</b>
God gave us the important commission to preach the gospel and defend the truth.	God is our living hope.	Prepare ourselves to defend the truth by sharpening the tools we have received from God.

*Overview*

---

**Events and Spiritual Teachings**

- A. Paul Is Persecuted in Jerusalem
- B. Paul Defends the Gospel
  - 1. Before the Jews
  - 2. Before the Sanhedrin
  - 3. Before Felix
  - 4. Before Festus
  - 5. Before Festus and Agrippa

**Life Application:** Defending the Truth

**Memory Verse**

**Conclusion:** Let us emulate Paul by boldly defending the gospel and preaching the truth to the end of the earth, no matter whom we face.

### Introduction

In the last section of the Acts of the Apostles, Paul resolved to go to Rome (Acts 19:21). Rome already had believers, but he was determined to go and continue to preach, despite the long and difficult journey. Today, we will look at some of the challenges Paul encountered on the way and learn how he handled them.

### A. Paul Is Persecuted in Jerusalem (Acts 21:17–36)

At the end of his third missionary journey, Paul traveled to Jerusalem (Acts 21:17). He knew that danger, and possibly death, awaited him in Jerusalem, but that did not stop him. He understood that God had a reason for him to go back.

When he arrived in Jerusalem, Paul's expectations were fully realized. The Jews believed he had been wrongly teaching the Jews on his journey through the Gentile areas. Upon spotting him in the temple, they took action against Paul, incorrectly assuming that he had defiled the temple by taking some of his Gentile companions into its inner court. This was a serious crime in the eyes of the law, so he was dragged out of the temple and beaten (Acts 21:30, 32). The Jews continued beating him until a Roman commander arrived, arrested Paul, and took him to the barracks (Acts 21:33).

This was not the first time that Paul had been beaten or arrested for preaching the gospel, nor was it his last. Jesus Christ encourages us, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:10). Paul understood that his earthly suffering was only temporary. Moreover, Paul knew that God was with him as he accomplished God's work. Likewise, when we face persecution, we do not have to be afraid because God is always on our side.

### B. Paul Defends the Gospel

To defend the gospel does not mean to win an argument or to debate. It means to give a reason for the hope that is in us (1 Pet 3:15). It is clear that Paul understood that he was defending the gospel and the truth of the kingdom of heaven, not himself. Whether before the Jews plotting to kill him or before foreign political leaders, Paul stated his defense clearly and with conviction. Let us study the different times Paul defended the gospel.

#### 1. Before the Jews (Acts 21:37–22:29)

As the Roman soldiers prepared to lead Paul into the barracks, he turned to the commander and asked to address the crowd. After receiving the commander's consent, Paul began addressing the Jews in Hebrew. He recounted his conversion, how Jesus Christ appeared to him near Damascus, and God's command, "Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles" (Acts 22:21). Hearing this, the Jews became enraged and wanted to kill him. Seeing the chaos, the commander brought Paul into the barracks – a building used to house soldiers – to be examined under scourging. He wanted to know why the Jews were so incensed at Paul. As they prepared him to be scourged, Paul demanded, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?" (Acts 22:25). Shocked at hearing he was a Roman citizen, the men immediately drew away from him, and the commander also became afraid.

#### 2. Before the Sanhedrin (Acts 22:30–23:10)

The next day, the commander brought Paul before the Sanhedrin for judgment. As he spoke before the council, Paul observed that several members were Sadducees while others were



Pharisees. To defend himself, Paul quoted from the Scriptures and cleverly started a quarrel among them by stating that he was a Pharisee who believed in resurrection. Subsequently, the council became hotly divided in opinion regarding Paul's innocence, with the Pharisees seeing no fault in Paul. With the uproar, the Roman commander feared that Paul would be pulled to pieces, so he commanded his soldiers to pull him out from among them and bring him back to the barracks (Acts 23:10).

### **3. Before Felix (Acts 23:11–24:27)**

Around forty Jews plotted to kill Paul, swearing not to eat or drink until they had succeeded. But Paul's nephew overheard the plot and told Paul, who commanded him to tell the Roman commander. Under the commander's orders, Paul was taken to Caesarea under strong guard, and with a letter addressed to Felix, the Roman governor. Upon arriving in Caesarea, Paul was kept in Herod's Praetorium until his accusers arrived to speak before Felix. Five days later, the high priest and other elders arrived at Caesarea and brought false charges against Paul before Felix.

After they had stated their case against him, Paul began his defense by stating clearly that he was innocent of their charges. He admitted to being a follower of Jesus Christ, but said that he also believed in the Law and in the Prophets, which the Jews themselves also believed. After hearing Paul's defense, Felix postponed further action. Though he was convinced of Paul's innocence, Felix continued to keep him prisoner, hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe for release.

### **4. Before Festus (Acts 25:1–12)**

After two years, Porcius Festus succeeded Felix, but he kept Paul imprisoned instead of releasing him to please the Jews. When Festus traveled to Jerusalem, the high priest and the chief Jews asked him to lure Paul to Jerusalem to be killed. Festus refused, but instead said that those with authority should go with him to Caesarea to accuse Paul. Later, when Paul was brought before Festus, many Jews from Jerusalem falsely accused Paul with unproved claims, all of which Paul denied. However, even after hearing Paul speak, Festus, wanting to please the Jews, asked if Paul was willing to be judged in Jerusalem.

*So Paul said [to Festus], "I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well know. For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar."*

(Acts 25:10–11)

Paul had already been imprisoned for two years, and he knew there was the risk of an assassination if he went to Jerusalem. He was determined to reach Rome, even if it meant that he would have to go as a prisoner. So, he exercised his right as a Roman citizen to appeal to Caesar. He could not be killed, tortured, or sentenced within a certain time period until he went to Rome to lodge his appeal.

### **5. Before Festus and Agrippa (Acts 25:13–26:32)**

Unsettled by Paul's appeal to Rome, Festus called Paul to appear before him and Herod Agrippa II, who was in town visiting. Festus wished for Agrippa, who was more familiar with Jewish

affairs, to suggest a solution. Once again, Paul had to give a defense. He began by sharing his background as a Pharisee, and then recounted how Jesus Christ called him on the way to Damascus. He concluded his defense by stating his mission in life: to preach and testify to all.

*Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come—that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.*

(Acts 26:22–23)

As Paul was giving his defense, Festus declared that Paul must be mad. Though people thought him a madman, Paul still bravely testified for the Lord. But King Agrippa said to Paul, “You almost persuade me to become a Christian.” King Agrippa could see the truth of the gospel, but he resisted it. Though Paul spoke boldly in his mission to preach and defend the gospel, the desired result did not come automatically. Likewise, we are unable to control how others respond to our message, but it is still our mission to speak up for the gospel.

His actions may have seemed inexplicable in the eyes of man, but Paul understood the importance of his commission and his call to go to Rome. Paul experienced firsthand the greatness of God’s salvation, and he truly wished for everyone to receive the message and become a part of God’s church. Paul gave such a powerful defense because of his strong conviction in his beliefs and his courage to simply speak what God wanted him to speak.

After the conclusion of Paul’s defense, King Agrippa and other officials discussed the case. It was clear that they found no guilt or fault in him. However, due to pressure from the Jews and Paul’s own request to appeal to Caesar, Paul was to be sent to Rome.

We can see that during each defense Paul gave, he recounted how the Lord had called him to serve. He repeatedly shared this testimony because his calling was a major turning point in his life. The experience impacted Paul so strongly that he still firmly held on to God’s commission even years after his calling. In addition to sharing personal testimonies, Paul defended the gospel by drawing upon his wealth of knowledge and speaking with wisdom. He was familiar with Jewish laws and customs, with Roman law, and more importantly, he was also familiar with the Scriptures, so he could make connections between the Old and New Testaments.

It takes great courage to stand before people that oppose you or may pass judgment on you. However, Paul spoke with strength, courage, power, and authority because he not only had knowledge, but also the power of the Holy Spirit. We must follow his example in taking courage and speaking boldly through the power of the Holy Spirit to say what we need to say (Lk 12:11–12).

### *Check for Understanding*

---

- 1. Why was Paul arrested?** The Roman commander wanted to know why Paul had made everyone so enraged.
- 2. Which authorities did Paul appear before?** The Sanhedrin, Felix, Festus, and King Agrippa.
- 3. What did Paul do when set before the Sanhedrin?** He cleverly started a quarrel between them by making a statement that he knew would split the Pharisees and the Sadducees due to their different beliefs.

4. **How did Paul defend the gospel?** He recounted his calling by the Lord and drew upon his knowledge of Jewish customs, of the Scriptures, and of the ways of the world.
5. **What allowed Paul to defend the gospel so boldly? How does this encourage us today?** He understood that it was God's will for him to go to Rome, so he was able to speak boldly and with courage. We do not have to be afraid of defending the gospel when we understand that we are doing it for God.

### *Life Application*

---

#### **Defending the Truth**

Just like Paul, we have also been called to defend the gospel, which is the truth that is in the Bible. Though we may not have to defend the gospel before a judge as Paul did, we still have to defend our beliefs before our family and friends. Thus, it is crucial that we have a firm conviction in our beliefs, that we understand what it is we believe in, and that we learn how to defend our beliefs. Paul used four tools to defend the gospel:

1. **Personal testimony**

For the opening of each defense, Paul recalled life before his conversion, God's calling at Damascus, and the commission given to him by God. Personal testimonies such as these are powerful because they are your own experiences that no one can deny.

2. **Knowledge of his audience**

Paul purposely spoke in a way he knew would connect with the audience. When speaking to the Jews, he spoke in Hebrew. When speaking to political leaders, Paul drew upon his knowledge of them in relation to his defense. For example, in his defense before King Agrippa, Paul mentioned how he knew that King Agrippa was well acquainted with all the Jewish customs (Acts 26:3).

3. **Knowledge of the Scriptures**

As a Pharisee, Paul was well versed in the Scriptures, and he cited this knowledge in his defense before the Sanhedrin and the Jews.

4. **Familiarity with the ways of world**

Paul knew his rights as a Roman citizen. But more importantly, he knew to use these rights to his advantage, such as when he was about to be flogged or when he refused to return to Jerusalem to face trial.

We have the very same tools available today. We need to learn how to wield them, so that we are able to effectively support our beliefs. In order to defend properly, we must prepare ourselves. Let's think about how we can wield these four tools, so that we can be prepared to defend the truth.

1. **Personal testimony**

- a. How has God strengthened your faith in Him?
- b. How has God guided and helped you and your family?
- c. Share a time when God helped you in your time of need.

When we are convicted of God's presence, recalling His works in our life is a powerful way for us to defend our faith. Our personal experiences with God cannot be denied by anyone else, and when we recall them, we strengthen our faith. Therefore, it is important that we continually recount the blessings of God in our daily life, perhaps by keeping a faith journal, or by sharing the blessings of God with our family and friends on a regular basis. Through these constant reminders, we are able to share the blessings of God with any who question our beliefs, or with those who have not experienced God before.

## **2. Knowledge of our audience**

- a. What obstacles hinder someone from coming to believe?
- b. Identify the people with whom you would like to share your beliefs.
- c. What are some challenges you have faced when preaching?

Every relationship that we have is an opportunity to share our faith. It is important to remind ourselves of the people we can preach to. As we are preaching to them, we can recall the things that they are going through and use those as a way to bring up our faith. The challenges they encounter may be the opportunity that God is giving to us to share our faith with them. It is times like these that we need to prepare ourselves to preach to them. We can do this by practicing what we would say to them with a practice partner at church, and by making a conscious effort to care for them and to get to know them.

## **3. Knowledge of the Scriptures**

- a. Why is knowledge of the Scriptures important when sharing or defending our faith?
- b. How have you consistently sought a better understanding of God's word in order to prepare yourself?
- c. What are obstacles or challenges that you encounter when trying to study the word of God? What are ways we can overcome them?

We need to study the Bible diligently by reading it often and thinking about what it is teaching us. When we have a deep understanding of the Bible, we are more able to weave His words naturally into our dialogue when defending or sharing the truth. It is easy to feel overwhelmed at the impossibility of fully understanding the Bible, enough that we may become discouraged from defending or sharing our faith. When we feel like we are lacking in knowledge, we can ask God to give us wisdom. Jesus' twelve disciples were not scholars but were still filled with wisdom and understanding of the Scriptures through the fullness of the Holy Spirit. This demonstrates that when we have the heart to seek after the word of God, the Holy Spirit will give us understanding.

## **4. Familiarity with the ways of the world**

- a. Reflect on your education. What gifts do you believe God has given to you?
- b. Think of a personal interest that you have. How can you use the skills that you apply to this interest for the church? Or, how can you use what you learn in school to help God's work?
- c. Are there any particular challenges or dangers that we have to consider in using our education and schooling for the church?

Our worldly education allows us to function in this society and make a living. More importantly, it allows us to support God's work. When we learn a second language or a technical skill like graphic design, we can use these to benefit the ministry and to share the gospel with even more people. We never know when the things that we learn in school can be useful in our servitude later on!

If Paul had not known his rights as a citizen or the way the courts of law worked at the time, he could very well have been forced into silence due to his ignorance. His skills in different languages also served as an advantage in his defense. The Bible teaches us to be shrewd as snakes and innocent as doves (Mt 10:16). We need to be wise enough to defend ourselves against the ways of the world, while also living upright lives in the eyes of men. This is because we are in the world but not of the world (Jn 17:14-15), meaning we have to live and survive in this world, but also live lives dedicated to God. Let's prepare ourselves by testifying often, reaching out to those around us, deepening our understanding of God's word, and learning skills that can support God's holy work, so that we can defend and share the gospel like Paul did.

## Testimony

*In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I testify.*

*I came to believe in Christ at a young age and even received the Holy Spirit when I was twelve during my first Student Spiritual Convocation. However, my parents, especially my mother, would not allow me to be baptized and even wanted to convert me back to Buddhism. Since I was young, I couldn't disobey her. She would often bring home food offered to idols and try to make me eat it. When I refused, she would say very ugly things to me like, "You're not my daughter," or "You're ugly."*

*One time, after one of these incidents, I was crying a lot in my room, and I started to talk to God in my head. "Why are You making it so difficult for me when I am trying believe and be a good Christian?" I felt that the persecution I had to go through was too much for me who was so young at the time. As I was talking to God, I felt a peaceful spirit enter me from my head to my toes. However, because I was so mad, I told God to go away, and then He did. However, a few minutes later, the spirit came back, and again I felt this peace go from my head to my toes. This happened three times before it really left me. Looking back at this incident, it makes me realize that God loves me so much that in that time of difficulty, He was reaching out to me.*

*My mother would also often question me about my religion and beliefs. Most of the time, I would not know what to say since I did not have enough knowledge at the time. However, one time, I was praying more and had read the book of Nehemiah. In it, Nehemiah had prayed and fasted before going to ask the king for permission to go and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. I realized that I could do the same. The next time when my mother started to question and interrogate me, I said a silent prayer in my heart. When I opened my mouth to respond, I found that my answers were amenable and clear. I was able to answer all the questions and concerns that my mother had without making her angry. This really was the power of God working in me!*

*Through God's grace I was able to receive baptism when I was in college, and God continues to watch over me even today. May all the praise and glory be unto His holy name.*

- Anonymous

## Memory Verse

---

"For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard." (Acts 22:15)

## Meaning

1. On Paul's journey to Damascus, God called upon him, and Ananias explained that God had chosen Paul to be His witness.
2. To be a witness to what we have seen and heard is to share about the work that God has done in our life. Our testimonies are not only for ourselves; they are meant to be shared with all people. Knowing this, Paul boldly and repeatedly recounted his calling from the Lord before others.

## Conclusion

---

Paul understood God's will for him to preach the gospel, so he was able to boldly preach the kingdom of God. Whether before his own people, before the Roman leaders, or before the Jewish elders, he did not

shy away from the truth. Let us emulate Paul and boldly defend the gospel and preach the truth to the end of the earth, no matter whom we face.

## Lesson 11 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What does it mean to witness God before others?  
*To share about the work that God has done in our life. Testimonies are not only for ourselves; they are meant to be shared with all people.*
2. How was Paul persecuted in Jerusalem? Read and write down Matthew 5:10 below.  
*The Jews, convinced he had brought Gentiles into the temple and was wrongly teaching others, dragged him out and beat him. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:10).*
3. How did Paul defend the gospel before the Sanhedrin?  
*Observing that several members were Sadducees while others were Pharisees, Paul cleverly started a quarrel between them by stating that he was a Pharisee who believed in resurrection.*
4. What can we learn about preaching the gospel from the reactions of Festus and Agrippa?  
*Though Paul spoke boldly in his mission to preach and defend the gospel, the desired result did not come automatically. Likewise, we are unable to control how others respond to our message, but it is still our mission to speak up for the gospel.*
5. What are four tools Paul used to defend the gospel?  
*Personal testimony, knowledge of his audience, knowledge of the Scriptures, and familiarity with the ways of the world.*
6. Which of the above tools do you think you need to work on the most? How can you do so?  
*Answers will vary. (Ex: Increase knowledge of the Scriptures by studying the Bible more; increase knowledge of our audience by getting to know friends at school better; become more familiar with ways of the world by studying harder at school or increasing exposure to news/politics.)*

**Paul in Rome**

Passages: Acts 27–28

*Memory Verse*

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.” (Psalm 34:19)

<b>Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]</b>	<b>Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]</b>	<b>Good Work [Behavior]</b>
We may encounter tribulations, but God protects those who do His will.	1. God is our protector. 2. God is faithful.	Trust in God’s protection.

*Overview*

**Events and Spiritual Teachings**

- A. Paul’s Journey to Rome
- B. Paul in Rome

**Life Application:** Traveling on Our Spiritual Journey

**Memory Verse**

**Conclusion:** Like Paul, let us trust in God’s guidance on our own spiritual journey so that we can also serve as a living testimony of His power and protection to those around us.



### Introduction

After defending the gospel before so many different authorities, Paul was finally on his way to Rome. He knew that the journey would not be a smooth one, but he also knew that God would be with him the whole way. Today, we are going to take a closer look at Paul's journey to Rome and examine how he endured the various hardships along the way.

### A. Paul's Journey to Rome

*(Note: Numbers correspond to Figure 1)*

#### 1. Jerusalem to Caesarea (Acts 23:33)

We left off from the last lesson with Paul in Caesarea. He had been arrested in Jerusalem and then taken to Caesarea, to preserve his life from a group of Jews who plotted to kill him.

#### 2. Caesarea to Sidon (Acts 27:1–3)

Paul and some other prisoners were handed to a centurion named Julius. They set out on a ship and landed in Sidon. It was here that Julius allowed Paul to go to his friends so that he could receive care.

The Bible does not explicitly state why Paul needed care, but through this act of kindness, we can clearly see God working in Paul's life. The centurion was under no obligation to give such freedoms to a prisoner, but God opened Julius' heart to give Paul this opportunity to receive care before they continued their journey. Today, we may also be on the receiving end of acts of kindness from others. Instead of simply attributing it to luck or taking it for granted, we should remember to give thanks to God, because everything that happens to us is in His hands.

#### 3. Sidon to Myra (Acts 27:4–6)

From Sidon, they traveled to Myra in Lycia. Here, they transferred to another ship bound for Italy.

#### 4. Myra (Acts 27:7–8)

Wind conditions made the journey from Myra difficult. However, the ship managed to land in a location named Fair Havens.

#### 5. Fair Havens (Acts 27:9–12)

Fair Havens was a sheltered port on the southern side of Crete. Since they were sailing at a time of year dangerous for sailing, they would have to find a place to dock their ship for the winter and wait for better sailing conditions. But a lot of time had already been lost, so the captain hoped to leave this port and get around to Phoenix on the western end of Crete, where there was a better port. This was when Paul warned them that the voyage was going to be a disaster. The source of Paul's knowledge is not mentioned, but it is likely that this knowledge was a revelation from God. The centurion did not listen to Paul's warning, but instead chose to sail onward under the advice of the captain and the ship's owner.

In the eyes of man, the centurion's decision to follow the advice of a sailor rather than a prisoner from Jerusalem made sense. What would a prisoner from Jerusalem know of sailing and weather conditions? Often, the decisions that we know God wants us to make seem illogical or even nonsensical. But our advantage is that we are not making these decisions based on our

own knowledge. They are based on God's will, who is all-powerful and all-knowing.

#### **6. Crete to Malta (Acts 27:13–28:1)**

When a gentle wind began to blow, they thought the weather was clear for sailing. But suddenly, the fair conditions changed into a strong cyclonic wind known as the Euroclydon. As a result, the ship was caught up in the sudden storm and forced out to sea. In order to save the ship, they began to throw cargo overboard. But despite their efforts, they could only let the ship be driven by nature's force.

Let's read Acts 27:20–26. God assured Paul that he would reach Rome. Paul trusted in God's power and protection, and his firm belief in God allowed him to comfort everyone else on the boat. Paul did not stop trusting God despite the storm, his hunger, or even the threat to his life from the centurion's soldiers. One way or another, he knew he would reach Rome because he knew God was watching over him.

Everything from waking up in the morning to traveling safely from one place to another are all ways that God watches over us each day. In everything, big or small, He is guiding us on our path. Even when things are not so peaceful, we should still trust that God is watching over us. Being a child of God does not guarantee us a problem-free life. Even Paul, a chosen apostle, still encountered many serious and life-threatening situations. Some followers of Christ may even encounter greater tribulations than many of our non-believer acquaintances. The biggest difference, however, is that we have God's protection. No matter the situation we are in, it is safely in God's hands. When we fully understand this, we can maintain a heart of peace and trust as Paul did.

Let's read verses 27–38. Paul was not exempt from experiencing hardships even while doing God's work. But he did not resent these hardships or become dispirited. In fact, he encouraged the non-believers around him – the ones who imprisoned him, who had refused to listen to his warnings before setting sail – and did not bear malice for their lack of understanding or belief. We can also see that unlike with his initial prophecy, this time the soldiers clearly began to trust in Paul and listen to his warnings and encouragements instead of brushing them aside.

Let's continue reading verses 39–44. Julius saw that the words Paul spoke came to pass, and thus witnessed God's power through him. God both preserved Paul's life and also demonstrated His power to those around him. Today, we may also endure storms in our lives while doing God's work. But our attitude and reaction to these hardships is a reflection of our faith, and our trust in God. God's work in our lives is a testament to His power and authority over all, and our own actions in the face of tribulation can also be a powerful witness of God's truth to non-believers.

#### **7. Malta to Syracuse, then Rhegium, then Puteoli (Acts 28:2–14)**

Once again, those around Paul witnessed God's power through him. Let's read Acts 28:3–10. We can see how God preserved Paul's life, showing again that God's will and power are greater than any force of nature. And because Paul healed many of their sick, the people of the island honored and aided them until they were ready to set sail, once again showing God's protection through the kindness of others.

For three months they remained on the island, before finally sailing out on an Alexandrian ship

that had wintered on that island. They landed at Syracuse and stayed three days before heading to Rhegium. They then sailed to Puteoli the next day. Paul and his companions stayed with the brethren there for seven days, before finally arriving in Rome.

### **B. Paul in Rome (Acts 28:15–31)**

While in Rome, Paul remained under house arrest for two years. Being neither a dangerous criminal nor a political threat, Paul was allowed to live by himself with only a soldier to guard him. During his house arrest, he continued to preach and spread God’s word to any willing to receive the gospel. Though imprisoned, he could, and did, continue to boldly and freely preach the gospel.

When he was not preaching, Paul wrote letters to other churches, teaching and encouraging them even while a prisoner. While we don’t know for certain what Paul wrote during his imprisonment, it is generally believed that Paul wrote the “prison epistles” during his time in Rome. They are the following:

1. Ephesians
2. Philippians
3. Colossians
4. Philemon

Throughout his journey, despite the many dangers, Paul never lost sight of the commission that God had given him: to go to Rome and preach the gospel there. Paul had confidence that God would protect him, and thus was prepared to sacrifice anything for the gospel. No matter where he was or what state he was in, Paul preached the gospel and encouraged the brethren all the way to the end, all because he had full faith in God’s protection and power.

### *Check for Understanding*

---

- 1. Name three ways God protected and encouraged Paul during his journey to Rome.**
  - a. Paul found favor in the eyes of Julius the centurion, who allowed him to receive care.
  - b. God preserved Paul’s life from both the storm and the poisonous snake.
  - c. God appeared to Paul to bring him comfort and assurance of His abidance.
- 2. The centurion’s decision to set sail made sense in man’s eyes. As children of God, how should our own decisions differ?** It is important to seek God’s guidance when making decisions. We should not make decisions based on common standards or our knowledge of the world.
- 3. How did Julius the centurion change in his view of Paul from the beginning of the journey to the end?** Julius initially ignored Paul’s warning, but as the journey went on, began to trust his words.
- 4. What happened to Paul after he arrived in Rome?** When Paul arrived in Rome, he was allowed to live by himself with a soldier to guard him. He was under house arrest for two years. However, he could and did continue to preach the gospel.
- 5. Which epistles did Paul likely write during this time period in Rome?** Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

### *Life Application*

---

#### **Traveling on Our Spiritual Journey**

The journey that Paul made from Caesarea to Rome was a long and difficult one, with many trials and tribulations along the way. Today, we are also on a spiritual journey. Like Paul’s, ours is a long and difficult one. Our destination, however, is not Rome, but our home in heaven.

As we travel on our spiritual journey, there will be times when we are faced with many difficulties. Let's discuss the following questions:

1. What are some possible obstacles you may face on this spiritual journey? *(Have students share.)*

Some examples may be:

- Temptations [media, internet, games]
- Extracurricular activities that take place on the Sabbath
- Broken relationships with siblings or parents
- Stress from schoolwork
- Loss of family members
- Financial difficulties
- Health issues
- Persecution or people who mock you for your beliefs
- Peer pressure

2. How have you experienced these, and how did you handle these obstacles?

When we encounter such obstacles, we must be like Paul and trust in God's guidance and protection. This can be quite difficult when we look at a situation and can only see negative, discouraging, or impossible outcomes. Read the following verses, and then consider some ways to improve and uphold our trust in the Lord during our spiritual journey.

- **Psalm 119:105**

It is important for us to study and to know the word of God because it is a light that allows us to see the direction that we should go.

- **Proverbs 3:5–6**

If we are willing to trust in God's protection and rely on Him instead of our own strengths, then we will see how God always guides us in the direction that we should go.

- **Proverbs 16:9**

Though it is important for us to plan, God already has everything in His hand. We can trust that He will direct us in the right way. However, we must give God room to work in our lives by being wise with our time and decisions.

- **Matthew 6:33**

To seek God's kingdom and His righteousness means giving God top priority in our life and aiming to do what is pleasing in His eyes. When we are able to do so, God will take care of all the other aspects of our lives.

- **James 1:5**

If we feel that we are lacking in wisdom, we should simply ask God for more wisdom, and He will grant it to us. This is a promise that He has given to us.

From Paul's journey, we can see that God was with Paul every step of the way, and that Paul was able to find comfort in His abidance. In the same way, these verses are an encouragement to us during times of difficulty or when we don't know which way to turn. However, if we are able to place our trust in Him and continue to walk in His ways, God will help us through it all.

### *Memory Verse*

---

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the Lord delivers him out of them all." (Psalm 34:19)

### **Meaning**

Just like Paul, it is inevitable that we will encounter difficulties on our spiritual journey. But we do not have to be afraid of any afflictions because God is with us, and He will deliver us out of them. We need only trust in Him, pursue His righteousness, and be upright children in His eyes.

### *Conclusion*

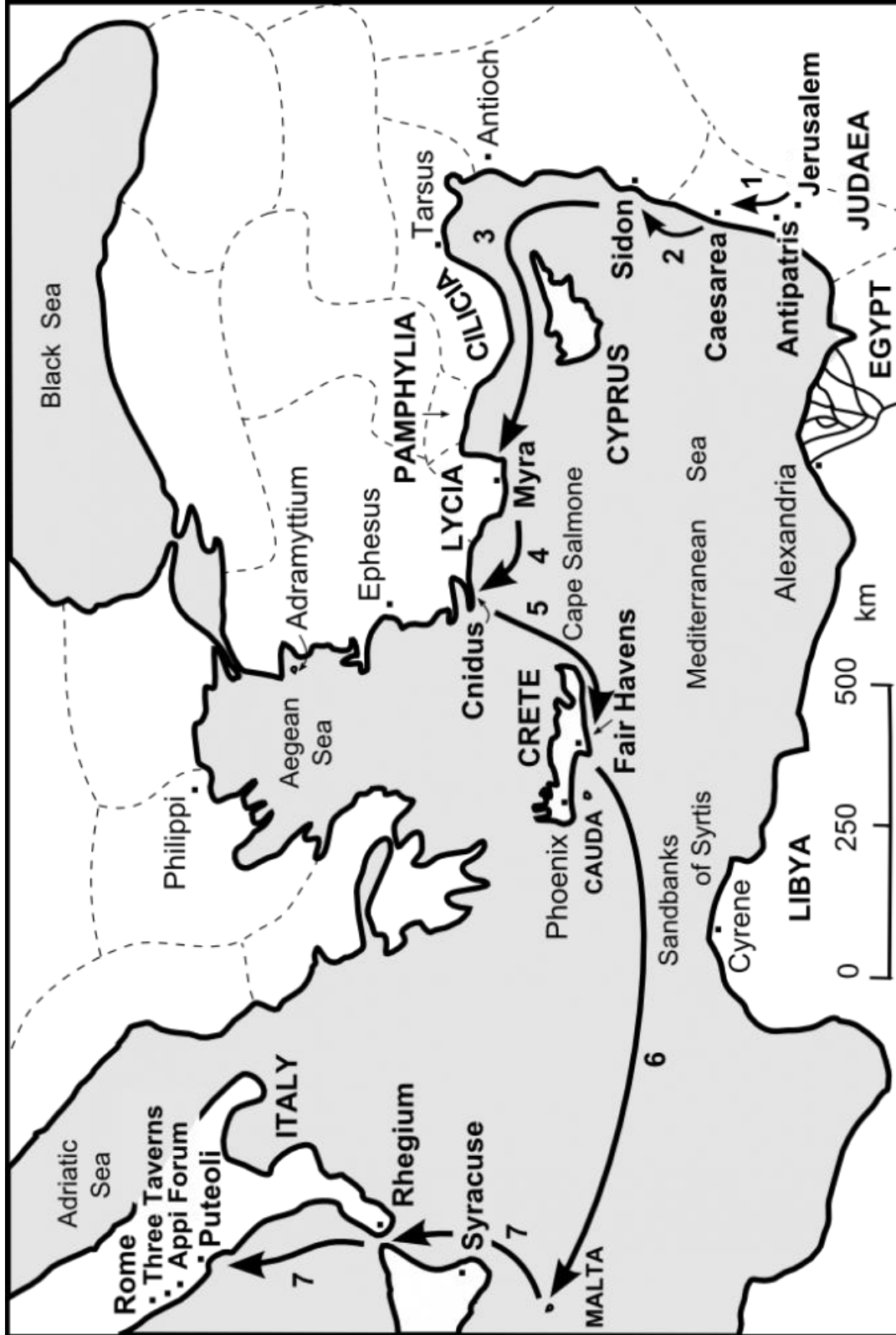
---

Paul encountered many difficulties on his journey, but he never lost heart and was fully convinced that God would deliver him safely to Rome. It is this conviction that both carried him through all of his difficulties and allowed him to serve as a witness and demonstration of God's power to those around him. Let us also trust in God's guidance on our own spiritual journey so that we can also serve as a living testimony of His power and protection to those around us.

## Lesson 12 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What does this verse teach us about our spiritual journey?  
*That it is inevitable that we will encounter difficulties. But we do not have to be afraid of any afflictions, because God is with us and will deliver us out of them.*
2. What can we learn about God's protection from Julius' kindness towards Paul?  
*That God will open the hearts of those around us and protect us through the kindnesses of others. When we experience this, we should always give thanks because everything that happens to us is in God's hands.*
3. Why did Julius' decision to sail make sense in the eyes of man? How should our decisions differ?  
*It made more sense to follow the advice of a professional than that of a prisoner bound for Rome. As God's children, our own decisions should be based on His will, no matter how illogical it may seem, because our God is all-knowing and all-powerful.*
4. How can we maintain a heart of peace and trust, as Paul did, in any situation?  
*By fully understanding that we have God's protection in every tribulation we encounter.*
5. What is important about our attitude and reactions to hardships we encounter?  
*They are a reflection of our faith and our trust in God. Our actions in the face of tribulation can also be a powerful witness of God's truth to non-believers.*
6. Using one of the verses we studied in the Life Application section, explain how you can improve and uphold your trust in God during your spiritual journey.  
*Refer to Life Application section; personal answers.*

Figure 1: Map of Paul's Journey to Rome (<https://www.thebiblejourney.org/the-bible-journey/12-pauls-journey-to-rome82062/paul-addresses-the-crowds/>)



## Junior 1 Year 1 Book 4 Review

### Memory Verses

Instructions: Fill in the blanks correctly using the provided words.

hand	believed	remission	baptized
idols	witness	Gentiles	vessel
joy	heard	obey	gospel
men	everyone	testify	delivers
salvation	love	called	receive
immorality	righteous	believed	name

Psalms 34:19	Romans 1:16	Acts 11:21	Acts 2:38
Acts 4:12	Romans 8:28	Acts 22:15	Acts 20:24
Acts 15:28–29	Acts 9:15	Acts 5:29	Acts 19:2a

1. “For you will be His \_\_\_\_\_ to all men of what you have seen and \_\_\_\_\_.”  
(\_\_\_\_\_)
2. “He said to them, ‘Did you \_\_\_\_\_ the Holy Spirit when you \_\_\_\_\_?’”  
(\_\_\_\_\_)
3. “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to \_\_\_\_\_, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual \_\_\_\_\_. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.” (\_\_\_\_\_)
4. “For I am not ashamed of the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” (\_\_\_\_\_)
5. “Nor is there \_\_\_\_\_ in any other, for there is no other \_\_\_\_\_ under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (\_\_\_\_\_)



6. "But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with \_\_\_\_\_, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to \_\_\_\_\_ to the gospel of the grace of God." (\_\_\_\_\_)
  
7. "Go, for he is a chosen \_\_\_\_\_ of Mine to bear My name before \_\_\_\_\_, kings, and the children of Israel." (\_\_\_\_\_)
  
8. "Many are the afflictions of the \_\_\_\_\_, But the Lord \_\_\_\_\_ him out of them all." (\_\_\_\_\_)
  
9. "But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: 'We ought to \_\_\_\_\_ God rather than \_\_\_\_\_.'" (\_\_\_\_\_)
  
10. "Repent, and let every one of you be \_\_\_\_\_ in the name of Jesus Christ for the \_\_\_\_\_ of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."  
(\_\_\_\_\_)
  
11. "And the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Lord was with them, and a great number \_\_\_\_\_ and turned to the Lord." (\_\_\_\_\_)
  
12. "And we know that all things work together for good to those who \_\_\_\_\_ God, to those who are the \_\_\_\_\_ according to His purpose." (\_\_\_\_\_)

## Multiple Choice

---

1. \_\_\_\_ : Why does Peter say that Jesus Christ is worthy of our worship?
  - a. He is the Holy One and the Just.
  - b. He is the Prince of life.
  - c. He is raised from the dead.
  - d. All of the above.
  
2. \_\_\_\_ : How did the Bible describe how the council saw Stephen as he stood before them?
  - a. They saw a look of complete remorse and guilt.
  - b. They saw his face as the face of an angel.
  - c. They saw someone who looked proud of being persecuted.
  - d. They saw a look of desperation and despair.
  
3. \_\_\_\_ : What was the revelation behind Peter's vision?
  - a. God was teaching Peter not to question Him.
  - b. Peter could now eat animals that used to be considered unclean.
  - c. Salvation is not just for the Jews, but also the Gentiles and all who believe.
  - d. None of the above.
  
4. \_\_\_\_ : Why was Elymas the sorcerer blind?
  - a. He tried to prevent Paul from preaching to the proconsul.
  - b. He was born blind.
  - c. He tried to cast out a demon but failed, so God rebuked him.
  - d. None of the above.
  
5. \_\_\_\_ : The dispute over which important matter required Paul and Barnabas to travel to Jerusalem?
  - a. Circumcision
  - b. Eating unclean animals
  - c. Preaching to the Gentiles
  - d. None of the above.
  
6. \_\_\_\_ : Why was Paul's spirit provoked when he visited Athens?
  - a. The citizens of Athens falsely accused Paul of blasphemy.
  - b. The citizens of Athens attempted to worship Paul as a god.
  - c. The citizens of Athens had been given over to idols.
  - d. The citizens of Athens called him a babblers.
  
7. \_\_\_\_ : What was the first question Paul asked the disciples in Ephesus?
  - a. "Have you received water baptism?"
  - b. "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"
  - c. "Can you speak in tongues?"
  - d. None of the above.

*Paul's Missionary Journeys*

Instructions: Write during which of Paul's three missionary journeys each event occurred.

Event	Missionary Journey
Paul, Priscilla, and Aquila met Apollos in Athens, and Priscilla and Aquila taught Apollos a more accurate truth.	
Jews from Antioch and Iconium went to Lystra and stoned Paul.	
Paul preached to Lydia in Philippi; in turn, she and her household were baptized	
Timothy joined Paul and Silas after being recommended by brethren at Lystra and Iconium.	
Paul baptized the disciples in Ephesus in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and they were able to receive the Holy Spirit.	
Jason's house was attacked by a mob that was envious of Paul and Silas after they preached in a synagogue	
Paul healed a cripple by saying, "Stand up straight on your feet!"	
Paul saw a vision of a man calling him to go to Macedonia.	
John Mark left Paul and returned to Jerusalem while at Perga in Pamphylia.	
While Paul was speaking in Troas, Eutychus fell from a third story window after being overcome by sleep.	
Paul and Silas were thrown in prison, where they sang hymns and praise God.	
The Holy Spirit separated Paul and Barnabas for the work of preaching to the Gentiles.	
Paul met Aquila and Priscilla for the first time in Corinth and stayed with them.	

### *Salvation Is Opened to the Gentiles*

---

Instructions: Put the events of Cornelius' conversion in chronological order.

- \_\_\_ The Spirit tells Peter not to doubt the men, saying that He has sent them.
- \_\_\_ As Peter is preaching, the Holy Spirit falls upon Cornelius and his household, and the brethren see them speak with tongues.
- \_\_\_ Peter goes up to the housetop to pray and falls into a trance.
- \_\_\_ Peter acknowledges how Jews and Gentiles do not associate with each other, but also says that God has taught him not to regard any man as common or unclean.
- \_\_\_ "Rise, Peter; kill and eat."
- \_\_\_ Cornelius has a vision of an angel of God who instructs him to send for Peter.
- \_\_\_ Peter hears what the messengers have to say and leaves to meet Cornelius the next day.
- \_\_\_ Peter preaches to Cornelius and Cornelius' relatives and close friends.
- \_\_\_ "What God has cleansed, you must not call common."
- \_\_\_ Peter commands Cornelius and his household to be baptized in the name of the Lord.
- \_\_\_ Cornelius sends two of his household servants and a devout soldier to Joppa.
- \_\_\_ Peter tells Cornelius that he is just a man after Cornelius tries to worship him.
- \_\_\_ Peter sees a vision of a great object bound at four corners descending from heaven, containing all kinds of unclean animals.
- \_\_\_ Cornelius explains to Peter the vision he had that caused him to send for Peter.
- \_\_\_ "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything uncommon or unclean."
- \_\_\_ The men sent by Cornelius inquire of Peter, as he wonders about the vision.

*Short Answers*

---

**1. What are two key lessons we must remember regarding the promised Holy Spirit?**

---

---

---

---

**2. From Acts 6:3, what qualities are required for a good church worker? How can we have these qualities?**

---

---

---

---

**3. How did God use Aeneas' and Dorcas' illnesses to further His purpose? What can we learn from these events about the circumstances that we might experience?**

---

---

---

---

**4. Why must we abstain from blood and from things strangled?**

---

---

---

---

**5. What are the reasons the sons of Sceva failed to cast out the evil spirit? What happened when the sons of Sceva misused the name of Jesus Christ?**

---

---

---

---

**6. What can we learn about preaching the gospel from the reactions of Festus and Agrippa?**

---

---

---

---

**7. What can we learn about God's protection from Julius' kindness towards Paul?**

---

---

---

---

## Junior 1 Year 1 Book 4 Review Answer Key

### Memory Verses

1. "For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard." (Acts 22:15)
2. "He said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' (Acts 19:2a)
3. "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell." (Acts 15:28–29)
4. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek." (Romans 1:16)
5. "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)
6. "But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God." (Acts 20:24)
7. "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel." (Acts 9:15)
8. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the Lord delivers him out of them all." (Psalm 34:19)
9. "But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: 'We ought to obey God rather than men.'" (Acts 5:29)
10. "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38)
11. "And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord." (Acts 11:21)
12. "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28)

### Multiple Choice

1. \_\_\_\_ : Why does Peter say that Jesus Christ is worthy of our worship?
  - a. He is the Holy One and the Just.
  - b. He is the Prince of life.
  - c. He is raised from the dead.
  - d. All of the above.**
2. \_\_\_\_ : How did the Bible describe how Stephen looked as he stood before the council?
  - a. They saw a look of complete remorse and guilt
  - b. They saw his face as the face of an angel**
  - c. They saw someone who looked proud of being persecuted
  - d. They saw a look of desperation and despair
3. \_\_\_\_ : What was the revelation behind Peter's vision?
  - a. God was teaching Peter not to question Him.

- b. Peter could now eat animals that used to be considered unclean.
  - c. *Salvation is not just for the Jews, but also the Gentiles and all who believe.***
  - d. None of the above.
4. \_\_\_\_ : Why was Elymas the sorcerer blind?
- a. *He tried to prevent Paul from preaching to the proconsul.***
  - b. He was born blind.
  - c. He tried to cast out a demon but failed and was rebuked by God.
  - d. None of the above.
5. \_\_\_\_ : The dispute over which important matter required Paul and Barnabas to travel to Jerusalem?
- a. *Circumcision***
  - b. Eating unclean animals
  - c. Preaching to the Gentiles
  - d. None of the above.
6. \_\_\_\_ : Why was Paul’s spirit provoked when he visited Athens?
- a. The citizens of Athens falsely accused Paul of blasphemy.
  - b. The citizens of Athens attempted to worship Paul as a god.
  - c. *The citizens of Athens had been given over to idols.***
  - d. The citizens of Athens called him a babbler.
7. \_\_\_\_ : What was the first question Paul asked the disciples in Ephesus?
- a. Have you received water baptism?
  - b. *Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?***
  - c. Can you speak in tongues?
  - d. None of the above.

**Paul’s Missionary Journeys**

Event	Missionary Journey
Paul, Priscilla, and Aquila met Apollos in Athens, and Priscilla and Aquila taught Apollos a more accurate truth.	<i>Third</i>
Jews from Antioch and Iconium went to Lystra and stoned Paul.	<i>First</i>
Paul preached to Lydia in Philippi; in turn, she and her household were baptized	<i>Second</i>
Timothy joined Paul and Silas after being recommended by brethren at Lystra and Iconium.	<i>Second</i>
Paul baptized the disciples in Ephesus in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and they were able to receive the Holy Spirit.	<i>Third</i>
Jason’s house was attacked by a mob that was envious of Paul and Silas after they preached in a synagogue	<i>Second</i>
Paul healed a cripple by saying, “Stand up straight on your feet!”	<i>First</i>
Paul saw a vision of a man calling him to go to Macedonia.	<i>Second</i>
John Mark left Paul and returned to Jerusalem while at Perga in Pamphylia.	<i>First</i>
While Paul was speaking in Troas, Eutychus fell from a third story window after being overcome by sleep.	<i>Third</i>



Paul and Silas were thrown in prison, where they sang hymns and praise God.	<i>Second</i>
The Holy Spirit separated Paul and Barnabas for the work of preaching to the Gentiles.	<i>First</i>
Paul met Aquila and Priscilla for the first time in Corinth and stayed with them.	<i>Second</i>

### Salvation Is Opened to the Gentiles

- 9   The Spirit tells Peter not to doubt the men, saying that He has sent them.
- 15  As Peter is preaching, the Holy Spirit falls upon Cornelius and his household, and the brethren see them speak with tongues.
- 3  Peter goes up to the housetop to pray and falls into a trance.
- 12  Peter acknowledges how Jews and Gentiles do not associate with each other, but also says that God has taught him not to regard any man as common or unclean.
- 5  “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.”
- 1  Cornelius has a vision of an angel of God who instructs him to send for Peter.
- 10  Peter hears what the messengers have to say, and leaves to meet Cornelius the next day.
- 14  Peter preaches to Cornelius and Cornelius’ relatives and close friends.
- 7  “What God has cleansed, you must not call common.”
- 16  Peter commands Cornelius and his household to be baptized in the name of the Lord.
- 2  Cornelius sends two of his household servants and a devout soldier to Joppa.
- 11  Peter tells Cornelius that he is just a man after Cornelius tries to worship him.
- 4  Peter sees a vision of a great object bound at four corners descending from heaven, containing all kinds of unclean animals.
- 13  Cornelius explains to Peter the vision he had that caused him to send for Peter.
- 6  “Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything uncommon or unclean.”
- 8  The men sent by Cornelius inquire of Peter, as he wonders about the vision.

### Short Answers

- (Lesson 1) What are two key lessons we must remember regarding the promised Holy Spirit?**  
*The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance in heaven (Eph 1:14); Speaking in tongues is proof of the Holy Spirit’s abidance (Acts 10:45–47).*
- (Lesson 3) From Acts 6:3, what qualities are required for a good church worker? How can we have these qualities?**  
*1) Be of good reputation; 2) be full of the Holy Spirit; and 3) be full of wisdom. Being of good reputation means being a good example for others by reflecting God’s character and wisdom in our lives, something accomplished by being filled with God’s Spirit. Being filled with the Spirit and with wisdom means receiving God in faith.*
- (Lesson 4) How did God use Aeneas’ and Dorcas’ illnesses to further His purpose? What can we learn from these events about the circumstances that we might experience?**  
*The miracles of their healing spread the gospel further among witnesses. We can learn that we are all a part of God’s plan, and that since God’s understanding is above our own, we ought to trust that whatever happens, He is in control and knows what is best for us.*
- (Lesson 8) Why must we abstain from blood and from things strangled?**  
*God gave blood the power to atone for our sins because blood represents life. The sanctity of blood is*

*such that to consume it is a serious sin in God's eyes. Blood also sustains life itself, and therefore must be drained out of any creature that we eat.*

**5. (Lesson 10) What are the reasons the sons of Sceva failed to cast out the evil spirit? What happened when the sons of Sceva misused the name of Jesus Christ?**

*They lacked belief, had ulterior motives, misused Jesus' name, and did not live God-fearing lives. The evil spirit caused the possessed man to leap on the sons and overpower them, which led them to flee the house naked and wounded. This incident caused fear to fall upon all the Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus, and "many who believed came confessing and telling their deeds" (Acts 19:18). Many even brought their books on sorcery to be burned in public.*

**6. (Lesson 11) What can we learn about preaching the gospel from the reactions of Festus and Agrippa?**

*Though Paul spoke boldly in his mission to preach and defend the gospel, the desired result did not come automatically. Likewise, we are unable to control how others respond to our message, but it is still our mission to speak up for the gospel.*

**7. (Lesson 12) What can we learn about God's protection from Julius' kindness towards Paul?**

*That God will open the hearts of those around us and protect us through the kindnesses of others. When we experience this, we should always give thanks because everything that happens to us is in God's hands.*