

Episode: Acts Series No. 1

Narrator: Luke

Primary Scriptures: Acts 1

Story Summary: Jesus is returning, Pentecost, Choosing Matthias

Location: Roman Empire; Tetrarchy of Judea; Jerusalem

Time: 30 AD Death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Pentecost.

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Acts 1:1-3, 8-9, 11

Acts is a history of the first three decades of the Church. It is the only existing history of the Church that was written in the first century. Although the Bible does not specify it, Church tradition and many scholars agree that Luke wrote both *Luke* and *Acts*.

In *Luke*, the author said he made a careful investigation of everything before writing. His three primary sources of information were: his own experiences, previously existing written sources, and careful listening to the stories of those who were personally involved. This series of stories illustrates what Luke might have heard from more than a dozen of the characters featured in *Acts*. Any reader of the Bible quickly notices it gives few details about most of its characters or events. These stories are true to the Bible, but personalities and personal details are given to its more illustrative characters.

Acts begins with a quick summary of Jesus' last days on Earth. Three extremely important future events are revealed there. The apostles and followers are not to leave Jerusalem but are to wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit, but they are not told how long to wait. They are also told that they will be empowered by the Holy Spirit to evangelize to the ends of the world. Lastly, Jesus tells them he would come back in the same way he ascended.

The followers of Jesus returned to Jerusalem after the ascension. Who were these followers? The apostles and certain people are specified as being among them, but there is not a comprehensive list given. Peter gave an impassioned speech about the betrayal of Jesus, and insisted that Judas be replaced with somebody else qualified to replace him. They chose two men who seemed to qualify, and then cast lots (like casting dice) to choose Matthias. This is the last record we have of early Christians making decisions by casting lots. After that time, they would rely on the Holy Spirit's leading. It is interesting that Matthias and most of the apostles are never mentioned by name again in the New Testament.

Discussion Questions:

1. Where did Luke get his information to write *Acts*?
 2. How did Christianity and Judaism differ from the other religions of the Roman Empire? Did that make it harder or easier to convince people to become Christians?
 3. At the beginning of *Acts*, Jesus reveals that he will return to earth after his ascension. When do you think the early Christians thought he would return? How do you think it affected them when he didn't return in a few decades?
 4. The Bible does not mention most of the apostles by name again after Acts 1. Why do you think that is the case?
 5. Put yourself in the shoes of early Christians: what might you have thought the Holy Spirit arriving would've been like?
 6. The typical modern concept of heaven isn't mentioned in the Old Testament. What do you make of that? Does that change how you think about the ascension of Jesus?
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1. Luke 1:1-4 Luke was a witness, he interviewed witnesses, and he used written materials that were available. 2. The others were interested in obtaining the favor of gods and did not concern themselves with morality. 3. Rev. 3:11 Soon!

Application Questions:

1. The behavior of the early Christians was very much impacted by the belief that Jesus would return at any moment. Does the fact he has not yet returned affect how and when you think he will return? Do you even think he will return? How do your actions reflect your belief on this subject?
2. Matthias was considered as a replacement for Judas because he had been a follower of Jesus from the beginning. If somebody asked you for your qualifications to be considered a follower of Jesus, what would you tell them?
3. After the choosing of Matthias, the early Christians had a strong reliance on the Holy Spirit to guide them in their decisions. What would that look like in your life? How would you know it is the Holy Spirit guiding you instead of something else?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Read Acts 1:11. What do you think that verse means? Do you feel wise or foolish believing that Jesus will return even though he hasn't done so for more than 2,000 years?
2. Do you have faith that Jesus will return again? How does your answer impact the way you live your daily life? Will you be ready when he returns?
3. Acts 1 talks about the power of the Holy Spirit. What things have you been taught about the power of the Holy Spirit? Are some of those things conflicting? Does your belief in the power of the Holy Spirit guide your daily behavior?

Episode: Acts Series No. 2

Narrator: Peter

Primary Scriptures: Acts 2-5, 10-12

Story Summary: Coming of Holy Spirit, growth of Church, activities of Peter

Location: Roman Empire; Tetrarchy of Judea; Jerusalem, Caesarea

Time: 30 AD Death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Pentecost.

40 AD (?) Cornelius becomes a Christian

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Acts 2:2-4, 38-39, 42, 47; 4:11-12, 19-20, 29; 5:32, 38-39; 10:34-35, 47-48; 12:23

On the first Pentecost after his death and resurrection, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to Earth to empower his followers. The account of that event is one of the most thrilling stories in the entire Bible. It is no wonder that Jesus was so excited to send Holy Spirit back to his followers.

That Pentecost day was a day of innumerable firsts. The first indwelling of the Holy Spirit in Christians, the first presentation of the entire Gospel in sermon form, the first conversion to Christianity, and many others. That day was the start of explosive growth of the early Church.

The early Christians followed the commands of Jesus, but they also continued to follow Judaism as best they could. Among other things, this allowed them continued access to the Temple and the synagogues so they could preach to the Jews.

The rapid growth of the Church became a threat to the Jewish leaders, so they threatened Peter and the other Christians; eventually, this persecution became so great that most of the Christians left Jerusalem, which had the unintended effect of spreading Christianity, because the Christians had the express mission of making disciples.

Christianity was the first religious movement in the Roman Empire intent on making new members from other communities. This evangelical motive confounded, threatened and angered leaders of other cultures and communities.

It is not made clear in the Bible, but it was up to ten years after Pentecost before the conversion of Cornelius by Peter. That event marked a turning point in the growth of the Church, because it signaled the beginning of major evangelism efforts to non-Jews (Gentiles). This was such a radical change for the church that even Peter's personal testimony was not enough. After the testimony of other witnesses, the church accepted the fact that non-Jews could become Christians, but just how and when that would occur would not be made clear until it actually happened.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does it mean to be filled by the Holy Spirit? How does it feel?
 2. How did the Holy Spirit confirm the work of the apostles?
 3. Who was specifically named as giving money to help fund the early Church?
 4. Does it affect your understanding of God that Holy Spirit killed Ananias and Sapphira?
 5. About how long after Pentecost was Peter's encounter with Cornelius? Does that time period change how you envision the growth of the early Church?
 6. If Peter was such an authoritative figure in the early church, why did the early church members feel like they could question his actions with Cornelius?
2. Miracles, healings, gave words to teach. 3. Barnabas 5. No exact date is known, maybe up to ten years. 6. It was such a radical change in their understanding of the very nature of their belief.

Application Questions:

1. The followers of Jesus prayed as a group for 50 days as they waited for the coming of the Holy Spirit. When the waiting started, they had no idea how long it would take. How long are you willing to wait for God to fulfill his promises in your life? What are you willing to do while you wait?
2. In the video, Peter wonders why Jesus would invest love into him. Can you relate? Why or why not?
3. When the crowd asked how they could be saved, Peter gave them a simple, clear answer. If somebody asks you that question, what would your simple, clear answer be? Is it different than Peter's answer in Acts 2:38?
4. Peter resisted the idea of having non-Jews become Gentiles because it did not fit his idea of who "should" be a Christian. Do you have any similar resistances in your life?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Sometimes it seems like Christianity is difficult to understand. If somebody asked you to explain how to receive salvation, how would your answer differ from Peter's words in Acts 2:38?
2. Some people point to Acts 2:44 as being the model for how churches should behave. Which is more important in that understanding Acts 2:44 or Acts 2:42? How many years do you think Acts 2:44 described how churches behaved? [there is no exact answer to this last question, but this instance does not seem to be the norm for future churches]
3. Peter did not want to go to Cornelius because he wasn't a Jew. Are there people groups you resist sharing the Gospel with, such as poor people, Muslims, unpopular peers, strangers, relatives, etc.?

Episode: Acts Series No. 3

Narrator: Stephen

Primary Scriptures: Acts 6-7

Story Summary: Stephen as one of the Seven; Stephen's trial and death

Location: Roman Empire; Tetrarchy of Judea; Jerusalem

Time: 30 AD Death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Pentecost.
32 AD (?) Trial and death of Stephen

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Acts 6:4, 7, 10; 7:58

For the first few years after Pentecost, the apostles and believers in Jerusalem continued to practice Judaism while teaching about Jesus. This allowed them to meet and teach in the synagogues and in the Temple, but as the early Church grew, so did the conflict between Christians and the Jewish leaders.

As the Christians became excluded from Jerusalem's Jewish society, they began replicating the social services inherent in the Jewish culture, including the feeding of widows and orphans. Stephen was one of the seven men chosen to help equitably distribute food and other services. This allowed the apostles to continue spending all of their time in preaching, teaching, and in prayer.

It is quite interesting that the apostles let the people choose among themselves who would be responsible for the food distribution. The people wisely chose men who were among those who felt mistreated.

Stephen's preaching was so effective that the Jewish leaders put him on trial. Stephen began his defense by recounting the history of the Jews. His words were so articulate and accurate that they had no cause to argue against him. But when he compared them to their ancestors, the leaders exploded and had him put to death. Apparently, something had changed since the trial of Jesus, when the leaders could not sentence Jesus to death. Whatever changed appears to have been permanent, since it inaugurated a wave of capital punishment by the leaders.

Discussion Questions:

1. This episode presents Stephen as being single and from Greece. What other alternatives can you think of?
 2. In the time of Jesus, how do you think the Jewish pilgrims felt when they saw the chaos and commercial activities surrounding the Temple?
 3. It was only a few years since the trial of Jesus when the Jewish leaders did not have the authority to put Jesus to death. What changed so that they had the ability to kill Stephen?
 4. Why was Stephen's death and the ensuing persecution helpful to the growth of the church?
 5. Name some ways that God eased the path for early Christianity to spread.
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1. Caused the believers to scatter to other cities and countries where the Sanhedrin was less influential. Weeded out the weak and uncommitted believers. 2. Roman highways, Pax Romana, Greek as a common international language, persecution by Jews.

Application Questions:

1. The apostles allowed the people to choose the men who distributed food. When is the last time you allowed someone to make a choice that you could have made for them? Are you typically more worried about exerting your authority or seeing that other people are allowed to grow?
2. Stephen was perhaps just as learned in tradition as the Jewish leaders of his time, but when he heard the gospel, he understood it while they did not. Why was he able to understand? What parallels do you see in our own culture today? What steps can you take to help others understand?
3. When Stephen was brought before those in power, he, like Jesus, was accused of crimes he didn't commit, and Stephen, like Jesus, chose not to defend himself. Would you be able to do the same? How might such an attitude play out today?
4. On the spur of the moment, and under great pressure, Stephen was able to recount what he knew about the Bible in great detail. What would you have to do to be capable of doing the same thing? Would memorizing more Scripture be important in doing so?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. The seven men to serve the early church based on just two parameters – they had to be full of the Spirit and full of wisdom. How did these men achieve those characteristics? Could you find part of the answer in Proverbs? How could you start working toward being full of the Spirit and wisdom? [look at Acts 6:10]
2. People were drawn to Stephen and the apostles because of their devotion to Jesus. Can the same be said of you? Why or why not?
3. Stephen obviously knew the Bible well. What are you doing to know the Bible better?

Episode: Acts Series No. 4

Character: Philip of Caesarea

Primary Scriptures: Acts 8

Story Summary: Philip evangelizes in Samaria and to the Ethiopian eunuch

Location: Roman Empire; Tetrarchy of Judea; Jerusalem, Samaria, Caesarea

Time: 30 AD Death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Pentecost.

32 AD (?) Trail and death of Stephen. Christians begin to scatter.

33 AD (?) Philip

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Acts 8:1, 5, 20-22, 30-31, 35, 37-38

Upon the death of Stephen, most of the believers in Jerusalem were scattered throughout Samaria and Judea, except the apostles who stayed in Jerusalem. Severe persecution was begun by the Jewish leaders. Further, the believers lost support from the Jewish social structure, so they needed to replicate many of its benefits and protections. They needed to do this while making disciples.

Philip was one of seven Greek men chosen by the Church to help meet the needs of widows and other needy Christians. After the death of Stephen, Philip went to Samaria to avoid further persecution from the Jewish leaders. He was so effective in Samaria that Peter and John were sent to see his results. While there, Peter and John imparted the Holy Spirit to the new believers.

The Holy Spirit led Philip south of Jerusalem, where he had the privilege to evangelize the Ethiopian eunuch, who was in charge of the treasury of Ethiopia. Since he was an important government official and would very likely be traveling with a big retinue. Try to imagine a string of chariots, with the eunuch reading the Bible in his chariot while his driver minds the horses. Then, a strange man comes running up. How would the soldiers react?

After baptizing the eunuch, the Holy Spirit took Philip to the coast where he evangelized further, until he ended in Caesarea, his new home. That detail gets bypassed by many, but is a key factor in the future of Christianity.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why was losing the social structure of the Jews so impactful to the early Christians?
 2. Why did Philip go to the Samaritans? What is the difference between Samaritans and Gentiles?
 3. Name some religious reasons why being a eunuch was such a disadvantage.
 4. What do you think it means that Philip's daughters prophesied? Do you think that has any relevance to today about women's roles in churches?
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1. Family support, support for poor people, a place to worship, acceptance by local community, support for travelers. 2. Expressly commanded by Jesus to do so; Not much, but Samaritans had Jewish blood in their ancestry and also worshiped the same God as the Jews. 3. Could not worship with the assembly of Jews, always an outsider, could not be fully accepted as a Jewish proselyte.

Application Questions:

1. Philip always reacted with immediate obedience when the Spirit wanted him to do something. What would that trait look like in your life?
2. How do you think Philip prepared himself to become so useful in the cause of the Lord? [he had wisdom and was full of the Spirit, was trusted by his peers, knew the Bible]. How can you better prepare yourself?
3. Simon the Sorcerer was drawn to the power of the Holy Spirit because he thought it could benefit him personally. In what ways do you find yourself seeing Christianity through this lens? How can you alter your perspective in those times?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Early Jewish converts to Christianity experienced a high social cost for their decision, including alienation from their own families and communities. In what ways might you experience a social cost? How can you make up for what you lose?
2. When the Holy Spirit prompts you to do something, do you listen and obey?
3. How can you prepare yourself to be useful in the cause of the Lord to bring your peers to Christ and be a good Christian example to those around you?

Episode: Acts Series No. 5

Narrator: Barnabas

Primary Scriptures: Acts 4

Story Summary: Barnabas brings Paul into the Church, growth of Church outside Judea

Location: Roman Empire; Jerusalem, Damascus, Antioch, Cyprus

Time: 30 AD Death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Pentecost.

33 AD (?) Paul becomes a Christian

46 AD Paul's "famine" visit to Jerusalem

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Acts 4:36-37; 9:26-27

Acts 4:36 says that Barnabas was a Levite from Cyprus who sold land to help the infant Church. The Bible does not say when Barnabas became a Christian or when he left his home of Cyprus, nor when or how he, as a Levite, came into possession of the land that he sold.

Land was very precious to the Jews, and selling land was an act of great sacrifice. Giving all of the proceeds to the apostles was an act of service, but the new Christians would have seen the act of selling the land itself as even more important than the money exchanged.

The growth of the early Church was possible because its leaders knew and trusted each other. Barnabas was one of these first leaders, chosen by God to vouch for Paul so he could become part of the Church. It was Barnabas who facilitated Paul's relationship with Peter, James, and the other apostles.

Barnabas seems to have been more influential in the Church than Paul for many years. It also seems that Barnabas was Paul's mentor for many years. You can get an inkling of that because Barnabas is always mentioned first when they are together.

More than fifteen years after the start of the Church, the Holy Spirit sent Paul and Barnabas on the First Missionary Journey, the first of many times there was a concerted effort to convert non-Jews to Christianity. The journey took place in Cyprus and modern-day Turkey. The trip was very successful in spreading the Gospel and starting new churches.

It would be easy to overlook two important events that happened on that trip. First, John Mark started the trip, but abandoned Paul and Barnabas after Cyprus, an event that would be a future source of contention. Second, Paul began to take preeminence over Barnabas. A few years later, these two events would result in Paul and Barnabas taking separate paths.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why did very few Jews ever sell their land like Barnabas did?
 2. Why was Barnabas a bit of an outsider to the early Christians? Do we sometimes treat people as outsiders because they don't fit our Christian and local cultures?
 3. Who was more influential in the early church for the first ten or fifteen years, Barnabas or Paul? When did Paul become the leader of the two?
 4. Did you know the leaders of the early Church had such contentious relationships? How does that knowledge alter the way you view the Church today?
 5. Why was the church at Antioch so important?
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1. Were supposed to give it to descendants, may have been prohibited by Old Testament, ancestors may have been buried on the land. 2. He was from Cyprus. 3. Barnabas. On the First Missionary Journey. 4. First major church outside of Jerusalem, first major church with Gentile influence, sent missionaries, home base for Paul's ministry.

Application Questions:

1. God has given you special gifts and talents. Can you name someone that you influence by mentoring them? If so, how could you be a better mentor. If not, how can you start doing so?
2. Although Barnabas had a special gift of encouragement, we can all encourage others. What can you do today to encourage someone? How could you make encouragement a habit?
3. Barnabas showed great humility in letting Paul become the leader of the two. Can you name a time in your life you have had to let someone else take the reins? Is there an instance when you need to be doing so now?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Barnabas found the gospel message so compelling that he upended centuries of tradition to follow it wholeheartedly. What might Jesus be calling you to give up to follow him?
2. How do you use your God-given gifts and talents to influence others? How can you bring others to Christ by using your gifts and talents? Who is the Barnabas-type mentor in your life?
3. How can you be more like Barnabas and encourage those around you today? How can you make encouragement a habit in your life?

Episode: Acts Series No. 6

Narrator: John Mark

Primary Scriptures: Acts 13

Story Summary: John Mark's story, start of the First Missionary Journey

Location: Roman Empire; Jerusalem, Antioch, Cyprus

Time: 30 AD Death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Pentecost.

46 AD Paul's "famine" visit to Jerusalem, start of First Missionary Journey

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Acts 12:12, 25; 13:13-14

The Scriptures give us only short, direct references about John Mark, but it is possible to infer many things about him that are likely to be representative of his life. Part of the inferences come from knowing that Jerusalem was a small city where the Christians knew each other and often interacted.

Acts 12:12-13 says that after Peter was released from jail, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. When Peter knocked at the door, a servant answered and recognized Peter's voice. From just this short passage, we can infer from the very big house and servants that John Mark's mother was wealthy and that, since her house was well-known to the Christians as a central gathering place, their family had likely been Christians for a long time. If the family was wealthy, John Mark was likely well-educated and knew many of the other wealthy people in Jerusalem, especially the Jewish leaders.

The next passage illustrates the importance of searching all the Scriptures about a topic instead of just the ones currently in front of you. Colossians 4:10 says that Mark is a cousin (or relative) of Barnabas, and in that same verse, Paul tells the Colossians to welcome Mark if he comes to them. Paul wrote this passage many years after the First Missionary Journey, so you can infer from it that Mark somehow ended up in Paul's good graces. We are not sure how that happened, but it is fun to speculate that John Mark's training under Barnabas had a big influence.

John Mark later became known as Mark, and he is typically credited with writing the New Testament book of *Mark*. He was not an original apostle.

Discussion Questions:

1. When is the first possible reference to John Mark?
 2. Why did Barnabas have a special interest in John Mark?
 3. Why do you think John Mark abandoned the First Missionary Journey?
 4. Did John Mark write the *Gospel of John*?
 5. What did wealth probably give John Mark access to?
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1. Rich young ruler? When Jesus chose his mother's house? When the young man ran away on the night of Jesus' betrayal? 2. They were relatives – probably cousins, but possibly uncle/nephew. 3. He was scared and homesick, he was bored, he was upset that Paul took over leadership from Barnabas, he was not used to a hard lifestyle, he didn't like the uncertainty of not knowing what was going to happen next. 4. No, but he wrote the *Gospel of Mark*, possibly under the influence of Peter. 5. A large house, travel money, money for support of church, a good education, access to other wealthy and influential people.

Application Questions:

1. When John Mark left for the First Missionary Journey, he probably thought that being a "good" Christian was enough to succeed. As he reflected on his failure, what do you think he might have wished to have had? What would help you avoid failures in your life?
2. One of John Mark's invaluable assets was being around educated and influential people. What do you learn from the people you are around? Could you learn more if you chose to be around other kinds of people?
3. What did John Mark learn from being around the influential church leaders? What could you learn from being around your church leaders?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. John Mark was very possibly a teen when he started the First Missionary Journey with Barnabas and Paul. When the going got tough, he quit (a failing he eventually overcame). Can you name a time in your life when you quit something because it was too difficult to finish? What can you do to keep from doing so in the future.
2. John Mark probably grew up in a well-to-do family. He very likely felt entitled. How does a feeling of entitlement affect someone's actions? Can someone with that feeling be a good servant to Jesus?
3. John Mark's failure and restoration were key components of the work he did for the Lord. What lessons can you learn from your failures? In what ways do you need to work toward restoration?

Episode: Acts Series No. 7

Narrator: Holy Spirit

Primary Scriptures: Acts 2

Story Summary: The book of Acts is often about the work and indwelling of the Holy Spirit

Location: Roman Empire

Time: 30 AD Death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Pentecost.

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Acts 1:8; 2:2-4, 33, 38; 4:31; 5:32; 6:3; 7:51; 8:39; 9:17

No reader of the book of *Acts* can help from being struck about how much activity is centered around the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus sent to Earth on the day of Pentecost. No other character in the book of *Acts* is nearly as important as the Holy Spirit, and the early Christians knew it.

In John 14:26, Jesus told his disciples that, after he was gone, the Father would send the Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus to teach all things and remind them of things he had said. In other Scriptures, Jesus gave his followers other information about the Holy Spirit to help encourage and inform them.

The arrival of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 is an amazing account. Peter says the event was prophesied by the prophet Joel. At the Tower of Babel, people were forced to have different languages so they could not understand each other, foiling their attempts to be like God. On Pentecost, people were allowed to understand in their own language so they could hear about God.

Throughout the books of *Acts*, confirmation of belief comes through baptism and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. In most cases, we are not told precisely how that gift of the Holy Spirit was demonstrated, but it was clear that people could tell when it was received.

It is obvious that the Holy Spirit empowered and led the early Church. The Christians regularly consulted and followed the leadings of the Spirit. To them, the Holy Spirit was as real as any of their fellow humans.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you think of Holy Spirit more as a living person or an ethereal entity?
2. What was a main reason Holy Spirit empowered the apostles to do miracles?
3. What was one non-miraculous way Holy Spirit enabled the apostles and early believers?
4. What main characteristic would the early believers need to withstand persecution?

2. to validate their testimony about Jesus. 3. gave them good memories and power to speak the truth. 4. faith

Application Questions:

1. The early Christians communicated clearly with Holy Spirit. How could you improve the ways you communicate with Holy Spirit?
2. How would your life be different if Holy Spirit didn't live in you?
3. In what ways have you ignored Holy Spirit through your life?

Application Questions for Teens

1. Do you listen to Holy Spirit daily and communicate with Him?
2. How would your life be different if Holy Spirit didn't live in you?
3. Holy Spirit often shows up in our lives in ways we don't expect. How ready are you for such an occurrence? What would you do if Holy Spirit showed up in a grandiose way like he did in Acts 2?

Episode: Acts Series No. 8

Narrator: Paul

Primary Scriptures: Acts 9

Story Summary: Paul's conversion and his early years as a Christian

Location: Roman Empire; Damascus, Jerusalem, Antioch, Tarsus

Time: 30 AD Death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Pentecost.

33 AD (?) Paul becomes a Christian

40 AD (?) Cornelius becomes a Christian

46 AD Paul's "famine" visit to Jerusalem, start of First Missionary Journey

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Acts 9:4-5, 15-16, 17, 31

After Cornelius was converted by Peter, it was clear God wanted people of all ethnic groups to become Christians. Peter was willing for that to happen, but did not seem to make it a priority. However, God had long ago decided that a young Jewish leader would head up the task of taking the Gospel message to the entire world.

Saul of Tarsus, better known today as Paul, was the man Jesus chose to lead evangelistic efforts to those outside the Jewish community. This episode is told from the vantage point of Paul as a younger man, just before the First Missionary Journey, and before he has endured intense persecution, or written any of his letters and books in the New Testament.

The Bible introduces Paul when Stephen was stoned. Apparently, Paul led the stoning of Stephen, and later became authorized by the Jewish leaders to kill other Christians in an effort to thwart the growth of the Church. Later in the Bible, Paul is described as being a leading Pharisee with a strong educational background.

Paul was on his way to Damascus to persecute the Christians when Jesus intervened. Jesus temporarily blinded Paul, and Paul had to be led into the city. Ananias was sent to lead Paul to repentance and convert him to Christianity. Paul immediately became a dedicated Christian and began evangelizing to other Jews. He had to escape Damascus with the help of the Christians.

Galatians 1:16-18 describes Paul's three years in Arabia, but it does not say when these three years occurred.

With the help of Barnabas, Paul was introduced to the Christian leaders in Jerusalem, who slowly accepted him. You can imagine their reluctance to embrace him; it wasn't that long ago he had killed and persecuted them.

Paul ended this phase of life in his hometown of Tarsus, where he would stay for many years while waiting to start his active ministry to the Gentiles.

Discussion Questions:

1. When did Saul change his name to Paul?
 2. When did Paul spend three years in the desert?
 3. Who started Paul in his career as a foreign missionary?
 4. From whom did Paul seek approval before going to the Gentiles?
 5. Paul received an unfathomable amount of grace from God; how do you think this motivated the way he preached grace?
 6. Name two primary questions facing the early Church.
 7. What event certainly terminated Judaism's immense influence over Christianity?
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1. Saul was his Hebrew name and Paul was his Roman name. People just started using his Roman name more. Luke went to the name change during the story of Sergius Paulus.
 2. Shortly after his conversion.
 3. Barnabas and the church at Antioch.
 4. The Apostles and James.
 6. Which would be primary – Christianity or Judaism? Could people become Christians without following the laws of Moses?
 7. The destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.

Application Questions

1. Paul was responsible for countless deaths of Christians, and yet God forgave him and restored him. What do you need forgiveness for in your life? What about restoration?
2. If you had to overcome your past, like Paul, how would you do it? [change your ways, have people vouch for you, be consistent in your changed behavior, pray]
3. Paul was absolutely sure he was pleasing God by persecuting the Christians, yet this is not what God wanted. How can you have assurance that you are pleasing God with your actions?

Application Questions for Teens

1. Paul was responsible for countless deaths of Christians, and yet God forgave him and restored him. What do you need forgiveness for in your life? What about restoration?
2. Paul was absolutely sure he was pleasing God by persecuting the Christians, yet this is not what God wanted. How can you have assurance that you are pleasing God with your actions? [following the Bible's instructions of loving God and loving people, praying, listening to counsel of wise people]
3. Have you ever had to overcome your past and change your ways to be a more faithful servant like Paul did?

Episode: Acts Series No. 9

Narrators: Barnabas, Paul

Primary Scriptures: Acts 13-14

Story Summary: The First Missionary Journey

Location: Roman Empire; Antioch, Cyprus, Galatia

Time: 30 AD Death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Pentecost.

33 AD (?) Paul becomes a Christian

46 AD Barnabas and Paul's "famine" visit to Jerusalem, start of First Missionary Journey

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Acts 13:3, 9, 36, 46, 48; 14:22-23, 27

It was about fifteen years after the resurrection of Jesus before the Christians made a determined, organized effort to take the Gospel to the ethnic groups other than the Jews, an undertaking often called the First Missionary Journey. This was possibly the first major effort by any religion to find followers among different ethnic groups and cultures in the Roman Empire.

After Barnabas and Paul took a relief offering from the church in Antioch to the church in Jerusalem, they returned to Antioch. They brought John Mark, a relative of Barnabas, with them from Jerusalem.

The Holy Spirit led the church at Antioch to set apart Barnabas and Paul for a special work. The church did so, and placed hands on them after prayer and fasting. They probably didn't know where the church was sending them, only that they were to be sent.

Soon, Barnabas, Paul and John Mark were on their way to Cyprus, the first stop on the First Missionary Journey. Barnabas was probably quite familiar with the island since he was from there.

They set a pattern they would follow for many years: share the Gospel with the Jews first, then the Gentiles. This pattern also allowed them to address the God-fearers, people who knew God from staying around the synagogues, but who were unwilling to convert to Judaism.

After traversing the island of Cyprus, the three men sailed north to modern-day Turkey, where John Mark chose to abandon the other two and go back to Jerusalem. This would prove to be an important event.

Paul and Barnabas continued into the mainland of Turkey where they shared the Gospel in many places and established many churches. Their success showed that God blessed their efforts to share the Gospel to non-Jewish people. With this good news, they returned to Antioch to find out what the Holy Spirit wanted them to do next.

Discussion Questions:

1. How long after Jesus' resurrection was the first of Paul's missionary journeys? Does that have any impact on how you think of the timing of the Church's development?
 2. How did Paul and Barnabas travel across Cyprus? What did many of the cities visited by Paul and Barnabas have in common?
 3. Who left Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey? How might this have influenced the relationship of Paul and Barnabas?
 4. What is the difference between Pisidian Antioch and Syrian Antioch?
 5. Who were the God-fearers, and why were they critical to Paul's evangelism strategy?
1. About 15 years. 2. On a Roman road. Located on major Roman roads. 3. John Mark strained it, Paul took over leadership from Barnabas about this time. 4. Syrian Antioch is where Paul left on the first missionary journey and was the place of an early major church; Pisidian Antioch is the location of one of the first cities visited on the first missionary journey. 5. Non-Jews who believed in God, but did not convert to Judaism. They often stayed near the synagogues and followed many of the teachings of the Jews about God, but did not become converts to Judaism.

Application Questions:

1. The Christians in Antioch were able to hear the leading of Holy Spirit. What could you do to hear Holy Spirit better?
2. Paul's strategy was to share the Gospel with the Jews first, then the Gentiles. Try to design a strategy to share the Gospel with your friends and family.
3. Paul didn't know if he would ever be back to see the people he evangelized. If you thought you were only going to get one chance to share the Gospel with someone, how would you try to get them to talk to you? What story in your life would you use to get them to know you better. How would you share the Gospel?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. We are not told whether John Mark embarked on the Missionary Journey on his own or was instructed to go by his mother. Which way do you perceive it happened? Do you think that had an impact on his decision to quit in the middle of his task?
2. Have you ever committed to doing something without understanding all of the costs involved? What did you do when you found out it was more costly than you expected?
3. The First Missionary Journey was filled with all kinds of hardships. What kinds of hardships have you endured for the sake of following Jesus? What are you willing to endure?
4. Almost everybody probably has a memory of quitting a project that they committed to do. Have you quit a project early? How does that make you feel? Did your decision affect other people involved?

Episode: Acts Series No. 10

Character: James

Primary Scriptures: Acts 15

Story Summary: The Council of Jerusalem

Location: Roman Empire; Jerusalem

Time: 30 AD Death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Pentecost.

46 AD Paul's "famine" visit to Jerusalem, start of First Missionary Journey

48 AD Council of Jerusalem

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Acts 15:5, 9-11, 19, 39

After a successful First Missionary Journey, it seems like all Christians would have been rejoicing with Paul and Barnabas that God was bringing in people of all ethnic groups. But many of the Jewish Christians were unhappy because they wanted all new believers to follow both the tenets of Christianity *and* the laws of Moses.

From a distance of two thousand years, this controversy may seem troubling, but not crucial. However, Paul and Barnabas understood that it struck to the heart of the Gospel and would greatly determine the growth of the Church. They believed that new Christians did not have to follow the laws of Moses.

The controversy came to a head in Antioch. Peter was visiting the city, rejoicing that so many Gentiles were being saved and quite satisfied to spend time in the company of the converted Gentiles who did *not* follow the laws of Moses. However, when Jewish Christians criticized him for doing so, he quit fraternizing with the Gentile converts. This insinuated that these converts were not true Christians, which incensed Paul. The church at Antioch appointed Paul and Barnabas to meet with the Christians leaders in Jerusalem to address this question.

This first great confrontation among the Christians was addressed at the so-called Council of Jerusalem. After a significant amount of discussion, it was agreed among the leaders that new Christians did not have to follow the laws of Moses. This ruling was given by James and cemented his leadership position.

This determination to open up the practices of Christianity was crucial in its growth. Now, there were no hindrances to keep people from coming to faith in Jesus. The men did not have to be circumcised. Nobody had to follow the dietary laws, rules of feasts, and complicated sacrifices. Christians truly had freedom in Christ.

Paul and Barnabas could not wait to take the letter from the leaders and resume their evangelical efforts.

Discussion Questions:

1. What were other names for the James who led the church in Jerusalem? Why did the James in *Acts* need to be distinguished by name?
 2. Who got a special visit from Jesus after his resurrection?
 3. Was James the Brother of Jesus an original apostle? Did he become one later?
 4. Why was the church in Jerusalem so poor in the late 40's AD?
 5. What was the reason for the Council of Jerusalem?
 6. Why was it important to Paul that Christians did not have to follow the laws of Moses?
-
1. James the Brother of Jesus; James the Just. So as not to be confused with James the Son of Zebedee or James the Son of Alphaeus who were both original apostles. 2. James. 3. No. Probably not, but was treated about on the same level. 4. Early believers sold all their goods, when persecution arose the economically well-off Christians probably left, and they had to replicate the Jewish social system that cared for the poor. 5. To determine whether Gentiles had to follow all of the laws of Moses when they became Christians. 6. He wanted to eliminate any hindrances that kept people from coming to faith in Jesus, he knew people were saved by faith instead of by following rules.

Application Questions:

1. Peter chose not to eat with the Gentile converts so he wouldn't look bad in the eyes of the Jewish Christians. Are you doing anything in your life to make you look good, but is actually hypocritical?
2. Paul tended to use his intellect instead of his heart. Which do you tend to use? How can you better incorporate the other one?
3. James's family made a business decision that cost them money but that gave them the ability to serve the poor. Have you ever made a similar decision? In what ways are you prepared to do just that?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. James's story shows how beautifully we can care for one another when we put aside differences and work together. How are you working toward unity with those in your life with whom you have disagreements?
2. The Bible makes it clear that Christians are to live lives of obedience and purity. How do you know when you are doing that or when you are just following rules to be following them?
3. James surely regretted not spending more time listening to Jesus about important matters. Who in your life should you be listening to? How could you spend more time with that person?

Episode: Acts Series No. 11

Narrator: Philip of Caesarea

Primary Scriptures: Acts 9:40

Story Summary: A description of the influential city of Caesarea

Location: Roman Empire; Caesarea

Time: 10 BC Caesarea founded by Herod the Great

30 AD Death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Pentecost.

48 AD Council of Jerusalem

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Acts 8:40; 10:1; 21:8-9; 23:23

Two cities in Israel had remarkable influence on the growth of the early church. The first was Jerusalem, the home of the Temple and the Jewish leadership. The church started in Jerusalem, but soon began to spread to other places because of persecution by the Jewish leaders.

The second most influential city in Israel was Caesarea, a port city on the Mediterranean Sea. Caesarea was built by Herod the Great shortly before the birth of Jesus. As the only deep-water port on the west coast of Israel, it exerted tremendous influence over Israel's economy, and Herod's ownership of the city was a main cause of his immense wealth.

Caesarea was on the Via Maris, the most famous trading route across Israel. The ancient Via Maris went north out of Egypt, up the coast of Israel, and north through Lebanon. One important spur off of the Via Maris went northeast to the Sea of Galilee, along the north edge by Capernaum, north past Hazor, and east to Damascus. In Damascus it met up with the King's Highway.

Although the Bible never mentions the Via Maris by name, it is clear that the trading route controlled many aspects of life in Israel. It was probably the reason why Jesus chose to locate his ministry in Capernaum and was instrumental in Israel having a good economy in the time of Herod the Great.

Caesarea's location and function as a deep-water port made it an ideal hub for spreading the Gospel. Philip the Evangelist probably lived in Caesarea during virtually all of his ministry. He is one reason that Caesarea was such a critical city for the Christians: instead of Philip having to travel, the travelers came to Philip—a strategy Paul would use in Ephesus.

Discussion Questions:

1. Who built Caesarea Maritima? What else did they build?
 2. What made Caesarea so strategic?
 3. Why did the Romans prefer Caesarea over Jerusalem?
 4. What is the difference in Caesarea Maritima and Caesarea Philippi?
 5. In the video, you learned a lot about ancient boat travel. Does that change the way you think about the missionary journeys? Why or why not?
 6. Who lived in Caesarea? Why was that helpful?
 7. When, if ever, did Philip move to Caesarea permanently?
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1. Herod the Great. Temple Mount, Masada palace, Herodium. 2. Only deep-water port in this part of Mediterranean Sea, controlled the strategic Via Maris trade route. 3. On the sea, easier to get to Rome, a Roman center of government, didn't have to deal with quarrelsome Jews as much. 4. Caesarea Maritima was on the ocean. Caesarea Philippi is near Mount Hermon in northern Israel and was place of Peter's confession of the Messiah. 6. Philip and Cornelius. Good place for Philip to help traveling Christians, and to help Paul when he was imprisoned there. 7. The Bible doesn't say, but it appears he moved there shortly after converting the Ethiopian eunuch, Acts 8:40.

Application Questions:

1. The early Christians tended to interpret events as if God was acting through them. When an important event is reported, is your tendency to think that God was in control or that things just happen?
2. It seems as if the Holy Spirit intentionally located Philip in Caesarea long before he was needed so that he could develop relationships ahead of time. Can you point to something in your life that is preparing you to be more useful for God?
3. Philip and the Christians in Caesarea provided rest and hospitality as a form of ministry. In what ways are you prepared to do the same? Can you identify with them? Why or why not?
4. Philip had to be ready to minister to anyone God brought into his path. How aware are you of similar opportunities in your own life? How can you be more responsive?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Can you make a compelling case that Herod the Great was actually a good king?
2. What do you suppose life would be like as a child of Philip the Evangelist?
3. It seems as if the Holy Spirit intentionally located Philip in Caesarea long before he was needed so that he could develop relationships ahead of time. Can you point to something in your life that is preparing you to be more useful for God?
4. Philip had to be ready to minister to anyone God brought into his path. How aware are you of similar opportunities in your own life? How can you be more responsive?

Episode: Acts Series No. 12

Narrators: Paul, Barnabas, Silas

Primary Scriptures: Acts 15-17

Story Summary: The first part of the Second Missionary Journey: Antioch to Berea

Location: Roman Empire; Galacia, Macedonia

Time: 30 AD Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives
46 AD Paul's "famine visit" to Jerusalem; First Missionary Journey starts
48 AD Council at Jerusalem; Start of Second Missionary Journey
51 AD End of Second Missionary Journey

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Acts 15:36, 39; 16:1, 30-31; 17:6, 11

After the Council at Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas continued to be concerned about the continuing discipleship of the Gentiles they had converted, as well as being enthusiastic about spreading the Gospel further, so they decided to return to many of the places they went on their First Missionary Journey. They had a specific goal of sharing the letter from the Christian leaders proving that new converts to Christianity did not have to follow the laws of Moses.

Their trip did not get started as they had hoped. Paul and Barnabas had an argument over John Mark joining them again. Paul was adamantly against that because John Mark had abandoned them on the First Missionary Journey. Consequently, Paul took Silas and continued with the original plan, while Barnabas took John Mark and went to Cyprus. Their dedication to spread the Gospel was more important than their personal differences.

This is the last mention of Barnabas in *Acts*. It is possible that God wanted Paul and Barnabas to part for at least two reasons. By splitting, they could present the Gospel to twice as many people. Also, John Mark very likely needed a tremendous amount of training before he could reach his full potential. John Mark's successful missional life indicates that Barnabas provided that training. The mention of Barnabas in 1 Corinthians 9:4-6 indicates Barnabas was still active as a preacher into the mid-50's AD.

There are two parts in this video episode that need special attention. First, the Bible says very little about Silas, but this video episode is written to give Silas a very definitive personality that may conflict with many people's preconceived notions.

Second, the video shows Luke first meeting Paul at Troas, at which time and place he is converted to Christianity. Acts 16:10 is the very subtle passage that provides the basis for the storyline, the first of the "we" passages, where Luke's narrative goes from "they" to "we." The Bible does not specify whether this is the first time Luke met Paul, whether Luke was already a Christian, or if this is the time Luke became a Christian.

Discussion Questions:

1. Where did Paul go after the First Council at Jerusalem?
 2. Why did Paul leave Antioch and go on the Second Missionary Journey?
 3. Who was and was not involved in the Second Missionary Journey?
 4. Paul and Barnabas parted for the good of the Gospel. Have you ever had to separate yourself from someone you value in order for some greater good? What came of it?
 5. Who did Paul and Silas pick up as traveling companions on this journey?
 6. Do you think Luke was converted by Paul at Troas, or was he already a Christian who just met up with Paul at Troas? What evidence do you have for your conclusion?
-
1. Antioch. 2. Spread word about results of Council, start new churches. 3. Paul took Silas; Barnabas and John Mark did not go with Paul but went to Cyprus instead. 5. Timothy, Luke. 6. Leaving Luke behind at Philippi indicates he might have been a mature Christian, or maybe that he was originally from Philippi.

Application Questions:

1. Barnabas and Paul both thought they were right about the issue of John Mark. If you had been a third-party judge, which one would you have ruled in favor of? Was their solution good or bad? If you had been Barnabas, would you have been angry at Paul for not giving you the benefit of the doubt after all of your past history with each other?
2. Paul sometimes changed up his usual preaching methodology on this journey, preaching on the roadside rather than starting in the synagogue. Have you ever stepped out of your normal routine at the prompting of the Holy Spirit? What happened? If not, in what ways are you prepared to do so?
3. What do you make of Paul and Silas staying put during a supernatural jail break in order to preach the gospel? Would you have the same perspective? Why or why not?
4. Who could you be training now to take your place in something you are doing?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Timothy valued sharing the Gospel with the Jews more than going through the pain of circumcision. Is there something in your life that you value that much?
2. Paul had great zeal, but he was responsive when the Holy Spirit kept them from preaching in Asia. How can you be similarly responsive in your own life, even when the Holy Spirit seems to be curbing your zeal?
3. What do you make of Paul and Silas staying put during a supernatural jail break in order to preach the gospel? Would you have the same perspective? Why or why not?
4. Although the text doesn't show it, Timothy and Titus were probably both trying to be Paul's best assistant. How could they do that and keep a good relationship?

Episode: Acts Series No. 13

Narrator: Paul

Primary Scriptures: Acts 17-18

Story Summary: The second part of the Second Missionary Journey

Location: Roman Empire; Athens, Corinth

Time: 30 AD Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives
46 AD Paul's "famine visit" to Jerusalem; First Missionary Journey starts
48 AD Council at Jerusalem; Start of Second Missionary Journey
51 AD End of Second Missionary Journey

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Acts 17:21-23; 18:3, 24-26, 28

Modern readers often think of biblical Greece and Macedonia as the same country. In general, however, it's more accurate to think of biblical Macedonia as being the northern part of modern Greece, and biblical Greece as being the southern part of modern Greece. The second part of the Second Missionary Journey began when Paul left Macedonia and entered Greece.

Paul's first stop in Greece is a famous tourist stop now, just like it was then. When Paul entered Athens, he surely must have been disappointed. What was once a magnificent city had greatly deteriorated both in its infrastructure and its intellectual vitality.

The Golden Age of Athens was about 480-404 BC. During this time, Athens was a leading city-state, had a strong military, built massive temples and public buildings, and led the world in philosophy and art. Rome defeated Greece in 146 BC at the Battle of Corinth. From that point on, Rome sacked the country and reduced it to a shadow of its former self.

Paul's second stop in Greece was Corinth. Corinth had been a great rival of Rome before Rome destroyed it in 146 BC. Understanding its geographical importance, Rome rebuilt Corinth in 44 BC and made it a provincial capital.

In Paul's time, Corinth was an active trading center, well-known for providing all earthly pleasures to its many visitors and sailors. Corinth's many social excesses would wend their ways into the church and cause problems that Paul would have to address for many years.

In Corinth, Paul made close friends with two people who would greatly affect the growth of the Christian Church. Priscilla and Aquila were tentmakers, like Paul. Paul took the opportunity to influence the people he worked with. It seems like he had matured when it came to building and maintaining relationships.

Discussion Questions:

1. When Paul arrived in Athens, it was only a shabby shell of its former grandeur. How long had it been since the Golden Age of Athens?
 2. Why was Corinth an important city?
 3. What couple did Paul meet in Corinth? Where had they previously lived? What would their previous residence qualify them to do?
 4. What was Paul doing in Corinth before Timothy arrived with funds?
-
1. Several hundred years. Athens was at its height around 480-404 BC and had declined since then. 2. It controlled both ports at the ends of the Isthmus of Corinth connecting the Peloponnese peninsula with mainland Greece. Crossing the Isthmus greatly shortened the travel to Rome. 3. Priscilla and Aquila. Rome. Go back to Rome and start a church. 4. Working as a tentmaker with Priscilla and Aquila. After Timothy arrived with money, Paul could probably afford to preach and teach on a full-time basis.

Application Questions:

1. Paul used his intellect and knowledge of Greece to begin his discussions with the Athenians. He was prepared by being educated. How can you prepare yourself to share the Gospel?
2. Paul used his job and skills to make disciples of Priscilla and Aquila, a couple that would work with Paul for many years to come. How can you use your job to make disciples? Do you always have to make a gospel presentation or can you begin by living a Christian lifestyle?
3. The Athenians' religious beliefs were influenced and created by the culture in which they lived. In what ways have your own beliefs been similarly influenced? How does Christianity differ from this cultural creation? How is it the same?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Priscilla and Aquila lived in the party capital of the world. How were they able to maintain their good marriage in that environment?
2. How can you follow Priscilla and Aquila's example of being obedient to God and resisting temptation in your own life?
3. The philosophies of Greece were found empty and wanting. Can any philosophy have meaning if it leaves out God? If the universe is a summation of random events as many teach, how can it have meaning or purpose?

Episode: Acts Series No. 14

Narrator: Timothy

Primary Scriptures: Acts 15-18

Story Summary: Timothy's story

Location: Roman Empire; Galatia, Macedonia, Greece

Time:

30 AD	Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives
46 AD	Paul's "famine visit" to Jerusalem; First Missionary Journey starts
48 AD	Council at Jerusalem; Start of Second Missionary Journey
51 AD	End of Second Missionary Journey

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Acts 15:39, 16:1-2, 3; 17:14-15; 18:5

From the beginning, Paul followed the pattern that he had learned as a Jew – the older men needed to train the younger men to take their place. Paul's first successful trainee was likely Titus, and his second was Timothy. We don't know how Paul met Titus, but it is likely he met Timothy or his family on the First Missionary Journey.

Timothy was a perfect example of the way Christianity conflicted with other cultures and religions. He was convinced that he wanted to evangelize the Jews, and he knew he could be effective doing that only if he qualified to enter the synagogues. Since his mother was Jewish, Timothy would qualify to do that once he was circumcised.

In the Greek culture, however, it was considered abhorrent to disfigure your body in any way, and circumcision was one of the worst disfigurements a man could have. Timothy's father was Greek and would not allow his son to be circumcised at birth. Scripture indicates that Timothy's father was not in the picture, but we don't know whether he died or lived somewhere else.

Timothy had a choice to make, and the overtones of that choice were much more important than the immense pain he would suffer. If he chose to be circumcised, he could more easily evangelize the Jews, but he would dishonor his father. If he chose to remain uncircumcised, he would honor his father, but would be hampered in his evangelistic efforts. Timothy chose to be circumcised.

As the Second Missionary Journey progressed, Timothy was entrusted several times with helping young churches grow and quickly became like a son to Paul.

Although Timothy has a reputation for being young when he joined Paul and Silas, we do not have a way to know his age definitively. This episode portrays him as a young man with a sensitive stomach, a description derived from 1 Timothy 5:23 where Paul instructs Timothy to stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of his stomach and frequent illnesses. We do not have any guidance on when Timothy began having those health issues.

Discussion Questions:

1. What nationality was Timothy's father, and why was that important?
 2. Why did Timothy choose to be circumcised?
 3. What city did Paul first leave Timothy in by himself to help guide the new church?
 4. What is the difference between Philippi and Caesarea Philippi?
 5. Why was it necessary to leave people behind to support new churches?
-
1. Greek. Greeks were against circumcision or any other thing that disfigured the body. 2. to make it easier to testify to the Jews. 3. Philippi. 4. Philippi is in Macedonia and was a city visited on the Second Missionary Journey. Caesarea Philippi is in northern Israel and was the place of Peter's confession of Jesus being Messiah. 5. They had to overcome old habits; learn about Christianity; standards had to be established about how church members should behave.

Application Questions:

1. Have you ever been involved with a church project where people clashed because of their different backgrounds or cultures? How was the problem addressed? In retrospect, how could it have been addressed better?
2. How much of what you like about your church has to do with culture versus Biblical example?
3. How would you feel about your teenage child(ren) leaving your home tomorrow to go travel as an intern with a vibrant leader in the faith? How would they feel?
4. Paul and his companions seemed determined to proclaim the truth even if they caused riots or landed them in jail. Do you have that same determination? Why or why not?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Timothy had to choose between honoring his father or honoring his mission. How would that choice be influenced if his father was dead? What if he had abandoned Timothy? How does your relationship with your parent(s) influence your faith choices?
2. How would you feel about leaving your home tomorrow to go travel as an intern with a vibrant leader in the faith? How would your parent(s) feel?
3. Timothy was obedient to Paul from the start. If you are in America, that often goes against societal norms. Do you consider yourself an obedient person to those in authority over you, or do you like to think that nobody has authority over you?
4. Is it better to follow the authority of those wiser than you or reject authority and do things your own way?

Episode: Acts Series No. 15

Narrators: Tabitha, Lydia, Priscilla

Primary Scriptures: Acts 9, 16, 18

Story Summary: The stories of Tabitha, Lydia, and Priscilla

Location: Roman Empire; Joppa, Philippi, Corinth, Ephesus

Time: 30 AD Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives

46 AD First Missionary Journey starts

48 AD Council at Jerusalem; Start of Second Missionary Journey

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Acts 9:36, 39, 42; 16:14-15; 18:2, 26

The book of *Acts* is primarily written about the male leaders of the early church. As you watch this episode, think of the different cultures of these prominent women and the different times they appear in the history of the Church.

The first story is about Tabitha, also known as Dorcas. She was probably an Israeli Jew before becoming a Christian, and we don't know if she had ever been married. Her story takes place between Saul's conversion and the conversion of Cornelius, which is between about 33 AD and 40 AD, and probably closer to 40 AD. The story is found in Acts 9:36-43.

Tabitha gives us an example of the Christian life as one of servanthood. She voluntarily served the poor people of her town, and her actions were so powerful that people were sent to Peter for him to do something upon her sudden and untimely death. We don't know that they asked him to raise Tabitha from the dead, but he apparently thought that was the best solution.

The second story is about Lydia. Lydia lived in the city of Philippi in the country of Macedonia, now the northern part of Greece, and her story coincides with the Second Missionary Journey of Paul, approximately in 49-50 AD, about twenty years after the death of Jesus. Her conversion story is found in Acts 16:11-15, 40. She very likely was a God-fearer prior to meeting Paul, although she may have not known anything about God. Like Tabitha, we don't know if Lydia had ever been married.

Lydia is known for responding to the Gospel immediately, bringing her family and servants to faith, and for being an influential church member. With her business background, she was probably very valuable in helping to tend a growing church.

The third story is about Priscilla, the wife of Aquila. Paul met the couple in Corinth on the Second Missionary Journey. Her story can be read in Acts 18:1-4 in Corinth, in Acts 18:18 in Ephesus where Paul leaves them, and Acts 18:24-26. Priscilla and Aquila are always mentioned together. Paul obviously trusted them to lead their churches through their teaching and their behavior.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is one reason that Joppa may have had poor people during the time of Tabitha/Dorcas?
 2. Who raised Tabitha from the dead?
 3. Why was Priscilla living in Corinth when Paul went there on his second missionary journey?
 4. Where did Paul leave Priscilla and Aquila to start a new church?
 5. Why was Lydia wealthy? What advantages and what disadvantages would she have had as a new Christian?
 6. How did the three different cultures of these three women affect their actions and thoughts?
 7. Sometimes Aquila is mentioned first, and sometimes Priscilla is. Do you think that has any relevance?
1. Caesarea had displaced Joppa as the main sea port. 2. Peter. 3. Emperor Claudius had expelled the Jews from Rome. 4. Ephesus. 5. Purple cloth was a very expensive luxury item that she sold. 7. Possibly, the more important person was often mentioned first.

Application Questions:

1. Tabitha was known to be a great servant to the people in her life. If you died tomorrow, would you be remembered that way? If not, how would you be remembered?
2. Lydia and her coworkers took immediate action to follow Christ upon hearing the Gospel. What was your conversion experience like? Do you still have that level of zeal and joy today? If not, what can you do to reclaim it?
3. What traits can you insinuate that Priscilla and Aquila had that helped them have a successful marriage?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Tabitha served her friends but became the center of attention. Which would you rather be, a servant or the center of attention?
2. Lydia upended her entire lifestyle to follow Christ. What aspects of your lifestyle need to be upended in the name of Jesus? Are you willing to follow him to those lengths?
3. What do you suppose others say and think about you? Do others say you are generous and a servant of the Lord, or do they say that you are self-serving?

Episode: Acts Series No. 16

Narrators: Luke, Timothy, Philip the evangelist

Primary Scriptures: Acts 19-20

Story Summary: The Third Missionary Journey

Location: Roman Empire; Galatia, Macedonia, Greece

Time: 30 AD Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives
 46 AD First Missionary Journey starts
 48 – 51 AD Second Missionary Journey
 52-57 AD Third Missionary Journey

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Acts 19:5-6, 10, 25; 20:24, 35

Paul was anxious to follow up on the success of the Second Missionary Journey, so he didn't wait very long to start another journey. It seems as if Paul had much to do and knew he was running out of time. Although the description in *Acts* of the Third Missionary Journey is not extensive, the trip was more than twice as long in calendar time as the Second Missionary Journey, and accomplished much, including the writing of several of the books in the New Testament.

At the end of the Second Missionary Journey, Paul was in Antioch; Priscilla and Aquilla were in Ephesus where they met Apollos; Luke was probably in Philippi; and the location of Silas and Timothy remains unknown, although they were last mentioned in Corinth with Paul. During Luke's description of the Third Missionary Journey, the action almost always centers on Paul, making it unclear what most of the others were doing.

Paul spent almost three years in Ephesus teaching and preaching. Since Ephesus was a major city, Paul was able to affect more people in one place than by traveling around. While in Ephesus, Paul seemed to have intensified his training efforts with a lot of young men. It is likely that many churches were planted throughout the province of Asia during this time period, including the churches mentioned in *Revelation*.

The church in Corinth continued to have a long list of problems. Paul and the other Christian leaders exerted a lot of efforts to guide them, including personal trips and writing of multiple letters.

The Christians' effects on the city of Ephesus were dramatic, even though the city was large and affluent, and since so many people quit worshiping Artemis—and quit paying for the privilege of doing so—the Christians' teachings resulted in a change in the whole city's economy. Once more, Paul was forced to leave, continuing the Third Missionary Journey in Macedonia and Greece.

Discussion Questions:

1. About how long was the Third Missionary Journey? Of that time, how long did Paul stay in Ephesus?
 2. What were some of the major happenings during the Third Missionary Journey?
 3. How did Paul know they had been effective in Ephesus?
 4. What is the most western distant city Paul visited on both the Second and Third Missionary Journeys?
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1. 5 years. 3 years. 2. training men, dealing with problems at Corinth and other churches, gathering relief funds for Jerusalem church. 3. the incomes from the silversmiths had decreased so much that they caused a riot. The Christians were no longer buying idols.
 4. Corinth

Application Questions:

1. The Holy Spirit gave the Christian leaders audiences with influential people of the time. If you had such an audience now, what would you say? Write down your thoughts.
2. Paul had the authority to teach the Corinthians because they had seen his personal example, not just because he was an apostle. If someone followed you last week, how would they have viewed your personal example?
3. The Corinthians had trouble with worldly living. Is there some part of worldly living that you are having a hard time giving up? Why do you value it so highly?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. The Holy Spirit gave the Christian leaders audiences with influential people of the time. If you had such an audience now, what would you say? Write down your thoughts.
2. Paul taught in the heat of the day when it was surely uncomfortable. Are you willing to be inconvenienced and uncomfortable in order to learn more about the Bible or to bring others to Christ? Have you ever gone on a mission trip to a place that made you uncomfortable so you could serve God and share the Word with others?
3. Paul knew he was effective in Ephesus because the income of the idol makers decreased. How can you know if you are being effective in sharing the Gospel?
4. Paul and the other Christians stayed in Ephesus but were untouched by their pagan surroundings. What concrete steps are you taking to retain your faith in the midst of surroundings that would tempt you otherwise?

Episode: Acts Series No. 17

Narrators: Paul, Luke

Primary Scriptures: Acts 21-28

Story Summary: Paul's trip to Jerusalem, his imprisonment and trials, trip to Rome

Location: Roman Empire; Jerusalem, Caesarea, Malta

Time:

30 AD	Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives
46 AD	First Missionary Journey starts
48 – 51 AD	Second Missionary Journey
52-57 AD	Third Missionary Journey
57-59 AD	Paul arrested in Jerusalem; Paul imprisoned in Caesarea
59-62 AD	Paul sent to Rome and imprisoned for two years

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Acts 22:1; 24:25; 25:12; 26:28-29, 32; 27:23-24; 28:15-16, 23; 28:28-31

In his infinite wisdom, God had a plan in mind for Paul that no human could have envisioned. When Jesus first called Paul, he said Paul would proclaim the name of Jesus to the Gentiles and their kings. It was now time for Paul to fulfill that prophecy.

By the time of his final trip to Jerusalem, Paul had been a Christian for about twenty-five years. Even after that long period away from practicing Judaism, he still qualified to go into the Temple area and follow certain Jewish rituals. Apparently, he never gave up his desire to preach to the Jews about Jesus.

After a clash with the Jews, Paul was imprisoned by the Romans in Jerusalem, then transferred to Caesarea. He was kept in Caesarea for about two years before he was sent to Rome, a trip full of adventure and danger.

Paul was under arrest in Rome for about another two years. The Bible never says when Paul wrote his letters to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, but while some scholars believe Paul may have written one or more of those while imprisoned in Caesarea, others believe he wrote them in Rome.

Acts ends rather abruptly. When you read the last two verses of the book, pay attention to whether you perceive Paul was still in jail or if he had been released. Try to imagine why Luke ended *Acts* so abruptly when he had not been abrupt throughout the rest of the book.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why did Paul go to Jerusalem after his Third Missionary Journey?
 2. Why did the Romans take Paul from Jerusalem to Caesarea?
 3. How long was Paul imprisoned at Caesarea? Who can be inferred to have aided Paul during his imprisonment?
 4. Who went to Rome with Paul on his first imprisonment?
 5. At least how long was Paul imprisoned in Rome the first time?
-
1. to deliver the relief funds he had gathered, and possibly to fulfill a vow. 2 to save his life because the Jews wanted to kill him. 3. Two years. Philip and his family. 4. Luke. 5. Two years.

Application Questions:

1. Paul went to Jerusalem even though Agabus prophesied danger. Have you ever been so committed to God that you obeyed despite the possibility of danger? What happened? Did God prove faithful? Would you do it again?
2. Paul wisely appealed to his Roman citizenship *and* his Jewish heritage to manipulate the system in order to gain an audience before the highest authorities. What are some systems in which you currently can use your position for the cause of Christ?
3. Paul took the occasion while in custody in Rome to spread the Gospel. How can you look for the opportunity to share the Gospel in difficult circumstances?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Paul went to Jerusalem even though Agabus prophesied danger. Have you ever been so committed to God that you obeyed despite the possibility of danger? What happened? Did God prove faithful? Would you do it again?
2. Paul's guard took Paul's advice when the ship was about to capsize. How did Paul get that much moral authority? How can you increase your moral authority among your friends?
3. Paul took the occasion while in custody in Rome to spread the Gospel. How can you look for the opportunity to share the Gospel in difficult circumstances?

Episode: Acts Series No. 18

Narrator: Theophilus

Primary Scriptures: Acts 28

Story Summary: Some thoughts about what happens after Acts ends

Location: Roman Empire

Time: 30 AD	Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives
46 AD	First Missionary Journey starts
48 – 51 AD	Second Missionary Journey
52-57 AD	Third Missionary Journey
57-59 AD	Paul arrested in Jerusalem; Paul imprisoned in Caesarea
59-62 AD	Paul sent to Rome and imprisoned for two years
66 AD	Start of First Jewish-Roman War
70 AD	Destruction of the Temple

The book of *Acts* abruptly ends with Paul possibly still being imprisoned in Rome. What happens then?

There is no direct information in the Bible about what happens to Paul after the end of *Acts*. From 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and church traditions, many scholars have surmised that Paul was released from prison after two years, then actively evangelized for another five years before being martyred by Nero.

This may be the case, but there is still a little mystery about the cause of his death even if it is later. Apparently, the Christians were relatively small in number, were being peaceful, and were not doing anything illegal. Why would the Roman rulers have been intent on executing Paul?

Church historians seldom talk enough about the First Jewish-Roman War, which is surprising since the Romans probably placed the Jews and Christians in the same category. The war began in 66 AD over disputes concerning taxation and Roman incursion into the Temple. The conflict quickly escalated, and the Romans sent Vespasian and Titus to quell the rebellion. They used sieges and force to slowly take control of all Judea. While Jerusalem held out for many months, it was finally captured in 70 AD, when the Temple was destroyed. Isn't it possible that the Christian leaders—including Paul—got identified with this rebellion?

In this episode, Theophilus surmises there may be only about 10,000 Christians in 62 AD. This is a much lower number than most modern Christians think because of there being 5,000 a short time after Jesus' death. However, at the time of Paul's jailing, consider how many churches were mentioned in the Bible, and how many members each church had. Unfortunately, we have no hard information about the numbers of Christians existing as the church grew.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do we know what happened to Paul after his first imprisonment at Rome?]
 2. Why did Luke possibly end *Acts* so abruptly?
 3. Did Luke write any more books after *Acts*?
 4. How might the First Jewish-Roman War in 66 AD have affected the Christians?
-
1. No, but from comments in some of his letters, we can infer he was released from prison and then evangelized for several more years. Many believe Paul was martyred by Nero in 68 AD. 2. he ran out of room on the scroll, he was finished with the story, he might have intended to write another account about Paul. 3. We have no evidence that he did. 4. The Romans probably associated the Christians with the Jews.

Application Questions:

1. Christianity is the dominant religion in Western culture, so it can be difficult to put ourselves in the shoes of those early Christians who were scattered and small in number. What would you find attractive about Christianity at that time? How can you bring that into your life today, in this culture?
2. Theophilus theorizes a much easier, less complicated way of preaching the gospel, but Jesus wanted to use people empowered by Holy Spirit. Why do you think this was the case? How can you go about living out your Holy Spirit mandate?
3. Think about some of the characters you've met over the course of this study. Which ones do you most identify with? Why? How can you live out their faithfulness today?
4. Christians took advantage of Rome's infrastructure to grow the early Church. What are some avenues of infrastructure in our world you can use to increase discipleship?
5. Theophilus offers a challenge: make sure you don't lose sight of Jesus while following the exploits of Paul. How can you keep Jesus in the forefront of your heart and mind?

Application Questions for Teens:

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