

WEEK 1 - Acts 1-2

Canopy Guide // Fall Focus 2025: The Spirit Acts

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Use the questions below to kickstart a community building, all-play conversation that connects to our weekly topic. If your group meets for dinner, these might be great questions to share around a table.

- How do you remember the important things your parents or early teachers told you?
- Before you launch a new adventure (e.g., a major vacation trip, a job change, a transition in your children's development), what seems most important in the process of preparation?
- Have you ever had an experience when you felt the inspiration, or almost "the presence," of someone who wanted you to do what you're doing?

VIDEO INTRO: WEEK 1

STUDY GUIDE

Part of our desire to study the book of Acts is that it might allow us to sharpen our focus on the Holy Spirit *as God*. The nature of the Triune God is, of course, mysterious and difficult to understand; indeed, many Christians struggle in their language, even, if not in their actual beliefs, to acknowledge that *Jesus* is God, let alone the oft-neglected Holy Spirit. But, *Jesus is God*; the *Father is God*; and, equally, the *Holy Spirit is God*. In our study of Acts, we want to focus on the works, the power, and the divinity of the Third Person of the divine Trinity: the Holy Spirit, who is as much the one God as the Father and the Son are the one God.

To begin to see how Acts is uniquely equipped to help us do this, notice that Acts is a continuation of the story that Luke begins in his account of the Good News. He says, in chapter one, "In the first book [i.e., what we call 'The Gospel According to Luke']...I have dealt with all that Jesus *began* to do and teach...." But

this means that *this* part of the story is about how Jesus *continues* to do and teach things about the Kingdom of God. And it's just here that things get interesting because just a few verses later, Jesus ascends into the skies—Jesus' ascension into the skies being a clear reference to Daniel 7 thereby reinforcing Jesus' divine status. But, if Jesus has ascended into the skies, how can he be said to continue to do and teach anything at all if he's no longer on the ground? The answer: the Holy Spirit. Jesus predicted the coming of the Holy Spirit in power, and He specifically stated a primary role of the Spirit: to teach and remind us of what He had taught (John 14:25-26).

It's important to hone in on the details Luke uses when he describes the Spirit's having been sent to Jesus' apostles. If we're at all familiar with the descriptions of the presence of God in the tabernacle/temple (see Exodus 40, or 2 Chronicles 7, etc.), then alarm bells should be going off when we read Luke's description of the event in chapter two that “suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.” The Holy Spirit, in other words, was taking up residence in the apostles *as if they were, themselves, the tabernacle/temple*. In other words, the apostles became walking, talking mobile “hot-spots” of the divine presence, i.e., of the presence of God himself.

Moreover, notice what is happening just after the apostles are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Devout Jews from all over the world (back in Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of Pentecost) begin to hear the apostles' teachings *as if in their own native languages*. This has two effects: first, it symbolically fulfills God's promise in Isaiah and Ezekiel to reunite Israel; and, second, to undo the dividing of humanity, more generally, through the confusion of languages in Genesis 11 (the story of the Tower of Babel). These are things that *God* has promised to do. So, it follows that God—here, in the Person of the Holy Spirit—is accomplishing these things in and through humans.

But, God is not done here. That is, *Jesus* is not finished with his teachings and doings that began in the first part of Luke's Gospel. Read on in Acts and you will see that there is much more—and even the book of Acts is just a mere tip of the iceberg—that Jesus is teaching and doing. How? Through the Holy Spirit at work in and through the apostles.

Scripture to Read: Acts 1-2

Other Scriptures: John 14:15-21, 25-27

This semester we're challenging our canopies to read the book of Acts in total. This study will be the most meaningful if you read the chapters you'll discuss ahead of time individually AND if you read the week's chapters during your group meeting time aloud together. You can read individually all in one setting or parse it out through your week. The Bible app has a great audio version of the Bible you can use as well.

General Discussion Questions:

- What's something in this week's reading you have questions about?
- What is something in this week's reading that makes you think about your own life of faith?

Deeper Discussion Questions *(feel free to pick & choose the questions your group wants to tackle together)*

1. Some of the 11 Apostles and the others in the prayer meeting that starts things off in Acts, were pretty quiet people during Jesus' ministry; i.e., they didn't seem to speak up enough to get quoted in the Gospels. Do you think the Pentecost experience changed them? What do you think it would have felt like?
2. What kind of reaction do you think the authorities had when the crowds had cried, "Crucify him!" at Passover and then 50 days later 3000 were baptized?
3. What evidences are there that those who were baptized stuck with their new faith? Could it have been an emotional response that faded in a day or so? How do we know that it wasn't just an emotional response?
4. How can you tell the difference between the genuine work of the Spirit and your own bias?
5. In light of the coming of the Holy Spirit and the empowering of the Holy Spirit for the first disciples, how does this empower you? How have you felt led by the Spirit?

PRAYER

Invite the Spirit to guide your conversations and reading this semester.

EXTRA RESOURCES/ARTICLES/RESEARCH

1. <https://youtu.be/eAvYmE2YYIU?si=bpNIK1sPmP7YWvvi>

- a. Bible Project video on how to think about the Trinity
- 2. <https://youtu.be/oNNZO9i1Gjc?si=HSEFSO6W90J-VXUr>
 - a. Bible Project video on the Holy Spirit
- 3. <https://youtu.be/JQhkWmFJKnA?si=tcB0OtrwdYhzYoBq>
 - a. Bible Project video on Pentecost

An additional document full of resources that will benefit deeper study through the book of Acts and the Holy Spirit can be found here:

<https://grandviewchristian.org/fallfocus2025/>