

# ACTS

## OF THE APOSTLES

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



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# PRAY FOR FIVE

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# HELLO FRIENDS,

Welcome to a study of the book of Acts. Our goal is to come together as a community to gain deep understanding of scripture and gain tools for our mission as witnesses here on campus and in our daily lives.

Jesus sent his disciples out only after equipping him with truth and power. He did this equipping in the context of community. The disciples did not grow into their “sentness” alone, and we do not believe that is your call either. It is our intention and prayer that this community will challenge you and grow you in your “sentness” alongside others, and that the study of the word and the encouragement of others would spur you on to great faithfulness and service in the call to take the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Each lesson will give you the opportunity to identify a characteristic of God that you noticed in the reading, as well as what that means about your identity. This list on the following page is there for your reference.

We pray that God will use this Bible study to dwell richly in your life, and increase a love for His word in your heart.

YOURS IN CHRIST,  
CRU AT UNC STAFF

# THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

**ATTENTIVE:** God hears and responds to the needs of His children.

**COMPASSIONATE:** God cares for his children and acts on their behalf.

**CREATOR:** God made everything. He is uncreated.

**DELIVERER:** God rescues and saves His children.

**ETERNAL:** God is not limited by and exists outside of time.

**FAITHFUL:** God always keeps His promises.

**GENEROUS:** God gives what is best and beyond what is deserved.

**GLORIOUS:** God displays His greatness and worth.

**GOOD:** God is what is best and gives what is best. He is incapable of doing harm.

**HOLY:** God is perfect, pure and without sin

**INCOMPREHENSIBLE:** God is beyond our understanding. We can comprehend Him in part but not in whole.

**INFINITE:** God has no limits in His person or on His power.

**IMMUTABLE/UNCHANGING:** God never changes. He is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.

**JEALOUS:** God will not share His glory with another. All glory rightfully belongs to Him.

**JUST:** God is fair in all his actions and judgments. He cannot over-punish or under-punish.

**LOVING:** God feels and displays infinite unconditional affection toward His children. His love for them does not depend on their worth, response or merit.

**MERCIFUL:** God does not give His children the punishment they deserve.

**OMNIPOTENT/ALMIGHTY:** God holds all power. Nothing is too hard for God. What He wills He can accomplish.

**OMNIPRESENT:** God is fully present everywhere.

**OMNISCIENT:** God knows everything, past, present and future, all potential and real outcomes, all things micro and macro.



**PATIENT/LONG-SUFFERING:** God is untiring and bears with His children.

**PROVIDER:** God meets the needs of His children.

**REFUGE:** God is a place of safety and protection for His children.

**RIGHTEOUS:** God is always good and right.

**SELF-EXISTENT:** God depends on nothing and no one to give Him life or existence.

**SELF-SUFFICIENT:** God is not vulnerable. He has no needs.

**SOVEREIGN:** God does everything according to His plan and pleasure. He controls all things.

**TRANSCENDENT:** God is not like humans. He is infinitely higher in being and action.

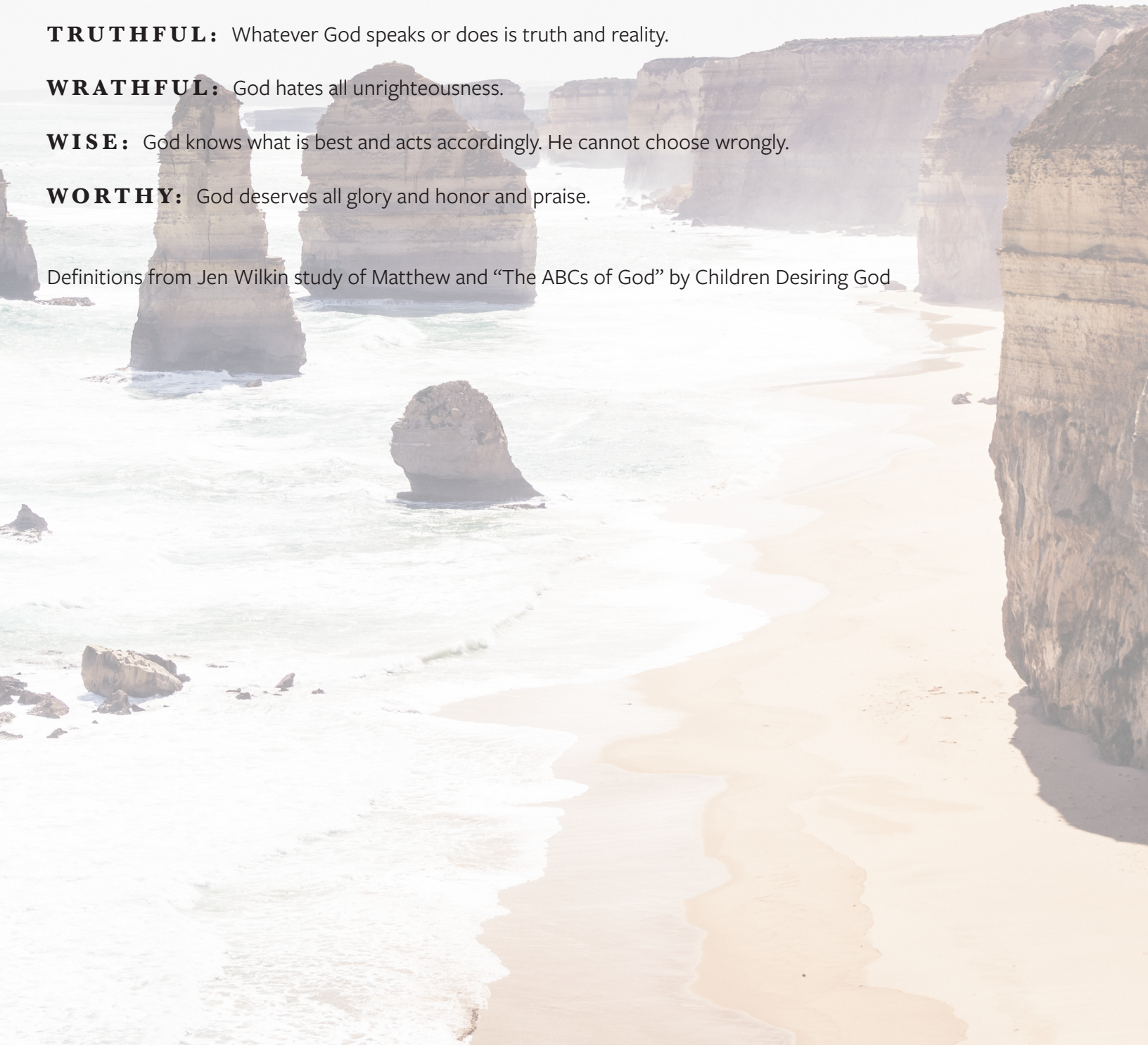
**TRUTHFUL:** Whatever God speaks or does is truth and reality.

**WRATHFUL:** God hates all unrighteousness.

**WISE:** God knows what is best and acts accordingly. He cannot choose wrongly.

**WORTHY:** God deserves all glory and honor and praise.

Definitions from Jen Wilkin study of Matthew and “The ABCs of God” by Children Desiring God





# WEEK ONE

*“IT IS NOT FOR YOU  
TO KNOW TIMES OR  
SEASONS THAT THE  
FATHER HAS FIXED BY  
HIS OWN AUTHORITY.  
BUT YOU WILL RE-  
CEIVE POWER WHEN  
THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS  
COME UPON YOU, AND  
YOU WILL BE MY WIT-  
NESSES IN JERUSALEM  
AND IN ALL JUDEA AND  
SAMARIA, AND TO THE  
END OF THE EARTH.”*

**ACTS 1:7+8**

## **STUDY ALONE:**

*So, Now What? Acts 1:1-11*

- 1) Verse 1 clues us in to the fact that Acts is the second half of a larger story. What makes up the first half (check out Luke 1:1-4)? Given that clue, what might this second half attempt to tell us?
- 2) What is the “promise of the Father” mentioned in v.4? Explore Genesis 1:1-2, Genesis 41:25-41, Exodus 31:1-5, Luke 3:21-23 to uncover truths about this promise and what it might mean for the disciples.
- 3) What do you think the disciples mean by their question in v.6? How is the question they are asking beyond their understanding?
- 4) Verse 8 is a powerful point in the story, and one that many of us know. In light of your brief study of the Spirit, how does His presence change the way the church was to go forth in the world? How does it change how we go about carrying the gospel today?
- 5) The ascension of Jesus was so crucial to Luke’s story that he wrote it twice, once in Luke 24:50-53 and here in the first chapter of Acts. Why do you think this is the case?
- 6) Staring up into the sky, the disciples are interrupted by men in white robes asking, basically, ‘what are you doing?’ They explain that Jesus is coming in the same way he left. In light of Jesus’ ministry and what we learn in Acts 1:3, what might these men be implying?

## **SUMMARY:**

Write in your own words what is being said in Acts 1:1-11

## **FILL IN THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT:**

Knowing that God is \_\_\_\_\_ shows me that I am \_\_\_\_\_.

In Everyday Church, read the sections “Rediscovering the Culture” and “Loving the Culture” in Chapter 2, p.42-46. Complete the “Where? When? What?” exercise for UNC and also list 10 things you love about campus/your neighborhood. Finally, ask God to reveal to you 5 people who do not know Jesus on campus that you will pray for this semester and write their names on the sheet provided.

## STUDY ALONE:

*The Arrival. Acts 1:12-2:13*

# WEEK TWO

1) It may be tempting to skim through the first business meeting of the disciples found in Acts 1:12-26, but try to imagine you've just spent 40 days in intensive ministry training with the risen Jesus and you are waiting for something big he's promised and you just saw him ascend up into the sky. Now what do you do? Observe what the disciples thought necessary to do, how they did it. What do you learn?

## SUMMARY:

Acts 2:1-12 describes the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. Write in your own words here what is happening.

2) Read Acts 2:1-4 and compare it with Acts 4:31; 7:55; 13:9; Luke 1:41, 67; 3:21-22, 4:1. How do these uncover ways Pentecost was unique, in what ways can we expect to see the Spirit work similarly?

3) Explore Genesis 11:1-9. How might Pentecost serve as a reversal? Why do you think God chose to move in many different languages in this pivotal act of power?

4) Notice what the people were speaking of in many languages. What were the different reactions to this communal act of worship?

## FILL IN THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT:

Knowing that God is \_\_\_\_\_ shows me that I am \_\_\_\_\_.

## SPIRITUAL BREATHING - BILL BRIGHT

The moment you invited Christ into your life as Savior and Lord, you experienced a spiritual birth. You became a child of God and you were filled with the Holy Spirit. God forgave your sins – past, present and future - making you righteous, holy and acceptable in His sight because of Christ's sacrifice for you on the cross. You were given the power to live a holy life and to be a fruitful witness for God.

But the average Christian does not understand this concept of Spiritual Breathing as an exercise of faith and, as a result, lives on a spiritual roller coaster. He goes from one emotional experience to another living most of his life as a worldly Christian, controlling his own life – frustrated and fruitless.

If this is your experience, Spiritual Breathing will enable you to get off this emotional roller coaster and enjoy the Christian life that the Lord Jesus promised to you when He said, "I came that they might have life and might have it abundantly." As an exercise in faith, Spiritual Breathing will make it possible for you to continue to experience God's love, forgiveness, and the power and control of the Holy Spirit as a way of life.

If you sin by committing a deliberate act of disobedience, breathe spiritually. Exhale by confession. God's Word promises in John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." In the Greek, the original language of the New Testament, the word "confess" (homologeō) means to "agree with" or to "say along with." Such agreement involves at least three considerations.

First, you acknowledge that your sin or sins – which should be named to God specifically – are wrong and are therefore grievous to Him. Second, you acknowledge that God has already forgiven you through Christ's death on the cross for your sins. Third, you repent, which means that you change your attitude toward your sin. The power of the Holy Spirit will enable you to change both your attitude and conduct. Instead of doing what your old sinful nature – your flesh – wants to do, you can do what God wants you to do.

Now inhale by appropriating the fullness of God's Spirit by faith. Trust him to control and empower you according to his command to "be filled with the Spirit" which actually means to be constantly and continually controlled and empowered with the Holy Spirit.

According to His promise, God hears you and grants your request because you pray according to His will. I encourage you to continue to claim his love, forgiveness and power by faith and continue to have fellowship with Him moment by moment.

AND PETER SAID TO  
THEM, "REPENT AND  
BE BAPTIZED EVERY  
ONE OF YOU IN THE  
NAME OF JESUS  
CHRIST FOR THE FOR-  
GIVENESS OF YOUR  
SINS, AND YOU WILL  
RECEIVE THE GIFT OF  
THE HOLY SPIRIT.

**ACTS 2:38**

## STUDY ALONE:

*Peter Cuts to the Heart. Acts 2:12-41*

1) The crowds are reacting to the great coming of the Holy Spirit, and Peter stands to respond with a sermon. Find the references and look up the passages of scripture he references here.

## SUMMARY:

Outline Peter's argument, noting how the scripture he references contribute.

2) Peter boldly accuses the crowds of crucifying Jesus. What is the effect of his argument and accusation?

3) Note the order of events. The crowds first see the power of God in the falling of the Spirit and observe his people worshiping Him. They then hear an explanation of who Jesus is (using Scripture, a context they would already understand), and then they learn of their guilt and are charged to repent. What might we learn about evangelism from this order?

4) What two things are promised in Acts 2:38? How are both of these crucial to salvation?

5) Verse 40 states that he continued to encourage and witness to some in the crowd, calling them to repent. We also see that about 3,000 did repent. What comfort and what encouragement can we get from observing this result?

## FILL IN THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT:

Knowing that God is \_\_\_\_\_ shows me that I am \_\_\_\_\_.

Peter, filled with the Spirit, responded with clarity to the questions the people had. As we practice walking in the Spirit, we must also ready our mind with a clear presentation of the gospel. Write down a brief and clear description of the gospel you could give in 2 minutes, on a bus or before class starts. This will certainly not be comprehensive, but try to present the clear basics in hopes of further conversation.



**STUDY ALONE:**

*An Attractive Community. Acts 2:41-47*

*“Obedience to Jesus- dying to self, doing whatever he wants in spite of the cravings of our flesh- renders liberty, with arms open wide, with bread and fish to give away, with a shocking recognition for the outcast and despised, remembering that we were once her. This was true when Jesus walked the earth, and it is true today, in our post-Christian world, where the Christian faith is dismissed or despised and where Christian values are seen as the enemy of compassion, care and diversity.*

*Radically ordinary hospitality is this: using your Christian home [or dorm or space] in a daily way that seeks to make strangers neighbors, and neighbors family of God. It brings glory to God, serves others, and lives out the gospel in word and deed... The purpose of radically ordinary hospitality is to build, focus, deepen, and strengthen the family of God, pointing others to the Bible-believing local church, and being earthly and spiritual good to everyone we know.”*

**ROSARIA BUTTERFIELD**

**“THE GOSPEL COMES WITH A HOUSE KEY”**

- 1) Identify and describe the four things that the early church devoted itself to. How might we mirror these in this small group study?
- 2) How was the early church a ministry of learning? How is it a critical part of this small group?
- 3) How was the early church a ministry of fellowship? How is it a critical part of this small group?
- 4) Tim Keller describes these vital signs of a spirit-filled community found in Acts 2 – theological depth, intimate relationships, joyous worship, relentless evangelism, and sacrificial service. In what ways is our community displaying these? In what ways is it not?
- 5) Is the church today attractive in this way? Dream about what it might be like for the body of Christ to live in this appealing way on campus at UNC.

**FILL IN THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT:**

Knowing that God is \_\_\_\_\_ shows me that I am \_\_\_\_\_.

Read the section “From Attractional Events to Attractional Communities” on p.27-28 in Everyday Church. How might your understanding of the state of Christendom on our campus inform the way you execute Jesus’ call to make disciples? How might this shift encourage us to behave more like the early church?

# WEEK FIVE

## STUDY ALONE:

*Boldness, an Indicator of Spirit Work. Acts 3:1-4:31*

- 1) Why do you think this lame man was healed? What did this healing require of him, of Peter and John, and of God?
- 2) Peter says in verse 15 that they (he and John) are witnesses to their killing of the Author of life. He continues many times in Acts to mention that they are witnesses to the gospel they are preaching. Why might this be frequently repeated?
- 3) These two chapters recount many words and deeds of boldness on the part of the church. Note here all of the ones you see.
- 4) When Peter and John are released from custody, they gather with their friends and relay what had been said to them. The church is then moved to pray. Look carefully at their prayer – what do they actually pray for? What do they notably NOT pray for?

## FILL IN THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT:

Knowing that God is \_\_\_\_\_ shows me that I am \_\_\_\_\_.

In Everyday Church read “Prayer as a Missionary Activity” in Chapter 6. Read pages 147-149 and complete the short assessment on the last pages of this chapter. For this assessment, consider the small group that you are doing this study with. Some questions may not apply directly, and that’s okay.

*REPENT THEREFORE, AND TURN BACK, THAT YOUR SINS MAY BE  
BLOTTED OUT, THAT TIMES OF REFRESHING MAY COME FROM THE  
PRESENCE OF THE LORD, AND THAT HE MAY SEND THE CHRIST AP-  
POINTED FOR YOU, JESUS, WHOM HEAVEN MUST RECEIVE UNTIL  
THE TIME FOR RESTORING ALL THE THINGS ABOUT WHICH GOD  
SPOKE BY THE MOUTH OF HIS HOLY PROPHETS LONG AGO.*

# WEEK SIX

## **STUDY ALONE:**

*The Early Church in Unity and Conflict. Acts 4:32-5:11*

- 1) Acts 4:32-37 gives a beautiful picture of the early church, much like we observed in Chapter 2. Note the characteristics you see and what stands out to you.
- 2) By contrast, Acts 5:1-11 shares a tragic story of sin. Describe in your own words what happened with Ananias and Sapphira.
- 3) What was the actual sin of Ananias and Sapphira? Consider heart-level motivations.
- 4) What about this particular sin could be so poisonous to the church that God deals with it this strongly? What might this indicate about the importance of protecting the church from ongoing sin?
- 5) How might we fall in to similar temptation? How might we avoid it?

## **FILL IN THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT:**

Knowing that God is \_\_\_\_\_ shows me that I am \_\_\_\_\_.

Read the section “Everyday Pastoral Care” in Chapter 3, pages 65-75. Respond to the idea that “change is a community project.” What about this seems most challenging? Most encouraging and motivating? How might a community rightly reflecting this idea be more attractive to outsiders?



# WEEK SEVEN

## STUDY ALONE:

*Fear Rightly Placed. Acts 5:12-5:42*

- 1) List the characteristics you see in this passage of a healthy body of Christ.
- 2) Look for instances of fear here. Who is afraid of what? Also look for the word “obey” which indicates a reverential fear.
- 3) Imagine what it might have been like to be the apostles who were arrested, set free by the angel of the Lord and then told to go speak of Life in the temple. What would that have been like? What might you feel?
- 4) How does the choice of the apostles to fear God and not man affect their ministry?
- 5) Verse 41 is simply foolishness outside of the gospel. Respond to this reality. How does it manifest itself in your life and ministry?

## FILL IN THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT:

Knowing that God is \_\_\_\_\_ shows me that I am \_\_\_\_\_.

Read the section in Chapter 6 entitled “The Hope of Glory” from p.134-137 in Everyday Church and consider the question “The challenge to us is this: when were you last asked to account for your hope? Are we living a life that makes no sense without the gospel?”

*THEN THEY LEFT THE PRESENCE OF THE COUNCIL, REJOICING THAT THEY  
WERE COUNTED WORTHY TO SUFFER DISHONOR FOR THE NAME.*

**ACTS 5:41**

# WEEK EIGHT

## STUDY ALONE:

*God and His People on the Move. Acts 6:1-7:53*

- 1) Acts 6:1-7 show us the body of the church functioning in healthy ways, working to fix problems that are part of living in a broken world. What do you observe about how they function?
  
- 2) What is the accusation that is brought against Stephen? What was the actual question Stephen responded to? What do you think it means that “his face was like the face of an angel.”?
  
- 3) Write a brief outline of Stephen’s speech. Note any frequently used words or themes. How do you think his response answers the question asked of him?
  
- 4) How does the gospel change the way we look at the temple and the law?

## FILL IN THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT:

Knowing that God is \_\_\_\_\_ shows me that I am \_\_\_\_\_.

Read the section “Exiles” until the end of Chapter 1 in Everyday Church (p.32-35) Stephen’s speech repeatedly notes that both the presence of God and God’s people do not have a home here on earth. What does our exile status mean about us today?

*AND THE WORD OF GOD CONTINUED TO INCREASE, AND THE NUMBER OF  
THE DISCIPLES MULTIPLIED GREATLY IN JERUSALEM, AND A GREAT MANY  
OF THE PRIESTS BECAME OBEDIENT TO THE FAITH.*

**ACTS 6:7**

# WEEK NINE

## STUDY ALONE:

*Stoning of Stephen and the Beautiful Aftermath. Acts 7:54-8:40*

- 1) Stephen's last words sound eerily familiar. What does this tell us about Stephen?
- 2) Two authorities are at work here in Acts 7:54-60. Identify them, their actions and Stephen's relationship to them.
- 3) In Acts 8 we see a domino effect of ministry and persecution following Stephen's death. How does God use a disastrous event to His glory and the flourishing of his Kingdom?
- 4) Philip's ministry in Samaria was effective and shocking. What do you know about the relationship of Israelites and Samaritans? What elements made up this successful ministry of Philip?
- 5) The story of Simon the magician is intriguing. What is his sin? Do you think he repents?
- 6) God seems to go out of his way to bring this Ethiopian Eunuch into the family, why do you think that is? What does this say about the Kingdom of God?
- 7) What can we learn about sharing the gospel from Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian? Observe particularly how he begins the conversation.

## FILL IN THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT:

Knowing that God is \_\_\_\_\_ shows me that I am \_\_\_\_\_.

Use the exercise on p.18 with a friend. Use thoughtful questions to identify the "Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration" story in their life.

*BUT HE, FULL OF THE  
HOLY SPIRIT, GAZED  
INTO HEAVEN AND SAW  
THE GLORY OF GOD,  
AND JESUS STANDING  
AT THE RIGHT HAND  
OF GOD. AND HE SAID,  
"BEHOLD, I SEE THE  
HEAVENS OPENED, AND  
THE SON OF MAN  
STANDING AT THE  
RIGHT HAND OF GOD."*

**ACTS 7:54-56**



# Wetstein

1) Pause a moment and put yourself in the shoes of Saul. Imagine the light and the sound, not being able to see, the potential emotions. Think about the experience of v.9. Write your reflections here.

2) Now do the same for Ananias. What might his experience of Saul been up to this point? What emotions might he be feeling? Take down your thoughts.

3) Acts 9:20 says Saul proclaimed Jesus in what manner? What do you observe?

4) Compare Saul's worldly circumstances before and after following Jesus.

Before:

After:

5) Saul is saved from multiple occasions of opponents' attempts to kill him, and the brothers send him home for his safety. At this time the church experiences peace, as Saul, a key opponent of the gospel, has become a brother himself. Describe this time. How might this inform how we live in a culture where we can freely practice our faith?

AND IMMEDIATELY HE  
PROCLAIMED JESUS IN  
THE SYNAGOGUES,  
SAYING, “HE IS THE  
SON OF GOD.”

Knowing that God is \_\_\_\_\_ shows me that I am \_\_\_\_\_.

Read from the beginning of Chapter 2 until the end of the section “We Cannot Expect the World to be Like Us” in *Everyday Church*. As we live day to day in a culture that doesn’t expel us or accept us, how do we fight to both love those outside the faith and remain a distinct people for God?

## ACTS 9:20

## RESOURCES:

Evangelism: Studies in the Book of Acts - Tim Keller

The Gospel Comes with a House Key - Rosaria Butterfield

A Study of Matthew - The Village Institute

Letters to the Church - Francis Chan

New Bible Commentary - Carson, France, Motyer, Wenham

Further Bible study and discipleship resources available online at [cruatunc.org](http://cruatunc.org)