



ACTS ON CAMPUS

Ron Pickell

Leader's Guide

Acts on Campus – Leader's Guide

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Welcome to Acts On Campus: Studies In Acts

I was recently asked to write the forward to a friend's book. Since this was my first forward, I looked at some examples in books on my shelf. What I found is that most of them follow a very discernible pattern. They begin with some kitschy comment about the topic that shows why the writer was asked to provide the forward. Eventually they connect the topic to the author of the book and show how their work is critical to the subject. They then move on to illustrate how our own lives, work, and ministry will be changed by the concepts and ideas presented in the book. It is a fairly identifiable pattern.

But then I found this forward by Shane Claiborne that broke the stereotype. He begins by writing, "It's a fun time to be alive." I was interested by the very first sentence. I had to know, why is it a fun time to be alive, especially since the book was about learning to see God in a broken world?

We see this same kind of energy with Luke as he continues in volume 2 about Jesus – the book of Acts. There is no forward to Acts, but Luke is definitely purposeful and methodical about his account of Jesus and the difference it makes to believe in Him. And make no mistake – the book of Acts is about Jesus. We could get it wrong by associating the Gospel of Luke with Jesus and Acts with the Apostles – but that could cause us to miss the point. Acts opens with Luke's account of "All that Jesus began to do and to teach..."

This means that the book of Acts is still about Jesus. It is the new world order of what Jesus began and it continues through His followers. The One who ties them both together is Jesus!

Perhaps the best introduction I have found for the book of Acts is from Eugene Petersen's Message Bible. Here it is in its entirety:

"Because the story of Jesus is so impressive – God among us! God speaking a language we can understand! God acting in ways that heal and help and save us! – there is a danger that we will be impressed, but only be impressed. As the spectacular dimensions of this story slowly (or suddenly) dawn upon us, we could easily become enthusiastic spectators, and then let it go at that – become admirers of Jesus, generous with our oohs and ahs, and in our better moments inspired to imitate him. It is Luke's task to prevent that, to prevent us from becoming mere spectators to Jesus, fans of the Message. Of the original quartet of writers on Jesus, Luke alone continues to tell the story as the apostles and disciples live it into the next generation. The remarkable thing is that it continues to be essentially the same story. Luke continues his narration with hardly a break, a pause perhaps to dip his pen in the inkwell, writing in the same style, using the same vocabulary. The story of Jesus doesn't end with Jesus. It continues in the lives of those who believe in him. The supernatural does not stop with Jesus. Luke makes it clear that these Christians he wrote about were no more spectators of Jesus than Jesus was a spectator of God – they are in on the action of God, God acting in them, God living in them. Which also means, of course, in us.

The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language (p. 1478). NavPress.

This of course leaves us with the question, "How is God acting through us?" This is the pulsating theme for our study in Acts on Campus. So I invite you to take your faith to the next level and see how God is speaking, moving, and directing our lives through a living faith, gathering others for His kingdom.

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Breaking Down *Journey*

Journey was created for larger weekly on or off campus meetings in a teaching format and small group discussion. The beginning story or illustration introduces the topic of study.



- **Journey Together** helps ease participants into the topic through ice-breaker related questions.



- **Road Map** is the main passage for discussion followed by questions that help draw out the topic. If you are leading *Journey*, feel free to depart from these as needed and come up with your own questions, while staying on track with the main direction of the study laid out in the leader's guide.



- **My Story** has been prepared as a continuation of the larger group meetings for smaller groups that meet during the week to check in with one another and reflect on how God is using *Journey* in their daily life. We recommend these groups be flexible in terms of location and meeting time. Also, the amount of questions are limited in the My Story section, allowing for more personal interactions and life application.



- **Back Story** is a helpful guide for those leading out in the *Journey* Series and is only included in the leader's book.
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Getting the most out of *Journey*

What You're Going to Need for *Acts on Campus*:

- Good soil—an open and receptive heart
- Willingness to work the soil—determination and diligence
- Hunger and thirst—a desire for God

Here are five suggested practices to help us get the most from our study of Acts. I call them the five S's of hearing and discerning God's voice:

- **Seek:** Pray for God to open up the passage for you. Is there a promise for you to claim, a sin to confess, a word for you to follow, an insight to share?
- **Soak:** Read the passage each day and write down any observations, thoughts, questions, connections, or anything God speaks to you about the passage.
- **Seal:** Seal God's word deep within your heart by taking some time to meditate on the most important truth to you this week. Ask God to open the deeper recesses of your heart to teach you what you need most for your life this week.
- **Script:** Journal or write—it can be just a few lines—noting the ways that God spoke to you from the passage, your meditation, or our group time together. This will help you keep better track of God's voice and the way He is speaking through Scripture.

- **Share:** Share with someone what you are learning from your time with God. As you share what you are learning, it will help drive God’s word home even more and you will notice how God will use what He has revealed to you to bless others.

Learning to practice these five disciplines will move us beyond a surface reading of the text to God’s discernible voice in our lives. We want more than Bible facts. We want God to move and act in our life as we read about it in scripture. This requires a deeper listening to God’s voice and soaking in His word. The great thing is that Jesus promised more for those who desire more.

“ ‘Consider carefully what you hear,’ he continued. ‘With the measure you use, it will be measured to you – and even more.’ ” Mark 4:24

We don’t want to lose any of what Jesus has for us. We want to soak it up together – first in our own personal time with the passage for the day, then in group time, again during the teaching time as we all consider the broader lessons together, and finally in late night conversations as we wrestle with God’s call in our lives. In the end, my prayer is that we will all see that acting on our own faith is so much better than reading and marveling over someone else’s – so let’s each get our own act together in our study of the book of Acts!

*Journey
Covenant*

I want to grow in my understanding of Jesus and the life he has for me. I want to participate in Journey to enhance my own relationship with God this year. I will commit to doing the weekly assignments and life group meetings.

Signature _____

My best times of availability are

Morning: _____

Evening: _____

Email address _____

Cell Phone _____

Just the Beginning

Luke, the author of the book of Acts, opens with a note to Theophilus, the intended reader: *"In the first book, O Theophilus I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach."* This is our great reminder that the fire and movement of the book of Acts all begins with Jesus! The spread of Christianity and the success of the early church began with *all that Jesus began to do and teach*.

In today's passage we want to look at what Jesus began along with what God has begun in our own lives through Him.



1. What are some new or recent things happening in your life?
2. Share some things that God has been teaching you about yourself, others, or Him over the last few months.



Mark 1:14-39

1. Mark lists all of these occurrences in one busy day of Jesus' ministry. Which one stands out for you and why?
2. What common thread might tie all these events together and what do they all have to do with Jesus' opening pronouncement that the kingdom of God is near?
3. What surprises you about Peter and Andrew leaving their nets, then James and John leaving their father to follow Jesus?
4. What impressed people in the synagogue about Jesus' authority? What was so new or different about Jesus' teaching?
5. What impresses you most about Jesus' early morning prayer vigil? How does it correspond with the other activities of His busy day of ministry? What do you think Jesus needed from His Father in this time alone with Him?
6. These events are the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. They are the kinds of things that Jesus began to do and teach. Talk about when you first began to open up to Jesus and what your life has been like since then.
7. In each of these different events we come into contact with Jesus' authority over people, spiritual powers, sickness, and personal ego. What does God's kingdom power and authority look like in your life and where do you feel the greatest need of God's kingdom right now?
8. If the gospel stories were only just the start of all that Jesus began to do and teach with the book of Acts as the developing story, what has the beginning imprint of Jesus' life been like in your life and what do you think God's next step of faith for you might be?
9. What's your greatest takeaway from today's passage and discussion? How can this group best pray for you?

"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." (Paul) Philippians 1:3-6



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week?
 2. How are you telling your story of God on campus?
 3. What things do you need God to do in your life?
-



Back Story

Who is Luke? Who is Theophilus? Why does Theophilus need to hear the story of Jesus and its impact throughout the world?

Luke is the author of both the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. Commentators have pointed out where Luke seems to come into the story of Jesus during Paul's second missionary tour as the Gospel made its way from Asia into Europe (Acts 16:6-11). Verse 11 is where he appeared for the first time by including himself in Paul's mission by the use of the personal pronoun *we*. We also learn that Luke was Greek by ethnicity and a physician by trade (Col. 4:14). Is he the man in Paul's dream beckoning Paul to come to Macedonia? That could be stretching things a bit. Truth is, we don't know a lot about Luke, other than he became a trusted convert and partner with Paul and he was educated enough to write both the story of Jesus and the story of how the followers of Jesus carried His message across the Middle East, Asia and Europe (Col. 1:6).

Theophilus is also a mystery. He seems to be some kind of important Roman official and his name means "friend of God" in Greek. According to Wikipedia (<https://bit.ly/3gxUAYG>), Theophilus may have been Paul's attorney, representing him before Nero. To support this claim, people reference to the formal legal terms found in the prologue to the Gospel such as "eyewitnesses," "account," "carefully investigated," and "know the certainty of things which you have been instructed."

The book of Acts ends with Paul still alive and under arrest awaiting trial, suggesting that the author intended to update Theophilus on Paul's history and provide an explanation of his travels and preaching to serve as evidence in support of his innocence under Roman law. According to Wikipedia, "Some also point to the parallel between the account of Jesus' trial before Pontius Pilate narrated in Luke's Gospel with the account of Paul's trials before Roman judges in the Book of Acts"). Like Paul's experience with various judges, Pontius Pilate declared Jesus innocent three times.

In this case, Luke may have laid out a defense for both Paul and the mission of Jesus by proving that Paul was a legitimate apostle. The first section of Acts follows Peter, connecting him to Jesus by the message he shared from the scriptures Jesus referred to about Himself, and by imitating Jesus' works like healing a paralyzed man (Acts 9:34), raising a young woman named Tabitha from the dead (Acts 9:36-42), and healing the sick by his passing shadow (Acts 5:12-16). Paul was also a true apostle as he repeated these same works of Jesus and Peter by curing the lame man in Lystra (Acts 14:7-9), raising the young man Eutychus from the dead (Acts 20:9-12), and healing people by the mere touch of his handkerchief or apron (Acts 19:11, 12). In this way, Luke presented Theophilus, whoever he was, a credible defense of Paul as a legitimate disciple of Jesus and genuine apostle like Peter.

This also demonstrates that the mission and message of Jesus was truly living on through the missionary efforts of the early church. Acts provides evidence of Jesus' promise to the disciples that, "*Whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father*" (John 14:12).

Luke is telling all of us that the work of Jesus was only the beginning of what Jesus intended to do. Acts has no clear and definite ending. It merely trails off with Paul living under house arrest awaiting trial. The obvious implication is that this same work of sharing the good news of Jesus with the world accompanied by the "greater works" to be done in His name were to continue along with the message. The first two significant miracles in the Acts story highlight this even further through the gift of tongues and the healing of a man paralyzed from birth. The followers of Jesus are given mouths for speaking and feet for running with the good news into a world that desperately needs their message. What better place to run with the good news than on campus!

Why Are You Standing Here?

I will never forget the overwhelming feeling flooding over me when I first landed at the University of Tennessee as the new Adventist chaplain and director of a student center on campus. Four successive campus ministry leaders had come before me in the space of five years and none of them had stayed. The facility was old and in need of much repair, and there was no money. Student residents who lived on-site just wanted a place to live while going to school and had little interest in being involved in a campus ministry. And of course, there were the 26,000 students on campus that I was expected to reach. An MDiv degree and a summer of public campus ministry training had not adequately prepared me for this mission. Where to start? I could identify with the disciples in today's passage—standing there, watching Jesus ascend into the clouds with jaws dropped and mouths wide open. What can these disciples teach us about taking our first steps in our mission with Jesus?



1. What against-all-odds stories of the Bible impress you the most and why?
2. What seemingly impossible things has God called you to do lately?



Acts 1:1-11

1. What are your first impressions of the beginning of the book of Acts?
2. What indications do you have that the disciples were not on the same page with Jesus even as He was about to return to Heaven? How did their expectations of Jesus' kingdom differ from His? What can we learn from their misunderstandings?
3. What were Jesus' instructions and how did this help prepare them for the mission ahead? What can we apply here to our mission on campus?
4. The disciples obviously had their own views of Jesus' mission. What were some things that kept them from taking the first step? How can you identify with their failure to launch?
5. How does the angel's reminder that *"This same Jesus will come again"* inspire you to step up?
6. What practical steps do you or your group need to take to share the good news on your campus? How does today's passage help you get started? What do you need to do first?
7. What do you fear most about launching, growing, or sustaining a ministry on campus?
8. What's your greatest takeaway from today's passage and discussion? How can this group best pray for you?

Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.' (Jesus)

Matthew 28:18-20



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week?
 2. What ideas are you praying about for ministry on campus?
 3. What is God telling you to do next?
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Back Story

The book of Acts opens with Jesus' last-minute instructions just before His ascension. The disciples stood with open mouths, clueless about their mission or where to even begin. The two guiding angels seemed surprised at their incomprehension. "*Why are you standing here looking into the sky?*" Jesus is coming back. The implication: "Don't you think you need to get going? You have work to do in preparation for His return!"

Still, the disciples obviously did not know what to do. They had no guidebook. There were no New Testament documents to follow. No established church structure or organization. No wonder they stood gazing into heaven like lost boys. Without Jesus the task was inconceivable. What they did not know – what they could not know – was that Jesus would still be with them. The Spirit of Jesus would now be *in* them guiding their mission, helping them to not be afraid, and providing words when they had none.

Their mission would be imbued and directed by the Holy Spirit and they needed preparation. Jesus' only instruction was to go back to the upper room where they had often met with Him, where they had eaten the last supper with Him before His crucifixion, and where Jesus often appeared to them after rising from the dead. They were to go back and pray for the very thing Jesus had promised – the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The other thing Jesus talked about was how they were to go about the mission. They were to begin in Jerusalem, testifying to Jesus' victory over death, then on to the surrounding area of Judea, Samaria, and from there to the rest of the world. Scholars have commented about the ripple effect. They were to begin where they were, extend out to the neighboring towns in Judea, then beyond the Jewish community into Samaria – an area Jesus had already opened up for them when they stopped to get a bite and a drink from the well of Sychar. From Samaria and beyond, the message of Jesus was to be shared around the world.

But His main message was to wait. Wait in the upper room in prayer for the moving of the Holy Spirit. His presence would open the way for them to speak the message to others. When we examine the mission of Jesus closely, there was more than one Pentecost. There was the main outpouring of the Holy Spirit for Jerusalem and Judea (Acts 2). The Samaritans also received their own outpouring of the Spirit (Acts 8:14-17). Then another miraculous and clear outpouring of the Holy Spirit was provided to the Gentile mission and the rest of the world at the home of Cornelius (Acts 10:44-46). There was a gift of the Holy Spirit for each and every wave of the mission.

The point is, nothing in Jesus' mission was to be done without the Holy Spirit's influence and power and that still hasn't changed. Jesus never intended us to work from our limited human abilities. He said that God would be glorified through the work of the Holy Spirit in us (Matthew 5:16, 1 Timothy 6:1, 2). God's mission is always greater than what can be accomplished by human means alone such as building a boat large enough to save the world. Leading out a group of slaves right under the nose of the most powerful nation on earth. Killing a giant more than twice your size with a slingshot and a few stones. Whatever God commands, He always enables.

But the disciples did not know this. All they had was the instruction of Jesus, so they went to Jerusalem and waited. They prayed for the promised Holy Spirit and when He came, they could not be quiet. They still didn't have a plan, but they were filled with joy and found they were now able to speak with anyone, no matter the language barrier. Somehow the Holy Spirit gave them utterance. It was as if the confusing languages from the tower of Babel had been reversed. The message of God's kingdom was being shared in the power and language of the Holy Spirit. This is how the world would know. This is how the campus will know. We may feel as confused and unprepared as the disciples, but with the leading and enabling of the Holy Spirit, nothing is impossible!

USB and the Human Connection

USB stands for Universal Serial Bus and it's an interface involving a port or cord for connecting electronic devices. Without a USB cord and port, we would not be able to connect computers with external devices such as our phones, printers, additional hard drives, external DVD drives, etc.

On a recent trip I mistakenly left a USB cord at home and was not able to connect my speakers to my computer. I couldn't charge the speakers, nor was I able to run them through the computer system. I had some first-rate BOSE speakers that I couldn't use without a connection.

Prayer and the ministry power source of the Holy Spirit function in a similar way in the book of Acts. Prayer is the cord that connects us to the Holy Spirit who provides direction, power, and functionality in our service to God and His mission.



1. Have you ever been without electricity? What was it like?
2. What is the relationship between prayer and the Holy Spirit for our lives and ministry?



Acts 2:1-13

1. What questions do you have about the Holy Spirit?
2. What relationship would you say that prayer has with the Holy Spirit for our lives and ministry?
3. What was so important about the gift of tongues and why the need to speak in different languages? Have you ever felt a breakdown in communication between you and another person and the need for the appropriate language to communicate with them? Please share an example.
4. Can you imagine the book of Acts without the ministry of the Holy Spirit? How important is the Holy Spirit in our ministry on campus?
5. According to Jesus, the Holy Spirit is a gift, yet we have to ask for Him (Luke 11:13). If Jesus came that we might be filled with the Holy Spirit, why do we need to ask for Him?
6. What would your campus ministry group look like if you were all filled, moved, and directed by the Holy Spirit? What kind of influence would your group have on campus?
7. What do you fear most about being filled and led by God's Spirit?
8. How can this group best pray for you?

"If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live." (Jesus)

John 14:15-19



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week?
2. Spend some time with God requesting the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence.
3. How would you like to see the Holy Spirit move on your campus?



Back Story

Pentecost was a big deal—a very big deal! According to Jesus it was the very reason He had come to our world: *“But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you”* (John 16:17).

Pentecost was one of the seven annual feasts from Old Testament times. It was also referred to as the Festival of Weeks since it was the next festival after First Fruits and occurred seven full weeks—50 days—later (Leviticus 23:15-22). Previously it marked the giving of the law when Israel was encamped at Mt. Sinai 50 days after leaving Egypt. The law came down from Sinai where God delivered it to Moses engraved by His own finger. The tongues of fire resting on the Apostles were a reminder of the fire that consumed the mountain in the wilderness as God came down in holy splendor. But no one could approach the mountain at the giving of the law (Exodus 19:16-22). This time the fire, blown in by a violent wind, rested over their heads and set their tongues ablaze for God.

This was the new revelation of God's law, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that Jesus had instructed them to wait for (John 14:23-27). Jesus said, *“When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth”* (John 16:13). Jesus said it was necessary that He go away, for if He didn't go away the Holy Spirit couldn't come and the Holy Spirit dwelling again in the human family was the very reason for His coming. *“Christ in you”* is *“the hope of glory!”* This was the New Covenant that the prophet Jeremiah had predicted some 600 years before where God would write His law on human hearts in place of tablets of stone (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

The Holy Spirit would be their teacher now. He would be the new guiding presence in their lives. He would teach them what to say as they stood before others. He would direct their efforts. He would enable them to do things and to help people as he had done in and through Jesus. Jesus had taught them all He could on earth, and now by the Holy Spirit's presence He would dwell within them since the Holy Spirit was the very Spirit of Jesus (Philip. 1:19).

The disciples asked when Jesus would restore the kingdom. Jesus responded, *“It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”* (Acts 1:7, 8).

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit was the beginning of the reign of God within those who believed and were baptized in Him. Paul comments on this very thing in his prayer for the Ephesians: *“It's in Christ that you, ...found yourselves home free—signed, sealed, and delivered by the Holy Spirit. This signet from God is the first installment on what's coming, a reminder that we'll get everything God has planned for us, a praising and glorious life”* (Ephesians 1:13, 14 MSG).

The book of Acts is often referred to as *Acts of the Apostles*, but a better title might be *Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles*. Before He left, Jesus encouraged the disciples that the Holy Spirit was coming to testify of him, but they would also be called to testify (John 15:26, 27). The testimony of the Apostles was the testimony of the Holy Spirit in and through them.

This is the same Holy Spirit—the Spirit of Jesus—is with us on campus. When we invite Him in, He will direct our ministry efforts. He will empower us to speak for Him. He will set our tongues on fire. He will give us a boldness we have never had. Pentecost has come. Better stop staring into the heavens and start sharing the news!

Speaking About Jesus

I was recently asked to give some workshops on launching a ministry on campus. But when the event facilitator introduced me, he got several things wrong. First, he mispronounced my name--something I am actually quite used to. Then he failed to list my academic credentials, which might have been important to a university crowd. Finally, he missed my title as the coordinator of public campus ministry for the Seventh-day Adventist church in North America. Of course, I was not insulted and actually made a joke of the mispronunciation.

Introductions can be tricky, but that is exactly the task Jesus handed off to the disciples in the book of Acts. He staked His entire reputation and success of His mission on their presentation. The world, and especially our campuses, still need to be introduced to Jesus. Let's see what today's passage can teach us about sharing Him with others!



1. When was the last time somebody got your name wrong or botched your introduction?
2. What do you love or dislike most about meeting new people?



Acts 2:14-40

What impresses you most about Peter or his message? What questions do you have?

How important was it for Peter to quote from the Old Testament? How did these references strengthen his argument? What references will help others identify and connect with Jesus today?

In Acts 17 when speaking to the Greeks of Athens, Paul quoted poets and sages familiar to them. He made no reference to the Hebrew Scriptures. What can Peter and Paul teach us about sharing the gospel on campus?

Leading up to his Pentecost sermon, Peter first denied Jesus, hid from the authorities, and was finally bewildered along with the other Apostles at Jesus' ascension. What prompted this 180 degree change of witness from the temple steps?

What do you need from the Holy Spirit to speak with boldness and authority about Jesus?

Jesus said we would need to be "wise as serpents yet harmless as doves." How do these instructions provide balance for bold witnesses?

What will it take for your campus to be "cut to the heart" about the death and resurrection of Jesus? What fresh ideas do you have for introducing Jesus to others on campus?

What's your greatest takeaway from today's passage and discussion? How can this group best pray for you?

"When they drag you into their meeting places, or into police courts and before judges, (or on campus) don't worry about defending yourselves--what you'll say or how you'll say it. The right words will be there. The Holy Spirit will give you the right words when the time comes." (Jesus)

Luke 12:11, 12 (Message)



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week?
2. What do you fear most about telling others about Jesus?
3. What do people need to hear about Jesus from you?



Back Story

Peter stood up! This is the first thing we are confronted with in the Pentecost response from the disciples. He stood up and brought clarity to what appeared as ecstatic chaos. The disciples were so happy and emotionally charged that others assumed they were drunk. Again, it was the presence of the Holy Spirit moving in them that got them out of the upper room and into the street in the first place. It was also the Holy Spirit that turned these scared, cowardly disciples into emboldened apostles joyfully dancing in the streets and speaking in languages they had never before understood. These men were not naturally disposed to such charismatic utterance or behavior. Many were rough fishermen, but they were now being moved by a violent wind and could not keep still or silent.

What did they say? Jesus had instructed them that when the time came, they would not need to worry about what to say. The Holy Spirit would speak through them (Matthew 10:19, 20). And true to Jesus' words, Peter knew exactly what to say. He quoted scriptures so often referenced by Jesus—some of the same scriptures that Jesus most likely shared with the two followers on the road to Emmaus just after His resurrection that caused their hearts to burn within them (Luke 24:25-27).

Peter was very direct. He quoted a well-known messianic prediction from Joel chapter 2 about the Spirit being poured out on all flesh. He began by referencing the movement of God grounded perfectly in scripture. Then he backed it up with a few other verses concerning a promise God made to David's son—one of the most repeated titles for Jesus—"Son of David" (Luke 18:38).

Peter quoted from Psalm 16 about David's body not being abandoned to the grave. But David's body was in the grave. David did die, and his body was entombed nearby for all to see. So, what hope beyond death was King David referring to? David was more than a king. He was also a prophet and Psalm 16 was a prediction about a son from his own loins that would one day deliver him and all those who believed in Jesus from the grave. "*Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it*" (Acts 2:31, 32).

Peter went on to explain Jesus' resurrection from the dead as the Son of David enthroned in heaven. "*For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, 'The Lord said to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.' 'Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah'*" (Acts 2:34-36).

In these verses Peter and the rest of the apostles modeled how people will come to know the mission and message of Jesus. It begins with a movement of the Spirit in someone's life—both those sharing the message and those hearing their testimony. When people are moved by the Spirit, they become open to the explanation He will provide through us. When Peter gave a clear and thoughtful account of how it was all predicted beforehand, there were no surprises. It was all according to God's plan. The pieces come together when people see how the movement of God in their life fits clearly into the broader scope of God's plan.

Michael Frost refers to this as living questionable lives: "*If all believers are leading the kind of lives that evoke questions from their friends, then opportunities for sharing faith abound, and chances for the gifted evangelists to boldly proclaim are increased. In brief, our task is to surprise the world!*" (Frost, Michael. *Surprise the World: The Five Habits of Highly Missional People* [p. 5]. The Navigators. Kindle Edition.)

Peter's message combined with the Holy Spirit's movement caused people to be cut to the heart and they were ready to repent and believe. Here's a model for us to follow on campus today—praying for people to be moved by the Spirit followed by a clear biblical explanation too difficult to refute. In this way the Bible defends itself and needs no additional proof!

New Community

Karl Marx and Frederich Engles wrote about a new man and a new society in the *Communist Manifesto* pamphlet of 1848. They envisioned a classless society following the revolution, and the new man would emerge as a result of the great economic revolution. However, 1,800 years earlier Jesus had already birthed a new community called the ekklesia—*called out ones*. The word “kirk,” or modern-day “church,” is the facility where Gaelic believers gathered much later across Northern Europe. The term “church” stuck, but what Jesus created was much more than a building. It was a living, breathing, active community of people called out from the world and into God’s new kingdom.

This community is God’s community—shaped by the fellowship of Jesus through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. What does the community of Jesus look like? We get snapshot pictures of it throughout the New Testament epistles, but the view from our modern balcony into the earliest gatherings and interactions of this community is found right here in today’s scripture passage.



1. Describe your three closest friends.
2. Describe what is working for your Adventist Christial Fellowship campus group, along with areas for growth.



Acts 2:42-47

1. What surprises you most about this portrait of the early church community?
2. What were some of the clear and obvious components of their life together? How many of these are taking place in your campus fellowship and how would you rate these for your group on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the highest?
3. Describe some great groups/fellowships you have been a part of. What made them so great and a group that you appreciated?
4. Rick Richardson from InterVarsity Christian Fellowship admits that “*students are looking for a community to belong to before a message to believe in.*” Do you agree with him? Why or why not? What is the relationship between the warmth of our fellowship and our witness on campus?
5. What suggestions do you have for helping new people and visitors to feel welcome and included?
6. Jesus once mentioned that when the seed is planted, it grows “all by itself” (Mark 4:26-28). How does the early church community illustrate this principle?
7. What’s your greatest takeaway from today’s passage and discussion? How can this group best pray for you?

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— I in them and you in me— so that they may be brought to complete unity. **Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.**” (Jesus)



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week?
2. How are you contributing to the strength of your chapter?
3. How is your ACF chapter contributing to your spiritual life?



Back Story

The people who built the Tower of Babel and the family of Abraham were in direct contrast to each other (Genesis 11 & 12). Those at Babel gathered themselves together for the purpose of “*making a name for themselves and to keep from being scattered across the face of the earth*” (Gen. 11:4). In contrast, Abraham followed God’s call. He left his family and familiar territory in Haran to build a new community in a land God said He would “*show him*” (Gen. 12:1-4). Abraham obeyed God’s command to fill the earth and take possession of it (Gen. 1:28). The people of Babel resisted God’s purpose for the human family by bunching up together and building a tower in defiance of God. Abraham was blessed by God while the people of Babel were cursed.

The new community birthed by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus were the continuation of Abraham’s family. Like Abraham, they too were called by God through Jesus Christ and sent out to bless others (Matt. 28:18-20). Today’s passage provides a fly-on-the-wall view of the newly formed family of Jesus. As we look closely, we see the characteristics that made them such a vibrant community:

- Discipleship – obeyed the disciples’ teaching
- Worship – filled with awe/praising God
- Fellowship – broke bread together and prayed
- Service – gave to any who were in need
- Evangelism – the Lord added to their number daily

Without being too proscriptive, these are the essential elements of a thriving community of Jesus. Growing in Christ means growing deeper through discipleship, stronger through worship, warmer through fellowship, broader through service, and larger in number through evangelism. The amazing thing about the early followers of Jesus was the “all by itself” principle. As they tended to the important matters of spiritual growth, worship, community, and serving others, God gave the growth. The community grew and included others as they focused on the growth catalyst.

This is a model for spiritual growth and mission success on campus.

As we focus our campus fellowships on digging deep into God’s word together, worshipping God wholeheartedly in the midst of a secular campus environment, looking for ways to serve fellow students, and developing real community by sharing meals, prayer, and life together, we experience the blessing of God in our midst and in turn become a blessing to others.

God blesses us by adding to our community. One of the great additional blessings of campus ministry is the opportunity to extend the blessing of God to other areas of the world as students from other countries become a part of our ACF chapter and help fulfill God’s ancient promise to Abraham.

It is important to differentiate between the church and the kingdom. It is a common mistake to confuse the two or to think of them as one and the same. The church is not the kingdom. The church is the body of Christ within God’s kingdom. Church members have the glorious privilege of announcing and inviting others to the kingdom, but the kingdom is distinct from those who inhabit it. The kingdom is where God reigns, regardless of who or how many accept it. God reigns on earth by virtue of Jesus’ victory over sin, death, and the Devil.

The church is made up of those who have responded to the good news of God’s kingdom and have come under His rule. In responding to Jesus’ invitation, we also become members of His body – God’s new community. As members, we are also citizens of the kingdom. It is an important distinction as it keeps us from thinking too highly of ourselves. The church and the kingdom are a result of Jesus’ victory and both belong to Him. One is His manifold presence on earth; the other is His rule. Our ACF groups are also members of this new community by helping advance His kingdom on campus. “*Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven!*” (Matthew 6).

To the Unknown God

Recently, I was asked to share some practical suggestions on launching a ministry on campus and sharing the message of Jesus with the skeptical people of Montréal. I was deeply impressed with the Canadian hospitality, especially on the highway. However, I'm not sure anything could have prepared me for such deep-seated spiritual indifference. Still, there were several evidences of Christian and other faith traditions all around me. I was able to visit historic places of worship such as the Cathedral of Notre Dame in downtown Québec and St. Joseph's Oratory. These beautiful and magnificent cathedrals are still highly frequented.

Québec is 90% Catholic, and yet is considered to be one of the most secular regions in all of North America. Like Paul in Athens, as I moved around Montréal, I was struck by the overwhelming presence of religious relics amidst an acute loss of personal faith. Underneath the cold religious exterior, however, is the heartbeat of the good news of Jesus' kingdom in the Canadian fervor for personal freedom. Like Paul of old, here is our challenge—to find connections within a spiritual vacuum so we can share the good news of Jesus.



1. Describe the spiritual climate of your campus.
2. What would you like to do about it?



Acts 17:16-30

1. How would you describe Paul's reaction to the spiritual atmosphere of Athens? How can you identify with him?
2. As you look around your campus, what are some of the troubling misconceptions about God that make you distressed? What specific needs do you see? What do feel God is calling you to do about it?
3. Paul used idols and Greek poetry as points of contact with the people of Athens. What can you use as points of contact with people on your campus in your efforts to share the good news of Jesus?
4. Paul did not use the Hebrew scriptures to introduce the people of Athens to Jesus and the resurrection. Instead, he used their own poets and philosophers. Do you think Paul made the right choice? Why or why not?
5. Paul referred to the idol to the "unknown god." What idols or evidence do you see of the Unknown God on your campus? What ideas do you have for making Him known?
6. Paul referred to the God who is always present—the one in whom we "live and move and have our being." Why is this idea about God an even harder truth to accept on campus today? How can we help people connect with the core truth that God is searching for us and not far from anyone?
7. What's your greatest takeaway from today's passage and discussion? How can this group best pray for you?

"I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings." (Paul)

I Corinthians 9:22, 23



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week?
 2. What church growth elements are you learning to incorporate into your chapter after this week's lesson?
 3. How are these elements contributing to your own spiritual life?
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Back Story

A friend of mine once made the comment that both of Paul's speeches given to a non-Jewish audience did not go well. The first was in Lystra where he was confused with Hermes, herald of the Greek gods and Barnabas with Zeus. Paul's message was well received, but the crowd eventually turned on him and proceeded to stone him. The second was in Athens where only a few received his message and became believers. I countered that ministry to skeptics is not easy – not in Paul's day or in ours. In spite of that, however, I think Paul did better than many of us. He at least got a hearing in both cities and left with the beginning of a house church in both places.

Athens was still the university center of the world when Paul visited. "It was the heir of the great philosophers, the city of Pericles and Demosthenes, of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Sophocles, and Euripides – these men who established patterns of thought that have affected human learning for centuries. Almost all philosophies follow, in some degree, the teachings of these men. But Athens was long past its zenith when Paul visited it. It was now four hundred years after the golden age of Greece, and, though Athens was still a center of art, beauty, culture, and knowledge, the city had lost all political importance" (Ray Stedman, *Athens Versus Paul*).

As Paul walked the city like any tourist might do, he noticed the vast array of idols – some 30,000 according to tradition. The ancient Greek historian, Peterronius, said it was easier to find a god in Athens than a man! Luke wrote that he was vexed in his spirit as he looked upon all these gods. Then he noticed the idol "to the unknown god." This struck a chord with him and provided a pretext for his address to the people of Athens. Paul would introduce them to the God they didn't know – the God that he had come to know confirmed by resurrection from the dead!

From Paul's ministry among the Athenians we learn the importance of understanding our audience. He began from their worldview and linked it to the mission and message of Jesus. Next he quoted their own poets and philosophers, building a bridge from their trusted sources to the God of the Bible. Then he went straight to the heart of the message – Jesus' resurrection from the dead. This is where many began to scoff, but some believed.

We also learn an amazing witnessing pattern from Paul in Athens. He began by reasoning with both Jews and Greeks in the synagogue. He always started with his own people. But he moved on to the marketplace where he continued the conversation. When the dialogue became interesting enough to people in the street, he was invited to the public square – the Areopagus where new ideas and philosophies were often heard and debated. When we learn to talk about Jesus with our friends and those we know, we develop the courage to bring Him up in more common places on campus and in the cafeteria. This can lead to even greater opportunities for sharing Him in class or among our professors.

It all begins with what we see. As Paul walked around the city, he was disturbed in his spirit by so many idols. This was certainly understandable considering his Jewish aversion to false gods. But it was more than that. Paul longed for the people of Athens to know the true God – the God who made heaven and earth. To Paul, God was not far off, but rather a personal God who entered the human story, died for our sins, and rose from the dead. He began from their story of god and introduced them to the story he was living in God. This is our challenge on campus – to speak from the story our friends are telling about god to the God we have come to know personally through Jesus Christ – the God still unknown to some people on campus!

Acts on Campus

"And the Gift Goes On," a Christmas song by Sandi Patti, gets stuck in my head during Advent. It reminds me of another song from an old children's television program, "Lamb Chop's Play-Along," called "The Song That Never Ends." Both songs keep on going with no obvious stopping place. This is how I feel about the book of Acts. Acts 28:31 is not a recognizable ending, which is a bit surprising since Luke was so careful in how he arranged both volume I: Luke, and volume II: Acts. Why does Acts end so abruptly – or does it?

If Luke and Acts were put together by Luke as a resource for Paul's defense before Nero, and Paul was beheaded soon after his time in Rome, then there was no need to continue the account of his life and ministry any further after his arrival in Rome where he faced trial. However, since the book of Acts is a continuation of "all that Jesus began to do and teach," it is actually not surprising that the ending is missing. In this case, Acts is the book that never ends because it documents the gift or story that goes on and on.

This means that Acts is still being written by those who have come to believe in Jesus through the Apostles' teaching, and His story lives on through us today. With tongues on fire for Him, we are writing the current chapter of Acts on campus. It is our privilege and challenge to act on the same faith in Jesus as His early followers did. Shine on, King Jesus! Shine the light of Your love through us on every campus, dorm room, and student center!



1. What are your dreams for the spiritual climate of your campus?
2. What is God calling you to do about it?



Acts 28:16-31

1. What are your impressions of Luke's ending for the book of Acts? What would you change?
2. How does Luke's ending complete Paul's earlier gospel commission in Acts 9:15, 16? What does this ending add to Paul's defense in Rome?
3. In Paul's letter to the Philippian believers he mentioned his witness in Rome and how some were preaching Christ in order to prejudice his case (Philippians 1:12-18). How does Acts 28 shed even more light on his Roman imprisonment? How did he use his defense to spread the gospel?
4. According to verses 30-31, Paul spent his last two years under house arrest in Rome. What do you think it looked like? How did Paul use this time? What can we learn from him about taking advantage of new surroundings to share the gospel?
5. Paul remained faithful to his gospel commission right to the end of his life. How do you understand your gospel commission? How successful have you been in carrying it out? What needs to change?
6. What was Paul's message right up to the end of his life? What did he keep mentioning and sharing about the message of Jesus? How can Paul's words guide our witness on campus?

"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Jesus)



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week?
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Back Story

Paul ended up in Rome, capital of the Roman Empire, and exactly where he wanted to be. Others warned him about going to Jerusalem at the end of his third missionary tour. Agabus, a prophet from Judea, predicted his arrest and possible death (Acts 21:10-14). In fact, Paul himself seemed to know what would befall him going into Jerusalem (Acts 20:22-24). As we follow the story in Acts, this is exactly what happened. While worshipping at the temple, he was spotted by some Jewish leaders, accused, and arrested. In order for him to receive a fair trial as a Roman citizen, he was whisked off to Caesarea where he remained in prison for two years waiting his sentence. After appealing to Caesar – his right as a Roman citizen – he was sent on to Rome instead of back to Jerusalem to face trial.

This was where he wanted to be. It fit in with God's original commission in Acts 9 where God told Ananias, the one God sent to explain Paul's mission, that he would suffer for God and would testify about Jesus before Gentiles and kings. Paul had spent his entire ministry sharing the message of Jesus with Gentiles. Now he was completing his mission by witnessing before kings. First he was sent before the Jewish Sanhedrin, then the Roman official Claudius Lysias in Jerusalem, then to the Roman governor Felix in Caesarea, then to Felix's replacement Porcius Festus, and then to the Jewish King Agrippa and his wife Bernice. All these people heard Paul's testimony before he was sent off to Rome to stand trial before Nero.

Finally in Rome after being shipwrecked and spending the winter on the island of Malta, he faced house arrest. He could come and go with the oversight of a Roman guard. This is where Paul wrote many of his prison letters – Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. Apparently, he also shared the message of Christ and His love with his Roman guards and this is where the book of Acts trails off with Paul awaiting trial. His eventual beheading in the Mamertine Prison is the subject of church history. We know according to his letter to the Romans written before his arrival that he intended to go on from Rome to Spain (Romans 15:23, 24). It is uncertain if that ever occurred, but what is clear is that wherever he went he shared the story of Jesus and His resurrection from the dead.

As we have already mentioned, the Acts story never really ends, which means the Holy Spirit is continuing to write the story of God through people who still believe with tongues on fire for the gospel who are eager to share our abundant life in Him. We are part of the book of Acts – *Acts on campus*. We are writing the story of God by His Spirit living and moving in us. How will God lead us? What is our commission? What divine appointments await us on campus? Who will God direct into our path so we can share the story of God through our own story of how He has changed everything for us? Only the Holy Spirit knows. When we wait on Him, follow His lead, and let Him speak through our voice anything can happen!

*"How beautiful on the mountains
are the feet of those
who bring good news,
who proclaim peace,
who bring good tidings,
who proclaim salvation,
who say to Zion,
Your God reigns!"*
Isaiah 52:7

Let's join the mission of God on campus. Let's keep on writing the amazing tales of the Holy Spirit in us. Let our voices be heard. All for Christ and campus!

