



THE BOOK OF
Acts

About Acts

Every movement in history starts somewhere. Whether it's a political movement, a non-profit, or a charity, many start with a small group of people committed to a certain cause or set of principles they hope will shape the lives of the community around them.

Much of the same is true for the history of the church. Today, church is often thought of as a building or a place, but the church started as a small group of people. People not just committed to a set of principles but to a person-Jesus. This community felt so strongly about Jesus that they committed to living and inviting others to follow him alongside them. As this invitation rapidly expanded to new cities, more and more joined over the generations. Today, this invitation is now available for us too. Now you have the opportunity to participate in this rich history as others to join you in following Jesus.

We'll be experiencing the origin story of the church in these Discovery Guides as we study Luke and Acts. We hope you and your small group will join the generations that have come before us and continue to make history as we learn to follow Jesus on campus.

How to Use This Guide

As you know, Bible Study is a vital part of leading a small group, but it's not the *only* part. Building friendships and following up outside of the study is crucial to leading a transformative group. This Leader's Guide is designed to help you lead both inside and outside of your group.

STUDY BREAKDOWN



THE PASSAGE

Each study begins with the portion of Scripture that you'll be exploring that week.



BEFORE THE STUDY

This section is designed to enrich your own personal understanding of each passage as you prepare to lead your friends.



DURING THE STUDY

This section provides you with everything needed to lead an engaging study. Pay attention to section headers and pacing icons.



AFTER THE STUDY

This section is designed to help you capture what God is doing in the lives of your friends and identify ways to help them grow closer to Jesus outside of the study.

ADDITIONAL TOOLS



PACING ICONS

Keep track of how much time the section should take



GO DEEPER

Go deeper into the passage with Bible Project's explainer videos



LEARN & LEAD

Lead well by learning more with InterVarsity's online training and resources

Weekly Preparation

Preparation is crucial to leading a great study! Set aside one hour each week to prepare. If other leaders are using the same study, prepare together! For more on preparing, visit howto.bible/how-prepare.



STUDY PASSAGE 45 MIN

Before you consider what God has for your friends, consider what he has for you. Study the passage and apply it to your own life first. The best leaders lead from personal experience.



REVIEW LEADER GUIDE 10 MIN

Review the study in the Leader Guide and familiarize yourself with the questions and content. The more familiar you are with the guide the less you'll have to reference it during the study, which frees you up to focus on the discussion.



PRAY 5 MIN

Pray that the LORD would meet you and your friends through each study, and watch for how he shows up!



INVITE

Invite by sharing *why* not *what*. Rather than just sharing the place, time, and content of your study (i.e. the what), share why people might enjoy coming to your study (i.e. the why).

Consider your why. Is it to ask questions about faith? Grow in faith? Grow closer as friends? Learn how God can use us to make a difference? Clarify your "why," and then share it!

First time invitations are best done in-person. However, a text reminder the day of each study is also helpful.

How to Lead Study

Leading an engaging study is the best way for your friends to encounter and follow Jesus! Below are the three parts to every study. For more training, visit howto.bible.

SHAPE OF DISCOVERY STUDY



ENTERING THE PASSAGE

What does it say?

The goal while entering the passage is to observe what it says. Use the prompts in this section to help your group understand the background, identify the facts (e.g. who, what, when, where, etc.), and engage their senses and emotions. The key is to be curious and ask questions about everything!



DISCUSSING THE PASSAGE

What does it mean?

The goal while discussing the passage is to interpret what it means. Use the prompts in this section to gather and discuss observations and questions. While observations focus on the what, interpretation questions focus on the why. The key is to discover why the author wrote this passage, what they were trying to communicate, and how the original audience would have understood it.



APPLYING THE PASSAGE

What does it mean to me, us, and our world?

The goal while applying the passage is to discover what it means for us and how we are meant to live our lives differently in light of it. Use the prompts in this section to summarize, clarify, and respond to the meaning of the passage. The key is to seek transformation, not just more information - about the Bible!

Discussion Guidelines

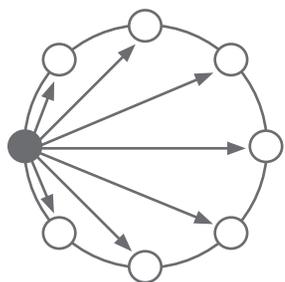
Review the Discussion Guidelines below as you begin the first few studies. Revisit them any time someone new attends. This will help everyone know what to expect.

PARTICIPATION IS CRUCIAL

In a Traditional Study, the *Leader* uses *their* questions to drive the discussion. However, in a Discovery Study, it's the *group's* questions that drive the discussion. Discovery Studies are more engaging and interactive, but they only work if everyone participates.

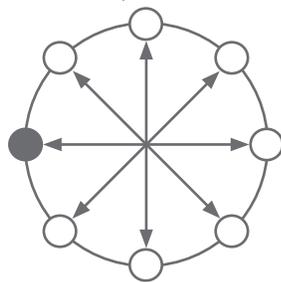
TRADITIONAL STUDY

Leader Driven



DISCOVERY STUDY

Group Driven



ASSUME YOU KNOW NOTHING

Whether the passage being studied is very familiar or completely foreign, it's best for everyone to assume they are reading it for the first time.

Sometimes knowing something can keep you from seeing something new. Focus on the passage and keep outside knowledge to a minimum.

BE REAL

Small Groups aren't just Bible Studies. They're communities, and the best communities are real and authentic. No one is perfect and everyone has questions so be real with one another.

HAVE SOME RESPECT

Everyone does not have to agree, but everyone must respect each other. The best discussions have multiple viewpoints.

Discussion Tips

Use the tips below to facilitate a great discussion. For more tips, visit InterVarsity's howto.bible.

ENTERING THE PASSAGE

Context First. Then Handouts.

Always give context (i.e. Prior to Passage) first before giving handouts. Context is critical but people tend to stop listening when given handouts.

Embrace Silence

Silence can be awkward but it's crucial for studying the passage. Silent study will make for better sharing later. Give people between 3-5 minutes of silent study.

DISCUSSING THE PASSAGE

Facilitate First. Then Share.

When discussing questions, don't share your thoughts right away. Focus on facilitating the discussion first. Then share.

Avoid Long Tangents

People lose focus with long tangents. Refocus your group by either repeating the original question or asking the next one.

Involve Everyone

Try to get everyone to share at least once during each study. Keep asking, "What do others think?"

Text the Answer

Use the passage rather than opinions to answer questions—"Where do you see that in the passage?"

Keep It Moving

Don't wait for the discussion to die before asking the next question. Move on as the discussion begins to slow.

Use Quick Recaps

Quickly summarize the story before moving on to next section of text. It helps build tension and momentum.

APPLYING THE PASSAGE

Use Group Lingo

Use the group's language rather than the guide's as much as possible. It will feel more personal and natural.

Choose One Application

Discuss only *one* Application Option. Choose the one that best fits your group's discussion.

Study Plan

Study	Date	Time	Location
One			
Two			
Three			
Four			
Five			
Six			
Seven			
Eight			

DATE & TIME

There is rarely a perfect time for everyone. Just pick a time that works for most people and be consistent.

LOCATION

Choose a place that is quiet, relaxed, and familiar to your group.

HOSPITALITY

Make people feel at home with snacks, drinks, and a comfortable setting. Invite your friends to bring snacks as well.

Table of Contents

STUDY ONE

Acts 1:1-11..... 11

STUDY TWO

Acts 2:1-41 (Excerpts)..... 23

STUDY THREE

Acts 3:1-16..... 35

STUDY FOUR

Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-35..... 47

MIDPOINT REVIEW

Reflection Guide..... 58

STUDY FIVE

Acts 6:1-7..... 61

STUDY SIX

Acts 7:51-8:1..... 73

STUDY SEVEN

Call to Faith

Acts 9:1-20..... 85

STUDY EIGHT

Acts 17:16-34..... 97

SEMESTER REVIEW

Reflection Guide..... 108





Acts 1:1-11

¹ In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach ² until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.

³ After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

⁴ On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵ For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

⁶ Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷ He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ 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." ⁹ After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

¹⁰ They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹ "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."



Before the Study

PREPARING

In order to better understand the meaning of a passage, it's critical to know how the *original audience* would have heard it. The context below has been provided for you to better understand the world in which these listeners lived. It will also be helpful in answering cultural questions that arise during the study.

The Book of Acts

The Book of Acts was written by Luke, a historian, physician, and author of the Gospel of Luke. Acts is the fifth book of the New Testament and recounts the expansion of the Christian church and the spread of the message about Jesus.

Theophilus (v. 1)

The name Theophilus simply means "one who loves God." Luke's former book, the Gospel of Luke, was also addressed to Theophilus.

Holy Spirit (v. 1)

Jesus had told his followers that he would eventually leave them, but he promised that he would send the Holy Spirit to them, who would be like a spiritual counselor to teach them how to live and guide them as he had (John 16:5-16). The Jewish people also believed that the coming of the Holy Spirit would be a sign indicating the return of God's Kingdom (Ezekiel 36:25-28).



ACTS OVERVIEW

Before starting your study, watch this overview to understand how the whole book of Acts fits together: bibleproject.com/explore/video/acts/

Apostle (v. 2)

Simply means "messenger or missionary." The apostles were Jesus' closest followers.

John & Baptism (v. 5)

This is the man more formally known as John the Baptist. John prepared the Jewish people for Jesus and his ministry by teaching and baptizing them, which was a way of publicly declaring your devotion to God. Yet, John taught that Jesus would baptize people with the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:15-16).

Restoring the Kingdom (v. 6)

Jesus' followers thought he would overthrow the oppressive Roman Empire and establish God's rule on earth through Israel. They had been waiting hundreds of years for this moment, and now they expected Jesus to free Israel from Roman power and then become their king. Yet, Jesus has much different and bigger plans than this.

Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, & Ends of Earth (v. 8)

Jesus and the apostles were staying in Jerusalem where Jesus was crucified and resurrected. Judea and Samaria were regions surrounding Jerusalem.

Taken Up (v. 9)

In Greek mythology, various heroes were supernaturally taken from the earth to heaven, usually by dying and becoming gods. For Luke, however, the ascension of Jesus was not just another mythical story, but a historical event that confirmed Jesus' status as both human and divine.

Men of Galilee (v. 11)

The apostles, or Jesus' closest followers, were from Galilee, which was a region just north of Jerusalem.



During the Study

ENTERING THE PASSAGE 5-10 MIN

DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

Review the Discussion Guidelines (page six) before beginning.

PRIOR TO THIS PASSAGE

As we enter into the Book of Acts, Luke, the author, continues the story he began in his account of Jesus' life. Up to this point, Jesus has been brutally murdered, miraculously raised from the dead and has appeared to his followers in person over a period of forty days while teaching and hanging out with them. Our story picks up here as Jesus has a critical conversation with his followers.

READ ALOUD

Have three people read the passage aloud for the group. You can use the sections on the following page to assign verses to read.

CREATIVE ENTRY

Imagine you are one of the apostles. For the last three years you have followed Jesus and looked up to him, and then one day, he's arrested and killed for a crime he didn't commit. What would it be like to have him back alive again?

STUDY SILENTLY

Invite everyone to reread the passage silently. Note who, where, when, and what. Imagine yourself in the story. Note repeated words, comparisons and contrasts. Develop questions for further discussion.

DISCUSSING THE PASSAGE 40 MIN

SHARE OBSERVATIONS. GATHER QUESTIONS.

First, invite everyone to share their observations. Then, gather questions asking for verse references and write them in their respective sections below. Do not discuss until everyone has shared. Finally, use the checkboxes to select no more than six questions to discuss.

DISCUSS QUESTIONS

Kingdom Come (v. 1-3)

- What is the Kingdom of God? Why would this be the last thing Jesus talks about before he leaves? (v.3)
- _____
- _____

Expansion (v. 4-8)

- Why does Jesus instruct the apostles to wait for the Holy Spirit? (v. 4)
- What is the significance of baptism with water versus the Holy Spirit? (v. 5)
- Why do the apostles ask about restoring the kingdom to Israel? (v. 6)
- What does it mean to be a witness? What is Jesus getting at? (v. 8)
- Imagine being one of the first employees hired to work for a startup company. Everyone is excited to see the company grow, but when you ask the founder if they are going to start expanding their business, they reply, "I'm not. You are!" What would your initial reaction be?
- _____
- _____

Homecoming (v. 9-11)

- Why is Jesus' return important for the apostles to understand? (v. 11)
- _____
- _____

APPLYING THE PASSAGE



10-15
MIN

SUMMARY

It has been an emotional rollercoaster for Jesus' crew. Eyewitnesses to the violent death and miraculous resurrection of a man they dedicated their lives to, the men now stand face to face with this Jesus. Ever since they met Jesus, they have been anticipating the moment when he would restore God's Kingdom, and now they wonder, has the time finally come? Yet, Jesus' response is shocking - "I'm not going to establish God's Kingdom right now. You are! And not just in Israel but the entire world!" Jesus invites them to do so by sharing what he did and showing others how he lived. Yet, Jesus isn't going with his men on this mission. In fact, he chooses this very moment to return to his Father right in front of their eyes. Now more than ever, Jesus' followers will need the Holy Spirit as their power source for the task Jesus has instructed them to begin - expanding God's Kingdom on earth.

BIG IDEA

Jesus invites us to play an integral part in expanding his influence in the world, but if we run ahead of his Spirit, we miss out.

APPLICATION OPTIONS

Discuss *one* Application Option from the next page. Then finish by sharing The Bigger Story and Creative Response.

THE BIGGER STORY

In the larger story of the Bible, we see God creating humanity to live under his rule and authority. Yet, when humanity chose to live by their own rules rather than God's, dysfunction became the norm. However, rather than abandoning us, God came to earth in the form of Jesus to reestablish his Kingdom by showing us the way he originally intended us to live under God's rule. One day he will come back again, but until then, he invites those who follow him to share what he did and show others how he lived. Yet, it's only through the power of his Spirit that we can do so. We must be changed by him before we change the world with him.

CREATIVE RESPONSE

Depending on the comfort of your group, you can simply pray or creatively respond through journaling, music, or another form of prayer.

APPLICATION OPTIONS

Pump the Brakes

In this passage, we see that Jesus' own followers had a very different idea of where their lives were headed next. **How often do you listen for God's instructions rather than running ahead with your own plans? What would be different if you paused and asked Jesus what he might have for you and your life?**

Did You Hear?

Jesus presents his followers with a mission, an assignment that will change the course of their lives from this day on. It's time for these guys to believe and share with their friends what they had been eyewitnesses to - Jesus' life, death and return to heaven. **What might be holding you back from believing that Jesus is worth sharing with your friends? What would it take for you to talk to your friends about Jesus?**

A Different World

How would the world be different if everyone lived as Jesus did? How would your campus be different? What keeps us from living as Jesus did? How would receiving His Spirit change the way we live?

