



EMPOWERED

ACTS PART I

Acts 1:1 - 6:7 • Jan - April 2023

Overview

Acts records some of the most exciting days in human history. Jesus has risen from the dead, the Holy Spirit descends into the lives of ordinary people and a brand new community is born: The Church! Against all the odds, the church grows and thrives and as it does so, every verse of Luke's retelling seems to carry an important lesson for us. Could it be that as we journey together through these pages, exciting and powerful days might characterise the church again?

Outline

1. Promise of Power & Purpose (Acts 1:1-11)
2. Waiting for Power (Acts 1:12-26)
3. Empowered Church I (Acts 2:1-13)
4. Empowered Church II (Acts 2:14-40)
5. Empowered Devotion (Acts 2:41-47)
6. Empowered Miracles (Acts 3:1-26)
7. Empowered Preaching (Acts 4:1-22)
8. Empowered Boldness (Acts 4:23-31)
9. Empowered Community (Acts 4:32-5:11)
10. Empowered Perseverance (Acts 5:12-42)
11. Empowered Wisdom (Acts 6:1-7)

Key Facts

Luke is the undisputed author of both Luke and Acts. He is the only gospel writer who continues the narrative of Jesus Christ to include how the good news about Jesus led to the actions of the early church. An ancient prologue to Luke's gospel indicates that Luke was first a follower of the Apostles and then became close with Paul.

In terms of timing, Luke does not mention Paul's death in Rome or the persecutions under Nero (c. 64AD). However, we do know that Luke was with Paul beyond the time covered by the narrative in Acts (2 Tim 4:11). Acts was probably written around AD 60-70.

Key Themes:

Resurrection

The proclamation that Jesus is alive. We preach this message, there isn't another one. There is one message about one risen saviour.

Holy Spirit

The empowering and action of the Holy Spirit. It is futile to pretend that we can accomplish anything in our own strength and yet through the enabling of the Spirit there is nothing that needs to be done in this mission that cannot be done.

A community gathered in simple devotion

It is also futile to believe that we can accomplish our God given mission alone. God has placed each one of us in the community of the church. Just as they were, we are to be devoted to each other, to the teaching of the Word, to prayer and to following the Holy Spirit.

One exercise that's good to do is to go through these chapters and highlight or annotate every mention of the resurrection and the Holy Spirit.



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ACTS PART I

Week 1 • 29 Jan • Acts 1:1-11

1. Have you read the book of Acts before? What are three words that come to mind when you think of this book?
2. Read aloud the passage from verses 1-11. What is going on? What stands out to you?
3. In verse 3, it says, “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.” Why do you think it was necessary to give convincing proof that he was alive?
4. In verse 8 it says “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.”
 - a. How have you experienced the Holy Spirit equip you when sharing the gospel or a story of God in your life?



- b. What do you need for this to grow in your life?
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- 5. Who are three people you are praying for that don't yet know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour?
 - a. Take time now as a life group to each share those names, and commit to regularly praying for each of them by name throughout 2023.

 - b. Share what it would be like to stand at a Sunday gathering and have those three people standing next you, arms raised, worshipping Jesus alongside you.

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ACTS PART I

Week 2 • 5 Feb • Acts 1:12-26

1. Have you ever been well and truly lost? Share that experience and how you managed to find your way home.
2. The 11 remaining disciples return to the place they've been staying but without Jesus (v12). Imagine being there. What do you think that was like for them?

The disciples are in limbo having been told to wait in Jerusalem. It's likely that they didn't really know what to do. So let's think about how they worked out what to do.

3. Notice that their first port of call was actually constant prayer (v14)
 - a. To what extent is this a first reaction for you?
 - b. Why or why not?

4. Out of prayer, they realise that Scripture is guiding them to appoint someone else to take Judas' place of leadership (v20).
 - a. What is a verse or passage of the Bible that has helped guide you when you've not known what to do?

 - b. How did that turn out?

5. What are some other places people turn to figure out what to do? What are some good places and not so good places to turn?

6. Their final part of the puzzle was to cast lots. This was actually thoroughly Biblical (Prov 16:33). However, Acts 1 is before the Holy Spirit came personally upon believers.

Have a look at James 1:5-7

- a. What do you notice in these verses?

- b. How do you think God would have us approach not knowing what to do now?

- c. How might this look in practice for you right now? Why not pray about that together.

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ACTS PART I

Week 3 • 12 Feb • Acts 2:1-13

1. Do you have any strange abilities or unique “party tricks?”

2. Notice how many different nations were represented on the first day of the church.
 - a. How do these verses show that this is a theme for God (Gen 12:1-3; Rev 5:9-10)?

 - b. If the church began in diversity, what implications do you think this might have for us as a church?

3. What reactions do you notice to the Apostles speaking in different languages (v5-7, 12)?
 - a. Has God ever done anything in your life that has provoked similar reactions?

 - b. How do you think people far from God might react to hearing about God doing the same thing?



4. One thing that's hard to argue with is your story - your testimony of God at work in your life.
 - a. How could you share that same story of God's powerful work in your life in simple and everyday language?
 - b. Who is one person with whom you would like to share that story?

Why not pray that the Spirit would give you the opportunity and courage to share that story and remember to share how it went next time you're together as a group.

5. Notice that the Apostles waited in Jerusalem until the Spirit came.
 - a. How do you think their mission to be witnesses of Jesus in the world would have gone without the Spirit (v8)?
 - b. To what extent can you identify with this?
 - c. Take time to pray for one another around the areas where you most feel like you've been striving with human effort. Pray for a tangible enabling of the Spirit.

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ACTS PART I

Week 4 • 19 Feb • Acts 2:14-40

1. What's the most stirring speech, or memorable sermon you've ever heard or read? What made it so striking and impactful for you?
2. Read Luke 22:54-62 and compare Peter's actions and words with today's passage.
 - a. What are some obvious contrasts in Peter's words and behaviour?
 - b. What does this make you think about what the Spirit was immediately able to do in Peter's life?
3. Peter quotes three Old Testament passages to the gathered crowd, scriptures they would have all been familiar with and heard before, but now they see the fulfillment of those ancient words.
 - a. How do these Old Testament prophecies confirm what Peter says in Acts 2:23?
 - b. These words were written centuries before Jesus walked the earth - what did it take for the words to finally hit home with the Jewish listeners?
4. As a church we are committed to helping people become total followers of Jesus Christ, which means discipling every single believer to be passionate about sharing their faith with others. But



we know the world often isn't receptive to the message of the gospel like the crowd in today's passage.

- a. What common reactions do you see in the world today to the message of Jesus Christ?
 - b. Peter's listeners were "cut to the heart" by the message. How do you think a Wellington audience would respond to this sermon today? Why?
5. When you think about sharing your faith with non-believers (whether family, friends, colleagues or neighbours), what emotions/thoughts come to mind?
- a. What do you want the Spirit to do in your life, and in their lives, to help with this?
6. Convicting the hearts of the lost is totally a work of the Holy Spirit, but he uses human words as his common method. How can your Life Group encourage one another to be bold in sharing your faith, and trusting the Holy Spirit with the outcome?
7. Have you been baptised yet? Simon taught that the New Testament has no concept of an unbaptised follower of Jesus. Is this a step you need to take? What might be holding you back?



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Week 5 • 26 Feb • Acts 2:41-47

1. What/who comes to mind when you hear the word “devoted”?
2. This is the first expression of church community after the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost.
 - a. Why do you think they devoted themselves specifically to “the Apostles’ teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer”?
 - b. How might the Holy Spirit’s empowering be demonstrated in these four activities?
3. The results of this kind of devotion led to people being saved daily (verse 47).
 - a. Why do you think this was?
 - b. Are there reasons we haven’t seen this so much today?



4. We want to be a church simply devoted to God and to one another. What might an individual response to that look like for you?

5. How can we as a Life Group grow in our devotion to each of these. Where are we weakest and how might we improve?
 - a. The Word (Apostles' Teaching)
 - b. Fellowship
 - c. Breaking of bread
 - d. Prayer

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ACTS PART I

Week 6 • 5 March • Acts 3:1-26

1. Have you ever witnessed a miracle? What happened? How did people who were there react?

2. The lame man asks Peter and John for money, but they don't have any.
 - a. It's clear Peter and John don't rely on money for their ministry, where is their trust placed?

 - b. What does Luke 9:1-6 tell us about what Peter and John learned from Jesus?

 - c. The lame beggar wanted to be supported in his present condition, but Jesus had so much more for him - how does what Jesus says in John 10:10 speak into this?

3. We see Peter and John immediately give all glory and praise to Jesus for this miracle (vv12,13), rather than accept it for themselves. What makes this so genuine as opposed to the false humility that we see so often in the world?

4. Peter and John used what they had, not what they didn't have. What do you have (gifts, skills, resources) that you know you can use for the good of others and the glory of God?
 - a. Are you using them already?

 - b. If not, what steps can you take to begin?

5. How can your Life Group consistently encourage one another in your gifts to use them for the kingdom?

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ACTS PART I

Week 7 • 19 March • Acts 4:1-22

1. What do you think Acts 4:22 means? 😊

2. Have a look at Acts 4:12. What do we learn from Acts 3 and 4 about why there really is no other name?

3. The message of Jesus challenged the Sadducees' belief about the resurrection and their relationship with Rome which led to the arrest.
 - a. What are the things in our culture that most bring about opposition against Jesus followers?

 - b. Do you have any personal experience of that?

 - c. What have you learned about responding well?

4. Peter and John were unschooled and ordinary.
 - a. Are there things about you that you have believed might stop you from being someone God uses to share Jesus with others?
 - b. If God gave you all the courage in the world, who would you have a conversation with about Jesus?
 - c. Why not ask him together to give you that courage?

5. Their boldness came from the Holy Spirit and it was evident that Peter and John had been with Jesus.
 - a. What do you think becomes noticeable about someone who spends time with Jesus.
 - b. What is a step you can take this week to deepen your time with Jesus?

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ACTS PART I

Week 8 • 26 March • Acts 4:23-31

1. How do you address God when you pray e.g. Father, Lord, Jesus? Is there any reason why?

2. Read Acts 4:23-31
 - a. What do you notice about prayer through reading this passage?

 - b. What do you think it means to speak the word of God boldly?

 - c. God answered their prayer specifically in verse 31. Where have you seen God answer prayers specifically in your life?

3. Kevin Harney talked about praying with non-Christians on Sun 12th.
 - a. Have you ever offered to pray for someone who's not a Christian?

 - b. What happened?



4. What would it look like for you to speak the word of God 'boldly' in your context?

5. Practice what you learn from the prayer in this passage.
 - a. Pray for God to enable you to speak His word with boldness
 - b. Pray through verse 30 - for signs and wonders
 - c. Pray specifically. Specific prayers get specific answers.

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ACTS PART I

Week 9 • 2 April • Acts 4:32-5:11

1. What's the most generous gift you've ever received?

2. The believers were of one heart and mind and they shared their possessions to the extent that there was no poverty among them!
 - a. Have you ever experienced a community that was even close to this?

 - b. If God zapped us and this is what we became, what is the first thing you'd notice?

 - c. Why do you think this sort of relationship in the church is so important to God (John 13:34-35)?

3. Are there any cultural or habitual barriers that exist in our lives that prevent us from experiencing this sort of community?

- a. What are some steps we could each take to alleviate some of that?
4. The start of chapter 5 is sobering and is probably placed there specifically by Luke as a contrast to 4:32-36.
- a. What was the core problem with what Ananias and Sapphira did?
 - b. What does God's response demonstrate about him?
5. In verses 36-37, we get a cameo from a significant New Testament character. Barnabas was given the name because he was an encourager. He had a profound impact on the lives of both Paul (Acts 11:25-26) and John Mark - who wrote Mark's gospel (Acts 15:36-41). Without Barnabas, our New Testaments would look very different.
- a. Why is encouragement so important?
 - b. Who do you know that most needs some encouragement today?
 - c. What steps could you take to make encouragement a habit?

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ACTS PART I

Week 10 • 23 April • Acts 5:12-42

1. When you find yourself in a hard situation in life, what helps you to push on? Do you naturally persevere or do you shrink back?
2. What do you notice about how the apostles went about sharing the gospel?
3. Verse 17 tells us that the high priest and all his associates were filled with jealousy. What do you think caused them to be jealous of the apostles?
Side note- It seems the high priest and his associates demanded respect and reverence for themselves while the apostles' goal was to bring respect and reverence for God.
4. What did God tell the apostles to do once He freed them from prison?

Often once God has freed us we sit back and enjoy the freedom but God wants us to get back on mission and to persevere with what He has called us to do.

5. What has God freed you to do? Are you obeying Him in that?

6. In verse 29 Peter says “we must obey God rather than human beings”
 - a. What does this look like for you in your context? Are you crippled by the fear of other people? Is God the main voice of authority in your life?

 - b. Imagine if we had the same perseverance and boldness the apostles had! How would our workplaces, homes, flats, uni, schools and places of leisure look different if we shared the news of Jesus wherever no matter the cost?!

7. What is stopping you from persevering in sharing the gospel?
 - a. Talk about it with one another and pray that God would give you boldness and courage.

 - b. Who is ONE person you want to share the gospel with this week? Tell your group and be accountable with one another.

8. Set up a monthly rhythm as a group to encourage one another to be sharing the gospel and praying for people who don't know Jesus. God has sent us and empowered us to be on mission together, so don't go at it alone!

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ACTS PART I

Week 11 • 30 April • Acts 6:1-7

1. Ask someone who knows how to juggle to start with two balls and add more until they drop them all. In this passage the twelve had so much to do they were neglecting important work.
2. Read Acts 6:1-7.
 - a. What stands out in this passage?
 - b. Why do you think hospitality and the support of those in need was important to the apostles?
 - c. What was it about their decision that meant the word of God spread rapidly?
3. Have a look at 1 Corinthians 12:12-31
 - a. How do you see these passages link together?
 - b. Do you know what some of your spiritual gifts are? (if someone isn't sure, you could encourage others to say what they see in them.)



4. Read Acts 6:5-8.
 - a. What do we learn about Stephen from these verses?
 - b. How does it challenge the view that he was “only serving the food”?
 - c. What does this say about the value of every person and the importance of each person playing their part in church?

5. As you think about the way you’re currently involved in church, to what extent is it in line with the gifts God has given you?
 - a. Are there ways you think God is wanting you to get involved?
 - b. What might you need to start?
 - c. What might you need to stop doing?