

Acts of the Holy Ghost

A Study of the Historical Book of Acts

Course Aim

1. To examine the work of Jesus Christ continued by the Holy Ghost (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-2)
2. To learn lessons on the proper functioning of a local New Testament church
 - 2.1 How to conduct business and elections (Acts 1)
 - 2.2 How to deal with problems and disunity (Acts 6)
 - 2.3 How to deal with doctrinal error (Acts 15)
3. To develop a Biblical philosophy of missions (Acts 1:8)
 - 3.1 Local outreach
 - 3.2 Regional and national outreach
 - 3.3 Global outreach
4. To properly interpret the book as transitional between the Gospels and the Epistles (II Timothy 2:15)
5. To have answers for those who speak against Christianity (Acts 28:22; I Peter 3:14-16)
6. To realize the part that your church has in continuing the work of Christ around the world

Course Requirements

1. Class attendance and notes (25% of your final grade)
 2. Write a summary and application of each chapter from Acts (25% of your final grade).
 3. Two exams established by your instructor (50% of your final grade)
- Memorize the following key verses for your exams:

Acts 1:8; 2:41-42; 4:12; 5:29; 8:36-38; 16:30-31; 17:11; 20:20-21; 20:26-28

Course Resources

1. *Acts*, David Cloud
2. *Exploring Acts*, John Phillips
3. *The Acts of the Apostles*, Robert Sargent
4. *The Book of Acts*, James Knox
5. *Understanding the Bible - John through Romans*, David Sorenson
6. *Willmington's Guide to the Bible*, H.L. Willmington

Course Outline

Introduction

1. Introduction to Acts

Part One: Jerusalem

2. Preparing to Make an Impact
3. Conducting the Business of the Church
4. Pentecostal Power
5. Lessons from the Healing of a Lame Man
6. Persecution and Political Incorrectness
7. A Biblical Mega Church
8. Tares Among Wheat
9. Growing Pains
10. Defending the Faith

Part Two: Judea and Samaria

11. Stirring Up the Church
12. A Pattern Conversion

Part Three: Uttermost Part of the Earth

13. Cross-Cultural Outreach
14. A Pattern Church
15. Miraculous Answers to Prayer
16. Paul's First Missionary Journey
17. Doctrinal Division and Personal Disagreements
18. A Strengthening Ministry
19. Reaching a Pagan Culture
20. Helpers in the Ministry
21. Paul's Ministry in Ephesus
22. An Exemplary Ministry
23. Paul's Arrest in Jerusalem
24. Paul's Trials and Defense
25. Surviving the Storms of Life
26. Finally in Rome

Permission is granted to duplicate or translate the following studies in their entirety for teaching and discipleship.

#1 Introduction to Acts

Background Information

1. Title of Acts
 - 1.1 The traditional title is *The Acts of the Apostles*
 - 1.2 The Acts of the *Holy Ghost through the Apostles* of Jesus Christ
2. Theme of the book: the work of Christ continued through the Holy Spirit (1:1; the Spirit is mentioned fifty-one times)
 - 2.1 Witnessing for Christ and world missions (Acts 1:8)
 - 2.2 Filling and empowerment (2:4; 4:31)
 - 2.3 Leading people to souls (8:29)
 - 2.4 Comfort of the churches (9:31)
 - 2.5 Calling men and sending them forth (13:1-4)
 - 2.6 Opening and closing doors for the Gospel (16:6-7)
 - 2.7 Placing men as overseers of the church (20:28)
3. Author, writer, and recipient
 - 3.1 The Holy Ghost is the Author of the book through inspiration (I Thessalonians 2:13; II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:21).
 - 3.2 The human writer is the physician, Luke (Acts 1:1-2; Luke 1:1-4).
 - 1) Luke was a traveling companion of Paul (Colossians 4:14; II Timothy 4:11; note the pronoun "we" throughout the book).
 - 2) Luke was supported by apostolic authority (Ephesians 2:20; II Peter 3:1-2; Jude 17).
 - 3.3 Theophilus ("friend of God") is the recipient of both Luke and Acts.
 - 1) Theophilus possibly was a high-ranking Roman official – most excellent (Luke 1:3; cf. Acts 23:26, most excellent governor; 24:3, most noble Felix)
 - 2) He may have lost his position because of Christianity since he was no longer referred to as "most excellent" Theophilus (Acts 1:1).
4. The book was written about AD 63 and covers about thirty years.
 - 4.1 Written before Nero's brutal persecution (AD 64)
 - 4.2 Written before the Roman army destroyed Jerusalem (AD 70)
5. Outline of the book (Acts 1:8)

- 5.1 The Gospel in Jerusalem (1-7)
- 5.2 The Gospel to Judea and Samaria (8-12)
- 5.3 The Gospel to the Gentiles (13-28; Romans 1:16; 11:13; Galatians 2:8; II Timothy 1:11)

Applying the Truth

- 1. How much are you involved in fulfilling Christ's work through the local church?
 - 1.1 Evangelism
 - 1.2 Missions
 - 1.3 Discipling new believers
- 2. Are you willing to go to the "uttermost part of the earth" if God would so lead you?

#2 Preparing to Make an Impact

Introduction (Acts 1:1-14)

1. Revolution: a complete change or turning around
2. Revolutions in history
 - 2.1 Political revolutions that bring about an entire change in the constitution of a government.
 - 2.2 The Industrial Revolution (1760 - 1900) – "Age of Industry"
 - 1) Changes in agriculture
 - 2) Changes in industry
 - 3) Changes in technology
 - 2.3 Technological Revolution – the present "Information Age" with an explosion of new technology
3. About two thousand years ago, a "spiritual revolution" took place that turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6b).

Preparing to Make a Spiritual Impact

1. Establish doctrinal convictions (1:1-3; Luke 1:1-4).
 - 1.1 Be sure about what you believe (Luke 1:1).
 - 1.2 Strong convictions require tireless study (Luke 1:1-2; Acts 17:11; I Timothy 5:17; II Timothy 2:15). Luke studied many accounts of the life of Christ.
 - 1.3 Desire to learn the truth of Scripture (Luke 1:3-4).
 - 1) Perfect understanding of all things
 - 2) Preparation: *to write in order*
 - 3) Know the certainty...instructed (1:4)
 - 1.4 Convictions will lead to obedience to the commands of Christ (Acts 1:2; 2:41-42). Commands were given through the Holy Ghost to the Apostles.
 - 1.5 Confidently affirm the resurrection of Christ (1:3, *many infallible proofs*: irrefutable evidence; dependable, reliable, certain proofs).
 - 1) Jesus Christ presented Himself alive, not half-dead, after His crucifixion (*passion*: suffering and agony).
 - 2) He took forty days to prove His resurrection (I Corinthians 15:5-8) with

eleven different recorded appearances.

- 3) Additional proof of His bodily resurrection:
 - No body was ever found (Matthew 28:11-15, no search was ever made for Christ's body).
 - The existence of churches (Mathew 16:18) – If Christ had remained in the tomb, the church Jesus started would have ceased to exist (Acts 5:34-39).
 - The day of worship changed from Saturday to Sunday among Jewish believers (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 16:2).
 - Martyrdom of the Apostles – they were willing to die for the resurrection. *If Christ did not rise from the dead... only a fool dies for what he knows is a lie!*
- 4) Frank Morrison was a respected British lawyer who believed the resurrection of Christ to be a myth. He began writing a book as a skeptic. After carefully studying the facts to prove the resurrection false, he wrote *Who Moved the Stone?* in support of Christ's resurrection.

1.6 Understand the kingdom of God (1:3b).

- 1) The kingdom of God and the kingdom to Israel (1:6b) are distinct terms.
- 2) The kingdom of God includes saints of all the ages (Luke 13:28-29; 18:17)
- 3) The kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom; the rule of God in the heart (Luke 17:21; John 3:3-5; Colossians 1:13).
- 4) Jesus did not come the first time to establish a kingdom (John 6:15; 18:36-37).
- 5) The kingdom to Israel refers to the Millennial reign of Christ in the future (Revelation 20:4-6).
- 6) Many erroneously believe that if the Jews had accepted Christ as their Messiah, Jesus would not have died on the cross (Psalm 22; Isaiah 53).

2. Rely upon the Holy Spirit's power to witness (1:4-5, 8, *power*: Greek *dunamis* is dynamic power for influence).

- 2.1 Pentecost was a fulfillment of prophecy, not an answer to prayer (1:4-5; 2:16-21; Joel 2:28-32).

- 1) The baptism of the Holy Ghost was a one-time event. Believers do not pray for a continuing baptism today (like many Charismatics teach).
 - Baptism for Jewish believers (Acts 2:1-21)
 - Baptism for Gentile believers (Acts 10:44-47; 11:15-17)
 - 2) All believers now *receive* the Holy Ghost at the time of salvation (Acts 2:38; 8:15-20; Galatians 3:2).
 - 3) Believers today need the filling of the Spirit, not a baptism (Acts 4:31).
- 2.2 The Holy Spirit must be involved in our witnessing efforts (1:8a).
- 1) They were told to *wait* for the Holy Ghost (1:4). Pentecost was ten days later. This does not seem like a zeal for souls.
 - 2) They were to witness in the power of the Spirit, not their own efforts (1:8; Zechariah 4:6).
 - Witnessing is not winning an argument about religion (II Timothy 2:24-26).
 - Methods of psychological manipulation to lead people into saying a "sinner's prayer" should be avoided (I Corinthians 2:1-5).
 - The Holy Ghost is not needed according to some preachers and soul winning manuals.
- 2.3 You are to *be* witnesses, not just *do* witnessing (1:8, *be witnesses*).
- 1) Lifestyle evangelism is unbiblical – live as a testimony but say nothing.
 - 2) Evangelism should be a way of life, not just a scheduled event. Look for opportunities to tell others about Christ.
 - 3) Talk about Jesus, not your church (*witnesses unto me*). "The church that promotes itself is carnal."
- 2.4 Every local church must be involved in reaching the world (1:8b, *both...and*).
- 1) Locally – Jerusalem
 - 2) Regionally and nationally – Judæa and Samaria
 - 3) Globally – the uttermost part of the earth
- 2.5 The ultimate witness for Christ is dying for Him (1:8, *witness*: Greek *martus*, source of the English word *martyr*)
- 1) A true witness for Christ is one who is willing to give his *life* for Christ and

- the Gospel (Acts 20:22-24; Revelation 2:13).
- 2) God used persecution to accomplish His purpose of world outreach (Acts 8:1-4). "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."
 - 3) You will not *die* for the Lord until you *live* for Him!
3. Focus more on proclaiming the Gospel than prophecy (1:6-7, 9-11).
- 3.1 Beware of those who make predictions about the coming of Christ (1:6-7).
 - *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Could Be in 1988* published by the World Bible Society predicted the rapture would be in September 1988. "We are now in the 100th Congress of the United States, and 212th session of the Senate and Congress. Water boils at 100 degrees centigrade, and at 212 degrees Fahrenheit. We will not see another national election; nor will we see the end of the 213th year of the Constitution..." [The United States has had several elections since then.]
 - 3.2 God does not reveal the time of Christ's coming because we would wait until the last moment to prepare!
 - 3.3 Prophecy should motivate, not immobilize and preoccupy our time (1:11, *why stand ye gazing up into heaven?*).
4. Remain unified as a local church (*one accord*: in harmony; with one mind) – united churches have a stronger witness (John 17:20-21).
- 4.1 Unity is a gift from God that must be guarded (Ephesians 4:1-3).
 - 4.2 Unity is evidenced in various ways.
 - 1) Uniting together in prayer and supplication (1:12-14; 4:24, 31)
 - 2) Assembling together (2:1; Hebrews 10:24-25)
 - 3) Believing the same doctrine (Philippians 1:27) – Unity is not an ecumenical gathering that disregards doctrinal differences.

Application of Truth

How much of an impact is *your* church making locally (Jerusalem)? regionally (Judæa and Samaria)? globally (uttermost part of the earth)?

#3 Conducting the Business of the Church

Introduction to Acts 1:12-26

1. Many churches evidence division in conducting the business of the church.
2. In many cases, the division is over insignificant business matters, not over doctrinal issues.
3. Churches should follow the pattern of the church in Jerusalem in properly conducting the business of the church.

Judas Iscariot – Reason for the Business Meeting

1. Many justify what they are doing for God as evidence of salvation.
 - 1.1 Judas was an apostle and a treasurer in the first church.
 - 1.2 He was lost and was called the "son of perdition" (John 6:64, 70-71; 17:12).
2. When a person turns from Christ, it is always for the wrong reason.
 - 2.1 Judas left for money (Matthew 26:14-16).
 - 2.2 Demas left because of a love for the world (II Timothy 4:10; cf. I John 2:15).
Consider: Demas traded a crown of righteousness for loving Christ's appearing for a love of this present world (4:8).
3. When people turn from Christ, they pay a terrible price (Acts 1:18-20; cf. I Timothy 1:18-20; 4:1; Hebrews 3:12).
 - 3.1 Destruction (1:18)
 - 3.2 Disgrace (1:19) – *it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem*
 - 3.3 Desolation (1:20)
 - 3.4 Death (1:25)

Properly Conducting Church Business

1. Remain united in purpose and prayer (1:12-14, *one accord*: oneness of spirit and purpose; I Corinthians 1:10; 12:24-25).
 - 1.1 Jesus said God's house should be a house of prayer (Matthew 21:12-13).
 - 1.2 The prayer meeting is the "barometer" of the church. It should be the primary service of the church but is often the least attended meeting.
 - 1.3 Several things are destroying the unity of prayer in the church.
 - 1) Individualism – "I am my own church."
 - 2) Intensity of life – busyness from pursuit of worldly interests

- 3) Indifference and apathy
- 1.4 "The ancient church had a minimum of organization, but it had a maximum of power. The average church today has a maximum of organization but tragically lacks power." (Walter Knight as quoted in *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*)
- 1.5 A praying church is rarely a divided church.
2. Maintain proper authority in the church (1:15).
 - 2.1 Disunity results from an unbiblical authority structure.
 - 1) Many churches are led by the deacons. Scripture never declares deacons to be the overseers of the church.
 - 2) Many churches are controlled by a democratic majority. A carnal majority controls many churches. They are only one vote away from voting out sound doctrine.
 - 3) Some churches are dominated by a dictatorial leader (I Peter 5:3). These pastors demand their way and invite anyone who disagrees with them to leave.
 - 2.2 The church was established as a "theocracy" under Christ's authority (Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23-24; Colossians 1:18).
 - 2.3 Pastors are accountable directly to Christ for their leadership of the church (I Peter 5:1-4; Hebrews 13:17; cf. I Timothy 5:17).
3. Seek guidance from God's Word (1:16-20; Psalm 41:9; 69:25; 109:8).
 - 3.1 Many believe that Peter was acting prematurely in appointing a replacement for Judas.
 - 1) Paul was specially selected as an apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13).
 - 2) Matthias was included in the number of the apostles later (6:2).
 - 3.2 The Bible must be our *only* authority for faith and practice, not just our *final* authority.
 - 1) Not the Bible and a denomination
 - 2) Not the Bible and the church
 - 3) Not the Bible and a preacher
 - 3.3 Every word in all of Scripture is inspired and preserved by God, giving the Bible its authority (II Timothy 3:16-17; Psalm 12:6-7).

4. Follow an orderly procedure (1:21-26; I Corinthians 14:33, 40).
 - 4.1 Biblical qualifications must be established (cf. I Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9).
 - 1) Peter is not just filling a vacant position. It is better to leave a position vacant than to fill it with an unqualified individual.
 - 2) These men had proven character of three years (cf. I Timothy 3:6).
 - 3) Certain qualifications were set forth (1:21-22). Note: apostolic succession is not possible based on Acts 1:22.
 - 4.2 Pastoral guidance – Using Scripture, Peter led the church to a vote.
 - 4.3 Prayer for direction (1:24; Nehemiah 2:4)
 - 1) Call on God's omniscience (I Samuel 16:7).
 - 2) Consider all possible candidates. They asked God to reveal the one whom He had already chosen.
 - 4.4 Congregational confirmation through a "vote of unity" (1:26)
 - 1) Casting lots is similar to tossing a coin or rolling dice in making decisions. (Proverbs 16:33) Count Zinzendorf of the Moravians called the lot "the infallible voice of God."
 - 2) The coming of the Holy Spirit made this practice unnecessary.
 - 3) Luke says they *gave forth* their lots (congregational vote similar to calling a pastor). The congregation was involved in the decision.
 - They appointed (1:23)
 - They prayed (1:24)
 - They gave forth their lots (1:26)
 - 4.5 Acceptance of the outcome
 - 1) There is no indication that Joseph was upset over the choice of Matthias.
 - 2) There was no spirit of competition evidenced between Joseph and Matthias.

Application of Truth

1. Are you truly born again? Judas fooled everyone but Christ.
2. Have you ever attended a business meeting that evidenced a bad spirit? What will you do to protect your church's business meetings from this contention?

#4 Pentecostal Power

Issues Related to Proper Interpretation of Acts 2

1. The meaning of Pentecost: fiftieth – a celebration of the harvest seven weeks after Passover (Leviticus 23:15-22).
 - 1.1 Feast of harvest (Exodus 23:16)
 - 1.2 Feast of weeks (Exodus 34:22; Deuteronomy 16:9-10)
 - 1.3 The meaning of the Old Testament feast was significant because they were about to experience a harvest of souls.
2. The start of the church
 - 2.1 Many teach that the church started on the Day of Pentecost.
 - 2.2 Hyper-dispensationalists, Protestants, and Catholics place Jesus Christ and the apostles in the Old Testament (contrary to Mark 1:1-8 and Luke 16:16).
 - 2.3 They emphasize a "universal" body of Christ made up of all believers of the church age.
 - 1) *Catholic* means "universal." Baptists have adopted this teaching through Protestant colleges and commentaries.
 - 2) They minimize the local church as an assembly (Greek *ekklesia*) of baptized believers. "The Church here is the true Church, 'His body,' not the local church..." (*The New Scofield Reference Bible*, p. 1272)
 - 2.4 Scripture indicates the church was already in existence before the second chapter of Acts.
 - 1) They baptized converts (John 4:1-2). Those who were baptized before Pentecost were not rebaptized.
 - 2) They had a shepherd or pastor (John 10:11-14).
Note: Peter was appointed by Jesus Christ as the second pastor of the church (Matthew 16:18; John 21:15-17).
 - 3) They had a treasurer (John 13:29).
 - 4) They had church discipline (Matthew 18:15-17).
 - 5) They observed the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:26-28).
 - 6) They sang hymns (Matthew 26:30).
 - 7) They had an evangelism and missions program (Luke 10:1-2).

- 8) They had a membership (Acts 1:15; 2:41).
3. The baptism of the Holy Ghost
 - 3.1 It was a fulfillment of prophecy, not an answer to prayer.
 - 1) It was prophesied by the prophet Joel (2:28-29; Acts 2:16-18).
 - 2) It was prophesied by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33).
 - 3) It was promised by Jesus Christ (Acts 1:5).
 - 4) It was mentioned as a past event by Peter (Acts 2:33; 11:16).
 - 3.2 Error has been taught concerning the baptism of the Spirit.
 - 1) Charismatics teach that the baptism of the Spirit is an ongoing experience believers should seek and is evidenced by speaking in tongues. Some even claim an "intoxication of Spirit" (2:13).
 - 2) Those who believe in a universal, invisible church teach that "the Spirit forms the Church...by baptizing all believers into the body of Christ..."
(*The New Scofield Reference Bible*, p. 1163)
 - 3.3 Note that the Holy Ghost does not do the baptizing (Acts 1:5, *with*). Nothing in this passage indicates that the Holy Spirit formed the church.
 - 3.4 The filling of the Spirit continues (2:4a; 4:8, 31; 9:17; Ephesians 5:18), not the baptism.
 4. Speaking in tongues (2:4-11)
 - 4.1 Tongues were spoken languages, not an unknown heavenly prayer language.
 - 1) Sixteen known languages and dialects are listed in Acts 2.
 - 2) Two significant Greek words are used:
 - *Tongues* (2:4): Greek *glossa* (English glossary)
 - *Language* (2:6): Greek *dialektos* (dialect)
 - *Tongue* (2:8): *dialektos* (dialect)
 - 3) Countries from three different continents were represented, including modern-day Iran.
 - Europe
 - Asia
 - Africa

- 4.2 Tongues were given by the Spirit, not learned by the speaker (2:4). It was never the Spirit's intent to give every believer this gift (I Corinthians 12:10-11).
- 4.3 Tongues were given as a sign to unbelieving Jews, not to present the Gospel (I Corinthians 1:22; 14:20-22).
 - 1) As devout Jews, the audience would have known Hebrew (2:5).
 - 2) They proclaimed the wonderful works of God, not the Gospel (2:11).
 - 3) Peter did not preach the Gospel in sixteen languages (2:14).
- 4.4 Tongues ceased in the first century of Christianity (I Corinthians 13:8-10) when that which is perfect (the completed Word of God) had come.
 - 1) Tongues are not mentioned in a book of the Bible written after AD 65.
 - 2) Missionaries would not need language school if the gift of tongues continued today.
- 4.5 There is no indication that the 3,000 converts spoke in tongues. Faithfulness was the evidence of their faith, not tongues (2:42).
- 5. The second chapter of Acts deals with the *empowering* of a local church (1:8), not the *beginning* of the church.

A True Pentecostal Experience

- 1. The filling with the Holy Ghost (2:1-4) – filling relates to control
 - 1.1 The filling of the Spirit requires a unity of the faith (2:1, *in one accord*). Doctrinal compromise is not unity.
 - 1.2 The filling of the Holy Ghost is dependent upon prayer (1:14; 2:1).
 - 1.3 The filling of the Holy Spirit requires assembling together (2:1, *in one place*; cf. Hebrews 10:24-25). The Christian who is out of church will not be Spirit-filled.
 - 1.4 The filling of the Spirit is not just for preachers (2:4; 6:3, 5; 13:52) – *they were all filled with the Holy Ghost*
 - 1.5 The filling of the Spirit is dependent upon desire and faith (John 7:37-39).
 - 1) Desire (7:37, *thirst*; Psalm 42:1-2; Revelation 22:17)
 - 2) Whole-hearted reception (7:37, *drink*; John 20:22, *receive* is active, not passive; receive with whole heart)
 - 3) Believing on Christ (7:38-39; Galatians 2:20)
 - 1.6 There are many evidences of the Holy Spirit's filling:

- 1) Avoiding excesses – the Spirit's control will restrain moral behavior (Ephesians 5:18).
 - 2) Singing and making melody in your heart (Ephesians 5:19; Acts 16:25)
 - Spirit-controlled music will emphasize the melody, not the rhythm.
 - Music the Spirit produces includes psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Spiritual music appeals to the spirit, not the soul or the flesh.
 - 3) A thankful spirit (Ephesians 5:20; I Thessalonians 5:18)
 - 4) Submission to one another (Ephesians 5:21) – Abraham yielded to Lot (Genesis 13).
 - 5) Victory over Satan and temptation with the Word of God (Luke 4:1-13)
 - 6) Bold, confident witnessing for Christ (Acts 4:8, 31; 7:54-60)
 - 7) A stand against false teaching (Acts 13:6-12)
 - 8) The fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)
 - 9) Prayer in the Spirit (Ephesians 6:18; Jude 20; cf. Romans 8:26-27)
- 1.7 Reasons many believers are not filled with the Spirit:
- 1) A lack of prayer (Luke 11:5-13; Acts 1:14)
 - 2) Carnality and spiritual immaturity (I Corinthians 3:1-4)
 - 3) Walking in the flesh rather than the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-25)
 - 4) Sowing to the flesh rather than the Spirit (Galatians 6:7-8)
 - 5) Grieving the holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30; Psalm 78:40-41; 95:6-11)
 - 6) Excesses (Ephesians 5:18) – excess: going outside boundaries
 - 7) A depressed, unthankful, and unsubmitive spirit (Ephesians 5:19-21)
 - 8) Quenching the Spirit (I Thessalonians 5:19) – to suppress, extinguish
 - 9) Insulting the Spirit of grace (Hebrews 10:29) – *despite*: to treat shamefully
2. Passionate preaching of the Word of God (2:14; Isaiah 58:1; II Timothy 4:2-4)
- 2.1 The Spirit produces amazement, not amusement and entertainment (2:6-7).
- 1) Many churches have replaced the Spirit's power with the following (Zechariah 4:6).
 - Programs and methods
 - Positive thinking and psychology

- Self-effort
 - Sensationalism (new doctrines, carnivals)
- 2) Many churches have replaced preaching with drama and discussion groups.
 - 3) Many preachers tell stories instead of preaching the Word.
 - 4) Many preachers have become politically correct in the pulpit.
- 2.2 Preaching must expose falsehoods (2:15; Titus 1:9-13).
- 2.3 Preaching must be based upon the Word of God (Matthew 7:28-29).
- 1) Explanation (2:16-20, 25-35; Joel 2:28-31; Psalm 16:8-11; 110:1; Isaiah 28:10, 13)
 - 2) Application (2:21, 36; Joel 2:32a; cf. Romans 10:13) – Peter's preaching was direct, "You crucified the Lord..."
- 2.4 Preaching must keep Christ preeminent (2:22; Colossians 1:18).
- 2.5 Preaching must emphasize the Gospel (2:23-24; I Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 1:16).
- 1) The death and burial of Christ (2:23; Revelation 13:8)
 - 2) The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ (2:24)
 - Acts 2:27, 31 – Word of Faith teachers and some Fundamentalists teach that Jesus suffered in hell for three days after His crucifixion. 1) Jesus went to paradise, not hell (Luke 23:43). 2) On the cross, Jesus said, "It is finished!" (John 19:30) The payment for sin was complete.
3. Heart-felt conviction and repentance (2:37-38; John 16:7-11) – *pricked*: pierced, anguished
- 3.1 Arguing with a person does not bring conviction (II Timothy 2:24-26).
 - 3.2 Manipulation tactics may lead someone to saying a prayer but not necessarily heart-felt conviction (I Corinthians 2:1-5).
4. Separation from the world (2:40, *untoward*: crooked; Greek word *skolios*, from which scoliosis is derived, an abnormal curvature of the spine; Philippians 2:12-15)
5. A committed membership (2:41-42, *they continued steadfastly*: to be earnest toward; persevere; constantly diligent)
- 5.1 Baptism by immersion must follow salvation (2:41; 8:12, 36-38; 10:47-48)

- 5.2 Greek words for sprinkling and pouring are not used in Scripture for baptism.
- 5.3 One evidence of genuine conversion is faithfulness and commitment (I John 2:19).
 - 1) Commitment to the apostles' doctrine (New Testament teaching)
 - 2) Commitment to fellowship (assembling together with the church)
 - 3) Commitment to hospitality (*breaking of bread*)
 - This would not be the Lord's Supper since the cup is not mentioned and they observed it from house to house (2:46).
 - It probably means they enjoyed meals with one another.
 - 4) Commitment to prayer meetings.
- 6. A fear of God (2:43a, fear: Greek *phobos*; English word *phobia*) – Theophobia
- 7. Genuine care for one another (2:44-45; I Timothy 2:19-21)
 - 7.1 The church is not commanded to supply all of the financial needs of the community (cf. Acts 3:6).
 - 7.2 The practice of the early church was a sense of community spirit, not communism (the gifts were voluntary, not coerced).
 - 7.3 The congregation must prioritize the needs of the local church (Galatians 6:10).
 - 7.4 Genuine need must be determined (2:45, *need*: necessity; destitution)
 - 1) A person who spends money foolishly does not qualify (like buying tobacco and alcohol products).
 - 2) A person who will not work is disqualified (II Thessalonians 3:7-12).
- 8. The blessing of the Lord (2:47)
 - 8.1 Praising God
 - 8.2 Favor with all the people
 - 8.3 God's increase (I Corinthians 3:5-7)

Application of Truth

How much of a true Pentecostal experience can be seen in your church?

#5 Lessons from the Healing of a Lame Man

Exposing Modern "Faith Healers"

1. Modern "faith healers" base their false doctrine on a misinterpretation of Scripture.
 - 1.1 I Peter 2:24b says, *by whose stripes ye were healed*. Note the past tense, *were healed*. In context, this refers to salvation through Christ.
 - 1.2 Isaiah 53:5 (*with his stripes we are healed*) in context refers to transgressions and iniquities (53:4-12).
2. Modern "faith healers" make their healing services a sensational sideshow.
 - 2.1 Many who are "healed" travel from one healing campaign to another.
 - 2.2 Many with real diseases and infirmities who attend these "healing" services are not allowed on the stage. If they are allowed on stage, they are told that they have another more serious problem through a "word of knowledge."
 - 2.3 Physical "healing" is used as a means for great wealth. People are required to buy a handkerchief or healing water or pay money to visit a faith healer.
 - 2.4 The emphasis of the modern miracles movement is on an emotional *experience*, *not Biblical truth*.
3. Many following the modern "healers" have opened themselves to false spirits, not the Holy Spirit (Matthew 24:24; II Corinthians 11:3-4, 13-15; I John 4:1-6).
4. There are several reasons why an apparent healing may take place.
 - 4.1 Self-induced manifestation: psychosomatic illnesses are caused by emotional problems. If the root cause is cared for, a "healing" results.
 - 4.2 Emotionalism: mass hysteria, hypnosis, and brain washing techniques have been used by screaming charismatic preachers who stir the crowd into a frenzy.
 - 4.3 Satanic counterfeit (Exodus 7:10-12, 22; 8:7, 18; Mark 13:21-23; II Thessalonians 2:8-10; Revelation 13:11-15).
5. When healing does not occur in a person's life, "faith healers" claim it is caused by a lack of faith. In the Bible, it was God's will, not the amount of faith, that usually brought healing (Mark 9:20-27).
6. A comparison of the modern "healing services" with Bible examples proves the modern experience to be a counterfeit (Acts 3).
 - 6.1 Peter and John did not call a healing service; they healed where they were.

- 6.2 This man was lame from birth, and people knew him (3:2, 9-11; 4:22).
- 6.3 This man did not seek healing (3:3-5).
- 6.4 This healing was immediate, not progressive (3:7).
- 6.5 This healing was supernatural (3:7b, *his feet and ankle bones received strength.*)
- 6.6 This healing was complete (3:8).
 - 1) No relapse
 - 2) No therapy
 - 3) No partial healing
- 6.7 This healing was without charge.
- 6.8 This healing was not a performance (no "theatrics").
- 6.9 Peter and John did not pray before performing this miracle of healing.
- 6.10 This miracle could not be denied by unbelievers (Acts 4:14-16).
- 6.11 The message, not the miracle, was the focus of the healing.
- 6.12 This miracle brought glory to God, not man (Acts 3:12; 4:21).
- 6.13 God did not choose to heal everyone (cf. II Timothy 4:20). Many disabled often sat at the gate of the temple to receive money from those who passed by.

Lessons from Acts 3

- 1. Jesus Christ has the power to transform lives (3:1-16).
 - 1.1 A transformed life will bring praise to God, not men (3:8-9)
 - 1.2 A transformed life will attract the attention of unbelievers (3:10-11).
 - 1.3 A transformed life provides an opportunity to exalt Jesus Christ (3:12-16; cf. Philippians 2:9-11).
 - 1) Peter and John turned the attention away from themselves (3:12).
 - 2) God the Father glorified Jesus (3:13).
 - 3) Jesus is given divine titles (3:14-15).
 - The Holy One
 - The Just
 - The Prince of Life
 - 1.4 A transformed life occurs through faith in Christ's name (3:16).
- 2. God calls all to repentance and conversion (3:17-26).
 - 2.1 Ignorance does not mean innocence (3:13-15, 17; Matthew 22:29; Luke 12:47-48).

- 1) Ignorance is caused by spiritual blindness (Ephesians 4:18).
 - 2) Ignorance is caused by religious pride (Romans 10:2-3).
 - 3) Ignorance is caused by a willful spirit (II Peter 3:5).
 - 4) Ignorance requires repentance (3:19, 26; 17:23, 30).
- 2.2 Repentance prepares a person for the future (3:19-24).
- 1) Times of refreshing from the Lord (3:19)
 - 2) Times of restitution of all things at the coming of Christ (3:20-21)
 - Regeneration and reigning with Jesus Christ (Matthew 19:28)
 - Restoration of creation (Romans 8:19-22)
 - 3) A time of retribution (3:22-24; Deuteronomy 18:15-19)
- 2.3 Repentance is a turning from iniquity to Jesus Christ (Acts 3:25-26).

Application of Truth

1. Do you test all teaching with the Word of God (cf. I John 4:1-6)?
2. Emphasize the gospel as you have compassion toward those with needs.
3. Have your life been *transformed* through the resurrection power of Jesus Christ (II Corinthians 5:17)?

#6 Persecution and Political Incorrectness

Results from Preaching about Christ

1. Persecution (Matthew 5:10-12; John 16:1-4)
 - 1.1 Persecution often comes from religious groups (4:1). True believers in Christ have experienced severe persecution from the following:
 - 1) Judaism (8:1; 9:1-2)
 - 2) Roman Catholicism
 - 3) Protestantism
 - 4) Islam
 - 5) Hinduism
 - 1.2 Preaching about Jesus has often been politically incorrect (4:2).
 - 1.3 Arrests, interrogation, and threats can be expected for the cause of Christ.
 - 1) They were arrested for preaching the gospel (4:3).
 - 2) They were questioned in a court of law for preaching Christ (4:5-7).
 - The Jewish Sanhedrin claimed its origin was the appointment of seventy by Moses (Numbers 11:16-17). It actually originated during Macedonian control following Alexander the Great.
 - The Sanhedrin acted as the supreme court of Palestine.
 - They were examined by these religious leaders (4:9, *examined: questioned; interrogated*).
 - 3) They were threatened with further legal action (4:14-18, 21).
2. Many will believe on Christ when they hear the Word of God (4:4; Romans 10:17).
 - 2.1 Five thousand *men* believed in addition to women and children.
 - 2.2 The church in Jerusalem possibly numbered more than 20,000 (3,120 + 5,000 men + women and children).
 - 2.3 Times of persecution have often produced the greatest growth of Christianity.

How to Face Persecution

1. Yield to the filling (control) of the Holy Ghost (4:8, 31).
 - 1.1 The filling of the Holy Ghost is dependent upon prayer (4:31a).
 - 1.2 The whole church needs the filling of the Spirit (4:31, *they were all filled with the*

Holy Ghost).

- 1.3 Holy Spirit filling will result in boldness in speaking the Word of God (4:31b).
 - 1) Boldness is not a contentious spirit and rudeness.
 - 2) Boldness is not necessarily the absence of fear but becoming fearless through the power of the Holy Ghost.
 - 3) Boldness is freedom in speaking; confidence; courage; and clarity of articulation.
 - 4) A bold, Spirit-filled believer will fearlessly, confidently, and clearly present the truth of the Word of God.
2. Continue proclaiming the truth about Christ (4:10-12).
 - 2.1 His crucifixion and resurrection (4:10)
 - 2.2 Jesus became the chief cornerstone (4:11; I Peter 2:4-8).
 - 2.3 Jesus is the only way of salvation (4:12; John 14:6).
3. Emphasize time with Jesus more than education (4:13).
 - 3.1 Peter and John had no accredited education (*unlearned*).
 - 1) Many discredit a preacher who does not have an accredited education.
 - 2) The power of God upon a life and ministry is unexplainable (*they marvelled*).
 - 3.2 They were common men with no social rank.
 - 1) The word *ignorant* is from the Greek word *idiotes*: idiot; an ignoramus.
 - 2) It referred to an unlettered amateur rather than a professional.
 - 3.3 You do not have to be a Bible scholar to tell people about Jesus.
4. Obey God when a human authority tells you to disobey God's commands (4:19-20; 5:29).
 - 4.1 Human authority is ordained and limited by God's authority (Romans 13:1).
 - 4.2 Respectfully obey God when a conflict arises.
 - 1) The midwives disobeyed Pharaoh (Exodus 1).
 - 2) Daniel respectfully disobeyed the king's command (Daniel 1, 6).
5. Find support through the local church (4:23-24).
 - 5.1 Peter and John immediately went to the local church for support (4:23).
 - 5.2 A church must remain unified to endure persecution (4:24, *one accord*).
 - 5.3 The church was of *one heart and of one soul* (4:32).

6. Rest in the power of God (4:24-29).
 - 6.1 The Jerusalem church had no legal assistance representing them before the Sanhedrin.
 - 6.2 The *Lord* (absolute ruler) is Creator of all things (4:24; I Peter 4:19).
 - 6.3 God has given His Word (4:25; quoted from Psalm 2; cf. Romans 15:4; Hebrews 4:12).
 - 6.4 Government officials are limited by what God allows (4:26-28).
 - 6.5 Turn all threats of persecution over to God (4:29).

Application of Truth

1. If it was illegal to witness for Christ, would there be enough evidence to convict you? (II Timothy 3:10-12)
2. If you were arrested and threatened for telling others about Christ, how would you respond? No one will *suffer* for Christ until they *live* for Him.

#7 A Biblical Mega Church

Examining the Modern Mega Church Movement

1. A mega church is defined as a church with 2,000 or more at a weekly service (The Hartford Institute listed more than 1,300 "mega" churches in the United States.)
2. A super mega church is a church with 10,000 or more.
3. Modern examples of mega churches:
 - 3.1 A team conducted a survey to determine what people wanted in a church before starting Willow Creek Community Church in Illinois (Revelation 3:14, a church of the Laodiceans!).
 - 3.2 Establishing "seeker-sensitive" services with modern music, drama, and modern versions of the Bible
 - 3.3 Emphasizing social action and interfaith cooperation before preaching the gospel, even working with atheists to cure problems of society
 - 3.4 Preaching that focuses on the goodness of God to the neglect of repentance of sin
 - 3.5 A lack of separation from compromising religious leaders
 - 3.6 Women pastors and co-pastors
4. The modern mega church philosophy is creeping into independent Baptist churches.
 - 4.1 The goal of many pastors has become church growth, not a stand for truth (Jude 3).
 - 4.2 Many pastors are tempted to change their music, lower worker standards, and use a modern perversion of the Bible to attract a crowd.
 - 4.3 Some preachers even claim that the "King James Bible Controversy" has been a distraction from growth.
 - 4.4 Smaller churches have been discredited because they have less than one hundred people.

A Biblical Mega Church

1. A survey of the book of Acts reveals qualities of a *Biblical* mega church.
 - 1.1 Great power (4:33)
 - 1.2 Great grace (4:33)

- 1.3 Great fear (5:5, 11)
- 1.4 Great persecution and lamentation (8:1-4)
- 1.5 Great joy (8:8; 15:3)
2. The Greek word translated "great" is *megas*: exceedingly great; mighty; strong; English word mega).
 - 2.1 It has nothing to do with the size of a church.
 - 1) Two thousand or more is the world's standard. (Noah only reached his family but was called a preacher of righteousness!)
 - 2) Dead things swell; they do not grow. Much of the "growth" of the mega churches is the swelling of something dead!
 - 2.2 A smaller church can have mega-church qualities.
3. Church growth should be the *result* of a Spirit-filled ministry, not the *goal* of a ministry.
 - 3.1 God gives the increase, not our methods (I Corinthians 3:7).
 - 3.2 On the Day of Pentecost, the 120 did not establish an attendance goal.
 - 3.3 The church in Jerusalem did grow rapidly.
 - 1) 120 (1:5)
 - 2) 3000 added (2:41)
 - 3) 5000 men (4:4)
 - 4) Some estimate as many as 100,000 in two years.
 - 3.4 Churches should be multiplying, not maintaining (Acts 1:8; 9:31).
4. The modern mega church movement has proven to be a *failure*. The United States with more than 1,300 mega churches is the most liberal it has been in its history.

Elements of a Great Church

1. Great Power (4:29-33a)
 - 1.1 The power of God is not something we should seek.
 - 1) The Jerusalem church *prayed for boldness*, not power (4:29).
 - 2) The church was filled with the Holy Ghost (4:31; Ephesians 5:18-21; Luke 4:1-14).
 - 3) Unity of the church was a prerequisite (4:32).
 - 4) Great power was a result of seeking God (4:33a).
 - 1.2 Desire for *positional* power has affected the Spirit's power (1:7-8).

- 1) Power of position (1:7)
 - Mathew 28:18 – "All power is given unto me..."
 - Romans 13:1-2 – power of authority is ordained by God.
- 2) Power of the Spirit (1:8)
 - Greek *dunamis*: inherent power capable of reproducing itself like a dynamo (II Peter 1:3)
- 1.3 The power of God is amplified through affliction and weakness (II Corinthians 12:7-10).
- 1.4 Churches no longer have *great power*.
 - 1) They are prayerless.
 - 2) They are worldly and carnal.
 - 3) They have replaced the power of God with *sensationalism!*
 - Methods of the world to get a crowd
 - Strange doctrines
 - Manipulate people into saying a prayer
2. Great grace (4:33b; 11:23)
 - 2.1 I Corinthians 15:10 – *by the grace of God, I am what I am.*
 - 1) Grace for salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9)
 - 2) Grace for suffering (II Corinthians 12:9)
 - 3) Grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16)
 - 4) Grace for giving (II Corinthians 8-9)
 - 5) Grace for living (Titus 2:11-14)
 - 2.2 Grace defined:
 - 1) Divine influence upon the *heart* that is reflected in the *life*.
 - 2) Graciousness (Luke 4:22)
3. Great fear (5:5, 11)
 - 3.1 The sin was not withholding a tithe (5:4a) but lying to the Holy Ghost (5:3-4).
 - 1) God is a God of truth (John 14:6; I John 5:20).
 - 2) Satan is a liar and the father of all lies (5:3; John 8:44).
 - 3) Lies are an abomination to God (Proverbs 6:16-19; 12:22).
 - 3.2 Great fear came on all that heard of God's judgment (5:5, 11).

- 1) Churches need to restore a *Theophobia* (Hebrews 10:28-31; 12:28-29).
 - II Corinthians 5:9-11 (*terror*: Greek *phobos*; English *phobia*)
 - 2) A fear of God affects your lifestyle (II Corinthians 7:1)
4. Great affliction
- 4.1 Great persecution (8:1)
 - 1) Persecution drove the disciples to obey Christ's command (1:8; 8:1-3).
 - 2) God scattered the first mega church through persecution.
 - 4.2 Great lamentation (8:2, sorrow)
 - 4.3 Great suffering (9:16; 14:21-22; I Thessalonians 3:1-4; II Timothy 3:10-13)
5. Great joy (8:8; 15:3)
- 5.1 Joy is cheerfulness and calm delight regardless of circumstances.
 - 5.2 Great joy is caused by salvation of souls (Luke 15:7, 10)
 - 5.3 Happiness is based on circumstances (happenings). Note the context of Acts 15:3 was a time of division in Christianity.
 - 5.4 Jesus Christ promised fullness of joy.
 - 1) Answers to prayer (John 15:11)
 - 2) Through the Word of God (I John 1:4)
 - 3) From people walking in truth (II John 4; III John 4)
 - 4) Reward for persecution (Matthew 5:10-12; I Peter 1:3-9; 4:12-13)

Application of Truth

A great "mega" church is made up of great "mega" saints. Are you helping your local church become a Biblical mega church?

#8 Tares Among Wheat

Introduction

1. When Satan is unable to *conquer* a church with persecution from without, he attempts to *corrupt* the church from within.
2. Jesus warned about this in the parable of the tares and wheat (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43).
3. Ananias and Sapphira were unbelievers (tares) that Satan used in an attempt to corrupt the church in Jerusalem.
 - 3.1 Ananias was not called a disciple (5:1).
 - 3.2 Satan filled Ananias' heart (5:3).
 - 1) Satan cannot possess believers, but he can oppress and influence them to oppose the work of God (Matthew 16:21-23).
 - 2) Satan is able to possess an unbeliever (Luke 22:1-3; John 13:18-27).
 - 3) Satan is the father of all liars (John 8:44).
 - 4) Satan controlled Ananias' heart instead of the Holy Ghost (Acts 4:31).
4. Consider what it takes to protect a church from Satanic corruption.

Ways to Protect a Church from Corruption

1. Unity of heart and soul (4:32, 34-35)
 - 1.1 People were more important than things (4:32b, 34-35).
 - 1) They were not possessed by possessions!
 - 2) They considered themselves stewards, not owners.
 - 3) They cared for genuine needs of the church family.
 - 1.2 Unity is a gift of the Spirit that must be guarded (Ephesians 4:1-6).
 - 1.3 Conflict will destroy a church (cf. II Corinthians 12:20).
 - 1) Debates – contention in words or arguments; strife in argument or reasoning, between persons of different opinions, each endeavoring to prove his own opinion right, and that of his opposer wrong
 - 2) Envyings – ill will at others, on account of some supposed superiority
 - 3) Wraths – violent anger; vehement exasperation; indignation
 - 4) Strifes – exertion or contention for superiority; contention in anger or enmity; struggle for victory (III John 9-10)

- 5) Backbitings – the act of slandering the absent (Galatians 5:15)
 - Listening to those who attack the church
 - Criticizing people when they are absent
 - 6) Whisperings – the act of speaking with a low voice; the telling of tales, and exciting of suspicions
 - Gossip – to run from house to house, tattling and telling news; to tell idle tales (I Peter 4:15; II Thessalonians 3:11)
 - 7) Swellings – to rise into arrogance; to be bloated with anger; to be exasperated
 - "Inflation by pride, arrogance, or conceit" (*Archaic Words*, Laurence Vance)
 - 8) Tumults – commotion, disturbance or agitation of a multitude, usually accompanied with great noise, uproar and confusion of voices
(*American Dictionary of the English Language*, Noah Webster, 1828)
- 1.4 Sowing discord among the brethren is an abomination to the Lord (Proverbs 6:19).
- 1) Questioning God-ordained leaders (Numbers 16)
 - 2) A critical, judgmental spirit (Romans 14:10-12)
 - 3) Doctrinal error (Romans 16:17-18)
- 1.5 A unified church is a powerful testimony to the unsaved (John 13:34-35).
2. A life of honesty (4:36 - 5:10; I Peter 2:11-12)
- 3.1 Hypocrisy is pretending to be someone you are not negatively affects the church's testimony. It is living a lie!
 - 3.2 The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was a violation of the holy character of God.
 - 1) Their sin was *not* keeping a portion of the selling price (5:4a).
 - 2) They were seeking recognition (4:36 - 5:2; Matthew 6:1-4).
 - 3) Ananias lied to God the Holy Ghost (5:3-4).
 - The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of truth (John 14:17; 16:13).
 - Lies offend a God of truth (Leviticus 19:11; Psalm 5:3-6; Proverbs 6:16-19; 12:22; John 8:44; Mark 7:21-23; Revelation 21:8; 22:15).
 - 4) Sapphira agreed with her husband to tempt the Spirit of the Lord (5:9; Deuteronomy 6:16; Matthew 4:7).

3. A fear of God (5:5-6, 10-11; II Corinthians 5:9-11a; Hebrews 10:28-31; Jeremiah 2:19).
 - 3.1 Nothing is hidden from God (Numbers 32:23; Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Romans 2:16; Hebrews 4:13).
 - 3.2 Defiling the temple of God is a serious offense (I Corinthians 3:16-17).
 - 1) The temple of God refers to the local church (*ye* and *you* are plural pronouns).
 - 2) God chastises (*destroy*) the individual who defiles His temple (3:17).
 - 3) There is a sin unto death (I Corinthians 11:29-30; I John 5:16-17).
 - 4) Tolerance of a little sin (leaven) leavens the whole lump (Galatians 5:9; I Corinthians 5:1-7).
 - 5) A fear of God will result in a hatred of evil (Proverbs 8:13).

Application of Truth

1. Are you helping or hurting the testimony of your church in the community?
2. Are you helping to protect your church from corruption?

#9 Growing Pains

Challenges for a Growing Church

1. The Jerusalem church began to grow rapidly (5:14; 6:1a; 6:7a).
2. Growth brings challenges that must be overcome.
 - 2.1 Persecution from without
 - 2.2 Potential problems within

Persecution from Without (5:12-42)

1. Expect indignation from the religious crowd (5:17-18).
2. Leave the outcome of persecution with God (5:19-26).
 - 2.1 God is able to provide supernatural deliverance (5:18-20; 12:5-11).
 - 2.2 God sometimes uses martyrdom for His glory (7:59-60; 12:1-2).
3. Stand for convictions without apology (5:27-29).
 - 3.1 Be respectful in stating your convictions (4:19).
 - 3.2 Preaching the Gospel will often be politically incorrect (5:28a).
 - 3.3 Active evangelism is needed to fill our city with our doctrine (5:28b).
 - Note: they attempted to excuse themselves from the guilt of the blood of Christ (Matthew 27:25).
 - 3.4 Obedience to God is the highest priority (5:29; cf. I Peter 2:13-17).
 - 1) Obedience to God is greater than cultural expectations.
 - 2) When judges order you to disobey the Word of God, you must obey God.
 - 3) Obey God when politicians attempt to legislate against Biblical Christianity.
4. Exalt Jesus Christ (5:30-32).
 - 1) The resurrected Christ is exalted on the right hand of God (5:30).
 - 2) Jesus is a *Prince* (highest ranking ruler) and a *Saviour* (5:31).
5. Two opposite responses to conviction can be expected (5:33, *cut to the heart*, Hebrews 4:12).
 - 5.1 Repentance
 - 5.2 Indignation
6. Sometimes your life may be threatened (5:33b).

7. Rejoice when you suffer persecution for the cause of Christ (5:41-42).
8. Continue teaching and preaching Jesus Christ (5:42, *preaching*: to evangelize).
 - 8.1 Large gatherings of people (temple)
 - 8.2 House to house (20:21)

Potential Problems Within the Church (6:1-6)

1. Acts 6 may *not* be the selection of the first deacons.
 - 1.1 The same Greek word (*diakonia*) is used for *ministration* (verse 1) and *ministry* (verse 4, related to the apostles).
 - 1.2 Different requirements are mentioned than in I Timothy 3:8-13.
 - 1.3 These men may simply have been chosen for a specific ministry in the church.
2. Several potential problems are indicated in the growing church in Jerusalem.
 - 2.1 An undercurrent of disunity (6:1, *murmuring*: uttering complaints in a low voice or sullen manner; grumbling; complaining; Philippians 2:14-15; Psalm 106:24-25).
 - 1) Unfulfilled expectations
 - 2) Feelings of neglect
 - 3) Unmet needs
 - 4) Apparent favoritism
 - 5) Apparent prejudice
 - One people group against another based on skin color or cultural background (*Grecians*: Hellenists, Jews who had adopted Greek culture)
 - Prejudice toward new people coming into ministries of the church
 - 2.2 Distractions from pastoral priorities (6:2, 4)
 - 1) Prayer and the ministry of the Word are the primary responsibilities of a pastor (*give continually*: total commitment; to be consumed; cf. I Timothy 5:17; II Timothy 4:2).
 - 2) Outreach, counseling, and administration are additional responsibilities.
 - 3) Various distractions limit many pastors:
 - Political involvement
 - Social work in the community
 - Business matters of the church

- Individuals who expect much attention from the pastor
 - Programs that distract from the real purpose of the church
 - Denominational involvement
- 4) A pastor is called by the Holy Ghost as an overseer, not hired to do all the work of the church (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11-16).
- 2.3 Spiritually unqualified leaders (6:3)
- 1) Standards were established before the selection procedure began.
- A member in good standing (*among you*)
 - Trustworthy character (*honest report*: one who has been observed by others; no accusations; integrity of character)
 - Evidence of the filling of the Holy Ghost; spiritual maturity
 - Evidence of Godly wisdom
 - Ability to fulfill the ministry assigned
- 2) Many churches appoint leaders out of obligation, not qualification. It is better to not have deacons than to have unqualified men in the office.
- 3) Ministries should be started based on leadership, not need.
- 4) These men were appointed over a specific ministry, not over the church. Deacon "boards" and committees overseeing the church are unbiblical.
- 5) A proper procedure for selecting leaders should be used.
- They did not call for volunteers to fill this ministry need.
 - The vote was a vote of confirmation, not to select seven men from a nominated group.
 - The men were appointed by the pastors (6:6). The pastor should be involved with appointments in the church.

The Blessings of God (6:7)

1. The Word of God increased.
2. The number of the disciples multiplied greatly.
3. Many of the religious leaders were obedient to the faith.
 - 3.1 Old Testament prophecies clearly identified Jesus as Messiah (Daniel 9:24-27; Psalm 22; Isaiah 53).
 - 3.2 Many Jews were not able to resist the Spirit-filled witness of the Jerusalem church.

Application of Truth

1. How much persecution would it take to silence your witness for Christ?
2. How can you safeguard your church from the potential problems?
 - 2.1 An undercurrent of disunity
 - 2.2 Distractions from pastoral priorities
 - 2.3 Spiritually unqualified leaders

#10 Defending the Faith

Introduction

1. Scripture commands us to earnestly contend for the faith (Jude 3-4).
 - 1.1 The English word *agony* comes from the Greek word translated *contend*.
 - 1.2 How you answer is as important as what you say.
 - 1) Contend for the faith without being contentious (mean-spirited).
 - 2) Avoid trying to win people with arguments.
2. Believers are to always be ready to give an *answer* (I Peter 3:14-17, Greek *apologia*).
 - 2.1 Know what you believe and explain why from the Scriptures.
 - 2.2 Live a life that will silence false accusations.
3. Stephen provides a Biblical example for defending the faith.

Stephen's Example of Defending the Faith

1. Defend the faith from a *full* life (cf. John 7:37-39; 10:10).
 - 1.1 Stephen was *full* of the Holy Ghost (surrender to the Holy Spirit's control; 6:3, 5).
 - 1.2 Stephen was *full* of wisdom (6:3).
 - 1.3 Stephen was *full* of faith (6:5, 8; conviction; faithfulness).
 - 1.4 Stephen was *full* of power (6:8).
 - 1) Power was evidenced by great wonders and miracles to confirm the message of the Gospel to unbelieving Jews.
 - 2) When the Word of God was completed, these supernatural sign gifts were no longer needed (I Corinthians 13:8-10).
2. Stand against attacks on the Gospel (6:9-10; Philippians 1:17, *defence* is the Greek word *apologia*, same as above).
 - 2.1 Jews from several synagogues disputed with Stephen (6:9).
 - 1) The Libertines: Jews freed from Rome
 - 2) Cyrenians: Jews from northern Africa
 - 3) Alexandrians: Jews from Egypt with a blending of the Old Testament and Greek philosophy
 - 4) Cilicia and Asia: this probably included Saul of Tarsus (Paul).
 - 2.2 They were not able to resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spoke (6:10;

Luke 21:12-15).

3. Respond with God's grace in persecution (6:11-15).
 - 3.1 He was wrongfully accused of blasphemy (6:11, 13-14).
 - 1) His adversaries secretly bribed false witnesses (*suborned*: to secretly procure, bribe, induce to do wrong, or obtain by corrupt or counterfeit means; *Archaic Words*, Laurence Vance).
 - 2) They stirred up a mob of people against him (6:12).
 - 3.2 Stephen's countenance reflected God's glory, not anger (6:15; Matthew 5:16; cf. Exodus 34:29-30).
4. Seek to win people with the truth (7:1-50).
 - 4.1 Stephen did not begin with confrontation (7:2a, 51; II Timothy 2:24-26).
 - 4.2 Stephen used Scripture and history (7:2b-36). Without the support of Scripture, it is only one opinion versus another.
 - 1) Abraham (7:2-8)
 - 2) Jacob and Joseph (7:9-16)
 - 3) Moses (7:17-36)
 - 4.3 Emphasize application of truth (7:37-50).
 - 1) Truth exposes a disobedient heart (7:37-39; cf. Romans 1:24, 26, 28).
 - 2) Truth exposes idolatry (7:40-43; I Corinthians 10:14; I John 5:21).
 - *Moloch*: worship of this false god included the sacrifice of children. This idol's head was shaped like a pig or ox and had a large open mouth. Children placed in the mouth would slide into a fire inside. (Aborting unborn children is a modern practice similar to this.)
 - *Remphan*: a name for the god Saturn and the star god of Babylon.
 - Small images of these false gods were placed inside miniature temples, enabling people to carry their god with them (19:24).
 - Idolatry is just as much a problem today – pleasure, happiness, money, possessions, success, statues of Mary and Jesus, guardian angel statues

- 3) Truth exposes the trivialization of God (7:44-50; I Kings 8:27; Isaiah 66:1-2).
 - God is immense and omnipresent and is not limited to a building.
 - People want a God they can manage.
5. Confidently confront rebellion when necessary (7:51-53).
 - 5.1 Stubborn rebellion – *stiffnecked* is taken from a stubborn ox which will not yield to the yoke (7:51).
 - 5.2 A hardened heart – *uncircumcised in heart and ears* (7:51)
 - 5.3 Resisting the Holy Ghost (7:51b; Hebrews 3:7-8).
 - 5.4 Transgression of the law of God (7:52-53)
6. Forgive those who persecute you (7:54-60).
 - 6.1 Pointed preaching of God's Word will cut through religious hypocrisy (7:54).
 - 6.2 Pointed preaching will sometimes provoke an angry response (7:54b, 57-58a).
 - *gnashed with their teeth*: bared their teeth angrily (this phrase does not mean they were biting him physically)
 - 6.3 Jesus welcomed His faithful martyr to heaven (7:55-56).
 - 6.4 Stephen entrusted his spirit to the Lord (7:59; cf. I Peter 4:19).
 - 6.5 Stephen forgave like Christ (7:60).

Application of Truth

1. "The blood of the martyr is the seed of the church." Consider how many millions have been saved because of one faithful martyr's testimony (7:58b; 9:5).
2. Are you prepared to defend the faith with Scripture and a life that reflects Christ?

#11 Stirring Up the Church

The Positive of Persecution

1. Jesus Christ commanded the church in Jerusalem to multiply, not maintain (1:8).
2. The mild persecution of Acts 3-5 did not motivate believers to move from Jerusalem.
3. Like an eagle that sirs up the nest (Deuteronomy 32:11), God used severe persecution to deal with the church's complacency toward a lost world (8:1-4).
 - 3.1 Everyone scattered except the apostles (8:1, 4).
 - 3.2 There was great lamentation over the death of Stephen (8:2).
 - 3.3 Saul made *havock* of the church (8:3; to devastate or ruin; great destruction; Galatians 1:13).
 - 3.4 Saul went house to house, forcefully and violently dragging believers to prison (8:3b, *haling*; 22:4-5; I Timothy 1:13a).
4. Instead of destroying Christianity, one church multiplied into many churches (9:31).
 - 4.1 Damascus, Syria (9:2)
 - 4.2 Phenice (11:19, modern-day Lebanon)
 - 4.3 Cyprus (11:19)
 - 4.4 Antioch, Syria (11:20) – possibly the third largest city in the Roman Empire
5. Note ways to effective ministry in our Jerusalem and beyond.

Lessons from the Jerusalem Church

1. Preach Christ and the kingdom of God (8:5, 12; I Corinthians 1:23).
 - 1.1 Not human philosophy
 - 1.2 Not psychology
 - 1.3 Not political correctness
 - 1.4 Not promotion of a church (brochures promoting a preacher and programs)
 - 1.5 Without prejudice (8:5; John 4:9; James 2:1)
 - 1) Samaria was conquered by Assyria in 721 B.C. (II Kings 17:1-6).
 - 2) The land was resettled by a heathen people who intermarried with the remaining Israelites (II Kings 17:23-24).
 - 3) Samaritans had a superstitious religion dominated by satanic power (Acts 8:7a).

- 4) The seed of the Gospel was planted during Christ's ministry (John 4:27-30).
- 1.6 Changed lives and contagious joy results (8:6-8, 12).
2. Beware of false professions in the church (8:9-20).
 - 2.1 Simon was involved in practices of the occult (8:9, 11).
 - 1) *Sorcery*: magic arts; witchcraft
 - 2) He *bewitched the people*: to place under his power through magic; to cast a spell over another; to entrance
 - 2.2 Simon exalted himself (8:9-10).
 - 2.3 Simon made a false profession of faith (8:13; cf. James 2:19).
 - 1) He believed in what he saw, not in Jesus Christ (8:13b).
 - 2) He did not receive the Holy Ghost (8:17).
 - 3) His heart was not right before God (8:21, crooked).
 - 4) He never repented of his wickedness (8:22).
 - 5) He was still in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity (8:23; Hebrews 12:15).
 - 6) He prayed through another, not personally (8:24; compare 9:11, *behold, he prayeth*). This is like Roman Catholics praying through apostles, Mary, or other saints.
 - 2.4 Simon tried to buy the power of God (8:14-20).
 - 1) The Holy Ghost was received later as a confirmation to Jewish believers (8:14-17). Acts 2-10 are transitional events.
 - 2) Simon offered Peter and John money, trying to buy the gift of God (8:18-20).
 - 3) A Roman Catholic practice called *simony* in the Middle Ages came from this account. The rich would buy religious positions of power.
 - 2.5 Justin Martyr (100-165) indicated that Simon was the founder of the heresy of Gnosticism.
3. Become an active soul winner (8:25-40).
 - 3.1 Testify and proclaim the word of the Lord (8:25).
 - 3.2 Remain sensitive to God's leading (8:26, 29).

- 1) Philip left a thriving outreach in Samaria to travel about eighty miles to the desert of Gaza.
- 2) There are no accidental meetings in the plan of God.
- 3.3 Emphasize outreach to individuals (8:27-28, *a man of Ethiopia*).
 - 1) This man was the Secretary of the Treasury under Queen Candace.
 - 2) He was a black man who had converted to Judaism.
 - 3) He was searching for truth about God (Jeremiah 29:13).
- 3.4 Share Christ with enthusiasm (8:30, *Philip ran...*). If believers are not excited about salvation through Christ, how will the unsaved ever desire it?
- 3.5 Use a leading question to introduce the subject (8:30b-33; cf. John 4:7).
- 3.6 Take time to answer honest questions (8:34).
- 3.7 Thoroughly explain the Gospel using Scripture (8:35; Romans 10:17).
- 3.8 Seek conversion to Christ, not just members (8:36-38).
 - 1) Conversion to Christ requires a confession of faith, not always a prayer (8:37; Romans 10:9-10). This confession of faith is omitted from most modern bibles.
 - 2) There were no manipulation techniques to get a convert into the baptistery.
 - 3) Church membership was not always automatic at baptism (8:39; cf. 2:41). There is no indication that the eunuch joined Philip's local church.
- 3.9 Continually look for another soul (8:39-40).
 - 1) *Azotus*: Ashdod, a city of the Philistines
 - 2) *Caesarea*: eventually became Philip's home (21:8)

Application of Truth

1. Do you have prejudice toward any other people group? Do you recognize prejudice as a sin before God?
2. Many have made a profession of faith in Christ but never change. Has there been a change since professing Christ (II Corinthians 5:17)?
3. How many opportunities to witness for Christ have you missed because of insensitivity to the Holy Spirit's leading? How long has it been since you have sought an opportunity to explain the Gospel to someone?

#12 A Pattern Conversion

Introduction to Saul's Conversion

1. Saul of Tarsus became like a ravenous wolf toward the disciples of Christ (Genesis 49:7; cf. Philippians 3:5, of the tribe of Benjamin).
 - 1.1 He expressed vehement hatred toward believers (9:1, *threatenings*).
 - 1.2 He voiced his approval when they were martyred (9:1, *slaughter*; 22:4; 26:10-11).
 - 1.3 He traveled 150 miles to Damascus to arrest men and women who believed in Jesus Christ (9:2).
2. Saul met the glorified Christ as he was nearing Damascus (9:3-6; I Corinthians 15:8-10).
 - 2.1 There was a blinding flash of light (9:3; John 3:19-21; 8:12; I John 1:5).
 - 2.2 He heard Jesus speak in the Hebrew tongue (9:4; 26:14).
 - 2.3 He finally yielded to the convicting work of the Holy Ghost (9:5-6; John 16:8-11).
3. Saul of Tarsus (Paul) is a pattern for those who believe (I Timothy 1:12-16).
4. Note evidences of conversion in the life of Saul of Tarsus.

Evidences of Conversion

1. Surrender to the lordship of Christ (9:5-7; Romans 10:9)
 - 1.1 The false teaching of lordship salvation states that you are saved by making Jesus Lord of your life. This is error because it is adding to faith in Christ.
 - 1.2 Surrender to Christ's lordship is an evidence of conversion (I Corinthians 12:3).
 - 1.3 Saul tried to resist Holy Ghost conviction (9:5b; cf. 7:51-54).
 - 1) *Pricks*: a goad stick with a sharp point used on a stubborn ox.
 - 2) Often goads were fastened to the axletree on a cart. When the ox would kick back, it would be subdued through the pricks of the goads.
 - 3) The word translated *pricks* is the same Greek word translated as *stings* in Revelation 9:10 (scorpions).
 - 1.4 There was trembling and astonishment as he yielded his will to the Lord (9:6).
 - 1.5 Others will not understand true conversion (9:7).
 - 1) Those traveling with Saul heard a voice that probably sounded like thunder but did not see the Lord.
 - 2) They saw the light and were afraid (22:9).

2. Humility (9:8-9; cf. Philippians 3:3-9)
 - 2.1 Because of blindness, Saul was led by the hand into Damascus (9:8; 22:11).
 - 2.2 Paul had eye problems later in life (Galatians 4:15; 6:11; II Corinthians 12:1-9).
 - 2.3 Toward the end of his life, he considered himself to be less than the least of all saints (Ephesians 3:8).
3. True prayer, not just saying prayers (9:9b-11, *behold, he prayeth*; Luke 18:9-14)
4. Purpose in serving Christ (9:12-15)
 - 4.1 Saul was a chosen vessel (9:15; Galatians 1:15-16a).
 - 1) To know His will (Acts 22:14)
 - 2) To see that Just One (22:14)
 - 3) To hear the voice of His mouth (22:14)
 - 4.2 He was personally appointed by God (II Timothy 1:11).
 - 1) A preacher
 - 2) An apostle
 - 3) A teacher of the Gentiles
5. A willingness to suffer for Christ (9:16; Matthew 13:20-21; II Corinthians 11:24-28; 12:10)
6. Filling with the Holy Ghost (9:17; Ephesians 5:18) – yielding to the Spirit's control
 - 6.1 No tongues are mentioned.
 - 6.2 The Holy Ghost was received before water baptism, proof that baptism is not a prerequisite for salvation (22:16).
7. Baptism by immersion (9:18) – baptism is a first step of obedience to Christ
8. Assembling with other believers (9:19; Hebrews 10:24-25; I John 2:18-19)
9. Telling others about Jesus Christ (9:20-30; Romans 1:16)
 - 9.1 Transformation resulted in proclamation (9:20).
 - 9.2 He increased in strength as he preached Christ (9:21-22).
 - 9.3 Even with persecution, he preached and spoke boldly in the name of Jesus (9:23-30).

Application of Truth

1. Salvation without any change is not true conversion (II Corinthians 5:17).
2. Since Paul's conversion is a pattern, how much evidence of conversion is seen in you?
3. Do people glorify God because of your conversion (Galatians 1:24)?

#13 Cross-Cultural Outreach

The God of the Whole Earth

1. Even in the Old Testament, God wanted to reach all nations, not just Israel (Isaiah 54:5).
2. Jews despised Gentiles, and these attitudes were carried over into early Christianity.
3. By this time, Peter was no longer the pastor of the church in Jerusalem.
 - 3.1 He spent some time visiting saints in Lydda. All turned to the Lord after Aeneas was healed (9:32-35). This healing was immediate, complete, and observable.
 - 3.2 The death of Tabitha (Dorcas) took him to *Joppa* in preparation for the events with Gentiles in Caesarea (9:36-43).
 - 1) Joppa is the modern Jaffa near Tel Aviv, forty miles from Jerusalem.
 - 2) He stayed with Simon, a tanner (9:43). A tanner dealt with dead animals, contrary to Jewish interpretation of Old Testament law.
 - 3) One rabbi wrote, "It is impossible for the world to do without tanners, but woe to him who is a tanner." (Sorenson, p. 395)
4. Note lessons concerning cross-cultural outreach.

Lessons Concerning Cross-Cultural Evangelism

1. Religion does not save a soul in any culture (10:1-2, 22, 30; 11:13-14).
 - 1.1 Cornelius had a position of authority in Caesarea, a Gentile city.
 - 1) Caesarea was named by Herod the Great in honor Caesar Augustus.
 - 2) Cornelius was a centurion, a captain over one hundred men.
 - 3) He was part of the Italian band, possibly the governor's personal guard.
 - 1.2 Cornelius was a very religious Gentile (10:2, 22, 30).
 - 1) He was *devout*: religious, devoted (10:2).
 - 2) He *feared God* with all his household: reverent (10:2).
 - 3) He gave much *alms* to the people: money or goods given to the poor (10:2). Many unsaved people are compassionate toward the needy.
 - 4) He said prayers (10:2, *prayed to God alway*).
 - 5) He was a *just* man: honest, fair, and upright in his dealings with people (10:22).
 - 6) He had a good reputation (10:22, *good report*).

- 7) He spent several days fasting (10:30).
- 1.3 Cornelius's good deeds went up as a memorial before God (10:4b).
- 1.4 Cornelius still needed salvation (11:13-14).
2. God prepares hearts to respond to the Gospel (10:3-8, 24, 33).
 - 2.1 Angels are ministering spirits (10:3-6; Hebrews 1:14).
 - 1) The angel did not give Cornelius the Gospel.
 - 2) God uses people win others to the Lord.
 - 2.2 When an unbeliever responds to revealed truth, God provides greater truth (10:24, 33; cf. Jeremiah 29:13).
 - 1) Creation (Romans 1:18-20)
 - 2) Conscience (Romans 2:14-15)
3. God prepares the heart of a soul winner (10:9-20).
 - 3.1 Time in prayer enables God to work in the heart (10:9).
 - 1) The housetops in Bible culture often was a flat patio.
 - 2) The *sixth hour* was noon.
 - 3.2 God deals with prejudice toward other groups of people (10:10-20).
 - 1) Peter resisted God at first (10:13-15, 29, *gainsaying*: speak against, contradiction, opposition, hindrance; 11:17, *withstand*: resist).
 - 2) The vision was repeated three times for emphasis.
 - 3) God dealt with Peter's doubt (10:17-20).
 - 3.3 Peter kept the focus on the Lord (10:25-26). The soul winner should never seek attention for himself.
4. God is not a respecter of persons (10:28, 34-35; Romans 2:1-11).
 - 4.1 No other group of people should be despised (10:28).
 - 4.2 *Every nation* will be represented at the throne of God (10:34-35; Revelation 5:9).
 - 4.3 Christ has made all men equal (Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:11-18).
5. The Gospel message is the same in all cultures (10:36-48).
 - 5.1 The absolute deity of Jesus Christ (10:36-38)
 - 5.2 The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (10:39-41; I Corinthians 15:3-4)
 - 5.3 The coming judgment of Jesus Christ (10:42; Revelation 20:11-15)
 - 5.4 Remission of sins through believing in Jesus Christ (10:43, *remission*: forgiveness,

pardon; release from the guilt, condemnation, and bondage of sin)

- 5.5 Repentance unto life (11:18)
 - 1) Repentance is not penance (Catholics): paying for sins personally
 - 2) Repentance is not reformation of a life (like new habits).
 - 3) Repentance is not mental assent to facts (James 2:19).
 - 4) Repentance is not a work of the flesh. God enables an unbeliever to respond to the Gospel (11:18; 16:14).
- 5.6 Baptism should follow salvation (10:44-48).
 - 1) Baptism was not necessary for salvation (I Corinthians 1:17).
 - 2) The Holy Ghost was given at salvation (10:44-45).
 - 3) Baptism was *commanded* by Peter (10:48). Baptism is not optional.
 - 4) No infants were baptized because they cannot believe and receive the Word of God (10:43; 11:1).
- 6. Not everyone will understand cross-cultural outreach (11:1-18).
 - 6.1 Peter had six Jewish believers with him to confirm what happened (11:12).
 - 6.2 Jewish believers *contended* with Peter (11:1, disputed).
 - 6.3 They accused him of violating Old Testament law by eating with Gentiles (11:3).
 - 1) Old Testament law forbade intermarriage with Gentiles.
 - 2) Old Testament law forbade the eating of certain foods (Leviticus 11).
 - 6.4 Peter gave an orderly presentation of the events in Caesarea (11:4-17).
 - 1) The vision from God (11:3-10)
 - 2) The guidance of the Holy Spirit (11:11-12)
 - 3) God's working in Cornelius (11:13-14)
 - 4) Baptism of the Holy Ghost (11:15-17)

Application of Truth

- 1. Do you understand that your *religious* neighbors and acquaintances need *salvation*?
- 2. Could God give your name and address to someone searching for the truth (10:5-6)?
- 3. Do you have prejudice toward any other group of people (James 2:1, 9)?
- 4. Do you understand that missionaries are to take Biblical Christianity to another nation, not their own culture?
- 5. Do you give glory to God when you hear that God is moving in the hearts of a nation?

#14 A Pattern Church

The Church in Antioch, Syria

1. The persecution related to Stephen caused the gospel to spread to other cities and nations (8:1-4; 11:19-20).
 - 1.1 Phenice: the Bible country of Phoenicia – Tyre and Sidon (Lebanon today)
 - 1.2 The Isle of Cyprus in the Mediterranean Sea
 - 1.3 Antioch in Syria
2. The city of Antioch was an important Roman city.
 - 2.1 Antioch was the capital of Syria.
 - 2.2 Antioch was the third largest city in the Roman Empire behind Rome and Alexandria, Egypt.
3. The strategic center for world missions was moved from Jerusalem to Antioch.
4. Note several elements of a pattern church.

Elements of a Pattern Church

1. The church in Antioch was a gospel-preaching church (11:19-21).
 - 1.1 Many churches no longer preach the word (11:19; II Timothy 4:2-4).
 - 1) They preach prosperity – God wants you healthy and wealthy.
 - 2) They preach philosophy.
 - 3) They preach politics.
 - 1.2 Many churches are replacing preaching with modern mega-church methods.
 - 1) Rock music concerts
 - 2) Seeker services
 - 3) Drama and movies
 - 4) Television reruns
 - 1.3 The gospel should be preached to all groups of people (11:19-20, *Grecians*: Jews who spoke Greek and adopted its culture).
 - 1.4 The church in Antioch preached the Lord Jesus (11:20; 17:3; I Corinthians 1:17-24).
2. The church in Antioch was a teaching church (11:22-26a; 13:1).
 - 2.1 Teach the Word of God with grace (11:23; Luke 4:14-22; Colossians 4:6).

- 2.2 Teaching should include *exhortation*, not just information (11:23).
 - 1) Exhortation means to excite or give strength, spirit, or courage; to animate or urge by arguments; to advise, warn, or caution.
 - 2) Barnabas exhorted the believers to cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart (11:23b, *cleave*: persevere, continue, abide with; Daniel 1:8).
- 2.3 Teachers should live an exemplary life (11:24; I Timothy 4:12).
 - 1) Good character
 - 2) Full of the Holy Ghost
 - 3) Full of faith: convictions and faithful
 - 4) Sharing the gospel (much people were added to the Lord)
- 2.4 A team ministry is most effective (11:25-26).
3. The church in Antioch was a Christ-like church (11:26b).
 - 3.1 *Christian* means one belonging to Christ, a follower of Christ, and indicates character that is like Christ
 - 3.2 *Christian* only appears three times in the Bible, and it was possibly a title given to believers by the unsaved (11:26; 26:28; I Peter 4:16).
 - 3.3 Early church believers called themselves *disciples* (a disciplined learner), and the term is used thirty-one times in Acts and more than two hundred times in the Bible.
 - 3.4 You become a *disciple* before you become a *Christian*. Not all saved people are Christians!
4. The church in Antioch was a giving church (11:27-30; II Corinthians 8:1-5).
 - 4.1 Giving should be Spirit-led, not just focused on need (11:27-28).
 - 4.2 Giving should be based on individual ability (11:29).
 - 4.3 The church in Antioch expressed compassion toward needy saints (James 2:15-16).
 - 1) The church in Jerusalem was especially affected by the dearth (famine) because of the persecution they had experienced.
 - 2) Note that giving primarily focused on believers, not the unsaved.
 - 4.4 Note that churches were independent but not isolated from one another (11:29-30).
5. The church in Antioch was a praying church (13:2-3).

- 5.1 Prayer and fasting is missing from many churches today, leaving them powerless.
- 5.2 Christ's greatest prayer request relates to laborers (Matthew 9:37-38).
6. The church in Antioch was a missionary-sending church (13:2-4).
 - 6.1 The Antioch church sent out two of its best men for the cause of missions (13:1-2).
 - 6.2 Missionaries are sent out by churches, not a denomination or mission agency (13:3; cf. 11:22).
 - 6.3 Both the Holy Ghost and the church sent out Saul and Barnabas. The church recognized what God was doing in their lives.
 - 6.4 Paul and Barnabas did not go on deputation for years. They were immediately sent out to the work to which the Holy Ghost had called them.
 - 1) The modern deputation practice is not found in Acts.
 - Paul sometimes worked to provide his financial needs (18:3).
 - Churches Paul started supported him financially (Philippians 4:14-19).
 - 2) Many churches give a small amount of financial support to several missionaries from other churches, but never send anyone out from their own church.
 - 3) A few modern-day ideas:
 - One church provided the living expenses for a family sent out of their church. They went on a short deputation to raise their work funds.
 - A church has plans to send out staff members to start other churches. Financial support will be decreased incrementally until the church is able to support a pastor.
 - 6.5 The unbiblical plan of deputation today is unwise stewardship.
 - 1) It wastes millions of dollars while missionary candidates travel around the country.
 - 2) It wears out many of God's called servants and their families.
 - 3) It delays missionaries getting to the field an average of three to five years.

Application of Truth

What needs strengthening in your church to follow the pattern of the church in Antioch?

#15 Miraculous Answers to Prayer

Introduction to Acts 12

1. Acts 12 is a transitional chapter.
 - 1.1 Peter's ministry is fading from the primary focus.
 - 1.2 The apostle Paul's ministry will be emphasized in the final chapters.
2. There are several kings from the Herod dynasty who ruled in Judea (12:1).
 - 2.1 Herod the Great (Matthew 2:1-18)
 - 2.2 Archelaus (Matthew 2:22)
 - 2.3 Antipas (Matthew 14:1-12; Mark 6:14; Luke 3:19)
 - 2.4 Agrippa I (Acts 12)
 - 1) Grandson of the insecure and wicked Herod the Great
 - 2) Jewish historian Josephus said he was "keenly fond of popularity."
 - He gained favor from the Romans by building theaters.
 - He sought favor from the Jews by persecuting believers (12:2-3).
3. All of the Herods persecuted Christ and His followers (12:1, vex: to make trouble).
4. From Peter's prison experience, note several lessons about suffering.

Lessons from Peter's Prison Experience

1. Trust in God's sovereignty (12:1-2; I Peter 4:12-19).
 - 1.1 James was the first apostle to be martyred for Christ (cf. Matthew 20:23).
 - 1.2 James was killed but Peter was released (Isaiah 55:8-9).
 - 1.3 Comparisons should not be made between how God uses individuals for His glory (John 21:18-23).
2. Rest in God's peace (12:3-4, 6).
 - 2.1 Note that some believe there is a mistranslation in Acts 12:4 (*Easter*).
 - 1) Easter was an ancient pagan celebration honoring goddess Ishtar.
 - 2) It was observed in the spring as one of the Roman holidays.
 - 3) Some believe this Greek word should be translated as Passover as other times in the New Testament.
 - 4) Note that the days of unleavened bread are observed *after* the Passover.
 - The Passover had already passed (12:3b).

- Easter was the Roman holiday that Herod celebrated.
- 2.2 Herod captured Peter and assigned sixteen soldiers to him (12:4).
- 1) He probably heard about the earlier escape from prison (5:19).
 - 2) A quaternion was a squad of four soldiers.
 - Two soldiers were chained to the prisoner (12:6).
 - Two soldiers guarded the prison door (12:6b).
- 2.3 Peter was sleeping the night before his scheduled execution (12:6).
- 1) He had already been delivered from prison once before (5:19-21a). Peter may have expected that God would do it again.
 - 2) He had a promise from the Lord that he would die in old age (John 21:18).
 - 3) He rested in the peace that God supplies (Isaiah 26:3; Psalm 3:5-6; 4:8; Philippians 4:6-7).
3. Pray with fervency (12:5, 7-17; Jeremiah 33:3; James 5:16-18).
- 3.1 Pray without ceasing (12:5; I Thessalonians 5:17).
- 3.2 Expect a supernatural answer from God (12:7-16; II Chronicles 20:12; Ephesians 3:20-21).
- 1) Chains fell off Peter's hands (12:7).
 - 2) The angel had to give Peter step-by-step instructions because he thought he was dreaming (12:8-9).
 - 3) They walked past the first and second ward of soldiers (12:10).
 - Soldiers did not sleep while on duty for fear of their lives (12:18-19a). This may have been a deep sleep from God.
 - The angel may have delivered Peter in another "dimension." That may have been why he thought he saw a vision.
 - 4) Peter finally realized that God supernaturally delivered him from the expectation of the people.
 - 5) Those praying were surprised when God answered (12:12-16).
 - James was already martyred. They may have expected the same for Peter.
 - They may have expected God to move Herod to release Peter.
 - They may have been praying for Peter to experience the grace of

God to endure persecution.

6) Supernatural answers from God should be shared with others (12:17b).

3.3 Sometimes God expects us to move out of harm's way (12:17c).

1) Peter went into another place (I Peter 1:1; 5:13).

2) God does not promise to deliver when there is presumption.

4. Glorify God, not man (12:20-23).

4.1 Herod probably wore a silver robe that glistened in the brightness of the morning sun (12:21).

4.2 Humanism is the deification of man (12:22).

1) Roman rulers were often deified.

2) Herod is a type of the coming anti-Christ (II Thessalonians 2:3-9).

3) Our modern culture deifies men.

- Athletes
- Musicians
- Movie stars
- The rich and the famous
- Pastors of mega churches

4.3 God will not share His glory with another (Isaiah 42:8; Daniel 4).

1) An angel immediately smote him (12:23).

2) Jewish historian Josephus wrote that Herod experienced "violent internal pains for five days and died."

3) Other Herods died terrible deaths.

- Herod the Great (tried to kill the child Jesus) died from poisoning, possibly from his own son.
- Herod Antipas (beheaded John) died a shameful death in exile.

4.4 The Word of God grew and multiplied (12:24; Psalm 138:2b; Isaiah 55:10-11).

Application of Truth

1. Are you trusting in God's sovereign control over your life?
2. Do you rest in God's peace when going through trials?
3. How fervent are your prayers? Trials are designed for increasing our dependency on God.
4. Are you careful to give glory to God in all circumstances (I Corinthians 10:31)?

#16 Paul's First Missionary Journey

Introduction to Acts 13-14

1. God prepared the church in Antioch to become a missionary-sending church.
 - 1.1 They were a gospel-preaching church (11:19-21).
 - 1.2 They had a cross-cultural leadership (13:1).
 - 1) Simeon probably was a dark-skinned man from Africa (Niger).
 - 2) Lucius was from Cyrene, a Greek city in Africa.
 - 3) Manaen was brought up in a home of royalty.
 - 4) Saul of Tarsus was an educated man.
2. The church was willing to send out two of its best teachers, Barnabas and Saul.
3. The Holy Ghost uses the local church to send out preachers, not para-church organizations or denominations.
4. The Apostle Paul eventually made three missions trips after being sent out of the church in Antioch.
5. Note several lessons from Paul's first missionary journey.

Lessons from Paul's First Missions Trip

1. Surrender to the leading of the Holy Ghost (13:1-4).
 - 1.1 Active in service (13:2, *as they ministered to the Lord*)
 - 1) The Latin word for liturgy comes from this Greek word translated as ministered and refers to a formal ministry.
 - 2) Guidance from the Holy Ghost comes from *doing*, not from *seeking* His will. Too many times we seek God's will while *doing* nothing.
 - 3) God does not give greater opportunities of service until you are proven faithful (Luke 16:10). Too many want "spotlight" ministries without paying the price of faithfulness (II Timothy 2:2, *faithful men*).
 - 1.2 Fasting and prayer (13:2-3; Matthew 9:37-38)
 - 1) Christ's greatest prayer request is the sending forth of laborers.
 - 2) Most churches pray for laborers to come to them.
 - 3) A prayerless church will not be a missionary-sending church.
 - 1.3 The call of the Holy Ghost (13:2, 4)

- 1) Ministry is not choosing a vocation or "career," but yielding to a *calling from God* (13:2, *separate*: a setting apart; 20:28; I Timothy 1:12).
 - Personal for each individual
 - Specific – God calls to a specific ministry.
 - Recognized by the local church
 - 2) The Holy Ghost often leads a team to work together – Barnabas and Saul (Luke 10:1; Acts 20:4).
 - 3) The Holy Ghost has a *work* for everyone to do (13:2; cf. I Timothy 5:17, *labour in the word and doctrine*).
 - 4) Both the local church and the Holy Ghost cooperate together to send out laborers (13:3-4).
 - Laying on of hands refers to a commissioning for service.
 - Barnabas and Saul were sent out *through a local church*, not a missions agency.
 - 5) There is no mention of the Holy Ghost calling John Mark (13:5, 13).
2. Confront false teachers with the Word of God (13:6-12; Titus 1:9-14).
- 2.1 Bar-jesus (son of Joshua; Elymas in Aramaic) was a *sorcerer*: one involved in practices of the occult (13:6, 8).
 - 2.2 Satan uses false teachers to oppose the teaching of the Word of God (13:7-8; I Thessalonians 2:18; I Corinthians 16:9; II Corinthians 4:3-4).
 - 2.3 The filling of the Holy Ghost supplies the boldness needed (13:9-11).
 - 1) Full of subtilty and mischief: devious
 - 2) Child of the devil
 - 3) Enemy of all righteousness: hostile to right
 - 4) *Pervert* the right ways of the Lord: make crooked
 - 2.4 When confrontation of false teachers takes place, the *doctrine* of the Lord should be elevated (13:12).
3. Clearly present the gospel of Jesus Christ (13:14-44)
- 3.1 Look for people (13:14-15).
 - 3.2 Respectfully address people who believe differently than you (13:16).
 - 3.3 Use the familiar to prepare hearts to understand the gospel (13:17-22, rehearsal of

- Jewish history).
- 3.4 Point to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (13:23-33, I Corinthians 15:3-4).
 - 3.5 Use Scripture in your presentation (13:33-35; Psalm 2:7; 16:10; Isaiah 55:3).
 - 3.6 Emphasize salvation through faith in Jesus Christ apart from works (13:38-39; Ephesians 2:8-9).
 - 3.7 Call people to repentance (13:40-41).
 - 3.8 Leave the door open to share the gospel again (13:42-44).
 4. Expect persecution for the cause of Christ (13:45 - 14:7).
 - 4.1 Persecution is often caused by envious religious leaders (13:45).
 - 1) They speak against the truth.
 - 2) They contradict the things taught.
 - 3) They blaspheme: curse, revile; to rail against
 - 4.2 False teachers are more concerned about crowds than souls.
 - 4.3 Persecution calls for a bold response (13:46).
 - 4.4 When someone does not respond, move on to another (13:46-51).
 - 1) Paul refers to this persecution later (II Timothy 3:11).
 - 2) Sometimes influential people will be stirred up (13:50).
 - 3) Jesus commanded His disciples to shake the dust from their feet as a testimony against those who reject the truth (Matthew 10:14).
 - 4.5 Willful unbelief will affect others (14:1-2).
 - 1) *Unbelieving* speaks of willful resistance and rebellion.
 - 2) These Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren.
 - *evil affected*: negatively influenced; causing evil
 - 4.6 In persecution, continue speaking boldly in the Lord (14:3).
 - 4.7 False teaching causes division (14:4, *division*: Greek *schidzo*, English schism; Romans 16:17-18).
 - 4.8 There are times when it is best to avoid persecution (14:5-7).
 - 4.9 Paul did not allow severe persecution to stop him (14:20).
 5. Turn all worship to God alone (14:8-19).

- 5.1 God wants to do powerful things for His glory (14:8-10; Ephesians 3:20-21).
- 5.2 When God works supernaturally, people often worship the men through whom He works (14:11-13; Luke 6:26).
 - 1) They worshiped Barnabas as Jupiter.
 - Greek Zeus, the national god of the Greeks
 - 2) They worshiped Paul as Mercurius (Mercury).
 - Greek Hermes, inventor of speech and messenger for the gods depicted with a winged hat
- 5.3 Even the greatest men of God are just men (14:14-18).
- 5.4 When dealing with idolatrous cultures, caution must be made that they are not simply adding Jesus to their other gods.
- 5.5 People often turn on those they once worshiped (14:19).
6. Practice the Biblical plan for the local church (14:21-28).
 - 6.1 Preaching the gospel (14:21)
 - 6.2 Teaching the Word of God (14:21)
 - 6.3 Confirming the souls of disciples (14:22)
 - 1) This is not confirmation classes of the Catholics and Protestants.
 - 2) This word means to establish and strengthen.
 - 6.4 Exhorting to continue in the faith and endure trials (14:22) – it will not always be easy to serve the Lord.
 - 6.5 Organizing independent churches under Christ's leadership (14:23)
 - 1) They ordained elders (pastors) in every church (Titus 1:5).
 - 2) They commended (entrusted) them to the Lord.
 - 3) They took a survey trip while returning to their sending church (14:24-28).

Application of Truth

1. Have you surrendered to the leading of the Holy Ghost in your life?
2. Do you stand against error with the Word of God?
3. Are you sharing the gospel with the unsaved?
4. Are you prepared to respond boldly when faced with persecution?
5. Do you exalt men?
6. How committed are you to your local church?

#17 Doctrinal Division and Personal Disagreements

Introduction

1. Doctrinal division and personal disagreements are common today.
 - 1.1 God warned us that in the last days there would be doctrinal compromise in churches (I Timothy 4:1). False doctrine is flooding churches from influential churches and pastors today.
 - 1.2 There is also conflict in various relationships:
 - 1) Between family members
 - 2) Between church members
 - 3) In the workplace
 - 4) Between nations
3. From Acts 15, notice lessons concerning doctrinal division and personal disagreements.

Doctrinal Division

1. Earnestly contend for doctrinal purity (15:1-5; II Peter 2:1-2; Jude 3-4).
 - 1.1 False teachers brought *legalism* into the church at Antioch – adding works to faith (15:1, 24, *subverting*: to plunder; ravage).
 - 1) Salvation through rituals like infant baptism
 - 2) Salvation through seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church
 - 3) Salvation through keeping the Old Testament law like Seventh-Day Adventists
 - 1.2 Paul and Barnabas opposed these false teachers (15:2-4).
 - 1) They had no small *dissension*: strife; violent wrangling; insurrection; sedition.
 - 2) They had no small *disputation*: discussion, debate, disputing.
 - 3) They declared the conversion of the Gentiles (15:3-4).
 - 1.3 Some bring false teaching with them into Christianity (15:5).
2. Consider carefully matters of doctrinal concern (15:6-12).
 - 2.1 The leaders of the church considered the matter (15:6).
 - 2.2 Peter concluded that God saves all the same way (15:7-9).
 - 2.3 Man-made requirements for salvation puts God to the test by placing a yoke of

- bondage upon the disciples (15:10).
- 2.4 Peter stated his conviction that salvation is through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ (15:11, *we believe...*; Ephesians 2:8-9).
- 2.5 The church listened intently to Barnabas and Paul (15:12).
3. Follow pastoral leadership (15:14-22).
- 3.1 James was now the pastor of the church in Jerusalem (21:18).
- 1) Jesus founded the church (Matthew 16:18).
 - 2) Peter was appointed as Christ's successor (John 21:15-17).
 - 3) James probably became pastor of the church when Peter began traveling (9:32-43).
- 3.2 The Holy Ghost calls pastors to protect the local church from false teachers (20:28-31).
- 3.3 As the pastor, James considered the evidence and gave direction to the church (15:13-20).
- 1) He summarized the evidence (15:14).
 - 2) He applied the Scriptures (15:15-17; Isaiah 54:1-5; 60:3; Amos 9:11-12).
 - 3) He led the church to a decision (15:19, *sentence*: verdict, decision).
 - 4) He recognize local church authority (15:19b, *trouble not them*).
- 3.4 Remain unified as a church (15:22, 25, *assembled with one accord*).
- 1) The church did not vote on their doctrine.
 - 2) Many churches are only one vote away from voting out sound doctrine.
4. Emphasize Biblical separation (15:20, 28-29).
- 4.1 Abstain from idolatry.
- 4.2 Abstain from fornication (Greek *porneia*).
- 4.3 Abstain from things that would offend another culture (things strangled and blood; I Corinthians 10:32-33; Galatians 5:13-15, liberty, not license).
- 1) Certain elements of the moral law still apply to New Testament believers.
 - 2) The ceremonial law was fulfilled in Christ's sacrifice.
5. Encourage those who have been affected by false teaching (15:22-35; Matthew 9:36).
- 5.1 An open letter was sent to encourage and instruct (15:22-30).
- 5.2 The church was greatly encouraged (15:31, *consolation*: comfort, encouragement)

- 5.3 Judas and Silas exhorted and confirmed the disciples (15:32, *confirmed*: to strengthen; firmly establish in the faith).
- 5.4 Paul and Barnabas taught and preached (*evangelized*) the word of the Lord (15:35).

Personal Disagreements

- 1. Realize that even great men of God may disagree on some matters (15:36-38).
 - 1.1 Barnabas was determined to give John Mark a second chance (15:37).
 - 1) John Mark was a nephew of Barnabas (Acts 12:12; Colossians 4:10).
 - 2) Mark went with Barnabas and Saul to Jerusalem (12:25).
 - 3) Mark started on the first missions trip with them (13:5).
 - 1.2 Paul strongly opposed the idea of taking John Mark (15:38).
 - 1) Paul held John's failure against him (13:13; *departed from*: "apostasy").
 - 2) Paul felt he had good reasons for refusing to take Mark (Proverbs 25:19).
- 2. Agree to disagree agreeably (15:39).
 - 2.1 Sharp contention developed between Barnabas and Paul (15:39, *contention*: discord; conflict; strife; violent emotion of anger).
 - 2.2 Paul did not hold to bitterness or animosity toward Barnabas (cf. I Corinthians 9:6).
- 3. Realize that God can use personal disagreements for His glory (15:40-41).
 - 3.1 Two missions teams were sent out.
 - 1) Note that the church in Antioch sided with Paul; there is no mention of Barnabas being recommended by the church.
 - 2) Barnabas is not mentioned again in the book of Acts.
 - 3.2 John Mark was restored to useful ministry (Philemon 24; II Timothy 4:11).
 - 3.3 John wrote the Gospel of Mark later.

Application of Truth

- 1. Many seem to have a careless attitude toward doctrine today (Ephesians 4:14).
 - 1.1 Do you recognize doctrinal error when it is spoken?
 - 1.2 Do you respond with the truth of the Scriptures?
- 2. Do you have any unresolved conflict with another person?
 - 2.1 Are you willing to admit that you may have been wrong?
 - 2.2 Are you willing to give people another chance?

#18 A Strengthening Ministry

Introduction to Paul's Second Missions Trip

1. Paul selected the prophet Silas to accompany him (15:40-41). Luke also joined Paul on this missions trip (16:10, *we...us*).
2. The goal of Paul's second missions trip was the strengthening the churches that were started on the first journey (15:36, 41; 16:4-5, *established*: Greek *stereo*, English *steroids*).
3. In Acts 16, notice several lessons related to strengthening local churches.

Ways to Stronger Churches

1. Invest in the lives of young people (16:1-3a).
 - 1.1 Timothy was probably saved on the first missions trip. His mother and grandmother believed, but his father possibly was unsaved (16:1).
 - 1.2 Timothy was *well reported of by the brethren* (16:2, Greek *martureo*, witness). Even those in another city knew of him.
 - 1.3 Paul planned to take Timothy with him as an intern (16:3a).
 - 1.4 It is important to teach the Word of God to children (II Timothy 1:2-5; 3:15).
 - 1) Parents in the home
 - 2) Teachers in the Sunday school
 - 3) Children's ministries
2. Yield to the direction of the Holy Ghost (16:6-12).
 - 2.1 Paul experienced closed doors as he attempted to go to places he chose (16:6-7).
 - 1) He was *forbidden by the Holy Ghost* to go into Asia Minor (16:6).
 - 2) The Spirit *suffered them not* to go into Bithynia (16:7, not permitted).
 - 2.2 The *steps and stops* of a good man are ordered by the Lord (Psalm 37:23).
 - 2.3 A vision for the unsaved should motivate (15:9-10).
 - 1) Macedonia is in northern Greece.
 - 2) They *immediately endeavoured to go...with a straight course* (16:10-11, *endeavoured*: earnest effort).
 - 3) Paul established churches in principal cities, and those churches would

then start churches in other places (16:12; I Thessalonians 1:8).

3. Seek for people whom the Lord is preparing (16:13-15).
 - 2.1 Lydia was a religious woman who gathered for prayer on the Sabbath (16:13).
 - 2.2 She was a woman with wealth (16:14a, *seller of purple*: used for dying robes of Roman rulers).
 - 2.3 The Lord opens hearts as they hear the gospel (16:14b; Romans 10:17).
 - 2.4 There was evidence of saving faith (16:15).
 - 1) Baptism
 - 2) Faithfulness to the Lord: moral character
 - 3) Hospitality toward God's servants (*constrained*: compelled, forced, obliged, strongly urged)
4. Care more for people than financial gain (16:16-19).
 - 4.1 This young girl was possessed with a *spirit of divination* (16:16).
 - 1) The word *divination* is the Greek word *Puthon* (Python).
 - Python was a mythological serpent of Greek idolatry.
 - The word was used for ventriloquists and those with another voice. A demonic spirit spoke through her.
 - 2) *Divination* is fortune-telling through practices of the occult.
 - 3) *Soothsaying* involves making predictions for financial gain.
 - 4.2 The evil spirit in her tried to distract people from hearing the gospel (16:17).
 - 1) Satan and the devils know the most high God (Isaiah 14:14; James 2:19).
 - 2) Paul was grieved after many days of her crying out (16:18).
 - 3) Many knew that she had an evil spirit; association with her would have hurt Paul's ministry.
 - 4.3 Evil spirits are no match for the power of the name of Jesus Christ (16:18b).
 - 4.4 Her masters cared more about financial gain than for her well being (16:16, 19).
5. Respond to trials that others may be saved and comforted (16:19-40).
 - 5.1 Paul and Silas were falsely accused (16:19-21).
 - 1) Many accuse Christians of causing trouble (16:20, *exceedingly trouble our city*).
 - 2) Many accuse Christians of unlawful customs (16:21).

- Going house to house with the gospel
 - Reading the Bible and praying in schools
 - Intolerance toward ungodly lifestyles
- 5.2 Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned (16:22-24; I Thessalonians 2:2).
- 1) *Stripes*: left bloody lacerations on their body (16:22-23; II Corinthians 11:25)
 - 2) *Inner prison and stocks*: maximum security cell (16:24)
- 5.3 Paul and Silas responded to persecution with prayer and praise to God (16:25).
- 1) They probably could not sleep from the pain of their beating (16:25, *at midnight*).
 - 2) They sang *praises* unto God (16:25).
 - They were not complaining or demanding their rights (16:35-39).
 - *Praises*: Greek word *hymneo* (English hymn, Ephesians 5:20)
 - 3) God responded with a supernaturally timed earthquake (16:26).
- 5.4 Your response to trials could mean salvation for someone else (16:29-34).
- 5.5 Paul and Silas were able to comfort others because of their response to severe trials (16:40; II Corinthians 1:3-4).

Application of Truth

1. Are you investing in the lives of young people?
2. Are you yielding to the direction of the Holy Ghost?
3. Are you seeking people with a heart prepared by the Lord?
4. What is most important to you – people or financial gain?
5. As people see your response to trials, would they want the gospel? Are others comforted?
6. Are you one of God's trophies of grace through faith in Jesus Christ?
 - 6.1 A young dedicated person like Timothy
 - 6.2 A wealthy person of business like Lydia
 - 6.3 A person delivered from the occult
 - 6.4 A working family man like the Philippian jailer

#19 Reaching a Pagan Culture

Introduction to Acts 17

1. Acts 17 reports the completion of Paul's ministry in Macedonia and Greece.
2. The Greek culture was dominated by paganism and idolatry.
3. Modern cultures today are becoming increasingly pagan.
4. First century Christianity influenced the society in which they lived (17:6).
5. Notice how to reach people in a pagan culture.

Outreach to a Pagan Culture

1. Reason with religious people from the Scriptures (17:1-4).
 - 1.1 Paul went to the people (17:1-2a).
 - 1.2 Paul reasoned with religious people out of the Scriptures (17:2b).
 - 1) *Reasoned*: to direct the mind; teaching that stimulates the mind to think
 - 2) *Opening*: to open the mind and heart to the truth (Luke 24:45)
 - 3) *Alleging*: to declare; to explain; to set forth a truth
 - 1.3 Paul focused on Christ, not religion (17:3).
 - 1.4 Some religious people will believe when presented with the truth (17:4).
2. Persevere through persecution (17:5-9, 13-15).
 - 2.1 The unbelieving religious crowd may incite persecution (17:5).
 - 1) They were motivated by envy.
 - 2) They used street people to create an uproar.
 - *Lewd fellows*: the Greek word translated as *lewd* is also translated as evil and wicked.
 - *Baser sort*: Greek *agora* (*agoraios*), the marketplace; similar to the homeless which live on the streets of large cities
 - 2.2 They may make false accusations against true believers (17:7).
 - 2.3 They may stir up trouble with the people and government officials (17:8).
 - 2.4 They prove their hatred for the Word of God (17:13).
 - 2.5 Persecution sometimes moves people to new locations (17:14-15).
3. Encourage people to study the Bible for themselves (17:10-12).
 - 3.1 Receive the Word of God with eagerness (17:11a, *readiness of mind*).

- 3.2 Search the Scriptures daily (17:11b, *searched*: examined; investigated; a Greek legal term meaning to gather evidence)
- 3.3 Compare everything you are taught with the Bible (Proverbs 14:15).
- 3.4 It is noteworthy that no epistle was sent to Berea to correct problems in the church.
4. Get a burden in your spirit concerning paganism (17:16-21).
 - 4.1 Athens was the educational, philosophical, and cultural capital of the world.
 - 4.2 Paul's spirit was stirred concerning idolatry (17:16, *stirred*: to sharpen the mind or courage; to provoke and arouse indignation).
 - 1) A Roman writer (Petronius) said it was easier to find a god than a man in Athens. It is estimated that Athens had thirty thousand public idols.
 - 2) Idolatry abounds today:
 - Materialism: money and material possessions
 - Hedonism: pleasure and sensuality
 - Humanism: exalting the accomplishments of man
 - Intellectualism: exalting man-centered education and philosophy (17:21)
 - Catholicism: statues of Mary, Jesus, and saints
 - Hinduism: millions of gods
 - Islam: worship of the moon god Allah
 - 3) Paul's stirred spirit moved him to reason with people in the community (17:17).
 - 4.3 Paul encountered philosophers, the educated elite (17:18).
 - 1) *Epicureans* (founded by Epicurus in the third century B.C.)
 - They were hedonists: pleasure is the chief good of man.
 - They sought freedom from negative emotions, fear, and pain.
 - Their philosophy was "enjoy yourself" – "eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die" (II Timothy 3:4b).
 - 2) *Stoicks* (founded by Zeno of Tarsus)
 - They practiced self-righteous asceticism and self-mastery.
 - Their philosophy was "deny yourself" (I Timothy 4:1-3).

- They were often unaffected by circumstances of life (joy, grief).
 - They were indifferent toward death.
 - They were fatalistic: everything is controlled by fate ("What will be, will be").
 - They were pantheistic: everything is god.
 - They were naturalistic: man is integrated with nature.
- 3) They had a condescending spirit toward Paul (17:18b).
- They called him a *babbler*: a chatterer; a seed picker; a gutter sparrow; an intellectual scavenger.
 - They were only curious, not truly interested in what he had to say (17:18b-20). Note that the *Areopagus* was the same place that philosopher Socrates was tried for corrupting the youth of Athens.
5. Introduce people to the "unknown God" (17:22-29).
- 5.1 Address people with respect (17:22, *Ye men of Athens...*).
- 1) The gospel may offend; our approach should not.
 - 2) Paul gave his perception – they were *too superstitious*: greatly addicted to religion.
- 5.2 Use the familiar to introduce the eternal (17:23).
- 1) Paul referred to their *devotions*: objects of worship – idols, altars, and temples.
 - 2) Paul referred to an inscription he found, "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD."
- 5.3 Paul addressed the agnosticism of their beliefs (17:23b, *ignorantly*: Greek *agnoeo*, English *agnostic*, II Peter 3:3-7).
- 5.4 Paul began with a foundation of creation (17:24-29).
- 1) God is Creator and Lord of heaven and earth (17:24).
 - 2) God does not dwell in temples (17:24b).
 - 3) God is not dependent upon man (17:25).
 - 4) God is the Source and Sustainer of life (17:25b).
 - 5) God is sovereign over the empires of man (17:26).
 - 6) God controls "luck" (17:27, *haply*).
 - 7) God is a Person, not an idol made by man (17:28-29). Man did not

"create" God.

6. Call people to repentance (17:30-31).
 - 6.1 God overlooked past times of ignorance (17:30a). This does not mean they went to heaven if they did not believe (Luke 12:47-48).
 - 6.2 God now commands all men everywhere to repent (17:30b; Luke 13:3, 5).
 - 6.3 God has appointed a day of judgment (17:31).
 - 1) All men are without excuse because of creation and conscience (Romans 1-2).
 - 2) All men have an appointment with death and judgment (Hebrews 9:27).
 - 3) The righteousness of Jesus Christ will be the standard for judgment (17:31).
 - 6.4 Evolutionists do not want a Creator because they do not want a Judge!
7. Leave the results with God (17:32-34).
 - 7.1 Some will mock (17:32a). They will reject and ridicule the truth.
 - 7.2 Some will procrastinate and only pretend to be interested (17:32b).
 - 1) Note that Paul did not try to argue with the willfully ignorant (17:33)
 - 2) There is no indication that a church was started in Athens (18:1).
 - 7.3 Some will believe (17:34).

Application of Truth

1. Consider: you cannot *make a difference* in a pagan culture unless you *are different!*
2. Almost entire generations have been taught atheistic evolution. Are you prepared to introduce the unknown God to them?

#20 Helpers in the Ministry

Introduction to Acts 18

1. The New Testament mentions the help that Aquila and Priscilla were to Paul's ministry.
 - 1.1 They willingly risked their lives for Paul (Romans 16:4a, possibly referring to the uproar in Acts 19).
 - 1.2 They hosted at least two churches in their home (Romans 16:5a; I Corinthians 16:19).
 - 1.3 Paul sent greetings to Aquila and Priscilla through Timothy (II Timothy 4:19).
 - 1) Timothy was pastor of the church in Ephesus.
 - 2) Second Timothy was the last book Paul wrote through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.
 - 1.4 They provided housing for Paul and partnered with him in Corinth (Acts 18:1-3).
 - 1.5 They traveled with him to Ephesus (18:18-19).
 - 1.6 They disciplined Apollos so that he also became a help to Paul's ministry (18:26).
2. Silas and Timothy were a blessing to Paul throughout his ministry (18:5).
3. From the example of Paul's helpers in the ministry, note ways you can help your Preacher in the ministry.

How to Help in the Work

1. Follow the vision of God for your city (18:1-17).
 - 1.1 The work in Athens probably did not result in the starting of a church (18:1).
 - 1.2 Corinth was a strategic commercial center in the region.
 - 1.3 Paul's ministry in Corinth was not easy.
 - 1) He had to work to support himself financially (18:3).
 - 2) The culture of Corinth was corrupt and immoral. The pagan temple of the goddess Aphrodite had one thousand religious prostitutes.
 - 3) Paul *reasoned* with the religious and *persuaded* people to receive the gospel (18:4).
 - 4) Paul was pressed in the spirit as he testified of Jesus Christ (18:5).
 - 5) The religious crowd opposed themselves and blasphemed (18:6; II Timothy 2:24-26).

- 6) The Jews stirred up insurrection against Paul and took him to the court of Corinth, the judgment seat of Gallio (18:12).
 - 7) They made false accusations against Paul, accusing him of being a law-breaker (18:13).
- 1.4 People were saved and baptized.
- 1) Justus (18:7)
 - 2) Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and his household (18:8; I Corinthians 1:14)
 - 3) Many of the Corinthians (18:8b)
 - 4) Sosthenes, chief ruler of the synagogue (18:17, I Corinthians 1:1, *Sosthenes, our brother*)
- 1.5 God gave Paul a renewed vision for the city of Corinth (18:9-11).
- 1) Paul was to overcome fear of coming persecution.
 - 2) Paul was possibly weary physically and emotionally from constant attacks.
 - 3) Paul was to speak the gospel boldly (18:9b).
 - 4) God reminded him of His presence and protection (18:10a).
 - 5) God had other people who would be saved (18:10b).
 - 6) With a vision from the Lord, Paul continued teaching the Word of God (18:11).
2. Support the determination of your Preacher (18:18-23).
- 2.1 Aquila and Priscilla enabled Paul to follow the Lord's leading by remaining in Ephesus.
 - 2.2 Paul had a spirit of determination (18:21a).
 - 2.3 He planned Lord willing (18:21b; James 4:13-17).
 - 2.4 Paul revisited the churches in order (18:23).
 - 2.5 Paul strengthened the disciples in their doctrine (18:23; cf. Galatians 1:6).
3. Communicate the Word of God confidently (18:24-28).
- 3.1 Apollos was born in Alexandria, Egypt.
 - 1) Alexandria was a prominent center of Greek culture and philosophy.
 - 2) It became a center of corrupt doctrine after the apostles were gone.
 - 3) They had a mixture of Christianity and pagan philosophy.

- 4) Much of its teaching was assimilated into Roman Catholic theology.
 - 5) Alexandria was the source for corrupted Greek manuscripts that form the basis for all of the modern English bibles.
- 3.2 Apollos communicated truth confidently (18:24-28).
- 1) He was an *eloquent* man (18:24, articulate; forceful of speech; having a sharp mind and ideas).
 - 2) He was *mighty in the Scriptures* (18:24, a thorough knowledge of Scripture).
 - 3) He was instructed in the way of the Lord (18:25).
 - 4) He was *fervent* in the spirit (18:25, *fervent*: to boil over; Greek *zeo*, English words zeal and zealous; Romans 12:11).
 - 5) He spoke and taught diligently (18:25).
 - 6) He spoke boldly (18:26).
 - 7) He was teachable (18:26b).
 - 8) He greatly helped other believers (18:27).
 - 9) He mightily (forcefully) convinced the Jews from the Scriptures (18:28; Matthew 7:28-29).
- 3.3 Apollos went to Corinth following Paul's ministry (19:1; I Corinthians 1).

Application of Truth

1. Would Paul have mentioned your name as one who helped much in the ministry?
2. How strong is the vision for your city? Does it motivate you?
3. How confident are you in sharing Scripture with others?

#21 Paul's Ministry in Ephesus

Introduction to Acts 19

1. Ephesus was one of the chief cities of the Roman Empire.
 - 1.1 Ephesus was in what is now known as the country of Turkey.
 - 1.2 The city was the center for pagan idol worship of the goddess Diana.
 - 1.3 In the midst of a pagan culture, Paul was used by God to start a church.
2. The spiritual darkness in Ephesus is revealed in Acts 19.
 - 2.1 Demon possession
 - 2.2 Exorcism
 - 2.3 Witchcraft
 - 2.4 Idolatry
3. Notice several keys to an effective ministry in a pagan culture.

Keys to Paul's Ministry in Ephesus

1. Question people thoroughly about their religious experience (19:1-7).
 - 1.1 Paul questioned twelve men in Ephesus about their spiritual condition (19:1-3, 7).
 - 1.2 This was more than twenty years after John the Baptist's ministry.
 - 1) They had not heard John's preaching about the Holy Ghost (19:2b; Matthew 3:11; cf. Romans 8:9).
 - 2) They were not baptized by John but by someone with a distorted teaching about baptism (19:3b).
 - 3) They had not heard about Jesus Christ (John 1:29).
 - 1.3 Paul was not quick to accept their immersion baptism.
 - 1.4 Their baptism was worthless because it did not follow faith in Jesus Christ (19:4).
 - 1.5 They were trusting in immersion baptism to save them.
 - 1.6 They were rebaptized after believing in Christ (19:5). Reasons we should rebaptize someone who is saved today:
 - 1) Those who were "baptized" as infants
 - 2) Those who were immersed three times (cf. Romans 6:3-5)
 - 3) Those who were immersed in a church with a false gospel
2. Emphasize Bible teaching (19:8-10).

- 2.1 Paul spoke the Word of God boldly even in the threat of persecution (19:8).
- 2.2 Paul was balanced in his presentation of truth (19:8).
 - 1) *Disputing* is the negative side: open debate and refuting of false teaching.
 - 2) *Persuading* is the positive side: convincing people of the truth.
- 2.3 Many will not believe even with a convincing presentation of truth (19:9).
 - 1) Hardened hearts
 - 2) Refusal to believe
 - 3) Speak evil of the truth
- 2.4 Young converts must be separated from unbelievers (19:9b, *separated the disciples*). A church must avoid ecumenical causes for the protection of its new converts.
- 2.5 A Bible institute can be a powerful tool for spreading the Word of God (19:9b-10).
 - 1) Tyrannus may have been a noted physician in Ephesus.
 - This school was possibly a school of medicine.
 - Doctor Luke may have been able to arrange for Paul to use space for his two years of teaching.
 - 2) The Word of God spread throughout the region of Asia Minor (19:10).
3. Overcome evil spirits with the Word of God (19:11-20; Ephesians 6:17).
 - 3.1 In the context, the diseases that God enabled Paul to heal were probably caused by evil spirits (19:11-12, *diseases departed...evil spirits went out of them*).
 - 3.2 *Vagabond Jews*, seven sons of Sceva, tried casting out evil spirits in their own power (19:13-14).
 - 1) Exorcism is a practice of the occult to cast out evil spirits.
 - 2) They tried to imitate Paul in casting out evil spirits.
 - 3) They had no personal authority in Christ (19:13b-14).
 - "...Jesus whom Paul preacheth."
 - The evil spirit did not know them (19:15).
 - 4) They tried using Jesus' name as a magical formula.
 - 5) Casting out evil spirits does not mean possession of salvation (Matthew 7:21-23).
 - 3.3 Evil spirits must be taken seriously but not feared (19:16).

- 1) One man with an evil spirit overpowered seven men.
 - He leaped on them.
 - He overcame them.
 - He prevailed against them.
 - They fled naked and *wounded*: Greek *traumatidzo*; English *traumatized*.
 - 2) Evil spirits can only be conquered through the authority of Jesus Christ and the power of the Word of God.
- 3.4 God used this experience to magnify Jesus Christ and His Word (19:17-20).
- 1) News spread throughout Ephesus (19:17).
 - 2) Fear fell upon those who heard of it.
 - 3) The name of the Lord Jesus was magnified (19:17b).
 - 4) Many believed and repented of their practices of the occult (19:18-19).
 - They confessed sin and publicly exposed their deeds (19:18).
 - Books of *curious arts* were collections of incantations of black magic used in the occult.
 - They burned everything associated with their wickedness (19:19).
 - 5) The Word of God grew mightily and prevailed (19:20).
4. Continue witnessing until the gospel affects society (19:21-41).
- 4.1 While Paul was making preparation to move on from Ephesus, a tumult developed (19:21-23).
 - 4.2 The tumult was stirred up by a labor union leader motivated by wealth (19:24-25).
 - 4.3 Many had been *persuaded and turned away* from idolatry throughout Asia Minor (19:26).
 - 1) The temple of the goddess Diana was considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world (19:27, *magnificence*).
 - 2) It was made with pure white marble and took more than two hundred years to build.
 - 3) It had 127 pillars, each sixty feet high and weighing 150 tons.
 - 4) The Roman goddess Diana was a pagan fertility goddess worshiped with immoral practices.

- 5) Diana was depicted as a huntress with instruments of war and torture.
 - 6) Diana was similar to the Ashtoreth of the Old Testament.
 - 7) Small silver shrines were sold for private worship of Diana (19:24).
 - 8) They believed that the image of Diana fell from Jupiter (19:35).
 - 9) Temples for Diana were built in that day as far away as London, England.
- 4.4 Filled with wrath, the mob chanted for two hours (19:28).
- 4.5 The whole city was filled with confusion (19:29, 32; I Corinthians 14:33).
- 4.6 God used the *townclerk* to quiet the crowd (19:35-41).

Application of Truth

1. Many have a hatred for the independent Baptist movement.
 - 1.1 Ungodly politicians
 - 1.2 Ungodly labor unions
 - 1.3 Pagan idolaters
2. We as Independent Baptists are losing our impact on society.
 - 2.1 Many churches have lowered their standards. You will not *make* a difference unless you *are* different.
 - 2.2 Many churches are careless in welcoming people into their church membership.
 - 2.3 Many are powerless because of a lack of the filling of the Holy Ghost.
 - 2.4 Many are not making a difference with the gospel in their own community.
3. The Bible warns often about idolatry (I Corinthians 10:7, 14, 19-20; I John 5:21). Are you standing against the idolatry of our day?
 - 3.1 Islam and the worship of the moon god Allah (Jehovah and Allah are not the same God!)
 - 3.2 Worship of the pope and statues of Mary and dead saints in the Roman Catholic Church
 - 3.3 Worship of the false gods of India with the spread of Hinduism
 - 3.4 Worship of the earth goddess, Gaia
 - 3.5 Worship of athletes and musicians
 - 3.6 Exaltation of self through the self-esteem movement
 - 3.7 Following big-name church leaders with blind loyalty

#22 An Exemplary Ministry

Introduction to Acts 20

1. As we move into Acts 20, the apostle Paul is entering the last few months of freedom before being arrested in Jerusalem for the cause of Christ (20:1-3a).
2. Paul continued to deal with opposition to his ministry (20:3).
3. Paul invested in the lives of faithful men who would carry on the work (20:4; II Timothy 2:2).
 - 3.1 Sopater from Berea (Romans 16:21)
 - 3.2 Aristarchus from Thessalonica (19:29; 27:2; Colossians 4:10; Philemon 24)
 - 3.3 Secundus from Thessalonica
 - 3.4 Gaius from Derbe (19:29; Romans 16:23; III John 1)
 - 3.5 Timotheus (Timothy, 16:1-2)
 - 3.6 Tychicus from one of the churches in Asia Minor (Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7; II Timothy 4:12; Titus 3:12)
 - 3.7 Trophimus from Ephesus (21:29; II Timothy 4:20)
4. Paul was a great example to follow in the ministry.

Lessons from Paul's Example

1. Remain faithful to the house of God (20:6-12; Hebrews 10:24-25).
 - 1.1 Paul was in Troas (ancient city of Troy) for seven days (20:6).
 - 1.2 Paul believed the first day of the week was the Lord's day (20:7; Revelation 1:10).
 - 1.3 The Troas disciples were not in a hurry to leave the special meeting (20:7b, 11).
 - 1.4 Eutychus learned the importance of staying awake in church (20:7b-10).
2. Maintain Godly character (20:17-27, 31-38).
 - 2.1 Paul called the pastors from the church at Ephesus to him in Miletus (20:17).
 - 2.2 Paul reminded them of his ministry in Ephesus (20:18-27, 31-38).
 - 1) He had a sense of urgency (20:18, *from the first day*).
 - Paul did not procrastinate.
 - Paul had more than good intentions.
 - 2) He had humility of mind (20:19; Ephesians 3:8; John 3:30).
 - Paul did not have a condescending spirit toward others.

- Paul did not have pride in his position as an apostle (I Corinthians 15:9).
 - Paul did not have pride in his accomplishments (I Corinthians 15:10).
- 3) He had convictions with compassion (20:19, 31; Matthew 9:36-38; John 11:35).
 - 4) He persevered through affliction (20:19b).
 - 5) He held nothing back that was helpful to the people (20:20).
 - 6) He had contact with people (20:20b).
 - Publicly
 - Privately from house to house
 - 7) He had no prejudice toward other groups of people (20:21a).
 - 8) He gave a thorough presentation of the gospel (20:21b).
 - Repentance toward God
 - Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ
 - 9) He was willing to hazard his life for Christ (20:22-24; 15:26).
 - 10) He purposed to finish his ministry (20:24b; II Timothy 4:7-8; cf. John 17:4).
 - 11) He declared the whole counsel of God (20:25-27).
 - Paul was thorough in his preaching.
 - Paul did not continually preach the same issues.
 - Each individual is responsible for the truth (Ezekiel 3:17-19; Luke 7:30).
 - 12) He coveted nothing from others (20:33; I Timothy 3:3; I Peter 5:3).
 - 13) He willingly worked hard to meet the needs of others (20:34-35; 18:3).
 - 14) He had a tender heart (20:36-38). He was not hardened by the hardships of the ministry.
3. Beware of false teachers who destroy churches (20:28-30).
- 3.1 Pastors are appointed by the Holy Ghost to protect the church (20:28; Hebrews 13:17).
 - 1) The pastor should pay attention to himself and his family (I Timothy 3:1-7; 4:12-16).

- The title *elder* speaks of spiritual maturity (20:17; I Peter 5:1).
 - The pastorate is a position of respect that demands standards of character.
- 2) The pastor should pay attention to all the flock.
- Oversee the ministry of the church as a bishop (20:28; I Timothy 3:1; Titus 1:7; I Peter 5:2).
 - *Feed* the church as an under-shepherd (20:28, *feed*; Ephesians 4:11, *pastors*; Hebrews 13:20; I Peter 5:2, 4).
- 3.2 An extreme price was paid for the local church (20:28b; Ephesians 5:25).
- 3.3 Satan often launches a two-fold attack on the church (20:29-30).
- 1) False teachers will enter into the church *from without* (20:29; Jude 3-4; II Peter 2:1-3; II John 10-11).
- These *grievous wolves* are often disguised as sheep (20:29; Matthew 7:15-23).
 - Wolves have a carnal, fleshly appetite (Philippians 3:18-19). They love the world's music and entertainment and lower their standards.
 - Wolves often observe things from a high ledge (Galatians 2:4-5).
 - Wolves want to lead the pack (III John 9-10; Numbers 16).
 - False teachers must be avoided (Romans 16:17). They teach divisive doctrines, serve themselves, and deceive the simple (16:18).
- 2) Apostates and heretics will arise *from within* (20:30).
- Apostates arise from within a church.
 - Apostates speak *perverse things*: twisted; corrupt; distorted. They change the meaning of Bible words.
 - Apostates steal disciples away from Bible preachers (20:30b).
 - Heretics are to be rejected after two admonitions (Titus 3:10-11).

Application of Truth

1. Are there any character qualities from Paul's life that is lacking in yours?
2. Are you prepared to stand against the attacks from without and within upon God's church?

#23 Paul's Arrest in Jerusalem

Introduction to Acts 21-22

1. Luke traces Paul's journey to Jerusalem (Acts 21).
 - 1.1 He mentions actual places that verify the geographical and historical accuracy of Scripture.
 - 1.2 There are no "fantasy islands" or legendary cities like many other writings.
2. The Apostle Paul is now in the last few weeks of freedom before his arrest in Jerusalem.
 - 2.1 Acts 21 records his arrest.
 - 2.2 Acts 22 gives his defense to the Jewish mob.
3. Notice several lessons from the life of Paul related to his trip to Jerusalem.

Lessons from Paul's Trip to Jerusalem

1. Seek the support of believers (21:4a, 5, 7, 8, 17-19; Hebrews 10:24-25).
 - 1.1 Wherever Paul went, he sought out a local church.
 - 1.2 The local church should be the center of our activities.
2. Beware of an independent spirit.
 - 2.1 There are differing opinions whether Paul should have continued on to Jerusalem.
 - 2.2 Paul humbly yielded to the Holy Ghost throughout most of his ministry.
 - 1) The Holy Ghost sent him out from a growing church in Antioch (13:2-4).
 - 2) He determined that the Spirit was leading him into Europe (16:6-10).
 - 3) He listened to the Lord's warning in Jerusalem (22:17-21).
 - 2.3 Paul was a man of determination and vision (19:21; 20:16, 22; Romans 1:11; 15:24, 28).
 - 2.4 A person of determination must use caution in not developing an independent spirit.
 - 1) Paul was not willing to give John Mark another chance (15:36-40). He later changed his mind about him (II Timothy 4:11).
 - 2) Paul had several warnings from the Holy Ghost concerning trouble at Jerusalem (20:23, *in every city*; 21:4, 10-12).
 - 2.5 Consider what more Paul could have accomplished for the cause of Christ if he had not been arrested within seven days in Jerusalem (21:27a; 24:27).

- 1) Paul was in bondage for most of the remaining years of his life.
- 2) There is no indication that he ever made it to Spain.
- 2.6 Paul's arrest finally slowed him down to complete his writing ministry (II Peter 1:21; 3:15-16; II Timothy 3:16).
- 2.7 Lessons for consideration:
 - 1) Listen to wise counsel (Proverbs 11:14; 15:22; 24:6).
 - 2) Remain teachable throughout life.
 - 3) Yield your spirit to the Holy Spirit.
3. Be willing to hazard your life for the cause of Christ (15:26; 20:23-24; 21:13-14).
 - 3.1 Throughout his ministry, Paul was willing to spend his life for Christ.
 - 3.2 Some have suggested that Paul's vision of the third heaven led to fearlessness regarding persecution (II Corinthians 12:1-4). He was ready to go to heaven.
 - 3.3 Paul rested in the will of the Lord (21:14; James 4:15).
4. Look for opportunities to share a testimony for Christ (21:27 - 22:16).
 - 4.1 Jews from Asia Minor recognized Paul while he was in the temple (21:27-28).
 - 4.2 An assumption was made that he had taken a Gentile into the inner court of the temple (21:29).
 - 1) This would have been a violation of Jewish law.
 - 2) Gentiles were only permitted into the outer court until they were full converts to Judaism.
 - 3) Rumors had spread before Paul had arrived in Jerusalem that he had rejected the law of Moses (21:20-21). These rumors fueled the controversy.
 - 4.3 All Jerusalem was in an uproar (21:30-31).
 - 1) This was common at this time of Israel's history.
 - 2) Judea was filled with zealots trying to overthrow the domination of Rome.
 - 3) In about ten years, the Roman General Titus would destroy the city.
 - 4) The Jews began beating Paul until soldiers arrived (21:32).
 - 5) *Centurions* (plural) indicates there were several hundred soldiers present.
 - 6) Paul was bound with two chains (21:33).
 - 7) The city was filled with confusion over Paul (21:34-36).

- 8) The chief captain had a mistaken identity of Paul (21:37-39a).
- 4.4 Paul's arrest gave him an opportunity to share his testimony with a large number of people at one time (21:39b - 22:16).
- 1) He spoke courteously with the mob that sought to kill him (22:1a).
 - 2) He gave a *defence* with his testimony (22:1, *defence*: Greek *apologia*; English *apologetic*, a formal defense or answer of one's position; I Peter 3:15).
 - 3) He related to his hearers by sharing his Jewish heritage (22:3). Paul was careful to not sound superior to them.
 - 4) He explained briefly his past before Christ (22:4-5).
 - 5) He told of his conversion experience (22:6-9).
 - 6) He shared the transformation that occurred in his life (22:10-15).
 - 7) He was baptized as a testimony of his faith in Christ (22:16).
 - This verse is not a proof text for baptismal regeneration.
 - Paul called Jesus Christ Lord (22:10; I Corinthians 12:3).
 - Paul was already a saved brother in Christ (22:13, *Brother Saul*).

Application of Truth

1. Have you developed an independent spirit regarding the counsel of others?
2. Are you willing to hazard your life for the cause of Christ?
3. Do you seek opportunities to give a testimony of salvation?

#24 Paul's Trials and Defense

Introduction to Acts 23-26

1. Paul endured several trials before corrupt government officials over a two year period.
 - 1.1 He gave a defense before the Jewish Sanhedrin (23) – the supreme court of Israel
 - 1) The Jewish Sanhedrin was made up of seventy elders of Israel.
 - 2) Israel's high priests during this period of history were ungodly.
 - 3) They hired an orator Tertullus to act as prosecutor (24:1).
 - 4) The high priest who followed Ananias plotted to kill Paul (25:1-4).
 - 5) The Jewish leaders brought political, religious, and legal accusations against Paul (24:2-9).
 - He was a pest (*pestilent fellow*).
 - He was a *mover of sedition* (insurrection because of his preaching concerning the kingdom of heaven).
 - He was the ring-leader of the Nazarenes.
 - He profaned the Jewish temple by supposedly taking a Gentile into the inner court.
 - He was falsely accused of many things two years later (25:7).
 - 1.2 He gave a defense before the Roman Governor Felix (24).
 - 1) He rose from slavery to an appointment by Caesar.
 - 2) He was vile, cruel, and filled with lust.
 - 3) He used a "secret police" as a gang of assassins.
 - 4) He knew about Christianity but refused to believe (24:22).
 - 5) He married three times. His last wife Drusilla was the youngest of three daughters of King Agrippa I (Acts 12).
 - 6) He often accepted bribes for political favors (24:26-27).
 - 7) Eventually, his corruption caught up with him and he was replaced by Porcius Festus as governor (24:27).
 - 8) He may have died in the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in A.D. 79.
 - 1.3 He gave a defense before the Roman Governor Festus (25).
 - 1) To Festus, Christianity was superstition (25:19, note the tone of contempt for Christ, *one Jesus*).

- 2) He emphasized the reasoning of philosophy.
- 3) He used Paul for political advancement (25:9).
- 1.4 He gave a defense before King Agrippa II (26).
 - 1) Agrippa II was son of the Herod who killed James (Acts 12).
 - 2) He was unpopular with the Jews and fought with Rome against them in A.D. 70. Agrippa II was the last one to rule in the Herod dynasty.
 - 3) Bernice was his sister.
 - She left her first husband to marry her uncle.
 - She then left her uncle to live with Agrippa II in an incestuous relationship.
 - She finally left Agrippa to be the mistress of Roman General Titus.
 - She apparently had great influence over Agrippa (25:13, 23; 26:30).
 - There is no mention that Bernice was almost persuaded to be a Christian (26:28).
2. Throughout Paul's trials as a prisoner of the Roman government, God used his citizenship as a means of protection.
 - 2.1 His Roman citizenship kept him from an examination by scourging to get a confession from him (22:24-29).
 - 2.2 God spoiled a conspiracy on Paul's life (23:12-30).
 - 2.3 Hundreds of soldiers escorted Paul to Caesarea (23:23).
 - 2.4 He used his legal right as a Roman citizen to appeal to Caesar (25:11).
3. Notice lessons from Paul's defense before both Jewish and Roman officials (Acts 23-26).

Lessons from Paul's Trials

1. Always maintain a good conscience before God and men (23:1; 24:16).
 - 1.1 Make sure your conscience is based upon the Word of God (Hebrews 5:11-14).
 - 1.2 Maintaining a good conscience will take great effort (24:16, *exercise: take pains*).
 - 1.3 Great problems result from not maintaining a good conscience (I Timothy 1:18-20).
 - 1.4 Violating your conscience will desensitize it beyond feeling conviction (I Timothy 4:2).

2. Respect God-ordained authority (23:2-5; Romans 13:1-7).
 - 2.1 Paul addressed the Sanhedrin with respect (23:1).
 - 2.2 Paul corrected his quick response to the high priest (23:2-5).
 - 1) He was under great pressure from several recent attempts to kill him.
 - 2) Ananias violated an Old Testament law by ordering Paul to be struck without being condemned (23:3; Deuteronomy 25:1-4; John 7:51).
 - 3) Paul unknowingly violated the law (Exodus 22:28).
 - He was not aware that Ananias was the high priest (23:4-5).
 - Ananias was possibly not dressed in his priestly garments due to this meeting hastily being called.
 - Paul had been away from Jerusalem for many years (24:17).
 - He probably had eye problems later in life.
 - 2.3 Paul respectfully addressed corrupt Roman officials and answered them in a calm manner.
3. Rest in the promises of God (23:11; II Peter 1:4; II Corinthians 1:20).
 - 3.1 After another uproar among the Jews, Paul may have been discouraged (23:6-10).
 - 3.2 God is always present in trials (23:11a; II Timothy 4:16-18; Hebrews 13:5-6).
 - 3.3 God gives specific promises in trials (23:11b).
4. Share your faith in Christ with boldness (9:15-16; 24:24-25; 25:22-23).
 - 4.1 Paul used his personal trial to share the gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - 4.2 As Paul reasoned from the Scriptures, Felix came under conviction (24:25; John 16:7-11). Note that there is no indication that Drusilla trembled.
 - 1) He reasoned of *righteousness* (Romans 3:10, 23).
 - 2) He reasoned of the moral *restraint* of temperance, which he lacked (I Corinthians 9:24-27).
 - 3) He reasoned of the *retribution* in the judgment to come (Acts 17:30-31; Hebrews 9:27).
 - 4.3 Paul was not intimidated as he stood alone for Jesus Christ (25:22-23; 26:1-2).
 - 1) King Agrippa II and Bernice
 - 2) Festus
 - 3) The chief captains, each over one thousand soldiers (26:23)

- 4) The principal men of Caesarea
5. Live a blameless life (23:25-29; 25:7-8, 24-27; 26:30-32; Daniel 6:1-5; I Peter 4:15-16).
 - 5.1 Several times a government official found nothing worthy of death or bonds in Paul.
 - 5.2 Paul should have and could have been released by any of the Roman officials.
 - 5.3 Paul was willing to be punished for any violation of the law (25:7-12).
6. Use your testimony to share the gospel (26:1-29).
 - 6.1 Tell of your past before salvation (26:4-12).
 - 6.2 Tell of your conversion experience (26:13-15).
 - 6.3 Tell how your life has changed (26:16-21).
 - 1) Paul was no longer zealous for religious tradition.
 - 2) He went from persecuting the saints to being persecuted.
 - 3) He received a commission from Christ to preach the gospel.
 - 6.4 Emphasize repentance (26:20).
 - 6.5 Use *your* story to tell *Christ's* story (26:22-23).
 - 6.6 Courteously answer objections to the gospel (26:24-26).
 - 1) Some will think Christians are mad (26:24, *mad*: Greek word *mania*; crazy; a maniac).
 - 2) Some will be almost persuaded but not believe (26:28). Bernice may have held him back (26:30, *and Bernice*).
 - 6.7 Call people to a response (26:27-29, *altogether* saved).

Application of Truth

1. Christians in the first century dealt with corrupt government officials. Paul still honored them for the position they held. Do you respect the *office* even when the *man* violates the law (I Peter 2:11-17)?
2. If you were on trial for Christianity, how would you respond?
3. Would you be willing to stand alone if necessary for the cause of Christ?
4. Procrastinating a decision for Christ until later has severe consequences (Ecclesiastes 12:1; II Corinthians 6:2).
 - 4.1 Waiting for a convenient day for salvation involves an eternal risk (24:25b).
 - 4.2 Almost persuaded to be a Christian is to be lost (26:28).

#25 Surviving the Storms of Life

Introduction to Acts 27

1. In nature, people experience several types of storms.
 - 1.1 Tornadoes
 - 1.2 Thunderstorms
 - 1.3 Hurricanes
 - 1.4 Cyclones and typhoons (Euroclydon, 27:14; *tempestuous*: typhoon-like wind)
2. In Acts 27, Paul experienced a devastating storm that God was able to use for His glory. He suffered shipwreck on three different occasions (II Corinthians 11:25).
3. Stormy circumstances will happen in your life.
 - 3.1 Consequences of wrong decisions (like Jonah)
 - 3.2 Circumstances out of your control
 - 3.3 Persecution for the cause of Christ (I Peter 4:12; Revelation 2:10)
4. Notice how to survive the storms of life from Paul's experience with a storm.

Lessons from Paul's Storm Experience

1. Seek the refreshment of other believers (27:1-3). Paul had the encouragement of several friends (cf. Romans 15:32; I Corinthians 16:18; II Timothy 1:16).
 - 1.1 Luke the physician (*we... us...*; II Timothy 4:11a; Colossians 4:14)
 - 1.2 Aristarchus (27:2; Colossians 4:10) – possibly under arrest with Paul
 - 1.3 Friends in Sidon (27:3)
 - 1.4 History reveals that Julius the centurion became a believer and a good friend of Paul (27:3).
2. Listen to the counsel of the man of God (27:4-13).
 - 2.1 Sailing on the Mediterranean Sea from early October through February or March could be dangerous (27:4, 7, 9).
 - 2.2 Paul expressed his perception of the situation (27:10).
 - 2.3 Julius believed the master and owner of the ship instead of Paul (27:11-13).
 - 2.4 There are several reasons people make wrong decisions.
 - 1) Impatience (27:9a; Psalm 27:14)
 - 2) Unwise counsel (27:10-11; Psalm 1:1; I Kings 12:6-11)

- 3) Personal comfort (27:12a, *commodious*: convenient or suitable)
 - 4) Consensus of the majority (27:12b; Numbers 13-14; Matthew 7:13)
 - What is popular
 - Peer pressure
 - Political correctness
 - 5) Favorable circumstances (27:13)
3. Realize that some things will be out of your control (27:14-17).
- 3.1 There are times when you will need to ride out the storm (27:14-15, *we let her drive*). You may have to change your plans and schedule while going through a storm.
 - 3.2 Trials will mean *much work* (27:16).
 - 1) They were not fishing or tanning themselves on the deck!
 - 2) Notice that Paul, Luke, and Aristarchus helped the crew.
 - 3.3 They had to under-gird the ship to reinforce it in the storm (27:17).
4. Reconsider your values (27:18-19, 37-38).
- 4.1 They lightened the ship of everything unnecessary (27:18-19; Hebrews 12:1).
 - 4.2 Live for eternal priorities.
 - 1) A relationship with God
 - 2) The Word of God
 - 3) Souls were more important than the cargo or their mission (27:37-38).

We often focus on our mission and miss the people on the journey.

 - Family
 - Church family
 - Friends
 - Young converts
 - The unsaved
5. Keep your faith in God (27:20-29).
- 5.1 They were in the "hole of no hope" (27:20).
 - 5.2 Spend more time in prayer and fasting (27:21a).
 - 5.3 Remember the presence of God (27:21-23; Hebrews 13:5-6).
 - 5.4 Rest in the promises of God (27:24; 23:11; Isaiah 43:2).

- 5.5 Remove the spirit of fear (27:24; II Timothy 1:7) – much cheer; little fear
- 5.6 Believe that God will keep His Word (27:25).
- 5.7 Find a place to anchor for stability (27:27-29; Hebrews 6:18-19).
- 6. Use your storm to comfort others (27:22, 25, 33-36; II Corinthians 1:3-4).
 - 6.1 Paul encouraged them to be of good cheer.
 - 6.2 Paul as a prisoner quietly, confidently led the others through the storm.
 - 1) Conviction
 - 2) Courage: the overcoming of fear, not the absence of it
 - 3) Confidence in God
- 7. Care for your physical needs (27:33-36; I Kings 19).
 - 7.1 Proper nourishment
 - 7.2 Adequate rest
- 8. Remain with the ship in the storm (27:30-44).
 - 8.1 The ship can picture the local church.
 - 8.2 Even when the local church is struggling in the storm, it is still the safest place.
 - 8.3 Many abandon the local church in difficult times and suffer greatly for it.

Application of Truth

- 1. How do you react in the stormy times of life? With calm confidence in God?
- 2. Do you give God praise for His care in the storms of life (Psalm 107:23-31)?

#26 Finally in Rome

Introduction to Acts 28

1. Paul had a promise from God that he would testify before Caesar (23:11; 27:24).
2. He had planned for years to preach the gospel in Rome (Acts 19:21; Romans 1:11, 15; 15:22-24).
3. Paul was transported to Rome as a prisoner, but there is no evidence that he ever questioned God's methods. "Disappointments are often God's appointments."
4. Paul experienced shipwreck and a delay in his journey, but he trusted God regardless of the circumstances.
5. In Acts 28, Paul finally arrived in Rome.
6. Consider several lessons from this final chapter of Acts.

Lessons from Paul's Journey to Rome

1. Wait patiently for God in times of delay (28:1-11; Psalm 27:14; 40:1; 62:1, 5).
 - 1.1 The ship landed on the island of Melita (28:1, Malta today).
 - 1.2 Paul spent three months on this island (28:11).
 - 1.3 Notice how Paul responded to the delay in his journey to Rome.
 - 1) Accept the hospitality of others (28:2)
 - *Barbarous*: natives who did not speak Greek
 - Many times we miss what people do for us because of focusing on unpleasant circumstances.
 - 2) Humbly serve others (28:3a; Matthew 20:20-28).
 - 3) Watch out for the bite of the serpent (28:3b; Genesis 3:1-5; Revelation 12:9-11).
 - 4) Do not react to what people say about you, good or bad (28:4-6).
 - 5) Stay busy helping other people (28:7-9, *bloody flux*: dysentery).
 - 6) Leave the place of delay at your first opportunity (28:11).
2. Enjoy times of fellowship with other believers (28:12-15).
 - 2.1 Paul enjoyed fellowship at Puteoli (28:14).
 - 2.2 The saints from Rome traveled up to forty-one miles to meet Paul.
 - 1) The book of Romans had been sent to them about five years before.

- 2) The saints had greatly anticipated Paul's arrival.
- 2.3 Paul would need encouragement for the trials ahead (28:15b).
3. Suffer for the right reasons (28:16-22; I Peter 4:12-16).
 - 3.1 Paul committed nothing against his people or the customs of the Jews (28:17-18; I Corinthians 10:32-33).
 - 3.2 He was arrested for the hope of Israel (28:19-20; cf. Ephesians 2:12-13).
 - 3.3 Many express prejudice against true Christianity (28:22).
 - 1) Many consider Christianity to be just another religion (*sect*).
 - 2) People everywhere continue to speak against true Christianity.
 - Jews cursed Christians in their synagogues.
 - Jewish leaders sent chosen representatives throughout the empire to poison the minds of people against Christians.
4. Look for opportunities to witness for Jesus Christ (28:23-31).
 - 4.1 God used Paul's imprisonment to further the spread of the gospel (28:16).
 - 1) The entire palace guard heard the truth (Philippians 1:12-13). Soldiers kept Paul in four-hour shifts, giving him a "captive" audience.
 - 2) The gospel spread to *all other places* throughout Rome (1:13b).
 - 3) There were believers in Caesar's household (Philippians 4:22).
 - 4) The Word of God is not bound (II Timothy 2:9). Many missionaries were sent out of the church in Rome to the entire empire.
 - 4.2 Paul sought to reach the religious Jew with the gospel (28:22-29).
 - 1) He expounded and testified the kingdom of God (28:23a, *expounded*: to set before).
 - 2) He persuaded them concerning Jesus from the Old Testament Scriptures.
 - 3) He was very thorough in his presentation of the truth (28:23b, *from morning till evening*).
 - 4) He turned to the Gentiles when the Jews rejected the gospel (28:24-29).
 - Even with a clear presentation of the gospel, some will believe and some will not (28:24).
 - Paul confronted unbelief with the truth of Scripture (28:25-27; Isaiah 6:9-10; II Corinthians 3:14-16). Note that they closed their

own eyes to the truth.

- When one group refuses to believe, move on to another (28:28).
- Exalting reason over faith will hinder a person from believing the truth (28:29).

4.3 Paul's house became a preaching station in Rome (28:30-31).

- 1) He preached the kingdom of God with boldness (Titus 2:15).
- 2) He confidently taught things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

5. Get involved in "the rest of the story" (Acts 29...).

5.1 The Holy Ghost did not permit Luke to finish the account of Paul's life.

5.2 God the Holy Ghost used Paul to write several books of the New Testament while a prisoner of the Roman government.

- 1) Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians
- 2) Philemon
- 3) II Timothy (just before his execution)
- 4) Possibly Hebrews

5.3 Paul was released after his hearing before Nero.

- 1) He asked Philemon to pray for his release (Philemon 22)
- 2) Paul had been in Miletum (II Timothy 4:20).

5.4 Paul's second imprisonment was not as pleasant as his first.

- 1) He was probably held in the Mamertine Prison in Rome.
 - This prison was twelve feet under the ground and was cold and damp (II Timothy 4:13a, Paul wanted a cloak).
 - "...Neglect, darkness and stench make it hideous and fearsome to behold." (ancient historian Sallust)
- 2) History indicates that Nero executed Paul by beheading (II Timothy 4:6-8).

5.5 The history of Christianity is the record of the completion of the story.

Application of Truth

1. How patient are you when going through times of delay in the will of God?
2. Do you look for opportunities to share the truth about Jesus Christ?
3. What part are you playing in the "rest of the story" of the book of Acts?
4. Do you explain away the truth through your reasoning? Have you believed in Christ?