



ACTS
SENT WITH
GOOD NEWS

NOTES FOR:

**SMALL GROUPS
& INDIVIDUAL STUDY**

ALL SAINTS WICK

INTRODUCTION TO ACTS

Acts is Luke's second volume, following straight on from his Gospel. That continuity highlights Jesus' ongoing mission through his Spirit-enabled followers, sent out to the world with the Good News.

The account of the early Church recorded in the book of Acts is our history. The people mentioned in that book are our brothers and sisters. Of course, the people of God did not originate in the first century. God has always had a people for himself—a people to whom he displays his glory, and a people through whom he displays his glory. Nevertheless, the book of Acts marks a pivotal turning point in redemptive history.

What do we know about Luke? We know he was a doctor (Col 4:14). As such, he would have been educated and presumably wealthy. He made trips with Paul and was loyal to him, even while the apostle was in prison (Acts 28; 2 Tim 4:11). Luke dedicates the book to 'Theophilus' - possibly a wealthy backer who financed this account of the early church.

Acts describes the history of the mission of the early church, and because we are part of the church's history and mission, the book is of great importance to us. Acts is not merely the history of the early church; it's the history of the mission of the early church. And we are to continue that mission.

Like every inspired book of Scripture, Acts should be read in light of its genre. It is a historical book, which means that while in it Luke describes the events of the early church, he does not always commend every practice to us. Some of it is instructive, but other parts are descriptive and the context determines how we are to understand and apply it to life in Wick, Littlehampton and the world in 2021.

NOTES ON SMALL GROUPS

My hope for small groups is that they are a place of encouragement, challenge and fellowship on our Christian journeys. The questions offer a framework but please feel free to explore and develop your own discussions on God's word. The 1st question each week is intended as a sort of 'ice-breaker.'

My suggestion is that you begin each week with time for one another before getting into the Bible - find out how people are, what's God been showing them recently, what have you found encouraging or challenging - those sorts of things.

To finish, it would be good to pray together. You might like to use worship music, quiet, and other ways to respond.

Enjoy!

Please don't neglect to have fun and enjoy spending time together - even if you're meeting online. You may need to be inventive in finding ways to support one another and to include all members of your group.

MORE RESOURCES

These notes, Sunday sermons and more can be found at:
www.allsaintswick.org.uk/Resources

Recommended for further reading:

Acts 1-12 For You, A. Mohler

The Message of Acts, J. Stott

Amazing Acts: Enjoying the real life drama, G. Chrispin

1. ACTS 6:1-7

APPOINTING OF DEACONS

Are you able to share an example of a well-handled disagreement?

How can we see that the apostles considered caring for widows important?

Why was the unity of the church threatened?

What did they do to prevent disunity and how can we learn from that for All Saints?

Why must prayer and proclamation be central in pastoral ministry?

Is it possible for everyone to have a ministry in a local church?

Which ministries are most in danger of being overlooked or go un-thanked?

How can we make sure that different gifts are not turned into a spiritual hierarchy?

Pause and pray for the unity of our church family, asking God to continue spreading the gospel through us.

2. ACTS 6:8-15

STEPHEN ARRESTED

Have you ever surprised yourself by speaking up in a situation where you'd normally be too nervous?

From where did Stephen receive power?

How often does opposition arise when God's at work and how should we respond?

How are the Spirit and wisdom related?

How does Stephen's teaching relate to Jesus' own words about the temple?

Have they twisted some of the message of Jesus' early followers in their report?

Should we anticipate opposition when we see Jesus at work in our community?

How can we be ready to respond with graciousness and faithfulness?

Do you believe that when asked, the Holy Spirit will give you the right words to say?

(Homework! You might like to read the whole of chapter 7 during the next week as preparation for the next study)

3. ACTS 7:48-60

STEPHEN MARTYRED

Do you have a favourite Bible story or character that's always been special to you?

What impresses you most about Stephen's sermon?

Would you be able to share some form of overall Bible story if asked - even a very general one?

(If not, and many people wouldn't feel confident, you might enjoy borrowing the Bible Society Overview course, or doing it as a homegroup at some point - please speak to Tom)

Does Stephen's vision of Jesus at the right hand of the Father help when we face any opposition to our faith?

How must Paul (Saul) have later felt looking back on his involvement in this?

Does it explain why he's so passionate about God's amazing grace?

What is your reaction to Stephen's willingness to forgive his murderers?

Do you need to forgive some people in your life? What advice would Stephen give you?

How does Stephen's story inspire you?

4. ACTS 8:1-8

PERSECUTED AND SCATTERED

Do you know of places today facing heavy persecution for their faith?

Have you, or do you, encounter opposition because of what you believe?

In what ways was God's mission helped or hindered by persecution in the first century?

Have a read of Acts 1:8 and consider how this passage relates to Jesus' mission statement

Is it significant that it took opposition for them to really get going?

Why do you think the opposition led them to preach more rather than less?

What does this story teach about the importance of preaching Christ?

Is there a particular group of people that God has sent you amongst, where you could be a witness?

Pray for some of the specific opportunities that each group member has to be an ambassador for the gospel.

5. ACTS 8:26-40

PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN

Where is the furthest you've ever travelled to?

How does this story highlight God's passion for the nations?

What does this passage teach about being led by the Spirit?

What does this story teach about the need to explain the Bible to others, especially with so many misunderstandings?

What impresses you about the character of Philip?

Read Isaiah 52:13–53:12. What does this text teach about Jesus?

Why is baptism important?

How does Acts 8:26-40 reflect some of the same themes as Luke 24:13-35?

Why is Acts 8:26-40 a good illustration of Matthew 28:18-20?

How does the conversion of the Ethiopian develop the scope of the book of Acts?

Are we praying for opportunities to share the message of Jesus?

6. ACTS 9:1-19

JESUS AND SAUL

Are all conversion stories the same? Perhaps people in the group could share their own story?

If you have time, you might like to read some of the other passages related to Saul's conversion and note the similarities and differences:

Acts 22:1-21; 26:12-23; Romans 1:1-5; 1 Corinthians 15:8-10; Galatians 1:11-24; Philippians 3:4-11; and 1 Timothy 1:12-17.

What does this passage teach about God's grace in salvation?

What does this passage show us about Jesus?

What practical lessons might be learned from Ananias's inclusion in this story?

What about Jesus's commission of Saul most speaks to you?

What can we learn from Saul's trials?

Why is Barnabas an example worth following?

How could we feel increasingly confident to speak up boldly for Jesus?

How can Christians have peace even in times of crisis?

(Homework! It would be helpful if you can read chapter 10 in preparation for next week!)

7. ACTS 10:24-48

PETER AND CORNELIUS

What's the best example of hospitality you've been shown? A great meal perhaps? What made it so welcoming?

Why is the story of Cornelius's conversion so important for us as majority-Gentile churches?

How does Jesus the Messiah create one people out of Jews and Gentiles?

If Cornelius was so pious, then why did he need the gospel?

How does the story of Cornelius's conversion address the issue of partiality?

Why is table fellowship important in the Bible? How can we put that into practice - especially coming out of lockdown?

How does this passage highlight the nature and importance of gospel hospitality?

How did God "convert" Peter to the implications of Christianity?

Pray for opportunities to welcome people from inside and outside the church with hospitality and consider practical ways you might be able to do that over the next weeks and months.

8. ACTS 11:19-30

FAITH IN ANTIOCH

Have you ever been along to a church in a different country, what was that like?

Why is the church in Antioch so significant?

What made the evangelists in Antioch so effective?

As we share the gospel, is the outcome in people's hearts dependent on our brilliance or God's power?

How did the leaders disciple the converts in Antioch? What can we learn from this model?

What is their response to others' hardships? What motivates it? Do you know about our Pastoral Emergency Fund?

Why should Christians value diversity in the church?

What does this passage teach about worship and prayer?

What can we learn from Antioch about sending out people for evangelism and church planting?

Take a few moments to pray for the Lord to show you how best to support your local church in discipleship, evangelism and church planting.

9. ACTS 12:1-17

PETER IN - AND THEN OUT - OF PRISON

Can you share an answer to prayer?

Why should Christians expect opposition when seeking to share the gospel?

How does this passage illustrate God's ability to bring good out of really difficult situations?

Consider how in James and Peter's outcomes we see that God can work miracles, but sometimes doesn't remove the effects of a fallen world with evil people.

What do we see here about the importance of prayer?

Does this passage say something to you about receiving God's peace?

How does this story help us to bring big prayers to the Lord?

How does this passage provide believers with hope?

As you look back over this series, how do we see that God's message continues to advance despite all the seeming setbacks and obstacles?

Does it give you confidence for seeing God continue to work in Wick and Littlehampton now and into the future?

Read Romans 8:31-39 in light of this passage and allow it to lead you into a time of worship and prayer.