

ACTS

A MOVEMENT BEGINS

GUIDE BOOK 3

ACTS

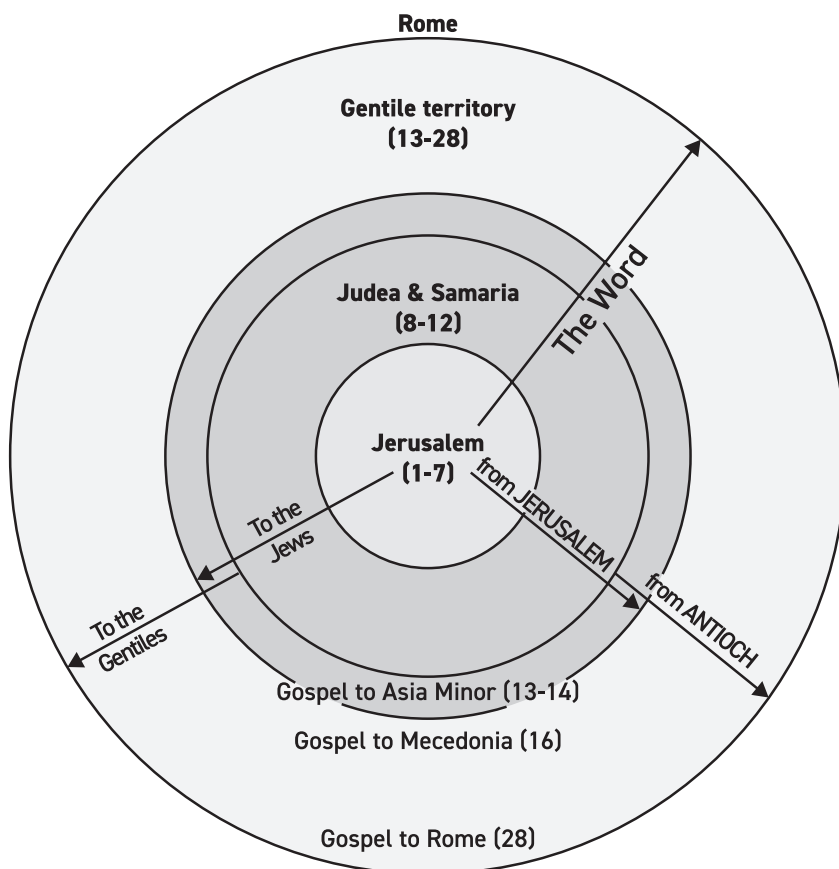
A MOVEMENT BEGINS

ACTS

A MOVEMENT BEGINS

Acts is the story of God breaking through barriers as the gospel of the resurrected Lord Jesus goes outwards. Those barriers that are broken take many forms - spiritual forces, political authorities, layers of wealth, and gender division. But also, the story of Acts shows us that God is breaking through into new regions and across the ethnic divide of Jew and Gentile.

This is what we see as we now move into a new part of the story of Acts. Have a look at the diagram below, which shows the outward spread of God's word that will move beyond 'gospel ground zero' of Jerusalem. In this Christ Central preaching and growth group series we'll be covering chapters 7-11.



OUR BARRIERS ARE NOT GOD'S

As we start this new journey into the book of Acts, it's worth asking certain questions of ourselves about how we view the power of God to break through barriers we face. Read through the questions below and take time to fill in some names that we'll use as part of prayer in the following weeks.

- If you're honest with yourself, who are those people you know who you think will probably never become a Christian because they've already rejected the gospel or have treated you badly because you're a follower of Jesus?
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- If you're honest with yourself, who are those people you know who you think will probably never become a Christian because they seem to have such a happy and successful life?
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- Who are those people in your life who you regularly see (might be a class-mate, neighbour, work colleague, parent at school etc) but you've yet to take the next step to get to know them? What's a helpful next step?
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- Who are people in your life for whom you might be nervous to invite to Hope Explored, but in fact might be happy that you did?
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STUDY 9

KILLED FOR JESUS

ACTS 6:8-8:2

INTRODUCTION QUESTION

How does it make you feel when you hear about people who are willing to die for their faith?

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EXPLORING TOGETHER

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Light Bulb. Write down any interesting observations you get from the passage. This includes things that stand out, repeated ideas/words or something you found unusual.

Question Mark. Any questions from the text or an issue or point that doesn't make sense from the passage. Questions are great! They encourage us to think a bit harder about the passage and its implications. They also give us a chance to help each other understand Scripture better.

Arrow. Note down any reflections on things you found challenging or applicable to you. The bible addresses our heads, hearts and hands, or if you like, our thoughts, attitudes and actions so reflect on whether the passage addresses any of these.

Read Acts 6:8-8:2 and take some time to fill in the sections below.



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After your group time of discussing the passage using the Swedish Method, if you have any time left, choose any of the questions from the 'Digging Deeper' or 'Bringing it Home' sections.



DIGGING DEEPER

1. What is it about this moment with Stephen that seems so familiar? (See Mark 14:55-59, Luke 23:34, 46) What are we supposed to make of this?

2. Stephen is the first Christian martyr and what we have in his speech is the longest defence of Christianity in the New Testament! It's important to spend time noticing the patterns and details of Stephen's speech as he flips the tables to becoming the prosecuting attorney for those who accuse him! What are the main periods of Old Testament history that Stephen covers?

3. Stephen's speech is lengthy and so it can be hard to fully take in. How do you see Stephen's speech relating to the charges that are brought against him in verses 11 and 13?

4. To answer their accusation about the temple, how does Stephen go about giving a true biblical account of how we should think about the temple?

5. What has been Israel's attitude to the various messengers sent from God and Moses in particular?

6. Compare the descriptions of Stephen (6:3,5, 8-10) with the Sanhedrin, the Jewish religious council (7:51-53). How does this comfort and challenge you?

7. Towards the end of the passage, something happens to show that God is always working His sovereign plans out. Compare Jesus' words in Acts 1:8 and what is described in Acts 7:2 and discuss.



ACTS & OUR CHURCH

8. God has always been 'mobile'. He appeared to Abraham in Mesopotamia (7:2). He appeared in a burning bush (7:30). He was with his people in the wilderness (7:38). And he was never contained within the temple (7:48-50). What does it mean for us today to realise that no one can pin our Lord down?


9. How should this moment in Acts be an encouragement to our church today?

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 **PRAYER FOR THE BARRIERS WE FACE** (see page 3)

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PETRIE
Working Bee

THIS SATURDAY 12 OCTOBER
STARTS AT 830AM

Contact Anthony 0418 791 472

SIGN UP ONLINE 





ACTS 6:8-8:2

9

STUDY 10



FALSE FAITH

ACTS 8:1-25

INTRODUCTION QUESTION

What sadness have you faced in terms of a friend or family member who initially showed traits of being a Christian, but then it emerged they have not yet come to a saving relationship with Jesus?

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Read Acts 8:1-25 and take some time to fill in the sections below.



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DIGGING DEEPER

1. Acts 8 marks a hugely significant moment in the story. The movement of gospel which was initially 'Jerusalem-centric' now busts outwards into the neighbouring region of Samaria. This event brings fulfillment to Jesus' promise in Acts 1:8 and it happens because of persecution too! Discuss as a group the relationship between Jews and Samaritans. You may like to refer to passages such as: John 4:1-9; Luke 9:51-55; 10:25-37; 17:11-19.

2. In the last episode in Acts, focus was brought to Stephen, one of those men appointed to the group who would 'wait on tables' (6:2-6). Now the focus is brought to someone else from that same group, Philip. When you read the account of Philip's activities in Samaria, how would you describe him?

3. In your own words, what is happening in the region of Samaria through Philip's ministry and what is the message he is proclaiming? v5 & 11

4. We might find the description of what takes place in v14-16 a bit perplexing! How do you think it was discerned that the Samaritans who had believed in Jesus and were baptised had not yet received the Holy Spirit?

As with various events in Acts, we shouldn't think this is laying down a normative pattern for how God works in conversion moments today. It seems to be this is a moment of necessary apostolic endorsement – a barrier is breaking down between Jews and Samaritans and there is authenticating evidence that the apostles need to see. With Acts 2 and Pentecost, there was a visible manifestation of the Spirit for those initial Jewish believers, and now something similar is happening with the first Samaritan believers. This is a significant redemptive-historical moment!

5. The story of Simon is devastating and also instructive for us today. Just because someone says they believe in Jesus and have been baptised, does not necessarily mean they have been genuinely converted. How can genuine conversion be judged? (You might like to refer to passages such as Romans 10:13; Matthew 7:21; Galatians 5:16-26; James 2:14-19).

ACTS & OUR CHURCH

6. How does this passage shape the way we should view and react to persecution?

7. In what ways does the story of Simon serve as a sobering message for you?



PRAYER FOR THE BARRIERS WE FACE (see page 3)

 **CHRIST CENTRAL**

Community

BREAKFAST | **LUNCH**

830 CONGREGATION | 1030 CONGREGATION

FROM 7AM | FROM 12PM

SUNDAY 20 OCTOBER



Sunday 13 October

ACTS 8:1-25

15

STUDY 11

GOD THE EVANGELIST

ACTS 8:26-40

INTRODUCTION QUESTION

Can anyone share a time when it became clear to you that God was at work to bring about an opportunity to share (or receive) the gospel of Jesus?

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Read Acts 8:26-40 and take some time to fill in the sections below.



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DIGGING DEEPER

1. Up until Acts 8, Luke the author has been providing the story of mass-numerical conversion moments (see Acts 1:15 2:41, 47; 4:4; 6:7), but he is now starting to bring our attention to individual people such as this Ethiopian eunuch. Why do you think this is the case?

2. The Ethiopian is not a Jew. Why then do you think he has been to Jerusalem to worship (v27)?

3. Like any human being, the Ethiopian eunuch was in a dire *spiritual condition* before the Lord, but when you read the Old Testament, what was unique about his background and *physical condition* that impeded his relationship with the God of Israel? (see Deuteronomy 23:1).

4. Throughout this episode in Acts, in what ways do we see God directly at work to direct Philip? What do you think was going on in these moments?

5. How incredible is it that just as Philip is jogging alongside the chariot, this man is reading from Isaiah 53:7-8! Have a read of these verses (perhaps Philip also took the opportunity to move the scroll back to the earlier verses of Isaiah 53 4-6), and then within your group (you might like to split into pairs) use Isaiah 53 to explain the gospel of Jesus.



ACTS & OUR CHURCH

6. Do you think you're alert and sensitive to God's sovereign work to bring about opportunities for you to speak about Jesus? Why/Why not?

7. What will it mean for our prayer life in wanting to be sensitive to God's sovereign hand in bringing about opportunities to share the gospel.

8. We're in the season when our last Hope Explored series for the year is coming to a close. Looking to next year, what does it mean to take opportunities so that we might be at a place where we can invite others to Hope Explored next time?



PRAYER FOR THE BARRIERS WE FACE (see page 3)

HE HOPE
EXPLORED

A 3 WEEK SERIES

CONTINUES THIS TUESDAY *Night*

630-8pm | Petrie

christcentral.org.au/hope



Sunday 20 October

ACTS 8:26-40

21

STUDY 12

SAUL/PAUL

ACTS 9:1-31

INTRODUCTION QUESTION

Can you think of a time when you met up with someone and it was very clear they seemed different/transformed since you last saw them. Describe that situation.

EXPLORING TOGETHER

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DIGGING DEEPER

The event described in Acts 9 is a significant turning point, because Luke goes onto supply the account of what happened another two times! (See Acts 22:1-22 and Acts 26:12-32).

1. When you compare what took place in Acts 9 to the events of Exodus 3:1-4 what is similar and what does this say about this moment?

2. Saul hears a voice speaking to him. What is so striking about the message Saul hears? v5

3. Ananias seems scared of the prospect of going to meet Saul, v13. Should he be? (It's worth thinking back to the first description we were given of Saul in Acts 8:1-2).

4. What is the purpose that the Lord has for Saul (v15-16) and how do you react to that?

5. How is the Lord's purpose for Saul already playing out in this chapter?

6. Besides Saul, there are two other people mentioned in this section – Ananias and Barnabas (notice what Barnabas does in v27 and also later on in Acts 11:22-26). What can we say about these two people?

ACTS & OUR CHURCH

7. How does Jesus' words to Saul shift your view on the church?

8. This moment of Saul's conversion is a turning point for the world because Saul/Paul will become the apostle to the Gentiles. We need to see that through his conversion Paul gains new understanding on the place of grace and faith when it comes to being made right with God. Read at least one of these passages below and then discuss why is Paul's conversion so important to you and also to our friends and family who don't yet know Jesus.

1 Timothy 1:12-17

Philippians 3:2-11

 **PRAYER FOR THE BARRIERS WE FACE** (see page 3)



Care Seminar

DEALING *with* **CONFLICT**

This Sunday 7pm @ Petrie

**BRING
SUPPER
TO SHARE**



Sunday 27 October

ACTS 9:1-31

27

STUDY 13

ALL BARRIERS BROKEN

ACTS 10:1-11:18

INTRODUCTION QUESTION

Can you think of a time when you met up with someone and it was very clear they seemed different/transformed since you last saw them. Describe that situation.

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PRAYER FOR THE BARRIERS WE FACE (see page 3)

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Sunday 3 November

ACTS 10:1-11:18

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CHRISTCENTRAL
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH