

Reading Through Acts, By Dr. Luke – Part I

Something new! Beginning with this set of readings and prayer points, our weekend reading will be the text of the Sunday message. Use this to prepare your heart (if before, which we would heartily recommend) or to reflect following the message. Monday through Friday readings will be the book of Acts, written by Dr. Luke as “part 2” of his careful account (which began with our reading of the gospel of Luke).

We recommend you have a notebook and pen for answering questions and recording your thoughts and insights. Bring this notebook with you to Faith Group for discussions and prayer times. Select a quiet place and consistent time to read and pray. We also recommend you pray for a moment before you read God’s word and ask for his illumination by the power of the Holy Spirit as you read.

Abbreviations: TAI – *Think About It* PP – *Prayer Point*

Monday, March 21 – Acts 1:1-5

TAI: Reread Luke 1:1-4, and compare with this paragraph that opens Acts. Who was Theophilus? Also compare these verses with the ending of Luke, 24:36-49. Why do you think Luke puts an emphasis on “proofs” in verse 3? What epic event is Jesus preparing his disciples to experience (vv. 4-5)?

PP: Ask God to prepare your heart for the grand adventure of reading and praying through the extraordinary book of Acts. Thank God for Luke’s faithful account in both the gospel and Acts. Ask God to use these readings to deepen your faith and fill you with the Holy Spirit and help grow your prayer life.

Tuesday, March 22 – Acts 1:6-8

TAI: A short reading today, of tremendous importance. What kind of “restoration” were these disciples looking for in v. 6? Who truly knows the “times” for the future fulfillment of God’s kingdom? What are we called to “be” until that time? What is a *witness*? How can we do that? Where are we to do that? Where are the “ends of the earth”?

PP: Ask God to fill you with his power for being his witness. Review your Sacred 7 list and ask God to help you witness to them of Jesus Christ. Pray for our church to truly have a global vision, yet also a heart for our neighbors next door. Ask God to keep you from foolish speculation about the end times.

Wednesday, March 23 – Acts 1:8-11

TAI: So, by Luke’s account, what were the last words Jesus said to his disciples before ascending? Why is this important to note? Who were the two men in white robes? Sum up the words spoken to the disciples in verse 11. What do they seem to be saying? Where did Jesus go when he ascended, and why is this crucial for us today?

PP: Ask God to help you keep your kingdom priorities straight. Ask him to clearly lead you into action, not standing around waiting for something to happen, but active in kingdom work, filled with his grace and power. Rejoice: we have a Mediator and Intercessor at God's right hand!

Thursday, March 24 – Acts 1:12-14

TAI: How many names are included in the list (v. 13)? Why would this be important to Luke? To what did they now devote themselves? Who was with them? Take a look within yourself: would you consider yourself “devoted to prayer”? What would “with one accord” look like?

PP: Ask God to help us grow more and more into a church “devoted to prayer.” Pray about that for yourself and your family. Ask God to help us learn what it means to pray in “one accord.”

Friday, March 25 – Acts 1:15-26

TAI: What does Peter clearly affirm about the writings we now commonly call the Old Testament? What doctrine about Scripture does this support? How does this point to God's sovereignty in the death of Jesus? What passages in the Psalms are quoted? What qualifications were stressed for replacing Judas as an apostle? Why did they cast lots?

PP: Express thanks to God for giving us the Bible, inspired by the Holy Spirit, the very word of God. Thank God for sending his Son Jesus to die on the cross for us. Rejoice that apostles carried forward the gospel message as God's messengers, *eyewitnesses* and *witnesses* who had been with Jesus and seen him risen from the dead!

Weekend, March 26-27 – Romans 6:1-5

TAI: Some might think that if “sin increased, grace abounded all the more” (Romans 5:20) then we ought to joyfully go right on sinning so that grace will increase more and more (‘abound’). What is the flaw in this logic? What kind of life does God have in mind for us when we are raised with Christ?

PP: Pray for Pastor Dana beginning our new series, ***Unshackled***. Rejoice that in Christ you have a new life, and ask him to help you grow in it and abound in joy – raised with Christ!

Monday, March 28 – Acts 2:1-4

TAI: What was Pentecost? What two images does Luke use to describe the scene, audibly and visually? Why do you think Luke used those two images? What happened to the followers of Jesus who were present there?

PP: Express praise to God for fulfilling the promise he made to his disciples (Luke 24:49). Thank him that he has given each believer the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. (We will take up the topic of tongues again tomorrow.)

Tuesday, March 29 – Acts 2:5-12

TAI: What kind of city was Jerusalem at this time? What was surprising to the internationals about this “tongues” phenomenon? [Note: the nature of tongues is a hotly debated subject. Three

options: they are always known languages, as here; they are sometimes known languages and sometimes angelic or unknown; they were only for this special time (apostolic age) and have ceased to be needed today. At Faith, we do not hold firmly to one view of tongues; there is room for latitude on this subject.] What did these international people hear the apostles saying in their languages?

PP: No matter what our view on speaking in tongues, let us pray that we are a church constantly speaking the gospel and “the mighty works of God!” Pray for those who are taking the gospel to new people groups, learning their language and living among them for the sake of Christ. Rejoice that God lives in us by the Holy Spirit.

Wednesday, March 30 – Acts 2:13-21

TAI: Read the Joel passage utilized by Peter here (2:28-32). What is Peter’s point about this prophecy in Joel? Why would people misinterpret the work of God here as drunkenness? How is this outpouring of the Holy Spirit a dramatic shift in salvation history? What is the glorious, good news in this passage and Peter’s announcement?

PP: Pray that all on your Sacred 7 list will “call upon the name of the Lord” and be saved from their sins. Once again, thank God for fulfilling his promise to send the Holy Spirit. Ask him to so fill you with his Holy Spirit that you truly living under God’s complete control.

Thursday, March 31 – Acts 2:22-28 *We will cover this passage for two days.*

TAI: List some essential “mighty works and wonders and signs” that God did through Jesus during the earthly ministry of Christ. Was the cross a great surprise to God? How can God have planned it, and yet Peter hold “lawless men” responsible for the crucifixion and death of Jesus? What is the Easter message in Peter’s sermon here?

PP: Express your praise to God for the mighty works of Jesus during his ministry on earth. Thank God for his salvation plan, and humbly rejoice in Christ crucified and risen for you.

Friday, April 1 – Acts 2:22-28 (*once again!*)

TAI: From what passage is Peter quoting? Read it in the Psalms. How does this passage point to the resurrection of Christ? Prior to the cross and resurrection, the disciples could not understand what Jesus was saying about his death. But now Peter is a changed man, fully comprehending, seeing the fulfillment of the Scriptures concerning Jesus. What changed?

PP: Rejoice in the truth that in God’s presence we will experience great gladness and joy. In a prayer of worship, thank God for the miracle of Christ’s resurrection from the dead, and all that implies for you as you trust in Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Pray, “Lord, change me as you changed Peter!”

Weekend, April 2-3 – Romans 6:5-14

TAI: What is the freedom Paul is describing in this passage? What is the relationship between the Acts 2 references to the resurrection and these verses? How does grace free us to walk in righteousness? Is the law weak or powerful? Is grace weak or powerful?

PP: Confess to God areas of your life where sin has been reigning in your body. Ask God to help you live in freedom, by his powerful grace. Thank God that with Christ you are raised up to new freedom and righteousness and life! Celebrate God's grace in prayer.

Monday, April 4 – Acts 2:29-36

TAI: Now Peter explains how David was prophesying about the Messiah in the Psalm he just mentioned, Psalm 16:8-11. What is his explanation? Do you understand it? Why does Dr. Luke once again stress "we all are witnesses"? Sum up then what Peter is preaching here concerning Jesus and also concerning the Holy Spirit (vv.33-36).

PP: Ask God to help you grow in your understanding of prophecies given in the Bible and fulfilled in Jesus Christ, such as this one. Express your praise to God for his grace and power in your life. Express your faith to God: that you are trusting in the One who is "both Lord and Christ, this Jesus."

Tuesday, April 5 – Acts 2:36-41 *We'll stay on this passage tomorrow also.*

TAI: What does it mean to be "cut to the heart"? Why do you think Peter responded by saying "Repent" instead of "Believe"? Is this passage saying the baptism saves us? (Careful! These last two are tricky ones! In fact, since this takes some real thought and reflection, we'll leave it at that for today and come back to this tomorrow. Take your time, and really think this over.)

PP: Recall a time when the Holy Spirit so powerfully moved in you that you were "cut to the heart" and thank God for it. If, in faith, you made an "about face" in your life and truly turned to God (that's repentance), then thank God for this powerful spiritual work in you. And if you have been immersed in water as a believer, as an expression of the spiritual 'baptism' which God did in you by the Holy Spirit, praise God for that as well.

Wednesday, April 6 – Acts 2:36-41 *Reread the passage from yesterday. It's good!*

TAI: What is the gift of the Holy Spirit? Who is this promise for? What do you think Peter means when he says "for you and for your children and for all who are far off"? What is the calling spoken of here in v. 39? Notice: they were baptized because they received the word...they weren't baptized in order to receive the word. Why do you think so many responded that day?

PP: Thank God for the gift of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in each believer. Thank God that this gospel message is for all peoples, including Jews and Gentiles. Rejoice in the effectual calling of the Holy Spirit in your life. Ask God to work so powerfully in the life of our church, and churches all across America, that we see a great harvest of souls just as they did.

Thursday, April 7 – Acts 2:42 *Yes, just one verse today! It's a crucial verse!*

TAI: Pastor Dana has called this verse "The four foundational pillars of the church." Can you identify the 4 pillars? What does "the apostles' teaching" refer to? What is true Christian fellowship? What do you suppose is meant by "the breaking of bread"? Why is prayer so critical to the life and power of any church? These will make for great Life Group conversation!

PP: Ask God to help you grow deeper and stronger in your understanding of sound doctrine. Thank God for Christians who provide fellowship and accountability in your life. Express again your joy in last Sunday's communion service. "God, help us at Faith to become a praying church!"

Friday, April 8 – Acts 2:42-47

TAI: What do you suppose the "awe" was like that they experienced? Why do you think Pentecost resulted in such radical sharing and generosity? Why do you think they had "favor with all the people"? What do you think is different today, when Bible-believing Christians seem not to be in favor and when we do not see people being saved daily? Think about that.

PP: Ask God to fill our worship, both gathered together and personal, with awe. Ask him to give us a spirit of radical generosity and sharing. If you are "possessed" by your possessions, confess that to God as idolatry. Ask God to move mightily, adding to our church through the gospel!

Weekend, April 9-10 – Romans 6:14-19

TAI: What are the two, contrasting types of slavery Paul speaks of here? Why do you suppose Paul says (v. 19), "I am speaking in human terms..."? What are our "natural limitations"? What is sanctification? How have you seen God's gracious work of sanctification in your own life?

PP: Ask God to set you free from the bonds of sins which seem to easily beset you. Ask for the fullness of God's Spirit in your life, and freedom through grace to love the right and do it. Reflecting on v. 19, ask God to continue the great grace-work that He's begun in you!

Monday, April 11 – Acts 3:1-10

TAI: What are alms? What details do you notice about this healing miracle? Consider this: would you rather give someone money or the good news of Jesus Christ? Be honest! What was the response of the man who was healed? Of the people in the temple?

PP: Ask God to help us be more observant of needy people who surround us every day. How can we minister to them? Rejoice in the name of Jesus, which has great life-changing power. If your faith has grown stale, ask God to restore your wonder and amazement over Jesus!

Tuesday, April 12 – Acts 3:11-16 *Let's spend today and tomorrow on this.*

TAI: In this second sermon of Peter, delivered to the crowd which gathered in the temple, how does Peter tie together both Jewish history and recent events? How does Luke tie his gospel account (see Luke 23) to this one? What name does Peter give to Jesus in this message?

PP: Pray a prayer of praise to the Holy and Righteous One, who is the Author of life! Ask God to help us not give honors to men which should go solely to God. Ask God to strengthen your joy and confidence in trusting Him.

Wednesday, April 13 – Acts 3:11-16 *Please do reread the passage.*

TAI: Note once again the emphasis on witnesses. This is so important – for Peter and for Luke! Why does the account state and restate the crucial element of *faith* in this man’s healing? Faith in what? Would you say that today, people are looking for miracles *apart from* the life-changing gospel and name of Jesus Christ? Why is this a crucial error?

PP: Ask God to keep you from looking in the wrong direction for life-changing help and power. “Lord, I believe, help my unbelief!” Praise God for saving you from sin through the powerful name of Jesus Christ!

Thursday, April 14 – Acts 3:17-26 *There is much here; we’ll revisit tomorrow.*

TAI: What did the people do in ignorance? What did God foretell by the mouths of the prophets? Can you give some examples from the Old Testament of prophets doing this? What was the straight-forward gospel demand that Peter then gave to the people? Do you think that the pastors of America are today calling people to repent and turn to God? Do people around you know that their sins need to be “blotted out”?

PP: Pray for our pastors at Faith, that we would faithfully preach the call to repent and believe the gospel, and that we would not ignore the subject of sin. Pray for a renewal of gospel preaching in our nation today. In fact, pray for revival in the American church! And in your life.

Friday, April 15th – Acts 3:17-26 *Did you render to Caesar today?*

TAI: What would “times of refreshing” look like? Peter seems to be trying to explain to the listeners how Jesus could be both a Suffering Servant Messiah and one who will come again as a Triumphant King. Why is this explanation necessary and important? According to Peter, how does this apply not just to the Jews but to all people?

PP: Give God glory for both the first coming of the Messiah Jesus, to die for us, and his second coming as well, King of Kings! Praise the Lord! Pray for all our missionaries, who are seeking to bring the grace-news of Jesus to all the families of the earth. Rejoice in your salvation today, and pray that others would also turn from their wickedness.

Weekend, April 16-17 – Romans 6:20-23

TAI: What fruit comes from being a slave to sin? What fruit comes from being a slave to God? Do you have Romans 6:23 memorized? Why would it be important to do so?

PP: Pray for Pastor Greg, who will preach on this text this weekend (the other pastors are at the Converge Heartland Pastors and Wives Retreat in Nebraska City, NE – pray for them also!). Ask God to help you be alert to the fruit that comes from walking in righteousness through Christ! Ask him also not to let you be duped into thinking that sin bears any kind of good fruit – that is a lie.