

ACTS

THE GREAT COMMISSION IN
ACTION



PART 1

THE GREAT COMMISSION IN ACTION

ACTS

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THE GREAT COMMISSION IN ACTION

ACTS

Getting the Most Out of Your Study Guide:

We are thankful that you are journeying through the book of Acts with us, learning about the impact of Jesus's life, death, resurrection, and ascension on the world, and seeing how the power of the Holy Spirit transforms the hearts and lives of men, women, and children in the early church as they hear the gospel proclaimed.

Acts: The Great Commission in Action is designed as a companion guide to the sermon series on *The Acts of the Apostles*. Each week the pastors will preach through the passages in the book of Acts. The questions in this study guide will aid Renew Groups as they seek to learn more about who God is, what he has already done for us, and what he, through Jesus, has promised to continue doing.

The study guide is broken into several parts: the **Introduction**, the **Lessons**, and the **Appendix**.

The **Introduction** will give context for this book of the Bible, and will help you see how Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament.

Beginning with **Lesson 1**, each lesson has four parts: **Living Under the Word**, **Living With One Another**, **Living Out Our Faith**, and **Prayer**.

In **Living Under the Word** you can record sermon notes each week. Write down truths that the pastors share, or specific verses to reflect on further. You may also write down questions to ask your group.

Living With One Another begins with an **Opening Discussion** question. These questions are meant to help the group connect and learn more about one another. After your opening discussion, take time to share your reflections on the sermon. What resonated with you? What questions do you have? Is there more you would like to learn about the passage? Following the sermon reflections are the study questions. It is most beneficial to answer these questions on your own before your group meets. This preparation will enrich your time together and will allow for flexibility as you move through the lessons. The goal for your group is not to walk through the answers to every question, but to gain an understanding of the big idea of the lesson as you study Scripture together.

Living Out Our Faith challenges you to prayerfully consider the implications this lesson has for your life today. What is the Spirit calling you to do? What does it look like to walk in faith? Who needs to hear the hope of the gospel *right now*? Is there an area of sin you need to confess? These questions take time to consider, so be sure to give yourself time to consider them. Be specific in your answers. Be vulnerable.

The final section, **Prayer**, guides us in our individual prayers and in our group prayers.

At the end of the study guide you will find an **Appendix** which contains helpful documents. The **Idolatry List** contains a list of idols, places, and things where we seek our worth and value apart from God—things we worship and serve other than God. The **Questions to Ask of Any Scripture Passage** includes questions that help understand the implications of the passage for our daily lives. **Preaching the Gospel to Yourself Everyday** is a section you might want to read again and again.

We encourage you to purchase a copy of the **Illuminated Scripture Journal of Acts** in order to take notes on the blank pages and easily highlight the text.

THE GREAT COMMISSION IN ACTION

ACTS 1:1-5

INTRODUCTION

Living Under the Word

Sermon Notes

Living With One Another

Opening Discussion: Take a few minutes to introduce yourselves. Share your name, something interesting about yourself, and what you hope to get out of this group.

Introduction to Acts:

Acts: *The Great Commission in Action.* Life, hope, glory, power that gives courage to act, tell, and trust. Again and again in the book of Acts, and throughout all of Scripture, God's work in the lives of his people is manifested in mighty and visible ways. What a blessing and gift it is to open the Word of God together and to learn more about our great God.

As we journey together through Acts, let's enjoy the process and take our time. We'll stop and reflect on how our Triune God moves and works as he transforms the lives of his people. We'll learn more about the struggles and joys of the people of the early church. We'll see the people of God equipped and empowered to share the message of the gospel with those they meet.

The amazing truth is that Acts is one chapter in God's grand story found in Genesis to Revelation. In Acts, the apostles will continually point us back to the Old Testament, as we learn that Jesus is the fulfillment of all that was written there. Jesus's life, death, and resurrection also establish the New Covenant - what a beautiful story of redemption and love, of repentance and forgiveness, of life and hope. This story shapes us and defines us. In the words of Nancy Guthrie,

...this story shapes and defines where I came from, why I am the way I am, what my life is like day to day, and what is ahead for me in the future. It is this story that explains my deepest joys, as well as the empty places where contentment can be elusive. It is this story that explains my drive to be somebody and my sensitivity to feeling like a nobody. It explains what makes me cry and why I can laugh. This story explains my desire to look good, my craving for the good life, my longing for home and security, and much more.

*And whether you know it or not, this same grand story- the story found in the sixty-six books of the Bible - shapes the world you live in, who you are, and what you want, too. That's why you and I need to know this story. It is where we find the answers to our questions about what really matters now and into eternity. This story has the power to change everything about our stories (**Even Better than Eden**, pages 11-12).*

Let's open our Bibles and learn more about this story.

1. Read Acts. As you read, highlight or mark names, places, themes, and big ideas. Tracing themes helps illuminate the threads of God's grand story of redemption. Look for these themes: proclamation of God's Word, resurrection, repentance and forgiveness, the power of the Holy Spirit, the church/body of Christ.
2. Use a commentary or study Bible to give you context for this book of the Bible. Write down what you learn.
 - a. Who wrote the book?
 - b. What does Scripture tell us about the author? See Colossians 4:14, 2 Timothy 4:11, and Philemon 24.
 - c. To whom was the book written? Who was he?
 - d. Why did the author write this book? What was his purpose?
 - e. When was the book written?
 - f. What are some of the themes of the book?

The Acts of the Apostles follows Luke's gospel account of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection, and tells the story of the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the first followers of Jesus. The church is established as believers proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to both Jews and Gentiles.

Throughout the book Luke shows us how Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament. Jesus appeared to his disciples after he had risen from the dead. Jesus's resurrection fulfilled Old Testament prophecies, and testified to the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

3. a. In Acts, Luke continues telling the story of Jesus. At the end of the Gospel of Luke we get a glimpse into a conversation between Jesus and two of his followers as they walked on the road to Emmaus. Read Luke 24:13-32 and describe what happened.

b. How did they respond?

4. Think back to the opening discussion question, *what do you hope to get out of this group?* In light of what we have discussed today, is there anything you might add to your earlier response?
5. Take some time to pray together as a group. Pray for a deeper love for God's Word. Pray for love for one another. Pray that God will unite your group this year as you learn together. Pray that the Spirit will give you eyes to see the people around you and move you to reach out with the hope of the gospel.

THE GREAT COMMISSION IN ACTION

ACTS 1:1-11

LESSON 1

Living Under the Word

Sermon Notes

Living With One Another

Opening Discussion:

Have you experienced an event that impacted your life in a transforming way?

Reflect on the sermon. What resonated with you? What questions do you have? What would you like to know more about?

Read Acts 1:1-11.

1. In verse 1, Luke, the author of both Acts and Luke, begins by telling the reader that he is continuing the narrative about *what Jesus began to do and teach* as recorded in the Gospel According to Luke. What does Luke 1:1-4 tell us about the historical accuracy of what Luke has written?
2. Read Luke 24:36-39. In this passage you will read the final words of Jesus recorded by his disciple Luke. Describe what was happening and when these events occurred. How did the disciples respond to Jesus in verse 37? How did Jesus calm their fears?
3. In order to deepen our understanding of the narrative of the book of Acts, we will look to other Scriptures in both the Old and New Testament. Luke helps us see how Jesus fulfills the Old Testament prophecies and establishes the New

Covenant. Compare Luke 24:44-49 with Acts 1:1-3. What themes do you see in both passages? Why are these themes significant?

4. One of these themes is Jesus's resurrection. Why is the resurrection of Jesus foundational to the Christian faith?

5. Looking back to Luke 24:49, Jesus says to his disciples, "And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." Read Acts 1:4-5. Based on these details, what more can you add to what Jesus told his disciples about what to do and what to expect?

6. Write down the question that the disciples asked Jesus in Acts 1:6. What were they hoping for?

7. Were the disciples misguided in their desire to see the Kingdom of God restored? Why or why not? See Psalm 72, Psalm 89, and Isaiah 40-55.

8. How did Jesus answer them in Acts 1:7-8? Where did he want their focus?

9. Acts 1:8 clearly states Jesus's mission. According to this verse, what is this mission? What is Jesus calling the disciples to be and to do? Where does he say his mission must take place?

Note: Acts 1:8 outlines the rest of the book of Acts, *“But you will receive power when my Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”* Jesus tells his disciples that they will receive power to share the message of the gospel first in Jerusalem and finally to the ends of the earth. As we study the book of Acts, remembering this outline will be helpful.

The Book of Acts

<i>You will be my witnesses in</i>	<i>Region</i>
Acts 1-7	Jerusalem
Acts 8-12	Judea and Samaria
Acts 13-28	The Ends of the Earth

10. Describe what happened after Jesus said these things. What might the disciples have been thinking and feeling when they saw this?

11. How did Jesus’s ascension fulfill the prophecy found in Daniel 7:13-14?

12. What did Jesus’s ascension prove? See Philippians 2:6-11.

13. There are 3 distinct aspects of the ascension that will be helpful in understanding its significance. Read the following verses and identify these things:
 - a. Ephesians 1:20-23

b. Hebrews 4:14-5:10; 7:1-10:39

c. Ephesians 1:20; Mark 16:19

14. Is Jesus your Lord, Mediator, and King? How does Jesus being Lord/Mediator/King of your life change how you spend your time each day? In what ways does it reorder your priorities?

Living Out Our Faith

15. Does Jesus's command to the disciples have any meaning for us today? What are present day disciples of Jesus commanded to do?
- a. Who has discipled/is discipling you?
 - b. Who are you discipling?
16. Think about the impact of the witness of these twelve men. At the time Luke wrote these words, *we were the ends of the earth*. How has their faithfulness to share Christ with others impacted you personally?
17. The fact that Jesus is not dead, but is resurrected and ascended into heaven means that I

18. What idols get in the way of making Jesus Lord of your life? (See **Idols List** in the Appendix if you need help identifying the idols in your life.)

Prayer

Acts 1:14 says, "All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers."

The following Old Testament prayers would have been familiar to these new Christians. Read through them. Pray through them. Then write your own prayer.

The Priestly Blessing:

May the Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.

Numbers 6:24-26

The Song of Moses:

The Lord is my strength and my defense; He has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise Him, my father's God, and I will exalt Him. The Lord is a warrior; the Lord is His name. Exodus 15:2-3

No One Like God:

My heart rejoices in the Lord; in the Lord my horn is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance. There is no one holy like the Lord; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God.

1 Samuel 2:1-2

Prayer of Jonah when he was in the belly of the fish:

When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple. Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God's love for them. But I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. I will say, "Salvation comes from the Lord."

Jonah 2:7-9

My Prayer:

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ACTS 2:14-41

LESSON 2

Living Under the Word

Sermon Notes

Living With One Another

Opening Discussion:

Think of time when an established and important tradition did not go as planned. What happened? How did you feel?

Reflect on the sermon. What resonated with you? What questions do you have? What would you like to know more about?

Read Acts 2:1-13.

As this chapter unfolds, we learn that Jews from all over were coming to Jerusalem for the feast of Harvest, or Feast of Pentecost. In the first century, Pentecost was an agricultural and historical festival that occurred 50 days after Passover. The Jews were offering their first fruits of wheat to God as a sign of thanksgiving. They were also remembering when God gave Moses the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai—fifty days after the Exodus.

These festivals were an important part of Jewish heritage and reminded the Jews of their Exodus from Egypt. Picture Jerusalem at this time. The Jewish people were gathered together remembering the Exodus, the first Passover, and the law being given to Moses on Mount Sinai. They were offering thanks and praise to God for his provision in the past and hope for the future.

Remember from Acts 1 that Jesus told the disciples to stay in Jerusalem. In Acts 1:4-5 Jesus *“ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father . . . the Holy Spirit.”* These men, with about 120 other followers of Christ, were

gathered in the upper room waiting for the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:1-4 describes the coming of the Holy Spirit.

1. How does Luke describe the coming of the Holy Spirit? What did the disciples hear, see, feel, taste, and smell?

2. How did this affect the other Jews in Jerusalem? See verses 5-13.

3. In Acts 2:12-13 we read, "And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does *this mean?*' But others mocking said, 'They are filled with new wine.'" What was going on here? Who was saying these things? Why the broad spectrum of responses?

4. Read Acts 2:14-41. Just before Peter begins to speak, the crowd (including both Jewish pilgrims and residents of Jerusalem who are most likely gathered on the temple grounds) asks, *What's going on here?* What is remarkable about the fact that Peter is the one boldly and courageously addressing the crowd (see verse 14)? Think about what you know about Peter. See Luke 22:54-62; John 21:15-19.

5. From where did Peter's boldness come? See Acts 1:5, 8; 2 Peter 1:21. After Peter tells the crowd that the people are not drunk, he points them to the Scriptures and weaves together familiar Old Testament promises that point to Christ. These prophecies are now being fulfilled by the work of Jesus Christ.
 - a. In Acts 2:17-21, Peter quotes from Joel 2:28-32. What connections does Peter want them to make?

- b. Notice that Peter points the crowd to Jesus in Acts 2:22-24. Why does he do this? What do you learn about God in these verses? What do you learn about Jesus? What do you learn about man?

- c. How does the truth that Jesus's death and resurrection was part of God's *definite plan* from all eternity comfort you and give you hope?

- d. Read Acts 2:25-31 and Psalm 16:8-11. What does David tell us about Jesus?

- e. Where is Jesus now? Read Acts 2:32-35 and Psalm 110:1.

Acts Passage	Old Testament Passage	What do we learn about Jesus?	Theme of Passage
Acts 2:14-21			The Spirit has Come
Acts 2:22-28			Jesus is Risen
Acts 2:29-36			Jesus is Lord

6. Read Acts 2:36. What can we know for certain?

7. Is Jesus both your Lord and Christ? How is this evident in your life?

8. Describe the people's response to Peter's sermon in Acts 2:37?
9. Outline what Peter told them in Acts 2:38-40. How might you use this outline to share the gospel with someone who does not yet know Jesus?

Living Out Our Faith

10. How are we to rightly respond to the gospel? How are you responding to the gospel?
11. We all have a lord of our lives. Who or what is yours?
12. Are you a person who seeks to minister to others in your own strength rather than the Spirit's? Or do you avoid ministering at all because you forget you have the Spirit?
13. Acts 2 clearly shows us that God is faithful and keeps his promises. What specific area of your life do you need to trust our faithful, promise-keeping God?

God's Spirit fuels God's mission by empowering weak people. The Spirit creates the church and, in turn, the church proclaims the gospel to the world by the power of that same Spirit. The Spirit then adds more people to the church through the preached word. (Acts 1-12 For You; R. Albert Mohler, Jr., pp 31-32.)

Prayer

Pray through these verses, asking the Spirit to show you areas of your life where you are clinging to things other than Christ to give your life meaning and purpose. Name these idols, repent of them, and turn to Christ.

Romans 12:1-2

1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Galatians 2:20

20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Matthew 16:23-24

23 But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man." 24 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me".

I Peter 5:6-10

6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. 7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. 8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. 10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

THE GREAT COMMISSION IN ACTION

ACTS 2:42-47

LESSON 3

Living Under the Word

Sermon Notes

Living With One Another

Opening Discussion:

Life as part of a community can be filled with joys and sorrows. Share a memorable experience you have had as part of a community.

Reflect on the sermon. What resonated with you? What questions do you have? What would you like to know more about?

Read Acts 2:42-47.

1. In these verses, Luke paints a picture of the early church. What are some of the characteristics of life in the early church? List some of their daily activities.
2. In what ways does this way of life appeal to you?
3. List the *four marks of a church* found in Acts 2:42. List the fifth mark of a church found in Acts 2:47.
4. How would the life of the church change if one of these marks were neglected?

5. On what did the apostles base their teaching? Give some examples of this from what we have read in Acts 1 and 2.

6. Doctrine is another word for teaching. Why is the study of Christian doctrine vital?

7. What does it mean to be devoted to the apostles' teaching?

8. Why is fellowship important to the life of a community?

9. Describe the benefits of a community of believers celebrating the Lord's Supper or sharing a meal. See 1 Corinthians 11:26.

10. What happens when a church prays together?

11. As you read Acts 2:42-47, think about some of the *joys* and *challenges* this new community of believers might have faced. What might they have been?

12. How did God show his faithfulness to this community of believers?

Living Out Our Faith

13. Luke says in Acts 2:23 that awe came upon every soul. Why were they in awe?

14. Are you awestruck when you see the Spirit at work in your life and in the lives of those around you? Are you amazed by the power and wonder of God? Are you joyfully thanking God for all his provisions and generously sharing them with those around you?

15. In what ways do you see evidence of the *five marks of a church* at Annapolis EP? How are you engaged in each?

16. The early church was obviously heavily engaged in evangelism. Jesus had clearly made it a part of his mission statement in Acts 1:8. What do you find exhilarating about evangelism? What scares you? Does that change knowing that Christ is with you?

Prayer

Pray for our church . . .

- that we would be devoted to teaching the Word,
- that we would be devoted to fellowship,
- that we would grasp the richness of communion and breaking bread together,
- and that we would be devoted to prayer.

THE GREAT COMMISSION IN ACTION

ACTS 3:1-10

LESSON 4

Living Under the Word

Sermon Notes

Living With One Another

Opening Discussion:

What is the best gift you have ever received from someone?

Reflect on the sermon. What resonated with you? What questions do you have? What would you like to know more about?

Read Acts 3:1-10.

1. Where were Peter and John going that morning? What does this tell us about the men?

2. According to verse 7, what did the man do before his "feet and ankles were made strong"?

3. Derek W.H. Thomas states that "the cripple was a social outcast because of his congenital deformity, unable to enter the parts of the sanctuary to which this Beautiful Gate promised entry. He had never walked in his entire life—but more especially, he had never walked beyond this gate into the nearer presence of God!"
 - a. How do you think those at the temple were treating this man?
 - b. Do you think the man ever expected to be healed?

4. What does the act of taking Peter's hand indicate about the man?

5. What was the man's immediate response to being healed? Where did the man go?
 - a. Is this your usual response when you see God work in your life? If not, then what is?

b. Read the verses below to understand what God does for us:

James 1:17

Psalms 84:11

Psalms 23:6

6. Often we think we know what we need, but God has something much better in store for us. How are you trusting God to give you what you need? Are you asking for what you think you need, or for what God wants to give you?

7. Read Matthew 7:11. Are you confident that God will provide what is best for you according to his will?

8. What happened as a result to the man being healed?

9. What does this story reveal to us about God and how he uses his people?

Living Out Our Faith

10. While we look to God who fulfills our needs and desires, we will not escape sin completely until we are reunited with Jesus in heaven. How are you living in the hope of the complete healing and fulfillment that is to come?

11. How are you caring for those who need help in your life and community? How can the gifts God has given you be used to help others? Can you think of a way to get others from your Renew Group or community involved in helping others together?

Prayer

Ask God to align your heart to his will. Ask that you will have the strength and wisdom to follow his will. Ask that you will trust in him. Thank him for his sovereignty in knowing what is best and what will bring him glory.

THE GREAT COMMISSION IN ACTION

ACTS 3:11-26

LESSON 5

Living Under the Word

Sermon Notes

Living With One Another

Opening Discussion:

Where is your favorite place to rest? Your home? A favorite place to vacation?

Reflect on the sermon. What resonated with you? What questions do you have? What would you like to know more about?

Read Acts 3:11-26.

1. Where are Peter and John? Why is this significant?

2. a. Who is Peter pointing to that is responsible for the healing? Are they taking any credit themselves?

b. Do you find yourself boasting in God's righteousness or your self-righteousness?

3. According to verse 15, what does Peter say "made this man strong"? Why did he say this?

4. What tone do you think Peter uses in these verses? Why? What verses indicate this?

5. What does Peter mean when he says in verse 15, “you killed the Author of life”?
6. According to verse 17, the people act in ignorance. How does Luke describe this? Do you see others in your life doing the same?
7. What does Peter urge the listeners to do?
8. Do you experience times of refreshment from the Lord (verse 20)? Share about one of these times of refreshment.
9. What does “the time for restoring all the things” refer to in verse 21? What does this mean for us as believers?
10. It is stated in verse 22, “You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you,” when talking about Jesus. Turn to and read Deuteronomy 18:15-16 where this verse originates. Are you listening to whatever Jesus tells you/has told you? What are you not listening to?
11. Peter refers to the Old Testament multiple times in his sermon to prove that Jesus is the Messiah. Why is it important to see Christ in the Old Testament? What are other passages you know that point to Christ in the Old Testament?

12. What can we learn about evangelism and sharing the gospel from Peter's sermon?

Living Out Our Faith

13. Do you feel like you are taking enough time to be refreshed by the Lord? If not, how will you fix this and find more time?

14. As it was pointed out in Peter's sermon, the Old Testament directly correlates to the New Testament with Jesus the Messiah fulfilling prophecies and covenants from the Old Testament. Have you been able to view the Bible's message as a metanarrative (an overarching story/interpretation of events)? As God's big story of redemption? One way to help see the connections throughout Scripture is to follow, or track, a theme from Genesis to Revelation. Some themes to start with might be sin (or rebellion), Christ, Covenants, blessings and curses, life and death.

15. Peter shares what Jesus came to the earth to do: live, die, rise from the dead, and ascend into heaven. Then Peter called his listeners to repent and believe. Who are you sharing the gospel with? Who needs to hear about the great things God has done?

Prayer

Pray through these verses about finding rest in the Lord.

Matthew 11:28-30

28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Psalms 23

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness

for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil,

for you are with me;

your rod and your staff,

they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

all the days of my life,

and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD

forever.

THE GREAT COMMISSION IN ACTION

ACTS 4:1-22

LESSON 6

Living Under the Word

Sermon Notes

Living With One Another

Opening Discussion:

What is one talent you wish you had?

Reflect on the sermon. What resonated with you? What questions do you have? What would you like to know more about?

Read Acts 4:1-22.

1. In response to Peter's sermon of the gospel being preached, what were the reactions of the people? What was the response of the priests and Sadducees? Why were there such different reactions to what was being taught?
2. Verse 4 states that following Peter's sermon, around 5,000 people were saved. What does this show about the power of God and the gospel?
3. Did Peter and John shy away from the truth after they were put in jail?
4. What was Peter's defense? See verses 8-12.
5. What is your response to persecution? Do you ever shy away from the truth?

6. Read the following verses describing Christ as our cornerstone. Why is Peter referring to Christ as the cornerstone in verse 11?

Isaiah 28:16

1 Peter 2:4-8

Psalm 118:22

7. Re-read verse 12. How are people saved? Is there anything you can do to restore your relationship with God by yourself? Is there anything you can do for others to restore their relationship with God by yourself? Why do we often act and/or boast as if we have the power of salvation?
8. What about Peter and John "astonished" the rulers and elders and scribes?
9. What caused Peter and John to speak boldly of the truth of Jesus?
10. Could even the rulers and elders and scribes deny the miraculous healing of the crippled man through Jesus Christ?
11.
 - a. What did the rulers and elders tell Peter and John to do after they were released from jail?
 - b. Did they do this?
 - c. Who did they fear more?
 - d. Are you listening to others over listening to and obeying God?

12. Why were Peter and John let go?

Living Out Our Faith

13. Are you proclaiming the gospel boldly? If so, how? How can you be doing this more boldly? Are you relying on the Holy Spirit?

14. How do you feel when you are persecuted? Do you want to respond with the truth?

Prayer

Pray for those in your life that do not know Jesus. Ask that the Holy Spirit would work through you in their lives. Ask that God would reveal the truth to them and save them.

THE GREAT COMMISSION IN ACTION

ACTS 4:23–37

LESSON 7

Living Under the Word

Sermon Notes

Living With One Another

Opening Discussion:

What is the nicest thing someone has done for you?

Reflect on the sermon. What resonated with you? What questions do you have? What would you like to know more about?

Read Acts 4:23-37.

1. Read Acts 4:13-22. Did Peter and John do what they were told to do in verse 18? Instead, what was their response?
2. In verse 24, what are the believers saying/believing about God? How is it impacting the way they live?
3. Why are they praying for boldness? Boldness for what?
4. How was this prayer of boldness answered?
5. Read Psalm 2.
 - a. How does this Psalm allude to the coming of Jesus?

- b. Why is it significant that the believers are referring to a prophecy that shows Jesus as the Messiah?
6. The prayer in verses 24-30 emphasizes God's sovereignty. Read the following hymn, "O Father, You are Sovereign," by Margaret Clarkson, and reflect on God's goodness:

*O Father, you are sovereign
in all affairs of man;
no pow'rs of death or darkness
can thwart Your perfect plan.
All chance and change transcending,
supreme in time and space,
you hold your trusting children
secure in your embrace.*

7. Do you ever find yourself believing or acting in ways that limits God's sovereignty?
8. According to verse 31, how do the believers act as a result of being filled with the Holy Spirit?
9. How does verse 31 lead into verse 32? How are they related?

10. What does it mean to be of “one heart and soul” with other believers? See verse 32.

11. We see the lives of the believers transformed. After praising the Lord for his great grace through prayer, the believers change how they treat each other. How do the believers treat one another in verses 32-37? What do they do for one another?

12. Read the following verses that describe a Christ-centered community. Write down what you learn.

Ephesians 4:1-6

1 Corinthians 1:4-10

1 John 1:7

Colossians 3:12-17

Galatians 6:2

Living Out Our Faith

13. Identify what communities you are a part of (e.g. church community, Bible study community, neighborhood communities).

14. How can you invest in and grow your communities?

Prayer

Pray through Acts 4:31-32. Ask that God would fill your heart with passion for Christ. Ask him to transform the hearts of your brothers and sisters in Christ and unite you into a Christ-centered community.

THE GREAT COMMISSION IN ACTION

ACTS 5:1-11

LESSON 8

Living Under the Word

Sermon Notes

Living With One Another

Opening Discussion:

Is there a time in your life when you lied about something and were caught? Tell us about it.

Reflect on the sermon. What resonated with you? What questions do you have? What would you like to know more about?

Acts 4 ends with a beautiful picture of believers who were of *one heart and one soul*. They shared their possessions and everyone's needs were met. The apostles were filled with power as they testified to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Life was good. Lives were transformed. They were growing together as they matured in Christ. But in Acts 5 some things came to light that rocked their world.

1. Re-read Acts 4:23-37. How did these new believers respond to the visible signs of God's work in their lives? List three words that would characterize their community.
2. Read Acts 5:1-11. Describe what Ananias and Sapphira did. How was this contrary to the hearts and actions of their extended community?
3. Was Ananias required to give all the proceeds of the land to the apostles?

4. What was his sin?

5. Why might he have lied?

6. How are lies counter to the character of God?
 - a. Numbers 23:19
 - b. Proverbs 30:5
 - c. Titus 1:2
 - d. Hebrews 6:18

7. Who is the father of lies? See John 8:44.

8. What lessons can we learn from Ananias and Sapphira?

9. In Acts 5:5 and 5:11, how did the people react when they heard about what happened?

10. In these verses we read that a *great fear* came upon the people. The word fear comes from the greek word *phobos* which means *reverent awe and healthy fear of God's displeasure and discipline*. Why do you think they reacted in fear? What was the source of their fear?

11. Gaining a richer understanding of the *fear of the Lord* will help us grasp more of who our God is. Look up the following verses and write down what you learn about the fear of the Lord.
- a. Deuteronomy 6:13

 - b. Joshua 24:14

 - c. Psalm 2:1

 - d. Proverbs 1:7

 - e. Proverbs 10:27

 - f. Proverbs 29:25

 - g. Romans 11:19-22

 - h. 2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1

12. Often our lives are controlled by fear of man rather than fear of God. Read the following verses. What truths do they remind us of that give us strength and solid footing as we struggle with fear of man?

a. Psalm 23:4

b. Psalm 27:1

c. Isaiah 41:13

d. Luke 12:32

e. 2 Timothy 1:7

f. 1 John 4:18

13. How might the actions and death of Ananias and Sapphira have impacted this growing community of new believers?

Living Out Our Faith

14. In what ways do you see yourself in this story? Where do compromise or hypocrisy show up in your life?

15. How does what you have learned in this passage attack your idols? Use the **Idols List** in the Appendix to spur your thinking on this.

16. Fill in the blank: The truth that God is -----
reminds me that I -----.

Prayer

by *Pastor Scotty Smith*

Sometimes the approval or rejection of people has more sway over my heart than what you think of me. Sometimes my “need” to be right in a conflict influences me more than my being righteous in Christ. Sometimes my desire to control people and circumstances claims much more of my energy than seeking your face, savoring your grace, and serving your Son. Sometimes a commitment to a pain-free heart preoccupies me more than a commitment to your ever-advancing kingdom. These are just a few of the things which bear the marks of idolatry in my heart.

Have mercy on me, Father, and free my foolish heart from giving anything or anyone the attention, allegiance, affection, and adoration you alone deserve. The fact that I’m “beloved,” one of your “dear children”—forgiven, secure, righteous, and beloved in Christ—should be all the motivation I need to keep myself from *any* form of idolatry. May the gospel of your grace relentlessly expose and dethrone all “empty nothings” from my heart. May the beauty and bounty of Jesus so fill my heart there’s little room leftover for anything else. So very Amen I pray, in Jesus’ most worthy and loving name.

THE GREAT COMMISSION IN ACTION

ACTS 5:12-42

LESSON 9

Living Under the Word

Sermon Notes

Living With One Another

Opening Discussion:

Describe a time when someone opposed you or one of your plans. How did you respond?

Reflect on the sermon. What resonated with you? What questions do you have? What would you like to know more about?

Read Acts 5:12-16.

1. Picture the scene surrounding Solomon's Portico. Who was there? What was happening?
2. How did the people view the apostles?

Read Acts 5:17-33.

3. How did the High Priest and Sadducees react to what the apostles were doing?
4. Define jealousy. What impact can jealousy have on relationships? On church unity? On church growth?

5. The Apostles were arrested and put in a public prison. How long were they in prison?
6. When they left the prison, where did they go and what did they do?
7. How did they risk their lives? Why were they willing to take this risk?
8. Explain the irony of Acts 5:21-26.
9. What did the High Priest say to the apostles in verse 28?
10. List the main points of Peter's response to the High Priest.
11. Did the High Priest and Sadducees like Peter's answer? How did they respond?

Read Acts 5:34-42.

12. In verses 34-39, how did Gamaliel reason with and persuade the religious rulers not to kill the apostles?
13. Why were the apostles not afraid to continue teaching and preaching that Jesus is the Christ?

Psalm 56:3-4

Isaiah 44:8

Matthew 10:26-31

John 14:17

Romans 1:16-18

1 Peter 3:13-15

Living Out Our Faith

14. How do you respond to opposition? In what ways does your fear of man, or fear of circumstances, paralyze you?

15. Do you resent God's trials in your life, or do you rejoice in them?

16. How does the statement "we serve God rather than man" shape your daily life?

17. Where is God calling you to boldly proclaim the gospel? Write down the names of the people who and the places where the gospel needs to be heard.

Prayer

Pick one of the verses in question 13 above and make it a prayer. Ask God to give you boldness, courage, and faith to boldly proclaim the name of Jesus to those who need to hear.

THE GREAT COMMISSION IN ACTION

ACTS 6:1-7

LESSON 10

Living Under the Word

Sermon Notes

Living With One Another

Opening Discussion:

Do you tend to be a complainer or a problem solver?

Reflect on the sermon. What resonated with you? What questions do you have? What would you like to know more about?

Read Acts 6:1-7.

1. What is the big problem that has been brought to the apostle's attention?
2. Describe the tension that may have been present between the Hellenists and the Hebrews. (The Hellenists are Greek believers and the Hebrews are Jewish believers.)
3. Read Deuteronomy 10 to gain understanding about the priority of caring for widows. What did you learn?
4. How did the apostles respond to the complaint, and what action did they take?

5. What type of men were they looking for to minister to the widows? Who did they pick?
6. What important aspects of church life do we see in this passage?
7. Why is a rightly ordered church important?
8. How did God bless them in verse 7?

Read Acts 6:8-15.

9. Describe Stephen and his ministry.
10. Who opposed him? Why? What false accusations were made against Stephen?
11. Why do you think they thought Stephen was such a great threat to them, and how serious were they about stopping Stephen?
12. How does Acts 6:14 describe Stephen's *face*? What does this mean? Think about other times in Scripture when angels are mentioned. What purpose do they serve?

Living Out Our Faith

13. It is not surprising that when growth happens in a church, complaints begin. Why is this? Can you think of times when this has been true in our church?

14. Why do you complain? What sin does this point to in your life?

15. Back to the opening question. Perhaps your answer has changed a bit as you have wrestled through the Scripture: *Are you more of a complainer or a problem-solver?*

16. When have you seen or experienced the world's opposition to godliness?

Prayer

And don't grumble as some of them did, and then were destroyed by the angel of death.

-1 Corinthians 10:10

The people refused to enter the pleasant land,
for they wouldn't believe his promise to care for them.

Instead, they grumbled in their tents
and refused to obey the Lord.

- Psalm 106:24-25

Ask the Holy Spirit to give you eyes to see areas in your life where you are prone to grumble and complain. Write a prayer of confession and repentance, asking God to forgive you and help you to trust his promises and plan.

THE GREAT COMMISSION IN ACTION

ACTS 6:8-7:53

LESSON 11

Living Under the Word

Sermon Notes

Living With One Another

Opening Discussion:

What is your favorite story?

Reflect on the sermon. What resonated with you? What questions do you have? What would you like to know more about?

Read Acts 6:8-7:53.

1. Summarize what happened in Acts 6:8-15.

- When the High Priest asks Stephen in Acts 7:1, "Are these things so," Stephen answers him by recounting God's story from Abraham to the current time. Re-read these verses and note what Stephen says about God.

What do you learn about God?

verse 2	
verse 3	
verse 6	
verse 9	
verse 10	
verse 17	
verse 32	
verse 33	
verse 34	
verse 35	
verse 42	
verse 45	
verse 48	

- Stephen responded to the charge against him in Acts 6:13 (that Jesus and his followers were speaking against the Mosaic law and planned to destroy it and the temple) by retelling the story of Israel and showing how Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of God's promises for the nation of Israel, his people. Re-read Acts 7:2-53 and look for ways that each person and part of the story points to Christ.

Abraham	
Isaac	
Jacob	

Joseph	
Moses	
Joshua	
David	
Solomon	
Jesus	
First Century Jewish Leaders	

4. How does Stephen's response address the accusations made against him?

5. In what ways was Moses a type of Christ? See Deuteronomy 18:15-18. Did Jesus come to nullify the words of Moses, or to fulfill them?

6. In Acts 7:51-53 Stephen argues that the Jewish leaders have persecuted and rejected God's prophets. He also says that they have rejected and betrayed the Righteous One. Who is the Righteous One? See 2 Corinthians 5:21-22.

7. Stephen tells the people in Acts 7:48 that they have mistakenly believed that God's presence could be limited to a man-made structure, the temple. Read the following verses to gain an understanding of where God dwells.
 - a. Exodus 40:34-35

 - b. Psalm 145:18

 - c. John 1:14

d. Matthew 1:23

8. What truths did Stephen want them to see?

9. What accusation did Stephen make against them?

Living Out Our Faith

10. Think of a time when you have been persecuted or opposed for the sake of Christ. In what ways was your response similar or dissimilar to Stephen's?

11. Consider what you have learned in this lesson. Are you led to praise God? To confess sin? To trust in God's promises? To share the gospel?

Prayer

Reflect on the things God is teaching you. Write a prayer of thanks to God for who he is and how he has saved you.

THE GREAT COMMISSION IN ACTION

ACTS 6:8-15, 7:54-60

LESSON 12

Living Under the Word

Sermon Notes

Living With One Another

Opening Discussion:

Share about a time when someone forgave you for something you did.

Reflect on the sermon. What resonated with you? What questions do you have? What would you like to know more about?

Read Acts 6:8-15 and 7:54-60.

1. Summarize Stephen's story and his sermon.
2. How did the religious leaders respond to Stephen's words?
3. Why did they respond in such a violent way?
4. What did Luke tell us about Stephen in Acts 7:55-56.
5. Where had Stephen placed his confidence and hope?
6. Stephen calls Christ the "Son of Man" in these verses. Jesus uses this title to refer to himself many times in the New Testament. See Matthew 8:20; 11:19; and

16:13. This title relates to a figure in Daniel 7:13-14. What do we learn about the "son of man" in these verses from Daniel?

7. Read Matthew 26:63 and Mark 14:62. How do these verses relate to Daniel 7? What do they tell us about the Son of Man?

8. What role does the Holy Spirit play in Stephen's last moments on earth?

9. How did Stephen respond to the injustice shown to him?

10. Read Acts 7:59 and Luke 23:46. What is similar about Jesus's words and Stephen's words?

11. What are Stephen's last words? How could Stephen pray this?

Living Out Our Faith

12. What does the Spirit enable and empower us to do today?

13. What does the Spirit produce in us? See Galatians 5:22-23.

Prayer

by Pastor Scotty Smith

"Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints." Ephesians 6:18

Heavenly Father, how we praise you for the gift of the Holy Spirit—who has marked us as yours and who makes us like Jesus. What comfort, assurance and peace we have in knowing that nothing can separate us from your love; nothing will disconnect us from your will; nothing is left up to chance. You will bring to completion the good work you have begun in us and in your world—and you will do so by the power and presence of your Spirit. For so glorious a gospel, so grand a salvation, and so great a hope, we worship and adore you.

So Father, in the name of Jesus, by the power of the Spirit, for the revealing of your glory, we bring our prayers and requests to you. Do exceedingly beyond all we can ask or imagine. Startle us with your faithfulness. Shock us with your goodness. Astonish us by your generosity. We won't mind being embarrassed by our lack of faith if it will highlight the greatness of your love.

We bring you our children and the children of our friends. Make the gospel beautiful and believable to them, Father. May we neither despair of our failures nor rely on our parenting for their salvation. Capture them and free them for your purposes and praise.

We bring you our churches. Bring renewal, bring restoration of first love, bring deep repentance. Free us from our boring ingrown-ness, our paralyzing pettiness, and our predictable sameness. Stir us up, shake us up, and send us out. Make us like gospel fountains, for our cities and communities.

We bring you our friends. Wounded hearts, broken marriages, strained relationships, depleted finances, destructive addictions, failing health... Holy Spirit, bring your resurrection power to bear. Work miracles in our midst, for the fame of Jesus and the glory of God.

We bring you ourselves. Nobody needs the gospel more than us, more than me, Father. Gentle us, refresh us... let us hear you again, singing over us in Jesus; let us experience your great and transforming delight; quiet our restless hearts with your irrepressible love. So very Amen we pray, in the Spirit and in Jesus' name.

THE GREAT COMMISSION IN ACTION

ACTS 8:1-8

LESSON 13

Living Under the Word

Sermon Notes

Living With One Another

Opening Discussion:

What activities do you do to find joy?

Reflect on the sermon. What resonated with you? What questions do you have? What would you like to know more about?

Read Acts 8:1-8.

1. Read Acts 1:8. How does Acts 8:1 fulfill the promise made in Acts 1:8?
2. Who was spreading the good news? The apostles?
3. Why did the apostles stay in Jerusalem?
4. What are some negative results of Stephen's death?
5. What are some positive results of Stephen's death?

6. How was God glorified through Stephen's persecution?
7. How does the result of Stephen's persecution relate to Stephen's message?
8. Read John 12:24. What principle is outlined in the verse? How does this principle relate to Acts 8:1-8?
9. Do you think the believers were able to see the purpose of God in what was going on?
10. When we ask God to help us be "mission minded," what are we asking?
11. With everything that is happening in Jerusalem, the people in Samaria are experiencing "much joy." Why are they joyful? Would you be joyful if believers were being persecuted? If you were/are being persecuted?

Living Out Our Faith

12. What do you see as your "mission field" to carry out the Great Commission from Matthew 28:19?
13. Have you ever been persecuted? What was your reaction to being persecuted? If you have not been persecuted, why do you think that is?

14. Are you experiencing “much joy”? Is your joy rooted in God and his great love and mercy?

Prayer

Take a moment to read, reflect, and pray over this prayer from *Knowing Jesus*.

Heavenly Father, what a comfort to read of the prophets of old who despite the difficulties and dangers that they were called upon to face, were able to rejoice in the Lord and trust in Your never-failing faithfulness.

I pray that like them, I too may receive Your abiding joy and discover like them, that the joy of the Lord is my strength and that the peace that comes from You is an abiding peace that enables me to overcome all difficulties of life, in the power of Your Holy Spirit.

So fill my heart with Your abiding joy so that I may rejoice in life’s circumstances, in periods of plenty and during those seasons when I have very little, in times of hardship as well as those times of great sufficiency.

Thank You, that I am Your child and You are my Father and sovereign Lord. May my heart rejoice in good times and in bad, and may Your abiding joy and perfect peace find residence in my heart, as I rest in Your love and trust in Your unfailing goodness. In Jesus' name,

Amen.

Source: <https://prayer.knowing-jesus.com/prayer/prayer-for-an-abiding-joy-1625>

APPENDIX

Idolatry List

As Tim Keller states in his book [Counterfeit Gods](#), an idol is “anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, and anything that you seek to give you what only God can give.” Simply put, an idol is anything that takes the place of God in your life.

To help you get started identifying idols in your life, we have created this list. It is not a comprehensive list, so please feel free to add your own personal idols to this list as the Spirit reveals them to you.

Power / Control Idol: Life only has meaning, and I only have worth if I have power, control, and influence over people and the circumstances of my life.

In Christ I don't need to have power and control. My life is controlled by Christ who loves me dearly and can manage things much better than I could.

Achievement / Success Idol: Life only has meaning, and I only have worth if I avoid failure, am successful, and am recognized for my accomplishments and contributions.

In Christ I don't need my own accomplishments or achievement; I have the achievement of Christ, his righteousness as my own.

Approval / Respect Idol: Life only has meaning, and I only have worth if I am loved, accepted, and respected by other people.

In Christ I am fully accepted by a holy God, so I don't need the respect and acceptance of others to be content.

Work Idol: Life only has meaning, and I only have worth if I am highly productive and am accomplishing much.

Christ has accomplished all that needs to be done in my place so I do not need to strive or work hard in order to be valued.

Materialism (Comfort/Pleasure) Idol: Life only has meaning, and I only have worth if I have a certain level of wealth and financial freedom so that I can experience certain pleasures, achieve a particular quality of life, and own quality possessions.

What I have in Christ as his forgiven child is more valuable and satisfying than riches, pleasure, possessions, and experiences.

Image Idol: Life only has meaning, and I only have worth if I attain a particular kind of look or achieve a certain body shape.

My value does not lie in my physical appearance or condition, but in my spiritual standing before God.

Helping Idol: Life only has meaning, and I only have worth if people are dependent upon me and need me.

My value comes not from people needing me, but from the God who provided a great salvation for me. My position of needing him is a happy place.

Dependence Idol: Life only has meaning, and I only have worth if someone is going to protect me and keep me safe.

In Christ I am safe and protected by one who loves me more dearly than anyone else could.

Freedom / Independence Idol: Life only has meaning, and I only have worth if I am completely free from obligations to, responsibilities for, and expectations from other people.

From Christ's sacrifice for me, I learn that serving others is a place of joy, not a place of burden.

Religion Idol: Life only has meaning, and I only have worth if I successfully live up to my group's moral code and complete my group's religious activities.

The need for the sacrifice of Christ on the cross shows me that I can never live up to any moral code and that Christ has done that for me through his righteous life credited to my account.

Racial / Culture Idol: Life only has meaning, and I only have worth if my race and/or culture are ascendant and recognized as superior.

The gospel tells me that the ground is level at the cross, that all people are in the same need of a savior. That means that my worth is not attached to my race or culture but to my relationship with Christ.

Ideology Idol: Life only has meaning, and I only have worth if my cause is pre-eminent, and increasing in influence.

The gospel tells me that only the cause of Christ and his glory is worth my concern. All other causes are only important as they relate to that supreme cause.

Intellect / Knowledge Idol: Life only has meaning, and I only have worth if I have everything figured out, and there are no more loose ends.

In the gospel I recognize that Christ is the source of all wisdom and knowledge. That is enough for me; I don't need to attain all knowledge and understanding myself.

Family Idol: Life only has meaning, and I only have worth if my children are happy or my parents are happy with me.

While my earthly family is a gift to me from God, I am aware that as a Christian, I was made a part of a bigger family where God is my Father who will always love me and is always for me.

Relationship Idol: Life only has meaning, and I only have worth if this certain person is in my life and happy to be there, and/or is happy with me or in love with me.

In Christ I have the most satisfying relationship I could have. I have the Heavenly Father who loves me unconditionally, the Son who gave himself for me, and the Holy Spirit who is always with me and in me.

Inner Ring Idol: Life only has meaning, and I only have worth if a particular social group, professional group, or other group lets me in.

In Christ I am accepted into the family of God which is the best place of belonging I could find.

Suffering Idol: Life only has meaning, and I only have worth if I am hurting or in a problem; only then do I feel worthy of love or able to deal with guilt.

In Christ I have a solution to my guilt which does not require me to suffer to get rid of it. I am not worthy of love. I am guilty, but Christ paid the penalty for my sin and he loves me though I am not worthy of it.

Keep asking questions of your soul. What of these are you looking to as a coping mechanism to face the pain and brokenness of this fallen existence? Which of these are you looking to give you joy and a sense of wellness?

Sources:

This list is a compilation from lists written by Tim Keller (the pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City), by Bob Flayhart (the pastor of Oak Mountain Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, AL), and by Bob Thune and Will Walker in *The Gospel-Centered Life*.

<http://takeyourvitaminz.blogspot.com/2013/04/tim-keller-diagnostic-on-idols-of-heart.html>

Bob Flayhart, *American Idols*; sermon from Isaiah 44:6-23, April 20, 2006

BobThune and Will Walker in *The Gospel-Centered Life*, chapter 6.

Questions to Ask of Any Passage of Scripture

- Make a list of what you have learned about God in this passage. Write what you have learned about his attributes, his commands, his promises, his view of relationships.
- In light of what the people/the prophet in this passage did, how does that change your feelings about them? About God? What might they have been feeling as they faced the circumstances around them?
- How does what you have learned in this passage attack your idols? Use the **Idols List** in the Appendix to spur your thinking on this.
- Describe the restorative hope that is found in this passage. How does this hope of restoration bring comfort to your soul?
- Fill in the blank: The truth that God is ----- reminds me that I -----.
- How will I live out my faith in light of the truths I have learned in this passage? How does this change my relationships?

Preaching the Gospel to Yourself Every Day

The main art in the matter of spiritual living is to know how to handle yourself. You have to take yourself in hand, you have to address yourself, preach to yourself, question yourself. You must say to your soul: "Why are you cast down" - what business have you to be disquieted? . . . And then you must go on to remind yourself of God, Who God is, and what God is and what God has done, and what God has pledged Himself to do. Then having done that, end on this great note: defy yourself, and defy other people, and defy the devil and the whole world, and say with this man: "I shall yet praise Him."

D. Martyn Lloyd Jones, **Spiritual Depressions: Its Cause and Cure** (repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 21.

When we are tempted to believe that God does not care about us or that his arm is too short to save, we need to know how to handle ourselves. We need to take our soul in hand, sit ourselves down, and preach a good sermon to our hearts. That sermon cannot be about us. It does not help you to preach to yourself about your past successes in order to encourage you or to shame yourself about your past failures. That works for a little while, but pride and fear are never good long-term motivators for change. We need a different sermon altogether.

The only sermon we need has three points. It's the one that Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones preached to his congregation:

- *Who is your God?*
- *What has he already done for you?*
- *What has he pledged, by the blood of his beloved Son, to continue doing for you?*

Our God is King of all and is our loving Father. He has already broken the chains of sin and defeated death for us. He has pledged to continue the good work he began in us, and he has promised to never leave us or forsake us. The blood of his Son proves that this is true. For he is the Lord, and he has spoken - and what he speaks will surely come to pass. . . .

Preach this sermon in the face of your doubts, in the darkness of your fears, in the middle of the brokenness of your story . . .Glorify the One who is on your side, giving him your trust and loving obedience. Don't wait until everything is resolved in this life to learn to trust him.

Yell the truth of who God is and the surety of his promises to the devil when he tries to accuse you! Rehearse in your heart over and over again who your God is! Preach this sermon until you see him face-to-face.

Abby Ross Hutto, *God for Us: Discovering the Heart of the Father through the Life of the Son* (New Jersey, P&R, 2019), 203-204.

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