

I can tell you confidently 2:29 they saw the courage 4:13 enable your servants to speak with great boldness 4:29 spoke the word of god boldly 4:31 preached fearlessly in jesus' name 9:27 spoke boldly in the name of the lord 9:28 paul and barnabas answered them boldly 13:46 paul and barnabas spent considerable time there speaking boldly 14:3 he began to speak boldly in the synagogue 18:26 he entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there 19:8 the king is familiar with these things and i can speak freely to him 26:26 boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of god and taught about jesus 28:31

boldly

speak to the people 4:1 warn these men not to speak 4:17 we cannot help speaking 4:20 enable your servants to speak 4:29 filled with the spirit and spoke the word 4:31 go and tell the people 5:20 ordered them not to speak 5:40 they could not stand up against his wisdom or the spirit by whom he spoke 6:10 he talked and debated 9:29 whilst he was speaking the spirit came 10:44 the people invited them to speak 13:42 we had to speak 13:46 they spoke so effectively 14:1 speaking boldly 14:3 we sat and began to speak 16:13 spoke the word 16:32 spoke with great fervor 18:25 speak boldly 18:26 let me speak to the people 21:39

speak

- they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news 5:42 preached the good news 8:12 preached the gospel in many villages 8:25 the good news about jesus 8:35 preaching the gospel in all towns 8:40 telling the good news 10:36 telling them the good news 11:20 we tell you the good news 13:32 continued to preach the good news 14:7 we are bringing you good news 14:15 preached the good news 14:21 the message of the gospel 15:7 called us to preach the gospel 16:10 preaching the good news 17:18 complete the task jesus has given me the task of testifying to the gospel 20:24

gospel

the book of acts

Action

Imagine a book full of miracles, has a shipwreck, great speeches, a sorcerer and a fortune teller, a couple who drop dead, an execution, gaol breaks, riots, courtroom dramas, a cast of 1000s in dozens of cities spread over a number of countries and a guy who fell out of a window to his death only to be resurrected by the guy who made him fall out in the first place. It'd be one heck of a book.

Acts is that book.

It was written by Luke to his friend Theophilus. Luke had written to him previously, which we call "The gospel of Luke". Both of these books are designed to strengthen Theo's faith so that he may be certain of what he believes [**Luke 1:4**]. Luke achieves this by tracking down eyewitnesses to who Jesus is and what he did. So by trade Luke was a physician [**Colossians 4:14**]. He also proves to be a masterful reporter.

He ends Acts by saying...

*Boldly and without hindrance Paul preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ **Acts 28:31***

Not only is this an encouragement to Theophilus, may it spur you on as well.

Boldly Speak Gospel

There are three words that sum up the one great theme of Acts.

Time and again, people are **bold**. Whether they are speaking to great crowds, religious rulers, state officials, unruly mobs or inquisitive minds, many boldly share their faith. And many marvel at the boldness of these unschooled, ordinary people who do so.

Everybody seems to be talking in Acts. Lots of people **speak**.

And what are they talking about? The **gospel**. That is, Jesus died on the cross for sins and was raised from the dead so that whoever believes in him will be saved.

Sometimes the gospel is met with opposition. Others want to find out more. Some embrace the gospel and in turn share it with others. They too boldly speak the gospel.

Let us be like them.

We speak. God saves.

These studies conclude with a few on 1 Thessalonians. Paul visited Thessalonica, Greece for just two weeks [**Acts 17**]. On the back of this brief visit, a church is planted. Amazingly, it was still going great many years later.

This shows Paul's great faith in God. He simply shares the gospel and entrusts God with all the rest. As such, reading Thessalonians reminds us to relax about evangelism.

Boldly speak the gospel and let God do the rest.

The promise Acts 1, 2

The Blues Brothers famously declared, "We're on a mission from God." So too are Jesus' disciples.

If someone said to you, "All Christians all missionaries..." what do you think they mean?

Read Acts 1:1-12

What task is given to the disciples?

Look at 1:6, 7

Do you think the disciples have grasped Jesus' plan for the gospel to go into all the world?

How do the events of Pentecost point forward to the rest of the book?

Read Acts 2:1-21

See if you can find how many people in the Old Testament had the Spirit. Contrast this with the number who receive the Spirit on this day alone.

How does this fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Joel?

If someone asked you, "Is your church spirit-filled?" how would you respond?

What does it mean to have the Spirit?

What is "speaking in tongues"? Should all Christians be able to do so?

Read Acts 2:22-41

It is amazing to think that this is the same Peter who denied knowing Jesus. What does this say about the people whom God chooses and how he works through them?

What comfort does this bring us as we try to share our faith?

How important is the resurrection in these opening chapters? If Jesus had not been raised what implications are there for our faith?

Count all the Old Testament verses that are referenced in these opening chapters. What does this say about the Old Testament, God's sovereignty and who Jesus is?

Read Acts 2:42-47

How would you describe the early church? How can we ensure that we're the same?

How do you think Theophilus would've felt after reading these opening chapters? What should we learn from them?

The name Acts 3, 4

Shakespeare famously wrote, "What's in a name?"

Well if your name is Jesus apparently it means riots, beatings, opposition, defiance, boldness and courage.

Does Jesus' name attract hostility today?

Read Acts 3:1-10

Jot down all the minor details in this section eg the name of the gate, the beggar's feet and ankles etc. What does this say about Luke's attention to details?

What confidence does this give us to the authenticity of these events?

Read Acts 3:11-26

If someone performed a healing in the middle of Castle Towers do you think crowds would flock to see it?

Why does Peter take this opportunity to preach and not perform other healings?

List all the ways Peter describes Jesus. What do each of them mean?

How central is Jesus' death and resurrection to Peter's message? How can we ensure that we as a church do the same?

Read Acts 4:1-22

The phrase "the name of Jesus" occurs a number of times in this section [3:6, 4:7, 10, 12, 17, 18, 30]. What does it mean?

When our church holds a Men's Breakfast or Women's Pizza and Trivia Night are they in the name of Jesus? Can you sweep Roselea's floor in the name of Jesus?

What does it mean that Peter and John were "unschooled, ordinary men"? Does that mean you don't need to go to Bible College to share the gospel?

Whilst it was amazing that Peter spoke before the crowds, it's astonishing how he responds to the religious ruler's threats [4:20]. Again, coming from the person who denied Jesus, how is it that he's changed?

Read Acts 4:23-37

In the face of threats what do the believers ask God for?

Is our society is becoming more hostile to the gospel? If so, how should we pray?

Describe the church. How do we make sure there are "no needy persons" amongst us?

Look back at Acts 2:23 and 4:28

Try to explain in five minutes or less the relationship between God's sovereignty and man's actions in the death of Jesus.

Easy!

The cost Acts 5-7

It has been said that there have been more Christians killed for their beliefs in the 20th century than in all other centuries combined. Many have counted the cost for following Christ.

How is Australia both hostile and friendly to the gospel?

Can you name some people who have counted the cost of the gospel? How are their stories encouraging?

Read Acts 5:1-11

Arguably one of the strangest stories in the Bible. What is its purpose?

Read Acts 5:12-16

The believers are once again congregating at Solomon's Colonnade. What part of Jesus' great commission do they seem to have they neglected?

Why do some dare not join the believers? Why do they hold back?

Read Acts 5:17-42

In what ways does the angel echo the believer's prayer [4:29]?

The disciples pay the price. How does this prove that Jesus rose from the dead?

In what ways is Gamaliel the smartest guy in the room?

Why do the apostles rejoice?

Read Acts 6:8-15

How would you describe Stephen? How does he imitate Jesus?

Read Acts 7

What is Stephen's speech all about? How does it echo how Jesus felt about the religious rulers in his day?

How does Stephen echo Jesus at his death?

Luke introduces a figure from out of nowhere, Saul. What's his role here?

How do you think Theophilus is feeling by the end of this chapter? Do you think he'd be afraid or emboldened?

Where do you find it most difficult to live the gospel? How can Stephen's example help?

The oddballs Acts 8-11

The buzzword for organisations today is "diversity". The early church was ahead of the times. It was amazingly diverse.

Skim through the church directory. Count all the different nationalities, age groups, relationship statuses and where people are at in life eg at uni, school, retired etc.

What does this say about our church? Should we be more diverse or less? What advantages and disadvantages are there in focusing on one particular group of people?

Read Acts 8:1-3

The honeymoon for the church is over. But is that what is needed for Jesus' great commission to be fully realised?

Someone once said, "The blood of the saints is the seed of the church." What do they mean by that?

Skim through Acts 8-11

Note all the places and people and who comes to believe in Jesus. Are they a homogenous bunch?

What does this say about who the gospel is for?

Read Acts 8:18, 19

What hasn't Simon figured out?

Read Acts 8:20-40

Why does the Ethiopian need the scripture to be explained? How does this show the importance of reading, studying and trying to figure out the Bible?

Read Acts 9:1-19

How would you describe Saul?

Why is Christianity called "The Way"?

Why does Jesus tell Saul that he's persecuting "Me"? What comfort does this give us when we face tough times?

How would you describe Ananias' response to Jesus' request? How would you describe Jesus' response to Ananias'?

Try to picture the scene when Saul is amidst the disciples and preaching Jesus. How do you think they felt?

In what ways is Saul proof that God can reach anyone? How can this encourage us to reach out to anyone and everyone?

Look at Acts 9:31

Where has the church spread to? Where else does it need to go?

Read Acts 9:32-43

How is Peter imitating Jesus here?

If a Jew stayed at a tanner's house, this would've made him "unclean". So it seems that Peter has been converted. Or has he?

Read Acts 10:9-23

Do you think Peter understands that the gospel is for everyone? Is that why the vision and voice has to happen three times?

Read Acts 10:24-48

What does Peter come to learn about who can receive the Spirit and be saved? How ought this to impact how we see people?

Read Galatians 2:11-14. Has Peter really learnt the lesson of the dream?

Read Acts 11

How far has the gospel spread? But what people groups is this limited to?

Some however dare break away and tell other peoples.

How can we ensure that we're like the latter and not the former?

The spread Acts 12-20

Paul Kelly once sang, "From little things, big things grow..." That could describe the church.

Grab an atlas. Find Bethlehem. Then find Wallis and Futuna Islands. It's amazing to think that the gospel has found its way there. What does this say about God's mission?

In your group break up into twos or threes and divvy up the following places amongst yourselves - Tuvalu, Suriname, St Helena, Réunion, Liechtenstein, Guinea Bissau, Aruba and Andorra. Get yourself onto the internet (or grab a good ol' Operation World) and see what you can discover out about Christianity in these places eg how it got there, % are Christian, difficulties they may face etc.

Share with the group what you find. Marvel at the fact the gospel has got to these places. Take the time to pray for these people.

Skim through Acts 12-20

List all the *countries* that are mentioned. How does this fulfil Jesus' great commission?

Read Acts 12:1-4 and 12:20-25

How is Herod your typical politician?

In what ways does his death fulfil the scripture, "All men are like grass and all their glory like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall but the word of the Lord lasts forever." [1 Peter 1:24]?

What comfort does this give us when we see rulers being hostile to our faith or just being plain awful?

Read Acts 13:44-52

Paul's custom was to visit the synagogue of the town he was visiting before moving on. Why was this his strategy?

Why does Paul "shake the dust" from his feet? Should we do the same to those who aren't interested in the gospel?

Read Acts 14:1-7

Why does meek and mild Jesus cause so much trouble?

Is division inevitable when it comes to the gospel?

Read Acts 15:1-5

What is wrong with what is being taught to some believers? What danger does this pose to their faith?

Read Acts 15:6-35

The Council of Jerusalem was established to wrap everyone's heads around the fact that the gospel has gone to all peoples.

What is the purpose of the letter? Do you think it's good or not?

Read Acts 15:36-41

Are splits between Christians inevitable? How can they be avoided?

Acts 16 marks a change in the book. Instead of "they" [16:7] there is now "we" [16:11]. That is, Luke has joined the team. Up till now he has been relating eyewitness accounts. But now he tells us of his journeys.

Read Acts 16:11-40

A rich woman, a slave girl and a gaoler. What does this say about who Paul is willing to share the gospel with?

Read Acts 17:1-9

How important is the Old Testament for Paul?

Read Acts 17:10-15

How are the Bereans described? How can we make sure that we're like them?

Read Acts 17:16-34

Paul is distressed by Athen's idols. Yet he does not mock their culture. In fact, he quotes from it [17:28]. What does this say about how we should engage with our culture?

Why do some sneer at the mention of the resurrection? Should it surprise us that people today feel the same way?

Read Acts 18:9-11

In what ways does this echo what God said to Joshua?

Read Acts 18:24-28

What is Apollo's role? What is Priscilla and Aquilla's? What does this say about the roles and gifts we each have?

Read Acts 19:1-22

How is the name of Jesus held?

What is Paul thinking when he says, "I must visit Rome also"? Why go there?

Read Acts 20:7-12

This is one of the funniest parts of the Bible. Why is it included?

Read Acts 20:36-38

After Paul's long speech, many tears are shed. Why do they weep? Does taking the gospel out always involve heartache?

How does our church take part in the spread of the gospel? Name as many past and present missos of our church and where they went. What does this say about our church over the years?

The stand Acts 21-28

Rosa Parks took a stand by sitting on a bus seat that was normally reserved for white people. That single simple action helped kick off the civil rights movement.

Paul takes a stand for the sake of the gospel. And that kicked off the good news of Jesus to go into all the world.

Read Acts 21:10-14

How would you describe Paul's personality?

Read Acts 21:27-40

Why does Paul want to speak to the crowd that just tried to kill him?

Read Acts 22:1, 2 and 22:21, 22

Why does the crowd go silent? What makes them go wild?

How does this show that God's people weren't on the same page as God?

Read Acts 22:29

Roman citizens had rights throughout the empire. If you weren't Roman, you could buy citizenship and enjoy the benefits.

Why hasn't Paul mentioned this before? That is, why didn't he play this card earlier?

How can we use the law and our rights for the sake of the gospel?

Read Acts 23:1-11

How is Paul's trial a copy of Jesus'?

Read Acts 23:23-35

Incredibly, the gospel will go to Rome. Amazingly, it'll get there via a Roman escort. What does this say about how God is at work in the world?

Read Acts 24:22-27

What is Felix afraid of? Why did he keep Paul in prison?

Read Acts 26:19-29

Why does Festus think Paul has lost the plot?

Is Paul being cheeky when he puts Festus on the spot as to what he believes? How can this encourage us to take those opportunities to see what others believe?

Read Acts 26:32

Should Paul have kept his mouth shut?

Skim through Acts 27

Look at all the cities and harbours that are mentioned. What does this once again say about Luke's attention to detail?

What things happen in the storm that remind you of Jesus? Would this chapter make a good movie?

Read Acts 28:1-10

How kind are the Maltese?

Read Acts 28:11-31

"And so we came to Rome". It's hard to imagine this considering where the gospel began and all that it had to endure to get there. What does this say about who's in control?

How does this fulfil what Gamaliel said long ago?

How does the last line of Acts sum up the book?

Luke finishes by writing "Lord Jesus Christ". Why does he give Jesus' "full" name?

In what ways would Theophilus have been challenged and encouraged by the end of Acts?

How can we be motivated to boldly speak the gospel?

Speak and share 1 Thessalonians 1-3

Some relationships are easier than others. Paul's relationship with the Thessalonians was a breeze compared to some other churches (looking at you Corinth).

What are the marks of a good church as opposed to a bad one?

Read Acts 17:1-15

How would you describe Paul's visit to Thessalonica? Who comes to believe?

How are the Thessalonians described?

Paul spent two weeks there before leaving for another city. What does this say about his trust in God?

Read 1 Thessalonians 1

What do these phrases mean...

"Work produced by faith..."

"Labour prompted by love..."

"Endurance inspired by hope..."

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Whose gospel is it? What obligations flow from knowing whose it is?

What does it mean that Paul shared his life with them? After all, he was only there for two weeks.

Why didn't Paul just share the gospel with them? Why did he couple that with doing life together?

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13-16

What happened to the Thessalonians after they believed?

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:17-20

Why is this church Paul's "glory and joy"? Do you think God looks at our church in the same way?

But as nice as the Thessalonians are, Paul also feels the same way about those crazy Corinthians [**2 Corinthians 7:4**]. What does this say about how he feels about all his brothers and sisters?

Do we feel the same way about other churches?

Read 1 Thessalonians 3:1-13

Paul mentions "prayer" three times in the opening chapters. Why is talking to God so important to him?

What is Paul's desire for the Thessalonians? When was the last time you prayed like that?

Will and ambition 1 Thessalonians 4

Some kids want to be astronauts when they grow up. Others want to be a doctor or a princess or a sports person. Paul says we too ought to have ambitions in life. However, it ain't as fancy as being an astronaut. Or a princess.

What do Christians mean when they say, "I'm trying to work out God's will for my life..."

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

What does Paul think God's will for our lives is?

Do you think Christians mistake what God's will for their lives is?

What do the Thessalonians need to work on? What are they getting right?

Why does Paul compel the Thessalonians twice to do more and more **[4:1, 10]**? Is he putting the guilts on them or making them realise that they can do more?

Do you think our church can do more? Can you do more?

What does it mean to live a "quiet life"? In what ways is this lifestyle evangelistic?

If we are to live "quiet lives" does this imply we shouldn't speak up on issues? If not, how do we speak out and live quietly at the same time?

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

How can the Christian view death?

Have you ever been to a "good" funeral? What made it good?

How is the Christian's grief different to others?

In another letter Paul describes Satan as "ruler of the air" **[Ephesians 2:2]**. Yet that is where we will meet Jesus **[4:17]**. As such, we'll be meeting Satan on his "home turf". But who will prevail?

How can this shape our thoughts when we see evil at work in the world?

Why should we encourage one another with these words?

Warn and encourage 1 Thessalonians 5

There are warnings on cigarette packets, warnings on TV to drive carefully and we are encouraged to gamble responsibly. As such, warnings are not foreign to us. They ought not to be foreign in the Church either.

Look at the following paraphernalia. What do they say about Jesus' return?



Is it okay for Christians to use fear to warn people about rejecting Jesus?

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3

How does Paul see Jesus' return?

Why aren't times and dates important? What does this say about people who claim to know when Jesus will return?

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:4-11

What does it mean that we belong to the day? How should we live in light of that day?

Why should we encourage one another about Christ's return? Are we too focused on what we go through in the here and now to think about Christ's return?

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-18

List all the things that Paul wants his friends to do and not do. In what ways does this show that being a Christian isn't just head knowledge?

Read 1 Thessalonoans 5:19-22

What do these phrases mean...

"Do not put out the Spirit's fire..." and "Do not treat prophecies with contempt..."

Are the Thessalonians Presbyterians by nature and not open to the spectacular?

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23-28

How does Paul describe God?

How has God been faithful throughout Acts? And to you?

Pray

Pray for the usual things. Don't forget to pray to boldly speak the gospel.