

The Church on Mission – The Spirit of Mission

Acts 1:1-8

Read through Acts 1: 1-8 together.

1. Have you ever felt like asking 'are we there yet' in some aspect of your life, work or ministry? How is the disciples' question of Jesus (v6) like one of those 'are we there yet' questions?

What happened?

2. What happened in the time period between Jesus' resurrection and this account with the disciples (v3 – 5)? How is this event both life-changing for the disciples and world-changing?
3. The disciples first ask 'is this the time', another way of asking 'are we there yet' (v6). Notice Jesus answer (v7). (See also Luke 12: 35-40; 17: 20-21) What is the danger of wanting to determine dates for Jesus' completion of the establishment of his kingdom?
4. The second question the disciples ask is 'are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel' (v6). What is the kingdom of God and who is it for? (See also Ps 45: 6-7 & Heb 1: 8-9; Rev 5: 9-10)

How is the good news to be shared?

5. What was Jesus' answer to the question the disciples had on the establishment of his kingdom (v8)? How might this apply to you today?

What lessons can we learn?

6. Who is the gift of the Holy Spirit for? (v 5, 8; see also Eph 1: 13-14)
7. What is the role of the Holy Spirit? (v 8; See also John 15: 8 - 15)
8. What does it mean to be empowered by the Spirit (v8)? What are some of the situations you encounter where you feel timid and need the Spirit's power to connect with people who are different from you by age, race etc.?

Pray together

Support each other in prayer for the situations you have to be a witness for Jesus in the way you live our life and in what you say.

The Church on Mission – Mission on Trial

Acts 24

What happened?

Read the whole chapter through to get the flow of events.

1. Discuss the attitude and demeanor of each of the characters. How does this event differ from a court room today?

Re-read the chapter dramatically to show how each character felt and the tension in the court room.

2. Tertullus, the lawyer for the prosecution, brought three charges against Paul. What were they (v5-8) and how did Paul answer them (v11 – 21)

How is the good news shared?

3. Take another look at Paul's defense of the accusations against him and his interaction with Felix and his wife. What aspects of the gospel does he draw out? How does his content relate to each audience (v9-21, 24-25)

What lessons can we learn?

4. What lessons can we learn about how Paul conducted himself at the trial that might help us in sharing the gospel with others?
5. What lessons can we learn from Paul's actions as he related to other people in his life and ministry in general? (See also 1 Cor 10:31-33)
6. We won't always have opportunity to share the gospel with Jewish people but we can be confident of the robustness of the gospel. How has the gospel influenced Western culture and values? (See below for a couple of good resources)
7. Who are the people you have opportunity to share your faith with? What are the challenges and how can you see God at work?

Pray Together

Take time to pray for opportunities to share you faith with others and to pray for your friends and family who don't know Christ.

Resources on influence of Bible & Church on Western culture

Air that we breathe by G. Scrivener

The book that made your world by Vishal Mangalwadi (available in St Johns library)

Truth Matters, Mangalwadi speaking on how the church and Bible have impacted Western values

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGS9ZYryQclqBVDBfzE79AA>

The Church on Mission – Mission in the face of death

Acts 25:1-22

What happened?

Read the whole passage through to get the flow of events.

1. What do you know about the Jewish and Roman justice systems of the day? How do they differ from our system today?
2. Use a Bible dictionary or Wikipedia to find out what you can about Felix, Festus and Agrippa. What might the political situation have felt like when Festus took over from Felix?

Re-read the passage keeping in mind the background political tensions.

How is the good news shared?

3. How does Paul respond in defense amidst the political situation of the time (v8 – 11)?
4. Trace the events leading up to Paul being given an opportunity to share the gospel with Agrippa, King of Judea and later in Rome. See how God's promise to Paul (Acts 23:11) was being fulfilled.

What lessons can we learn?

5. Can you think of any situations where the political forces and voices of powerful people appear to be overwhelming in their opposition to Christians and the gospel. As you reflect on the death of Jesus and the experience of Paul what encouragement do we have that God is more powerful? (See also Acts 2:22-24,36)
6. Christians sometimes refer to God's sovereignty over political, historical and our own personal events. What do we mean by God's sovereignty? (I Chron 29:11-12; Prov 16:9; Dan 4:17)
7. How does our responsibility work when God is sovereign? (Eph 2:10; Col 1: 9-12)

Pray Together

Pray for God's purposes and power to overrule in the lives of people you know who seem far from God.

That you may become what I am

Acts 25:23 – 26:32

What happened?

1. Who was King Agrippa (Herod Agrippa)? Why was he well positioned to understand Paul's case?
2. From Festus' perspective what was the purpose of this trial (Acts 25:25-27)? From Paul's perspective what was he on trial for (Acts 26: 6-8)?
3. What did the Pharisees believe about resurrection? What is different about the Christians belief in the resurrection of Jesus to the Pharisees belief?

How is the good news shared?

4. Why is the resurrection of Jesus central to the experience of Paul (See also I Cor 15:12-19)?
5. When Paul realized that Jesus was the fulfillment of all the promises to Israel (Acts 26:22-23) what difference to his life and mission took place (Acts 26:26:16-21)?

What lessons can we learn?

6. Why is the mission to reach others with the news of Jesus important (Acts 26:17-18; see also Romans 3:9-12)?
7. Most of us have not experienced a dramatic encounter with Jesus like Paul did but our story is just as real and valid. What lessons can we learn from Paul about telling our story of faith?
8. Take time to tell your faith story, as you might to a non-Christian friend, in no more than one minute each. Make sure Jesus is the centre of your story.

Pray together

Pray for opportunities and boldness to share your faith story (Col 4: 3-4)

Church on Mission – Trusting God in the Storm

Revelation 27

What happened?

Read through Revelation 27.

Try retelling the story from the perspective of the different characters found in the story, the Captain and his crew, the Centurian, the soldiers, Paul and his friends. Notice their faith journey throughout this experience. (You might divide into smaller groups each telling the experience of one of the characters.)

Why do bad things happen to us?

1. Why did this storm happen? (v9, 14) [Note: the Day of Atonement was 5th October. The seas were so rough in the Adriatic all shipping stopped between November and mid-March.]
2. If there was an inquiry into this shipwreck who might be blamed and why? (v9 – 12)
3. Sometimes there is no clear answer to the ‘why’ question in a difficult situation. What has helped get you through those times?
4. Why should we not be surprised by difficulties in life? Notice what God did not promise Paul, v23 – 26. (See also John 16:33; 1 Pet 1: 6-7)

What lessons can we learn from Paul?

5. This sea voyage came at the end of Paul’s life. What lessons had he learned from previous difficulties that help us in our difficult times? (See II Cor 1: 8 - 10; II Cor 4:16-18; Rom 5: 3-5)
6. Why do you think we often find it difficult to believe verses like Rom 8:28 and 8:35 – 39?
7. Paul was promised he would go to Rome and all those on the ship would be saved (v 24). What end does God promise us through our difficulties? (See Romans 8: 18 – 21; Rev 21:4)

Pray together

Pray for each other in the difficulties you face. Pray for grace to depend on God and that you won’t lose sight of the great hope we have in Christ.

Church on Mission – To the Ends of the Earth

Acts 28

What happened?

Recall the events of Acts 24-27; read together Acts 28.

1. Noting Jesus plan for all disciples in Acts 1:8 and his specific plan for Paul in Acts 23:11, what experiences did Paul face (Acts 24-28) that made it seem Jesus' plans would be impossible to achieve.
2. How do the events in Acts 28 move Jesus' plans forward?
3. It is all too easy to think that God is only at work when our circumstances are easy. Can you think of times when God used really difficult situations to further his plans?

How is the good news shared?

4. Despite the setbacks, how was Paul Jesus' witness while on Malta (Acts 28: 1-10) and in Rome (Acts 28: 17-31)? Notice the different approaches he took and the cultural misunderstanding on Malta.
5. In sharing the good news what responses can we expect (Acts 28: 24-28)? What is our responsibility as witnesses?

What lessons can we learn?

6. How might we respond positively when our plans are hindered, especially those plans to reach out to people who do not know the good news of Jesus?
7. What can we learn from Paul's experience in Acts 28 as we are Jesus' witnesses to people who are different to us, ethnically or in some other way?

Pray together

Commit your plans and hopes to Jesus and ask for grace to remain flexible. Pray for the people you have opportunity to Jesus' witness to through your faith lived out and your words.