

New Heights
Christian Church
Sunday School
Quarterly
Lesson Plans
(Fall 2008)

The Book of Acts

by

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The Book of Acts Lesson Plans

Lesson 1: The Ascension of Christ (September 7, 2008)

- I. Introduction (author, time, occasion, purpose)
- II. Ascension of Jesus to heaven (1:1-11)
- III. Selection of Matthias to Replace Judas (1:15-26)

Main Focus of this Lesson: After watching their Lord be crucified and then seeing Him in resurrected form, the disciples were excited but also in shock. They went with Him to the Mount of Olives and watched as He disappeared into the clouds. Then, they returned to the Upper Room and began praying about where to go and what to do next. By this time, they understood that Judas has betrayed Jesus and sought someone to take his place.

Related Passages: Colossians 4:14, II Timothy 4:11, Matthew 28:18-20, and Matthew 16:18

Five Day Recommended Reading:

- Monday: Acts 1:1-5
- Tuesday: Acts 1:6-11
- Wednesday: Acts 1:12-14
- Thursday: Acts 15-21
- Friday: Acts 1:22-26

Study questions:

- 1. What does Acts 1:8 tell us about sharing our faith with others?

- 2. What was the attitude of the disciples just before and just after Jesus' Ascension?

- 3. What is the Great Commission, and how many times did Jesus say something to the disciples?

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4. Why did the disciples choose Matthias to be with them?

5. According to Scriptures, what came of Matthias after he was chosen?

6. How was the Holy Spirit building Jesus' church in this lesson?

7. How was the Holy Spirit showing His deity in this lesson?

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Daily Devotion for Tuesday: September 2, 2008

Title: What the Book of Acts Teaches

Bible Passages: Acts 1:1, Luke 1:3, Colossians 4:14, II Timothy 4:11, Acts 28, Acts 1:8, and Matthew 28:18-20

Key Verse: "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."

The Book of Acts was written to prepare an authoritative account of the works of the Apostles, to show that Christianity was the same for everyone, to present the legitimacy of the Apostle Paul's ministry, and to prove that God bore witness of the Apostles and their work. Acts 1:1 and Luke 1:3 both mention a man named Theophilus, so the author was writing both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts to a specific individual. Because of the medical terminology that is used throughout both Books, the medical doctor, Luke, is credited with having been the author of each. In Colossians 4:14 and II Timothy 4:11, the Apostle Paul wrote that Luke was with him, so the implication is that Luke would have written his Gospel and also the Book of Acts while traveling with and under the direction of Paul. Luke was most likely Paul's doctor since Paul was so often having to endure persecution.

The dates of Luke's writings can be estimated based on the imprisonment of Paul in Acts, Chapter Twenty-eight. Because he had gone to Rome between 58-60AD, the time of the writing of Acts was probably around 60-62AD. The Gospel of Luke preceded the Book of Acts, so the date of that work was probably around 58-60AD. The Book of Acts is a missionary Book. The main character in the first twelve chapters was the Apostle Peter, and the main character in the last sixteen was Paul. The first seven chapters took place in Jerusalem, the next five were in Judea, and the last sixteen were in Samaria. Acts 1:8 says, "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." The Great Commission, in Matthew 28:18-20, tells Christians to go, and the Book of Acts shows them how. The early church started the work, and now, Christians are called to finish it.

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Daily Devotion for Thursday: September 4, 2008 Title: Christians Can Learn From The Jerusalem Church

Bible Passages: Acts 1:8, Acts 2:42-47, Acts 4:32-37, and Matthew 16:18

Key Verse: "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."

The people in the Jerusalem church were from all walks of life. They made decisions in unity, they were in one accord, they were unified around Jesus, they had a unified purpose, and based on Acts 1:8, they went from house to house trying to reach and teach others about the Lord. Because of their united attitude around Him, as seen in Acts 2:42-47 and Acts 4:32-37, they enjoyed spontaneous evangelism, they grew in number, and their ministry flourished.

Modern-day Christians can learn much from the church in Jerusalem. It was a growing church because it was a qualitative church. If a church grows qualitatively, then it will almost always grow quantitatively, and that is another way of saying that internal growth leads to external growth. They put their emphasis on reaching and teaching others for Christ, and their goal was to saturate their city with the gospel. The Jerusalem church had all the elements that make up the theological definition for the church. It was an assembly of professing believers. Its members were individually indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The church was under the discipline of the Word of God. It was organized to carry out the Great Commission, and its members went from house to house evangelizing, educating, worshiping, and offering fellowship. The church administered the ordinances of water Baptism and the Lord's Table for believers, and those believers exercised many spiritual gifts.

Studying the early church lets one see what has worked in the ministry and what has not worked. It also gives insight into how others have interpreted Scripture and how they have dealt with the various problems that have crept into the church. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus told His disciples that He would build His church, and He has been true to His Word. The church has often come under attack. But it has always stood, and it will continue to do so.

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Lesson 2: The Birth of the New Testament Church (September 14, 2008)

- I. Filling of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (2:1-13)
- II. Peter's Explanation of Pentecost (2:14-36)
- III. Baptism of Three Thousand Believers (2:37-47)

Main Focus of this Lesson: In Acts 1, the disciples had returned to the Upper Room to pray. A short while later, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came down and indwelt those saints. It was a time when many travelers were in Jerusalem, and each one heard the gospel in their own language. The work of the Holy Spirit on that day was tremendous. In addition to the presentation of the gospel, the Apostle Peter preached a strong, dynamic sermon. He pulled no punches in his remarks, and the result was that about three thousand people were saved.

Related Passages: John 14:15-31, I John 2:27, Matthew 26:31-35, Matthew 26:69-75, Matthew 16:16, I Corinthians 10:12, Ecclesiastes 3:7, and I John 1:9

Five Day Recommended Reading:

Monday:	Acts 2:1-11
Tuesday:	Acts 2:12-21
Wednesday:	Acts 2:22-28
Thursday:	Acts 2:29-36
Friday:	Acts 2:37-47

Study questions:

1. What is a sign gift?

2. Why were so many out-of-town people in Jerusalem?

3. Do you believe that speaking in tongues is a sign gift?

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4. Peter was apparently fearless as he stood before the crowd. How do you explain the sudden change in his attitude?

5. Was having everything in common a good thing or a bad thing?

6. Did the Lord bless their commune lifestyle?

7. How was the Holy Spirit building Jesus' church in this lesson?

8. How was the Holy Spirit showing His deity in this lesson?

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Daily Devotion for Tuesday: September 9, 2008
Title: Christians Should Obey the Leading of the Spirit

Bible Passages: John 14:15-31, Acts 2:1-8, and I John 2:27

Key Verse: "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever."

In John 14:15-31, when speaking to His disciples towards the end of His ministry, Jesus described the Holy Spirit as their coming Comforter and Teacher. The Lord had already been their personal Master and Teacher for a little over three years, and at the conclusion of that time, He was telling them that the Father would send them the Holy Spirit. He said that the Spirit would teach them all things about Him and that the Spirit would also cause them to remember all things that He had spoken. According to Dr. Oliver B. Greene, the Holy Spirit came into the world so that He could take over the interests of Jesus on earth, and while here, His principle role has been to indwell those that have followed Christ and to teach them about their Lord.

Jesus told His disciples that the Holy Spirit would teach them all that they would need to know to continue God's work on earth. He also told them that the Holy Spirit would come to indwell, comfort and teach them. However, when He was speaking those words, the Holy Spirit had not yet been sent. He would not come until Pentecost, and that account is shared in Acts 2:1-8. Acts 2:4 says, "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them." So, from the very beginning, the Holy Spirit took over Jesus' interests on earth, and He started by empowering the Apostles to speak foreign languages at Pentecost so that they could share the gospel with the visitors from other lands.

Important truths about the Holy Spirit are that He indwells all believers and becomes their personal Teacher and Comforter. I John 2:27 says, "As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit--just as it has taught you, remain in him." In other words, Christians should obey and follow the Holy Spirit's leading.

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Daily Devotion for Thursday: September 11, 2008
Title: Peter Denied Three Times But Was Forgiven

Bible Passages: Matthew 26:31-35, Matthew 26:69-75, Acts 2:14-36, Matthew 16:16, I Corinthians 10:12, Ecclesiastes 3:7, and I John 1:9

Key Verse: "I tell you the truth,' Jesus answered, 'this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times."

Few people reach the spiritual height that the Apostle Peter reached in Matthew 16:16 when he boldly proclaimed that Jesus was and is the Christ, the Son of the living God. However, at the same time, few people fall as far as he fell when in Matthew 26:69-75 he three times declared that he did not know Him. Peter was a man of extremes, and he often spoke too quickly. But he was also a very strong, very wise spiritual leader who many times did exactly what he should. In Acts 2:14-36, he preached the sermon at Pentecost and three thousand people were saved. During that dynamic sermon, he said in Acts 2:36, "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." Paul was frightened on the night that he denied knowing Jesus, just as each person is sometimes fearful for his or her own safety. But he was not afraid at Pentecost, and some years later, he even wrote two epistles to encourage the early church during persecution.

One can learn five important spiritual lessons from the Apostle Peter's denial of Jesus and from his life, in general. First, the Bible is an honest book that does not hide the shortcomings of its heroes. One can read it and find similar negative accounts about Abraham, David, and the Apostle Paul. Second, as is stated in I Corinthians 10:12, Christians should not be too confident in themselves because that is when they are most likely to fall. Third, Christians should not speak too quickly because that is when they are most likely to put their foot in their mouths and be sorry for what they have said. Ecclesiastes 3:7 indicates that there is "a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak." The fourth lesson, as is taught in I John 1:9, is that a person can be forgiven for any sin, if only he or she will confess it. And fifth, despite Peter's sin of three times denying his Lord, God still loved him and still used him mightily for the rest of his life. When Peter focused on Christ, he was correct every time and the same is true for all Christians.

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Lesson 3: Soon in Trouble for Doing Good (September 21, 2008)

- I. Peter Heals a Man Crippled from Birth (3:1-10)
- II. Peter Uses the Opportunity to Preach About Jesus (3:11-26)
- III. Peter and John Are Arrested (4:1-4)
- IV. Peter Preaches about Jesus to the Sanhedrin (4:5-22)
- V. The Disciples Unite in Prayer (4:23-31)
- VI. The Believers Share with Others in Need (4:32-37)

Main Focus of this Lesson: Acts 2 was a time for celebration. Many people heard the gospel, and many of them were saved. In Acts 3, Peter and John were going to the temple, and a beggar asked them for money. Peter did not have any money, but he gave the man something far better. He healed him of his infirmity. The news quickly spread, and Peter and John were arrested. When they were brought before the high priest, they were told to stop what they were doing or risk facing severe consequences. Peter and John refused to be scared away, and the Jewish rulers had no choice at that time except to let them go.

Related Passages: Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, I Timothy 2:1-6, John 14:1-6, Acts 5:1-11, Acts 9:26-27, and Acts 15:36-41

Five Day Recommended Reading:

Monday: Acts 3:1-9
Tuesday: Acts 3:10-16
Wednesday: Acts 3:17-26
Thursday: Acts 4:1-22
Friday: Acts 4:23-37

Study questions:

1. Why were Peter and John going to the temple?

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2. Why did they take time from their schedule to deal with the beggar? Most people look away and keep walking.

3. Do you think that the ability to heal others was a sign gift?

4. From where did Peter and John get their courage to take on their adversaries?

5. Acts 4:32 mentions the commune lifestyle of the early believers in Jerusalem. Was that way of life good or bad?

6. How was the Holy Spirit building Jesus' church in this lesson?

7. How was the Holy Spirit showing His deity in this lesson?

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Daily Devotion for Tuesday: September 16, 2008

Title: Jesus Truly is the Only Way

Bible Passages: Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, I Timothy 2:1-6, Acts 4:12, and John 14:1-6

Key Verse: "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"

Many argue that a person can get to Heaven simply by being good, but in Romans 3:23 and 6:23, the Bible teaches that simple goodness will not do. Some religions say that a person can trust in the prophet of his or her particular Faith and then get to Heaven. But in I Timothy 2:5-6 and Acts 4:12, the Bible says that Jesus is the only true Prophet and Mediator that could and did make a way for people back to God. In this world of so many phonies, people need to be careful about the messengers that they follow. A number of years ago, some people, who were probably good and decent, followed a man, named Jim Jones, to Guyana and lost their lives because of that very charismatic, radical leader. Recently, another group of people, who were also probably good and decent, lost their lives in Texas because they followed another charismatic person that had professed to have a special link to Heaven. Even more recently, another group of people lost their lives because they followed one that had said that they could ride a comet to Heaven.

Many individuals have lost their lives and souls by following insincere men who did not have the best interest of their followers at heart. When Jesus lived on earth, He, too, said that He was God, and He, too, said that people could follow Him to Heaven. Was He like the others, or was He truly the One in whom people can trust? The answer is given in John 14:6, when He told His disciples that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Many critics argue that uneducated or undereducated fishermen, who did not understand what they were hearing or how to report what they were hearing and experiencing, wrote the Bible. Others argue that the numerous translations and copies of the Bible have made having the true Scriptures impossible. But even if those critics were correct, people can still know the truth because of the indwelling Holy Spirit, who teaches every believer that Jesus is the Lord.

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Daily Devotion for Thursday: September 18, 2008

Title: Barnabas was an Encourager

Bible Passages: Acts 4:36-37, Acts 5:1-11, Acts 9:26-27, and Acts 15:36-41

Key Verse: "Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet."

Having a positive attitude is a wonderful personal trait, and it can be very useful to the Lord. The Book of Acts spoke of a man named Barnabas, and he easily lived up to that billing. In Acts 4:36-37, he encouraged others to support the Lord's work by selling a field that he owned and by contributing the money to the church. Of course, as will sometimes happen, two people, in Acts 5:1-11, that had seen his act of generosity only pretended to do the same thing, and the Holy Spirit dealt very stringently with them.

On another occasion, after Saul of Tarsus had become a Christian, none of the disciples in Jerusalem would associate with him. Saul had fought zealously against the early church by trying to kill or imprison those that had professed Christ. Therefore, when he accepted the Christ that he had been trying to overthrow, many that had witnessed or experienced his evil works did not trust the sincerity of his profession, even though he had undergone the same dramatic change of having been reborn. They thought that he was possibly only pretending to be a Christian, and they were afraid of him. But Barnabas, in Acts 9:26-27, trusted Saul's conversion and brought him to the apostles. By his example, others were able to embrace Saul, too, and Saul was the man that is now referred to as the Apostle Paul, probably the greatest Christian ever.

In Acts 15:36-41, another incident was recorded where Barnabas distinguished himself by being an encourager. Paul was very upset with a co-worker named John Mark, and he would not take him on their next missionary journey. But Barnabas received Mark and took him under his wing. Then, a few years later, Mark wrote the Gospel of Mark, and Paul admitted that Mark had been useful to him in the ministry. By consistently demonstrating a godly attitude and a willingness to receive others, the Lord used Barnabas to do many great things.

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Lesson 4: Dealing Harshly with Sin and Unimpeded Growth (September 28, 2008)

- I. Ananias and Sapphira Are Judged for Lying (5:1-11)
- II. The Apostles Do Remarkable Miracles (5:12-16)
- III. An Angel Opens the Doors of the Jail (5:17-32)
- IV. Gamaliel Addresses the Men of Israel (5:33-42)

Main Focus of this Lesson: In Acts 4:36-37, Barnabas sold his land and gave the money to the church. No doubt, his action was seen by many, and that prompted Ananias and Sapphira to do something very similar. In Acts 5:1-11, they sold a possession and let everyone think that they had donated the proceeds to the church. However, they deceived their brothers and sisters in the Lord and actually held back a portion of the proceeds for themselves. The result was that the Holy Spirit dealt with them quickly and harshly. In the rest of the chapter, the church continued to grow, the disciples continued to perform miracles, and their enemies continued to be upset. Finally, in Acts 5:38-39, a Jewish teacher, named Gamaliel, advised the Jewish leaders to let the disciples be.

Related Passages: Acts 4:36-37, Acts 9:26-27, Acts 15:36-41, Proverbs 11:1-3, Psalm 15:1-3, Psalm 138:6, Proverbs 16:19, and Psalm 25:21

Five Day Recommended Reading:

Monday: Acts 5:1-11
Tuesday: Acts 5:12-20
Wednesday: Acts 5:21-26
Thursday: Acts 5:27-32
Friday: Acts 5:33-42

Study questions:

1. Why were Ananias and Sapphira judged so harshly?

2. How did the disciples get out of jail?

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3. What was Peter's attitude when brought before the council?

4. What famous person did Gamaliel teach?

5. What was Gamaliel's advice concerning the disciples?

6. How was the Holy Spirit building Jesus' church in this lesson?

7. How was the Holy Spirit showing His deity in this lesson?

The Book of Acts Lesson Plans

Daily Devotion for Tuesday: September 23, 2008

Title: Barnabas was an Encourager

Bible Passages: Acts 4:36-37, Acts 5:1-11, Acts 9:26-27, and Acts 15:36-41

Key Verse: "Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet."

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On another occasion, after Saul of Tarsus had become a Christian, none of the disciples in Jerusalem would associate with him. Saul had fought zealously against the early church by trying to kill or imprison those that had professed Christ. Therefore, when he accepted the Christ that he had been trying to overthrow, many that had witnessed or experienced his evil works did not trust the sincerity of his profession, even though he had undergone the same dramatic change of having been reborn. They thought that he was possibly only pretending to be a Christian, and they were afraid of him. But Barnabas, in Acts 9:26-27, trusted Saul's conversion and brought him to the apostles. By his example, others were able to embrace Saul, too, and Saul was the man that is now referred to as the Apostle Paul, probably the greatest Christian ever.

In Acts 15:36-41, another incident was recorded where Barnabas distinguished himself by being an encourager. Paul was very upset with a co-worker named John Mark, and he would not take him on their next missionary journey. But Barnabas received Mark and took him under his wing. Then, a few years later, Mark wrote the Gospel of Mark, and Paul admitted that Mark had been useful to him in the ministry. By consistently demonstrating a godly attitude and a willingness to receive others, the Lord used Barnabas to do many great things.

The Book of Acts Lesson Plans

Daily Devotion for Thursday: September 25, 2008

Title: Godly People Live Clean, Honest Lives

Bible Passages: Proverbs 11:1-3, Psalm 15:1-3, Psalm 138:6, Proverbs 16:19, and Psalm 25:21

Key Verse: "The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity."

In Proverbs 11:1-3, Solomon wrote about three different spiritual principles, and through each one, a person can gain valuable insight into godly wisdom. The first pertained to being honest and to not trying to cheat others. God is never pleased when people cheat other people or when they even try to cheat them. Solomon used the illustration of false scales, and the image was of someone dishonestly weighing out goods for someone else. The Lord is not pleased or honored when a person uses a weight that says one value when it is really of a lesser value. People can cheat their employers by not doing their required work. They can cheat others out of money by attaching phony claims to items that they sell. They can cheat by doing as Solomon wrote and using false balances. But the Bible teaches in Psalm 15:1-3 that the intentional cheater will not profit.

The second instruction from Proverbs 11:1-3 dealt with a prideful heart. God is not pleased when people lift themselves up and are too boastful, so Solomon wrote that shame comes when a person becomes too prideful. Psalm 138:6 says, "Though the LORD is on high, he looks upon the lowly, but the proud he knows from afar." Proverbs 16:19 says, "Better to be lowly in spirit and among the oppressed than to share plunder with the proud." People should take pride in themselves and in the quality of lives they live, but they should never exalt themselves in their own eyes. The third teaching from Proverbs 11:1-3 was that people should have integrity and live right. Integrity comes from the Hebrew word that means completeness, fullness, innocence, and simplicity, and part of having integrity is to be mature and to live a clean, honest life. Psalm 25:21 says, "May integrity and uprightness protect me, because my hope is in you." Thus, godly people should try to live clean, honest lives before others and, most of all, to live lives that honor the Lord.

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Lesson 5: The First Deacons and the First Martyr (October 5, 2008)

- I. Seven Men Are Selected to Administer Care for Widows (6:1-7)
- II. Stephen is Arrested due to False Accusations (6:8-15)
- III. Stephen Preaches to the Sanhedrin (7:1-53)
- IV. Jewish Leaders Stone Stephen (7:54-60)

Main Focus of this Lesson: In Acts 6, the busy disciples told the church to select seven men to assist in the daily tasks that were arising within the church. The seven were chosen, and that left more time for the disciples to minister. Soon afterwards, however, Stephen was arrested and falsely accused by some witnesses. He was taken before the council and once there preached a very condemning sermon. The members of the council took revenge and had him stoned to death. Stephen was the first martyr of the early church.

Related Passages: Matthew 16:16-18, Exodus 14:13-31, Daniel 3:1-30, Daniel 6:1-28, Acts 12:1-2, II Corinthians 11:22-27, and II Timothy 4:6-8

Five Day Recommended Reading:

Monday: Acts 6:1-7
Tuesday: Acts 6:8-15
Wednesday: Acts 7:1-16
Thursday: Acts 7:17-36
Friday: Acts 7:37-60

Study questions:

1. Why did the first church have seven deacons?

2. Why was Stephen taken prisoner?

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3. What did he tell the council when he was before them?

4. Do you think the Holy Spirit was leading him or not?

5. If so, then why was he killed?

6. Did any members of the council repent as a result of his message?

7. What prominent person oversaw Stephen's execution?

8. How was the Holy Spirit building Jesus' church in this lesson?

9. How was the Holy Spirit showing His deity in this lesson?

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Daily Devotion for Tuesday: September 30, 2008

Title: Jesus Said, "I Will Build My Church"

Bible Passages: Matthew 16:16-18

Key Verse: "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."

When Jesus spoke the words of Matthew 16:16-18 to His disciples, He made them an incredible promise. He indicated that He would build His church and that no earthly or demonic force would ever be able to overcome it. His words were very profound. But almost two thousand years later, the church is still standing, even though it has endured numerous trials and tribulations.

The first opportunity for the church to die was when Jesus was crucified. No one could have blamed the disciples if they had retreated to their former occupations and tried to forget all that Jesus had said and done. The second opportunity for the church to die was when Saul of Tarsus, later to be called the Apostle Paul, started his one-man campaign to destroy all Christians. In Acts, Chapter Six, he had participated in the stoning of Stephen, a man who was one of the first deacons of the newly formed New Testament church. But in Acts, Chapter Nine, while traveling to Damascus to kill even more Christians, Saul encountered Jesus in a spectacular fashion and surrendered his heart and life to Him. The third opportunity for the church to die was when a band of Jews decided to go after Christians and especially after the Apostle Paul. The Jewish people had learned about worshipping the one, true God while in Babylonian captivity, so they rejected Christianity and its triune-God teaching. The fourth opportunity for the church to die was when the Roman Empire declared Christianity an illegal religion.

But despite the determined efforts of Rome and all the other forces through the centuries, the church has continued to stand. Flesh and blood may be able to tear down church buildings and even take the lives of professing Christians, but flesh and blood will never be able to bring down the church or put a halt to the Lord's work.

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Daily Devotion for Thursday: October 2, 2008

Title: Stephen Was the First Martyr of the Church

Bible Passages: Acts 7:1-60, Exodus 14:13-31, Daniel 3:1-30, Daniel 6:1-28, Acts 12:1-2, II Corinthians 11:22-27, II Timothy 4:6-8, and Acts 6:5-15

Key Verse: "While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.'"

A person might read Exodus 14:13-31, Daniel 3:1-30, or Daniel 6:1-28 and conclude that serving God is a convenient crutch for getting someone past their opposition in life. In each of the above instances, those that had been faithful to God were delivered from certain doom, and each time, their enemies were destroyed. But since the time of Christ, deliverance from one's enemies has often meant deliverance into eternity rather than the experiencing of some kind of glorious, heaven-sent victory on earth.

In Acts 12:1-2, James was put to death by King Herod for the crime of being a Christian, and he became the first apostle to be martyred. In II Corinthians 11:22-27, the Apostle Paul wrote about the intense persecution that he had endured for his faith in Christ, and in II Timothy 4:6-8, he wrote his final words just before he was martyred. By tradition, eleven of the twelve apostles were tortured and killed because they would not deny the One that had lived and died for them. But before any of those men died, Stephen became the first martyr of the New Testament church. In Acts 6:5-15, Stephen was identified as the first deacon of the church, and he was described as a man full of faith, full of the Holy Spirit, and full of God's Grace and Power.

In those verses, though, some dissident Jews seized him and brought him before the Sanhedrin for a mock trial. Even though they saw in him the face of an angel, his fiery sermon in Acts 7:1-53 quickly turned them against him. So, in Acts 7:54-60, they dragged him outside the city and stoned him. Being stoned to death was not an easy way to die. He was not merely pelted with rocks, but instead, his executioners would cast huge stones upon him until he was buried in a heap. Stephen died a real death on that day, but in so doing, he took hold of a secure eternity with Christ the Lord that will last forever.

The Book of Acts Lesson Plans

Lesson 6: The Missionary Works of Philip (October 12, 2008)

- I. Philip Witnesses in Samaria (8:4-8)
- II. Simon the Sorcerer is Baptized (8:9-25)
- III. Philip Encounters the Ethiopian Eunuch (8:26-40)
- IV. Saul Persecutes the Church (8:1-3)
- V. Saul is Converted on the Road to Damascus (9:1-9)
- VI. Saul is Baptized (9:10-31)
- VII. A Paralytic, Aeneas, is Healed at Lydda (9:32-35)
- VIII. Dorcas is Restored to Life by Peter (9:36-43)

Main Focus of this Lesson: In Acts 8, Saul was terrorizing the church, and that caused Christians to flee Jerusalem. At the same time, the Christians were ministering for the Lord and enjoying great success. Philip was one of the seven deacons, and this chapter documents some of his early missionary work. First, he became involved with Simon. The passage says that Simon got saved, but a later exchange with Peter showed that his heart was not perfect towards the Lord. Next, Philip ministered to a eunuch from Ethiopia. In Acts 9, the great persecutor of the early church got saved. He would go on to have a tremendous ministry in his work with the Gentiles.

Related Passages: Matthew 25:14-30, Isaiah 53:7-8, Acts 7:58, Acts 13:9, Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, Romans 10:9, Romans 5:6-8, and II Corinthians 5:17

Five Day Recommended Reading:

- | | |
|------------|--------------|
| Monday: | Acts 8:1-13 |
| Tuesday: | Acts 8:14-33 |
| Wednesday: | Acts 8:34-40 |
| Thursday: | Acts 9:1-18 |
| Friday: | Acts 9:19-43 |

The Book of Acts Lesson Plans

Study questions:

1. Who was Saul and how did he hurt the church?
2. Who was Philip?
3. Why did Peter rebuke Simon? Was Simon saved?
4. Did the saints in Acts 8:14-17 experience a second work of grace. Why or why not?
5. How did Philip feel about missions?
6. What part of the Bible did Philip explain to the Ethiopian eunuch?
7. Did Saul get saved on the road to Damascus or in Damascus?
8. How did the Lord describe to Ananias the future ministry of Saul.
9. How was the Holy Spirit building Jesus' church in this lesson?
10. How was the Holy Spirit showing His deity in this lesson?

The Book of Acts Lesson Plans

Daily Devotion for Tuesday: October 7, 2008

Title: Philip Became the First Missionary

Bible Passages: Acts 8:26-40, Matthew 25:14-30, Acts 8:4-8, and Isaiah 53:7-8

Key Verse: "Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Go south to the road--the desert road--that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.'"

Many people never accomplish very much for the Lord simply because they never try. In Matthew 25:14-30, Jesus told a parable about three servants that were given five talents, two talents, and one talent, respectively. The first two individuals both doubled what they had been given to end with ten and four talents. But the last servant was afraid of failing, so he did not do anything for his master with the one talent that he had been given. Therefore, in Matthew 25:26-30, the master called him wicked and lazy, and his single talent was taken from him and given to the one that had ten.

Concerning the matter of service to the Lord, the Apostle Peter gave the proper instructions for all Christians. In I Peter 3:15-16, he wrote, "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander." Peter was saying that all Christians are called into the Lord's service and that they should always be ready to share their hope in Christ with others.

In Acts 8:4-8, Philip the evangelist had been preaching the gospel and sharing his hope in Christ with those in Samaria, and many were getting saved. Then, in Acts 8:26-40, he was told to go south to the road between Jerusalem and Gaza, and like any faithful Christian, he trusted his Lord and went. Once he got there, he found an Ethiopian eunuch who was reading Isaiah 53:7-8, but the eunuch did not understand what he was reading. So, in the conversation that followed, Philip shared his hope in Christ with the eunuch, and the eunuch became a Christian, too. Philip had only been doing what he was told to do with the talent that he had been given. But his efforts were blessed, the eunuch was saved, and he became the first missionary of the New Testament church.

The Book of Acts Lesson Plans

Daily Devotion for Thursday: October 9, 2008

Title: All Things Really Do Become New

Bible Passages: Acts 7:58, Acts 8:3, Acts 9:1-31, Acts 13:9, Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, Romans 10:9, Romans 5:6-8, and II Corinthians 5:17

Key Verse: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"

The Apostle Paul was probably the most remarkable Christian that ever lived. Before his conversion, he had been an ardent enemy of the church. In Acts 7:58, Luke says that he was a witness to the stoning of Stephen and that the participants of that stoning even threw their garments at his feet. In Acts 8:3, Luke wrote that Saul, later to be renamed Paul, went from house to house looking for Christians to put in prison. That verse says, "But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison." In Acts 9:1-2, the Bible says that he obtained permission to go to Damascus to bring Christians in that city back to Jerusalem to stand trial and be put in prison. During those days of the early church, few people fought more against the cause of Christ than Saul of Tarsus, and few names brought more terror to the hearts of Christians than the name of Saul.

On his journey to Damascus, however, something unusual happened that changed his life forever. In Acts 9:3-6, Luke reported that Saul encountered the Lord and that he became a believer in Christ. Later, in Acts 13:9, his name was changed to Paul, and he was like a totally different person. From that time until his death, he learned more and more about his Lord, he went on missionary journeys to spread the Gospel and set up churches, and he wrote at least thirteen, and maybe fourteen, Books of the New Testament. Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles, and through his efforts, many, many people were and have been saved. In Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, Romans 10:9, and Romans 5:6-8, he wrote about God's love and compassion for lost sinners and about the free gift of salvation. For the rest of his life, he demonstrated to everyone around him that those in Christ truly are new creatures and that everything really does become new. After his conversion, he set an example that anyone can follow with confidence because his path led straight to the Lord.

The Book of Acts Lesson Plans

Lesson 7: A Ministry to the Gentiles (October 19, 2008)

- I. Cornelius's Call to Peter (10:1-8)
- II. Peter's Vision (10:9-48)
- III. Peter Defends his Ministry to the Gentiles (11:1-18)
- IV. Antioch Receives the Good News (11:19-26)
- V. Relief is Sent to Judean Christians (11:27-30)

Main Focus of this Lesson: In Acts 10, a Roman centurion named Cornelius was eager to learn more about the Lord. He prayed, and the Lord told him to send to Joppa for a man named Peter. At almost the same time, Peter was awaiting his noon meal, and the Lord caused him to fall into a trance. In that trance, he was told to eat what would have normally been considered unclean meats, but the Lord told him to eat anyway. After a while he understood and accepted the message. Shortly afterwards, Cornelius's servants arrived, and Peter went with them back to Caesarea. At Cornelius's house Peter preached, and many were saved and baptized. In Acts 11, some of the brethren were bothered that Peter had ministered to those that were not of the circumcision. But Peter explained what had happened, and everyone rejoiced in the Lord. The chapter ended with Barnabas traveling to Tarsus to get Saul.

Related Passages: Acts 4:12 and Romans 3:10-11

Five Day Recommended Reading:

Monday: Acts 10:1-8
Tuesday: Acts 10:9-23
Wednesday: Acts 10:24-48
Thursday: Acts 11:1-18
Friday: Acts 11:19-30

Study questions:

1. Why was Peter reluctant to eat the meats in his vision?

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2. What did Peter do when he got to Cornelius house?

3. How did Cornelius's household react to Peter?

4. Why were the brethren upset when Peter returned?

5. Why did Barnabas go to Tarsus to get Saul?

6. How was the Holy Spirit building Jesus' church in this lesson?

7. How was the Holy Spirit showing His deity in this lesson?

The Book of Acts Lesson Plans

Daily Devotion for Tuesday: October 14, 2008

Cornelius Had the Right Kind of Heart

Bible Passages: Acts 10:1-8, Acts 4:12, Romans 3:10-11, and Acts 10:34-43

Key Verse: "He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly."

Many people think that they can win favor with the Lord and be saved by being a good person and by doing good deeds for others. But Cornelius, in Acts 10:1-8, proved that those beliefs are not correct. According to Acts 10:1-2, Cornelius was a centurion in the Italian regiment, he was a God-fearing man that helped others, and he even prayed to God regularly. But in the matter of salvation and eternal life, he was clearly lacking. Despite all his goodness, all his power, all his prayers, and all that he had done for others, without Jesus as his personal Savior, he was still lost and destined for eternal doom. Acts 4:12 says, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

By identifying Cornelius as a centurion, Luke, the medical doctor and the author of the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, showed that he was an important man with power and influence. Being a centurion in the Italian regiment meant that he was an officer and that he had one hundred Roman soldiers in his division. By identifying Cornelius as devout, God-fearing, and generous, Luke showed that those traits alone are not enough to gain salvation if the individual does not have a personal relationship with Jesus as Savior. People frequently think of themselves or others as being good, but Romans 3:10-11 says, "As it is written: 'There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God.'" Cornelius was good in the eyes of others, but he had never received Christ as his personal Savior.

In Acts 10:34-43, the Apostle Peter preached to Cornelius and his house the message of Jesus dying on the cross for the sins of humanity and of His being resurrected three days later. When they heard and received that message, they were saved. Nothing that they had tried before had worked. But when they believed into Jesus, they had the right kind of heart, and they were saved.

The Book of Acts Lesson Plans

Daily Devotion for Thursday: October 16, 2008

Title: Peter Learned an Important Lesson

Bible Passages: Acts 10:9-48

Key Verse: "Then Peter began to speak: 'I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.'"

The Old Testament Jewish person could have easily thought that God only worked with the Jewish people because He had especially chosen them to be His peculiar people. He had raised up Abraham, to whom He had given the promise of some land and a seed. Then, Isaac, who was that promised seed, became Jacob's father, and Jacob became the father of the whole Israeli nation through his twelve sons. Everything that happened in those early days contributed to the birth of a nation, and God seemed to be in the midst of the whole thing, watching over His people.

However, God was not just interested in the nation of Israel even during those early days. Whenever someone showed a love for Him and the right attitude towards Him, whether Jew or Gentile, He always openly received them. When Rahab, the Gentile harlot from Jericho, hid the two Jewish spies before Jericho was overthrown, her family and she were protected when destruction came to her city. When the Gentile king of Nineveh led his nation in a revival back to the Lord, God forgave them and did not destroy their land. Even in the Old Testament, God showed mercy, love, and kindness to those that sought Him.

In Acts 10:9-48, a Roman Gentile, named Cornelius, wanted to learn about Christ, so he sent his servants to fetch the Apostle Peter. Peter was Jewish, and before the incident with Cornelius, he had incorrectly thought that God only dealt with the Jewish people, too. However, the Lord gave him an object lesson that made him realize that he should go to Cornelius' house. When he got there, he found a whole household that wanted to hear about Jesus, and after he preached his salvation message, Cornelius, his family, and his servants received Christ as their Savior. When Peter saw the incredible response, he realized that God is concerned about everyone, whether Jew or Gentile.

The Book of Acts Lesson Plans

Lesson 8: The First Apostle Martyred and the Second Attempted (October 26, 2008)

- I. Herod Directs James's Execution and Peter's Imprisonment (12:1-4)
- II. An Angel Rescues Peter from Prison (12:5-17)
- III. Herod's Pride Causes his Violent Death (12:18-25)

Main Focus of this Lesson: In Acts 12, the Apostle James was martyred by King Herod. The Jews were pleased to see James killed, so King Herod next took Peter with the plan of killing him, too. His plans for Peter, however, never happened because an angel freed Peter from the prison. Peter was chained to guards on either side, but the angel of the Lord had no problems getting him out of that predicament. The angel told Peter to gird himself and bind his sandals, and then, Peter was led outside. After escaping, he went to Mary's house, the mother of John, and interrupted their prayer session for him. At the end of the chapter, Herod was killed by an angel of the Lord. Also Barnabas and Paul returned from their ministry.

Related Passages: Matthew 20:20-28, Acts 7:54-60, Acts 7:54-60, Acts 2:14-41, and Isaiah 26:3

Five Day Recommended Reading:

- Monday: Acts 12:1-4
- Tuesday: Acts 12:5-10
- Wednesday: Acts 12:11-19
- Thursday: Acts 12:20-24
- Friday: Acts 12:25

Study questions:

1. Why did Herod kill James?

2. Was that Herod the same as the one that killed all the babies when Jesus was born?

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3. How did Peter escape from prison?

4. Why did the angel tell Peter to gird himself and bind his sandals?

5. How did Herod die?

6. From where were Barnabas and Saul returning?

7. How was the Holy Spirit building Jesus' church in this lesson?

8. How was the Holy Spirit showing His deity in this lesson?

The Book of Acts Lesson Plans

Daily Devotion for Tuesday: October 21, 2008

Title: James was the First Martyred Apostle

Bible Passages: Acts 12:1-2, Matthew 20:20-28, and Acts 7:54-60

Key Verse: "He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword."

According to Acts 7:54-60, Stephen was the first deacon to be martyred because of his profession for Christ, and according to Acts 12:1-2, the first apostle to be martyred for the Lord was the Apostle James. James was also the brother of the Apostle John, and in considering his death, two issues need to be addressed. First, why were Christians being killed because they professed a belief in Jesus, and second, why was James the first apostle to be martyred?

The reason that the Jews were killing Christians, as was the case with Stephen, was that they did not recognize Jesus as the Son of God. In their mind, worshipping Him as the second Person of the Trinity was the same as idolatry, and that broke the first two commandments of their Ten Commandments. The reason that the Romans were killing Christians, as was the case with James, was that Christianity, in their mind, was an illegal religion. They were very liberal and open in the forms of worship that they allowed, but Christianity did not fit into any of their definitions for a legal religion. They would allow worship of their mythological gods, such as Jupiter, Venus, Mars, or Pluto. They would allow worship of the Roman emperor, which was called emperor worship, and they would allow worship of a religion that could be associated with a particular nation. They allowed Judaism, for example, because it was the national religion of Israel. But Christianity could not be connected to any nation, so it was not allowed.

Concerning the second issue, no one can say exactly why James was the first apostle to be martyred, but one can look at his spiritual growth during his last days and see that he had matured in the Lord. In Matthew 20:20-28, he had once wanted to sit on either the right or left hand of the Lord in heaven so that he could feel important, but Jesus told him that selflessly serving others was the real way to be important. So, by associating himself with Christ and then being willing to die for Him, he showed in the end that he had learned to serve.

The Book of Acts Lesson Plans

Daily Devotion for Thursday: October 23, 2008
Title: Peter was Miraculously Delivered from Herod

Bible Passages: Acts 12:1-17, Acts 7:54-60, Acts 2:14-41, and Isaiah 26:3

Key Verse: "Then the angel said to him, 'Put on your clothes and sandals.' And Peter did so. 'Wrap your cloak around you and follow me,' the angel told him."

From the very beginning, the early church had to deal with a lot of opposition. The Jewish religious leaders opposed the church because they thought that God was against it. The Roman Government opposed the church because it did not meet any of their three criteria for being a valid religion. The church did not acknowledge Caesar to be an emperor god, it did not worship any of the Roman mythological gods, and it was not tied to a particular country or region. Therefore, from their viewpoint, Christianity was not a valid religion, and the New Testament church was not operating in Rome's interests.

In Acts 12:1-2, King Herod began a campaign against the church. He arrested some church members, and he also had James, an Apostle and the brother of the Apostle John, executed. In Acts 7:54-60, Stephen had been the first deacon to be martyred for the cause of Christ, and in Acts 12:1-2, James was the first Apostle to be martyred. When the king saw that the killing of James was popular among the Jews, he then arrested the Apostle Peter, who, in Acts 2:14-41, had preached the first church sermon at Pentecost.

According to Acts 12:6, Peter slept soundly between two guards on the very night before he would probably be condemned and executed for being a Christian. That fulfilled Isaiah 26:3, which says, "You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you." In Acts 12:7-17, an angel of the Lord miraculously delivered him from prison, and that deliverance illustrates how the Holy Spirit works in a partnership with modern-day Christians to do God's work on earth. The angel told him, in Acts 12:7-8, to do those things that he could do for himself, such as getting dressed. But the angel of the Lord did for him, in Acts 12:9-10, those things that he could not do for himself, such as leading him out of the prison. In God's economy, Christians never work alone because the Lord is always with them.

The Book of Acts Lesson Plans

Lesson 9: The First Missionary Journey (November 2, 2008)

- I. The Holy Spirit calls Saul and Barnabas (13:1-3)
- II. Saul (Paul) and Barnabas Proclaim the Word of God on Cyprus (13:4-12)
- III. Paul and Barnabas Minister in Pisidian Antioch (13:13-52)
- IV. Paul and Barnabas Minister in Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe (14:1-7)
- V. A Crippled Man is Healed (14:8-10)
- VI. Paul and Barnabas are Deified by the People (14:11-28)

Main Focus of this Lesson: In Acts 13, the church at Antioch prayed and fasted with the result being that the Apostle Paul and Barnabas were called to go on their first missionary journey. The two men preached the gospel in the synagogues at Salamis, Paphos, and Perga. While in Perga, John Mark deserted them and returned to Jerusalem, where the Apostle Peter received him. From Perga, Paul and Barnabas went to the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia, and Paul preached the gospel. The Jews did not like his message. But the Gentiles asked him to preach to them, and he did. In Acts 14, the division between the two missionaries and the unbelieving Jews continued. Paul and Barnabas fled to Lystra and Derbe, but the high emotions followed them there. Paul healed a man, and the townspeople immediately wanted to make Paul and Barnabas into gods. But Paul and Barnabas would not have any of that. Eventually, the uproar became so great and so serious that Paul was stoned and left for dead outside Lystra. However, he survived that near death experience and continued his work into Derbe, back to Lystra, to Iconium and Antioch, and finally to Pisidia, Pamphylia, and Attalia.

Related Passages: II Samuel 12:1-15, Acts 20:1-4, Acts 17:4-13, and Acts 23:12

Five Day Recommended Reading:

Monday:	Acts 13:1-22
Tuesday:	Acts 13:23-37
Wednesday:	Acts 13:38-52
Thursday:	Acts 14:1-12
Friday:	Acts 14:13-28

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Study questions:

1. Who decided that Paul and Barnabas should go on a missionary journey?
2. In verses 9-11, did Paul hear an audible voice from the Lord? If not, then did people like Abraham and Moses hear audible voices?
3. In verse 22, why was David described as a man after God's own heart? He committed adultery and then had the wife's husband killed. Is that a picture of God's heart?
4. Why did the Jews reject Paul's message?
5. Why did the Gentiles receive Paul's message?
6. Where was Paul stoned and left for dead? Do you think that he was actually dead?
7. What did he do when he rose up?
8. How was the Holy Spirit building Jesus' church in this lesson?
9. How was the Holy Spirit showing His deity in this lesson?

The Book of Acts Lesson Plans

Daily Devotion for Tuesday: October 28, 2008
Title: David was a Man After God's Own Heart

Bible Passages: Acts 13:22-23 and II Samuel 12:1-15

Key Verse: "I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do."

People familiar with David's life may be confused by the part of Acts 13:22 which says, "I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart," and for good reason. The Bible teaches that a man should have only one wife. Yet, David had several. The Bible teaches that a man and woman should not commit adultery. Yet, David and Bathsheba did. The Bible teaches that one person should not kill another. Yet, David intentionally put Bathsheba's husband into a place of mortal danger when he learned that she was pregnant with his child. In II Samuel 12:1-15, the Prophet Nathan confronted him about all that he had done, and he had done a lot. But then, Acts 13:23 says, "From this man's descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised." One could examine the negative aspects of David's life and easily conclude that God is more pleased when an individual falls further and further into sin, but that conclusion would not be correct.

The Lord was not pleased when David married more than one woman, when he had an affair with Bathsheba, or when he plotted to kill her husband. But despite his many shortcomings, David still demonstrated several traits that did please the Lord. He had the heart of a shepherd when he defeated the Philistinian warrior, Goliath, and led Israel to victory. God could relate to that because Jesus called Himself the Great Shepherd, and He delivers all sinners from the penalty and burden of their sins when they come to Him. Even though he was not allowed to do it, David had the heart to build a temple so that people could worship God, and twice during His ministry, Jesus threw the moneychangers out of the temple because they were not properly honoring His Father's house. Lastly, David demonstrated an important trait that anyone can mimic. Whenever he did wrong, he never argued with the Lord or with God's man concerning his guilt, but instead, he always quickly repented. David made many mistakes, but he had the kind of heart for the Lord that God loves.

The Book of Acts Lesson Plans

Daily Devotion for Thursday: October 30, 2008

Title: Paul was Stalked by his own People

Bible Passages: Acts 20:1-4, Acts 14:19, Acts 17:4-13, and Acts 23:12

Key Verse: "Because the Jews made a plot against him just as he was about to sail for Syria, he decided to go back through Macedonia."

During the early days of the New Testament church, right after Pentecost, no one fought more zealously against Christians and Christianity than Saul of Tarsus. He was an ardent Jewish man from Tarsus, and he tried very hard to destroy those that were taking a stand for Christ. Stephen was one of the first deacons of the early church, and Saul watched with approval as Stephen was stoned to death for his faith. A few days later, Saul set out on a journey to Damascus so that he could find more Christians, but unbeknownst to him, he was about to have a different encounter. On the road to Damascus, he met the Lord Jesus, and for the first time, he realized that the Christians were right and that he was wrong. He repented on the spot, became a Christian, and from that day forward, he did all that he could to lead others to the Lord. After his conversion, God changed his name from Saul to Paul, and others began to know him as the Apostle Paul.

After his conversion, Paul went from being the hunter to being the hunted. In Acts 14:19, while in Lystra, he was stoned by some Jews that had traveled from Antioch and Iconium just to get him. They thought that they had killed him, but when they were gone, he got up and walked back into the city. In Acts 17:4-13, some Thessalonian Jews tried to turn the crowds against him, both in Thessalonica and in Berea. But once again, he escaped their evil plans. In Acts 20:1-4, some Jews had made a plot against him so that he was forced to alter his travel plans to avoid the danger. Then, in Acts 23:12, the Jerusalem Jews organized a plot against him, and that time, they were so determined that they agreed to not eat until they had gotten rid of him. Unfortunately, their plan was discovered, and he was transferred safely to Caesarea. Paul endured much from those that did not want him to share Christ, and he eventually was killed for his faith, too. However, he never stopped trying to tell others that the One that had died for them could free them from the penalty of their sins.

The Book of Acts Lesson Plans

Lesson 10: The First Church Council Meeting (November 9, 2008)

- I. Dispute over Circumcision of Believers (15:1-5)
- II. Meeting of the Jerusalem Council (15:6-21)
- III. Decision of the Jerusalem Council (15:22-35)

Main Focus of this Lesson: In Acts 15, some believing Jews approached Paul and Barnabas and told them that the circumcision of Moses was still a condition for salvation. Paul and Barnabas adamantly disagreed with those that held that position, so they decided to take the matter to the apostles in Jerusalem. The dispute was not between unsaved Jews and saved Gentiles. It was between saved Jews and saved Gentiles, which meant that resolving the matter was very important to the early church. During the meeting, Paul broke up an argument between those in attendance and began presenting his reasoning on the matter. He reported his work among the Gentiles and bore witness to how the Lord had blessed that work and those Gentiles that had believed. He indicated that circumcision placed an unnecessary burden on new converts and that such a thing should not be. He reported that salvation should be through the grace of Jesus and through that alone. When Paul finished his speech, the apostles and elders agreed. So, the dispute was ended.

Related Passages: Galatians 1:11-24, Galatians 2:1-9, Acts 16:1-10, and Proverbs 29:18

Five Day Recommended Reading:

Monday: Acts 15:1-5
Tuesday: Acts 15:6-21
Wednesday: Acts 15:22-29
Thursday: Acts 15:30-35
Friday: Acts 15:36-41

Study questions:

1. Why did the believing Jews want to cling to circumcision?

The Book of Acts Lesson Plans

Daily Devotion for Tuesday: November 4, 2008

Title: Paul Prepared for Fourteen Years

Bible Passages: Galatians 1:11-24, Galatians 2:1-9, and Acts 15:1-21

Key Verse: "Fourteen years later I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also."

The Apostle Paul was probably the greatest, most fruitful Christian that ever lived, but his transformation from being a persecutor and killer of Christians to becoming a great Christian evangelist, soul winner, and church builder was not instantaneous. In Galatians 1:11-24, he wrote that he had received the gospel of Christ by revelation from Christ rather than from man, but one can see that that revelation still occurred over time.

In Galatians 1:17-18, after his conversion, he said that he went to Arabia and then returned to Damascus instead of going to Jerusalem to meet with the apostles. After three years, he went to Jerusalem briefly to get acquainted with the Apostle Peter and with Jesus' brother, James, but even then, they were the only church leaders that he saw. Peter was the leader of the apostles and the early church, and according to Acts 15:1-21, James was either the leader of the Jerusalem council or he soon would be. So, when Paul went to Jerusalem, he went straight to the top so that the leaders could confirm the genuineness of his conversion. He stayed there for just a few days, and then, he went to Syria and Cilicia. In Galatians 2:1-9, he wrote that he returned to Jerusalem again after fourteen years, and by that time, he was readily accepted by Peter, James, the Apostle John, and the others as having his ministry to the Gentiles. When they parted, they encouraged each other to continue in their respective works.

Because Paul remained in Damascus for fourteen years after his conversion, the indication is that he probably spent time alone with the Lord so that he could receive the revelation from Christ that he wrote about in Galatians 1:12. He, like any newborn Christian, had to start slowly because he could only handle small portions of Bible truth at a time. So, his example teaches newborn Christians that they should patiently and diligently seek to learn more about the Lord during their walk with Him and through regular Bible study.

The Book of Acts Lesson Plans

Daily Devotion for Thursday: November 6, 2008

Title: Seeing First, Farthest, and Most - Goals for the Church

Bible Passages: Acts 16:1-10, Proverbs 29:18, and Acts 15:4-20

Key Verse: "So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers."

To be successful, a local church must have sound goals and objectives, and those goals and objectives should involve evangelism, the baptism of new converts, and teaching. The church's primary objective should be to carry out the Great Commission, and to do that, it must have a spiritual vision. The first part of Proverbs 29:18 says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

To be evangelical, the church should see first, farthest, and most. It should see the spiritual needs of its community "first," which means before anything else, and it should be ready to act on those needs. It should see "far" into the future with the idea of growing a church and a community that will be glorifying to God, and it should have a passion to reach all or "most" of the people in its community. The church must have compassion and be caring. It should reach out to others and be a motivator for those that attend. The church should present the gospel, and it should have a testimony concerning what it has seen of Christ, what it has heard about Him, and what it has experienced. An important goal for any local church should be to communicate enough of the gospel, in an understanding and motivating manner, for others to be saved. A second goal should be to persuade others to receive Jesus as Savior because people do not naturally come to Him. The human heart is often suspicious, so many times, people need to be encouraged and persuaded.

The Apostle Paul had a great vision for the Lord and for the church, and God used him in a mighty way. In Acts 16:1-8, he was busily traveling from one town to another to share the results of the Jerusalem Council, which was discussed in Acts 15:4-20. Then, in Acts 16:9-10, the Holy Spirit came to him in a dream and told him to go to Macedonia, so he immediately left for his new destination without complaint or question. Throughout his ministry, he always saw first, farthest, and most, and as a result, he was very successful.

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Lesson 11: Trouble in Philippi (November 16, 2008)

- I. Division of Paul and Barnabas over John Mark (15:36-41)
- II. Enlistment of Timothy by Paul and Silas (16:1-5)
- III. Conversion of the Philippian Jailer (16:19-40)

Main Focus of this Lesson: Chapter 15 ended with Paul and Barnabas disputing about whether John Mark should be allowed to rejoin them. Paul thought not, so he joined Silas. Barnabas did not hold a grudge against Mark, so Mark and he went together. In chapter 16, Paul started his second missionary journey with Silas by returning to Lystra, and while there he met Timothy. After that, he traveled to multiple locations, ministering as he went. But trouble was waiting for him when he got to Phillipi. He commanded an evil spirit to come out of young lady, and her master was very upset with Paul because the woman in her demonic state had been his source of income. Therefore, the man took Paul and Silas before the local judge and had them thrown in jail. In the late evening, a great earthquake occurred, and through the events that followed, a Philippian jailer got saved, and Paul and Silas were set free.

Related Passages: II Timothy 4:11, I John 1:9, John 16:7-11, I Corinthians 1:27-30, and II Thessalonians 2:7-8

Five Day Recommended Reading:

Monday: Acts 15:36-41
Tuesday: Acts 16:
Wednesday: Acts 16:
Thursday: Acts 16:
Friday: Acts 16:

Study questions:

1. Why did Paul and Barnabas split?

2. Do you think that it was God's will for them to split?

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3. Why did Paul have Timothy circumcised.
4. Why did Paul cast the demonic spirit out of the woman?
5. After the earthquake, why did the jailer want to get saved?
6. When Paul and Silas were free to go, why was Paul so antagonistic?
7. Is it possible that Paul perhaps had too great a temper?
8. How was the Holy Spirit building Jesus' church in this lesson?
9. How was the Holy Spirit showing His deity in this lesson?

The Book of Acts Lesson Plans

Daily Devotion for Tuesday: November 11, 2008
Title: Mark Deserted Paul and Barnabas in Pamphylia

Bible Passages: Acts 15:36-41, II Timothy 4:11, and I John 1:9

Key Verse: "But Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work."

Even the best people sometimes make mistakes, and John Mark was one of those that did. In Acts 15:36-41, he had deserted the Apostle Paul and Barnabas while they were in Pamphylia, so Paul did not want to take him on their next missionary journey. Paul was very zealous for the Lord, and he did not want to have to accommodate anyone that did not share his same fervor. Barnabas, however, was more understanding of Mark's actions than Paul, so he was willing to take him. Among the three, Barnabas seems to have had the right perspective and the more spiritual attitude.

Mark had made a serious mistake by leaving Paul and Barnabas, and it had created some hard feelings among the three. Therefore, the first lesson from his story is that Christians should be careful about what they say and do. Since Mark had committed himself to do the work, he should have completed what he had said he would do. On the other hand, the second lesson is that Paul could have been more understanding of the younger man's spiritual immaturity. I John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." Therefore, being the more spiritual, Paul should have been more understanding and more forgiving. Eventually, he did forgive Mark, and in II Timothy 4:11, he said that Mark was valuable to him in the ministry.

The third lesson from Mark's story is that God's will will be done. No one can understand how the Lord works. But He has a plan, and His plan will come to pass. After the three men had had their dispute, Paul joined with Silas, and Barnabas and Mark ministered together. At some point, though, Mark became involved with the Apostle Peter, and through Peter's tutelage, he wrote the Gospel that bears his name. Thus, in the end, God's will was accomplished, and He got the glory that is due to Him.

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Daily Devotion for Thursday: November 13, 2008

Title: Receive Jesus to Prepare for the End Times

Bible Passages: John 16:7-11, I Corinthians 1:27-30, II Thessalonians 2:7-8, and Acts 16:30-31

Key Verse: "When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment."

In John 16:7-11, Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would come and that He would reprove or convict the world in three different ways. He would reprove of sin, He would reprove of righteousness, and He would reprove of judgment. John 16:9 says that the Holy Spirit would reprove of sin because people do not believe on Him. John 16:10 says that He would reprove of righteousness because Jesus was about to go to His Father and because they would not see Him anymore. In I Corinthians 1:27-30, written by the Apostle Paul, Jesus was identified as a person's Basis for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. So, those verses mean that the Holy Spirit, Who took Jesus' place, would reprove unrepentant sinners and cause them to see themselves in the light of the Lord's righteousness.

John 16:11 says that the Holy Spirit would reprove of judgment because the prince of this world is judged. The prince of this world is the devil, and the judgment to which Jesus was referring was that of being eternally lost. The Holy Spirit would reprove lost sinners and show them their eternal doom without Christ, and though not mentioned explicitly by the Apostle John, the Holy Spirit would also restrain evil. Based on II Thessalonians 2:7-8 and to a lesser degree on John 16:7-11, the Holy Spirit's work since His arrival has been to restrain evil and to hold back the man of sin. When Christians are raptured out of the earth, then the restraining power of the Holy Spirit will be gone, too, and Satan will have his time to wreak havoc on those left behind.

Understanding the end times is not easy, but understanding what one must do to prepare for those times is simple. Acts 16:30-31 says, "He then brought them out and asked, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' They replied, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved--you and your household.'"

The Book of Acts Lesson Plans

Lesson 12: Paul in Trouble and on Trial (November 23, 2008)

- I. Paul is Warned to Avoid Jerusalem (21:1-26)
- II. The Rioters try to kill Paul (21:27-36)
- III. Paul Makes a Request of the Commander (21:37-40)
- IV. Paul Tells his Conversion Story (22:1-21)
- V. Paul Announces his Roman Citizenship (22:22-30)
- VI. Paul Appears before Festus (25:1-8)
- VII. Paul Appeals to Caesar (25:9-22)
- VIII. Paul Appears before Agrippa (25:23-27)

Main Focus of this Lesson: Now in his third missionary journey, Paul traveled to Tyre, where some fellow believers warned that he should not go to Jerusalem. Later, at Philip's house in Caesarea, a prophet named Agabus also warned him to not go to Jerusalem. Nevertheless, despite the warnings, he went. When he arrived, he learned from James that the Jews were upset because they thought that he was teaching the Gentiles to ignore the Law of Moses. When Paul tried to defend himself at the temple, some of the angry Jews saw him and aroused the crowd against him. When the uproar started, the chief captain and his soldiers broke it up. They took Paul into custody to get him out of the way, but Paul asked if he could speak to the angry mob. From the steps leading to the jail, he got the people's attention and offered his appeal. In Acts 22, he shared his testimony with those that would listen, but with every word the crowd became more upset. Finally, the guards were going to examine him by scourging, but Paul wisely told them that he was a Roman citizen. That got him out of the scourging and also meant that his case would go to Felix the governor, Festus, and eventually Agrippa. None of these Roman officials found Paul guilty of a crime. But because he had appealed his case to Caesar, they were forced to send him to Rome for a trial.

Related Passages: Acts 26:1-32 and Acts 27:1-12

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Five Day Recommended Reading:

Monday:	Acts 21:1-14
Tuesday:	Acts 21:15-40
Wednesday:	Acts 22:1-21
Thursday:	Acts 22:22-30
Friday:	Acts 25:1-27

Study questions:

1. Why was Paul willing to go to Jerusalem even though the trip might put him in grave danger?
2. Why were the Jews so upset with him?
3. Why was the guard willing to let Paul speak to the crowd from the stairs leading to the jail?
4. Why did Paul tell the guards that he was a Roman citizen?
5. How did Paul force a trip to Rome?
6. How was the Holy Spirit building Jesus' church in this lesson?
7. How was the Holy Spirit showing His deity in this lesson?

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Daily Devotion for Tuesday: November 18, 2008

Title: Paul was Always Ready to Share his Faith

Bible Passage: Acts 22:1-25

Key Verse: "You will be his witness to all men of what you have seen and heard."

Within the Christian Faith, probably the most important thing that anyone can do is sharing his or her faith in Christ with others. In Acts 22:1-25, the Apostle Paul was in Jerusalem, and the commander of the Roman troops had just taken him into custody to stop an uproar that had broken out in the whole city. Some Jewish people from an Asian province had seen him, and they were very much against his spreading of the gospel. So, they stirred up the people and tried to cause trouble because they could not leave well enough alone.

However, Paul was very intelligent and very crafty, and he was not afraid to use his resourcefulness to advance the cause of Christ. While the commander was taking him away in chains to the prison, he asked for permission to speak to the crowd. The commander did not even know Paul, and he was not familiar with his situation, at all. In fact, he thought that Paul was an Egyptian troublemaker that had been in Jerusalem earlier. But when he learned that Paul was really a Roman citizen, he gave him permission to speak.

Given that scenario, some people might have tried to console the mob and ease the situation. But Paul was not thinking of himself, and he did not use that tactic. Instead, he shared his testimony with the very people that were trying to shut him up. He talked about his days of being against the church, of trying to kill or jail Christians, and of even traveling to faraway places like Damascus to do the same. Then, he told them what all Christians should be willing to share with others. He told them about his encounter with Jesus, and he explained how the Lord had called him to his particular ministry. In short, he told them what the Lord had done for him personally, and that had become the basis for his testimony. Paul was always willing to share his faith with others, and modern-day Christians would do well to follow his example.

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Daily Devotion for Thursday: November 20, 2008

Title: A True Champion of the Christian Faith

Bible Passages: Acts 25:1-27, Acts 26:1-32, and Acts 27:1-12

Key Verse: "Agrippa said to Festus, 'This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.'"

The Apostle Paul was often persecuted and put in prison by those that did not want him to preach Christ. In Acts 25:4, he was being held prisoner in Caesarea until a Roman leader named Porcius Festus could hear the charges against him. When Paul stood before Festus, in Acts 25:9-11, the leader told him that he could return to Jerusalem to answer his accusers there. But Paul turned down that opportunity and instead appealed to Caesar, which was his right as a Roman citizen. By making such an appeal, he was exercising his right to go to Rome to stand trial.

During his time in Caesarea for that particular imprisonment, Paul spoke before Felix, Festus, and King Agrippa. Simply by sharing the events of his own conversion, he was able to communicate the Gospel to each man. In Acts 26:32, the king told Festus that Paul had not done anything wrong and that he could have been released if he had not appealed to Caesar. But actually, Paul had not betrayed himself by making his appeal. He had simply chosen Rome over Jerusalem because he knew that certain doom awaited him in Jerusalem.

In Acts 27:1-12, Luke wrote that Paul was placed on a ship in route to Rome. Many people would have had a pity party for themselves after having been so mistreated just for serving God, but Paul was not one of those people. While in Rome, he wrote to Philemon and the churches at Colosse, Ephesus, and Philippi. Today, those writings are appropriately called his Prison Epistles. When released from that imprisonment, he went to Spain where he wrote I Timothy and Titus. He was arrested again, and on that occasion, he wrote II Timothy. A short while later, he was martyred because of his faith in Christ and his zeal for serving the Lord. His life was a perfect example of grace under pressure. Once he became a Christian, he never let up on his service for the Lord, so he was truly a champion of the Christian Faith.

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Lesson 13: Paul's Journey to Rome and Imprisonment in Rome (November 30, 2008)

- I. Agrippa Sends Paul to Rome by Ship (27:1-12)
- II. The Voyage is Threatened by Storm (27:13-26)
- III. Paul is Shipwrecked on the Island of Malta (27:27-44)
- IV. The Snake on Paul's Hand does not Harm Him (28:1-10)
- V. Paul is under Guard while Boldly Preaching in Rome (28:11-31)

Main Focus of this Lesson: In Acts 27, King Agrippa sent Paul to Rome, and of course the main reason was that Paul had appealed to Caesar during his trial. Prior to sailing to Rome in dangerous waters, Paul warned the centurion of an approaching bad storm, but the ship sailed anyway. A short time into the voyage, Paul's prediction of the storm became a reality, and the ship was tossed about in the heavy seas. Eventually, the ship was lost to the winds and rain, and the people on board had to seek safety by using planks from the ship and swimming to land. In Acts 28, the ship's crew was on dry land and preparing a fire to get dry and stay warm. While gathering wood for the fire, a poisonous snake bit Paul, and those around him thought for sure that he was a dead man. However, the Lord intervened, and he quickly shook the snake off into the fire. A short while later, Paul was imprisoned in Rome where he stayed under what would probably be considered house arrest for two years. Then, he was released, and he returned to telling people how to get saved.

Related Passages: Acts 19:23-41, Colossians 4:10, and Romans 8:28-32

Five Day Recommended Reading:

Monday:	Acts 27:1-12
Tuesday:	Acts 27:13-26
Wednesday:	Acts 27:27-44
Thursday:	Acts 28:1-10
Friday:	Acts 28:11-31

Study questions:

1. Why was Paul being sent to Rome?

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2. Why did the ship's captain ignore Paul's warning about the storm?

3. How did Paul use the storm as an opportunity to present the Lord?

4. Does Paul experience with the snake teach that poisonous snakes are not dangerous?

5. What happened to Paul once he got to Rome?

6. Why was he released?

7. Where did he go after he was released?

8. How was the Holy Spirit building Jesus' church in this lesson?

9. How was the Holy Spirit showing His deity in this lesson?

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Daily Devotion for Tuesday: November 25, 2008

Title: Aristarchus Shared Paul's Difficulties

Bible Passages: Acts 19:23-41, Acts 27:2, and Colossians 4:10

Key Verse: "The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia, and rushed as one man into the theater."

One man that seems to have seen a lot of action during the days of the early church is hardly ever mentioned by people outside of the Bible. His name was Aristarchus, he was from Macedonia, and he often traveled with the Apostle Paul. In Acts 19:23-41, he was with Paul in Ephesus when their enemies had carried Gaius and him into a theatre with the intent of having them tried and arrested. A silversmith, named Demetrius, had incited the crowd to apprehend them because of their position against idols, and as Paul's traveling companion, Aristarchus was in serious danger just because of his association with Paul. In that instance, Paul was not in the theatre with them. So, the city clerk calmed the angry mob and encouraged them to take Paul and his friends to court rather than taking the law into their own hands. In the end, Aristarchus and the others were released, but they still had to undergo a scary experience because they were co-workers in the ministry with Paul.

Aristarchus was also with Paul in Colossians 4:10. On that occasion, Paul was in prison, and he called Aristarchus a fellow prisoner. So, Aristarchus not only traveled with the apostle, but he also shared in many of the same difficulties with him. He had been in Ephesus when the mob rose against them, and he was in jail with Paul when the apostle wrote his letter to the church at Colosse. Like Paul, his only crime was telling others about Christ, and in Acts 27:2, he was with Paul again when Paul was on his way to Rome to appeal his legal case to Caesar. Aristarchus was a faithful co-worker, and his life showed the scars. When people seized Paul, they also often seized Aristarchus. When Paul was thrown into jail, Aristarchus was often with him. Most people would not even recognize his name, but the Lord knows of his works and of his sacrifices. He knows that Aristarchus was a faithful servant, and in due time, this faithful Christian worker with Paul will be rewarded accordingly.

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Daily Devotion for Thursday: November 27, 2008

Title: Paul Shook off a Snake

Bible Passages: Acts 28:1-10, Acts 27:1-44, and Romans 8:28-32

Key Verse: "But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects."

Romans 8:31-32 says, "What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all -- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" The Apostle Paul wrote those words to the Christians in Rome because he wanted them to be aware of their glorious victory in Christ. In Romans 8:28, he had just written that all things work together for good in a Christian's life if he or she loves the Lord and if he or she has been called according to His purpose.

Thus, the above verses offer hope to devoted followers of Christ as they struggle to live in a world that offers little or no hope. When difficulties arise, as they always do, then people, who truly love the Lord, can rest assured that God is working out His plan in their lives. Many early Christians were martyred because they professed Christ as their Savior, and during recent years, many more individuals in foreign lands have also forfeited their lives because of their faith in Jesus. Yet, in the midst of such final disaster, Romans 8:28-32 still gives hope to those that truly love the Lord.

In Acts 27:1-44, Paul was in a hopeless position. He had been arrested in Jerusalem for preaching Christ, and because he had appealed his case to Caesar, he was in route to Rome to stand trial. While being transported by boat from Crete towards Phoenix, however, his ship encountered a severe storm with hurricane-force winds. It was thrown about in the deep waters, and eventually, the crew had to run aground to keep from sinking. After everyone was ashore, in Acts 28:1-10, Paul's predicament grew even worse because he was bitten by a poisonous snake. While the snake still dangled from his arm, he shook it off into the fire, but then, those that had been watching waited to see if he would die from the bite. God was with him, though, so that did not happen. Instead, he was spared, and God got the glory for what He had done.

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The End

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