

SERMON SERIES

DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 1: ACTS 1

In the New Testament, the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John tell the story of Jesus' life and ministry. However, there is only one account of the early church, and it is called the Acts of the Apostles (or the Book of Acts). The author, Luke, intended it to be a second volume to the Gospel that bears his name, and it picks up the story pretty much where he left off at the end of Luke 24. God chose the best candidate possible to record the history of the early church because Luke was not only a physician and detailed historian, but he was also an early convert himself and a traveling companion with Paul, the church's greatest missionary. So, while Luke may not have been one of the original twelve disciples (in fact, he was not even Jewish), he was still an eyewitness to the incredible spread of the gospel in those early years!

Luke probably wrote the book of Acts between A.D. 63–65, with the intention of explaining the birth and growth of the Christian church to someone named Theophilus. We don't know who Theophilus was or even if he was a believer (although his name means "friend of God"), it is likely he was a Roman official who may have been studying the Christian faith in order to learn more about Jesus and "the Way."

A good outline of the book of Acts is to divide it between the two main characters: Peter and Paul. The first section is Peter's ministry as recorded in chapters 1-12. The second section is Paul's ministry from chapters 13-28. As a Gentile himself, Luke tracked the gospel through the Roman empire and wrote with the intent of demonstrating that salvation through Jesus applies to everyone—Jews, Greeks, Romans, slave or free, male or female. It is an incredible journey of faith that records the Holy Spirit teaching, strengthening, intervening, leading, and working miracles through the lives of the early church leaders. Keep in mind, these timid men found the strength to share their faith and change the world!

So, in this first chapter, we see the disciples in their last few moments with Jesus before He left them. Once He was gone, they took care of some "unfinished" team business and then began preparing for Pentecost. What they said and accomplished in those early years has implications for us all today, so get ready for a journey with the early church as they became obedient to the Great Commission. (Homework: Read Acts 1 and try to memorize 1:8)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

on your own, with family, or with your small group

Read Luke 1:1-4. What did Luke do and what does he want to accomplish?

Read Acts 1:1-5. If Luke's gospel is about what Jesus began to do and to teach, then what is Acts probably about?

The disciples asked Jesus a question in Acts 1:6. What does this question tell us about them?

What was Christ's response to their question (see verses 7-8)? This is the purpose of the book, so what is He really telling them? And how does it apply to you and me today?

Read Acts 1:12-26. Focus on who was present, what they were doing, and why it was so important to replace Judas. How would you summarize the last half of chapter one?