



**Ron Pickell**

*Acts on Campus* – Participant's Guide by Ron Pickell

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402.486.8800  
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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 college students to use in larger, weekly meetings either on or off campus in a teaching and small group discussion setting. The beginning paragraph is an illustration that introduces the topic of study.

- **Journey Together** helps ease participants into the topic through ice-breaker related questions.
- **Road Map** is the main Bible passage discussion will focus on, and the questions that follow will help flesh out the topic. If you are leading *Journey*, feel free to depart from these as needed and come up with your own, as long as they stay on track with the main direction of the lesson laid out in the leader's guide.
- **My Journey** is a continuation of the larger group meetings meant for smaller groups of people that meet during the week to check in with one another and reflect on how God is using *Journey* in their daily life. I recommend these groups be flexible in terms of location and meeting time. Keep in mind that the amount of questions have been purposefully limited in this section to allow for more personal interactions and life application.

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

### 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!

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*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?

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2. Share some things that God has been teaching you about yourself, others, or Him over the last few months.

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## 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?

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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?

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3. What surprises you about Peter and Andrew leaving their nets, then James and John leaving their father to follow Jesus?

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4. What impressed people in the synagogue about Jesus' authority? What was so new or different about Jesus' teaching?

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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?

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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.

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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?

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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?

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

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"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?

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# 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?

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2. What seemingly impossible things has God called you to do lately?

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## Acts 1:1-11

1. What are your first impressions of the beginning of the book of Acts?

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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?

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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?

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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?

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5. How does the angel's reminder that "*This same Jesus will come again*" inspire you to step up?

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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?

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7. What do you fear most about launching, growing, or sustaining a ministry on campus?

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

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"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?

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2. What ideas are you praying about for ministry on campus?

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# 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.



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1. Have you ever been without electricity? What was it like?

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2. What is the relationship between prayer and the Holy Spirit for our lives and ministry?

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## Acts 2:1-13

1. What questions do you have about the Holy Spirit?

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2. What relationship would you say that prayer has with the Holy Spirit for our lives and ministry?

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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.

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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?

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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?

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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?

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7. What do you fear most about being filled and led by God's Spirit?

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8. How can this group best pray for you?

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"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?

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2. Spend some time with God requesting the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence.

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3. How would you like to see the Holy Spirit move on your campus?

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# 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?

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2. What do you love or dislike most about meeting new people?

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## Acts 2:14-40

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

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2. 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?

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3. 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?

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4. 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?

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

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

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7. 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?

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

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“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?

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2. What do you fear most about telling others about Jesus?

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# 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.



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1. Describe your three closest friends.

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2. Describe what is working for your Adventist Christian Fellowship campus group, along with areas for growth.

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## Acts 2:42-47

1. What surprises you most about this portrait of the early church community?

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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?

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3. Describe some great groups/fellowships you have been a part of. What made them so great and a group that you appreciated?

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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?

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5. What suggestions do you have for helping new people and visitors to feel welcome and included?

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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?

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

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“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?

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2. How are you contributing to the strength of your chapter?

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# 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.



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1. Describe the spiritual climate of your campus.

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2. What would you like to do about it?

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## Acts 17:16–30

1. How would you describe Paul's reaction to the spiritual atmosphere of Athens? How can you identify with him?

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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?

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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?

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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?

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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?

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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?

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

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"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?

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2. What church growth elements are you learning to incorporate into your chapter after this week's lesson?

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3. How are these elements contributing to your own spiritual life?

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# 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?

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2. What is God calling you to do about it?

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### Acts 28:16-31

1. What are your impressions of Luke's ending for the book of Acts? What would you change?

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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?

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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?

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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?

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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?

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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?

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"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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2. What church growth elements are you learning to incorporate into your chapter after this week's lesson?

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3. How are these elements contributing to your own spiritual life?

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