



## Acts

The Acts of the Apostles tells the story of Jesus' disciples from their time in Jerusalem, just after Jesus' ascension, to Paul's eventual arrival in Rome. Roughly the first half of the book concentrates on what happened to Jesus' first disciples and how, inspired by the Holy Spirit, they began to share the good news, first in Jerusalem and then further afield. The second half of the book picks up the story of the apostle Paul (whom we meet first at his conversion on the road to Damascus in chapter 9) who spreads the good news to the Gentiles in Asia Minor (what we now call Turkey), then Greece and finally Italy.



### How long will it take?

**Reading time:** 2¼ hours  
**Share time:** Just read 1.1-2.47; 5.1-8.3; 9.1-31; 27.1-28.31



### Genre

History



### Anything tricky?

There are a few gory bits (the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira in chapter 5 and King Herod Agrippa in chapter 12). Otherwise there is not much that is tricky, probably the hardest thing is keeping a track of the places Paul and the other disciples visited. It can help to read Acts with a map of the Roman world in the first century to hand so you can plot where the different places are.



### Inspiring quotes

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

*(Acts 1.8)*

<sup>19</sup> "Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out, <sup>20</sup> so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord."

*(Acts 3.19-20a)*

<sup>34</sup> Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, <sup>35</sup> but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him."

*(Acts 10.34-35)*





## Look out for...

One of the interesting strands that runs through Acts is the intersection of baptism and the Holy Spirit. Sometimes the Holy Spirit falls on people first, and then they are baptized (chapter 10); sometimes people are baptized in the name of Jesus and then receive the Holy Spirit (chapter 19). Keep an eye open for these twin themes (of baptism and the Holy Spirit) and see what you think about how they are connected.

Another huge theme is the relationship between Jews and Gentiles. Again reflect as you read about what you think about the disagreement between Paul, Peter and James.

Acts is known for the long speeches given by various people along the way, read these carefully and ask yourself why you think Luke uses so many of them. What do they add to the story?



## What could this mean for me?

One of the key features of Acts is the strength of community among the early Christians, eating together, sharing every (or most!) things together, reflect on how this compares to your local Christian community and ask whether we should even aim for this level of community today.



## Discussion group questions

Were there any parts of the book that you particularly liked or which inspired you?

Were there any parts of the book that you disliked or which troubled you?

What did *you* think the book was about?

Discuss the theme of community in Acts (see What could this mean for me? above), what do you think – is it possible or desirable to aim for the closeness of community that we see in Acts?

Acts is only a few chapters in before conflict breaks out among the Christian community. Discuss conflict in the church then and now, is there anything we can learn from the early church?

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