CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
JANUARY032026

Scripture Story: Acts 1:1-11.
Commentary: *The Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 1-3.

last words and witnesses



Photo by Alden Ho

flashlight

"The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning it has been God's plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency. The members of the church, those whom He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light, are to show forth His glory" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 9).

keytext

"He said to them: 'It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'"

(Acts 1:7, 8, NIV)

what do you think?

What do you think is the region that has the greatest need for mission work? (Rank the following in order for the greatest need for gospel work: 1—greatest need, 7—least need.)

____ My local church
____ My neighborhood
____ My school
____ Inner cities (urban areas)
____ Small towns (rural communities)
____ Regions of the world that have large groups of people who can't read
____ Unreached people groups around the world that have no Bible

Why did you rank the above this way?

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did you know?

Did you know that there are 7,360 languages spoken in the world today? Furthermore, one in five people are still waiting for the Bible in their own language. One hundred sixty-seven million people, speaking 2,014 languages, are still waiting for translation to begin.

Accessed from https://www.wycliffe.org.uk/about/our-impact/, January 20, 2021.



INTO THE STORY

"In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: 'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'

"Then they gathered around him and asked him, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?'

"He said to them: 'It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'

"After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

"They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.'

"Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city. When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers."

(Acts 1:1-14, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Read the story and *underline* what you think are the three most important sections of this story. Why?

Who is this person named Theophilus that the book of Acts is addressed to? How does Luke describe his approach to writing the story of the New Testament church?

This story contains the final words Christ spoke directly to the disciples before ascending to heaven. Compare these words with His final words in Matthew 28:19, 20. What are the similarities? differences?

Why do you think the disciples were told to wait in Jerusalem for "the promised gift"? What is this gift and what did the disciples know about how they were to function without Christ physically there with them?

How would you describe/define someone who is a "witness," and what were they to bear witness to?

Why do you think they were to start first in Jerusalem? How is Jerusalem different from Judea and Samaria and the ends of the earth?

punch lines

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" **(Matthew 28:19, 20, NASB).**

"And when He got into the boat, he who had been demon-possessed begged Him that he might be with Him. However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, 'Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you.' And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled" **(Mark 5:18-20, NKJV).**

"This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all" **(1 John 1:5, NKJV).**

"And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God" **(1 John 5:11-13, NKJV).**

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" **(Romans 1:16, NASB).**

further insight

"In every age the Lord has had His watchmen, who have borne a faithful testimony to the generation in which they lived." —Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles,* p. 11

Sabbath

Read Matthew 28:19, 20.

Read and respond to the ranking exercise in the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson. What do you see as the greatest mission field to witness to?

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As you read this commission, what is your response to Christ's words? How do you see yourself answering this call or fulfilling this command in your life?

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Sunday

Read Mark 5:18-20.

Read the *Into the Story* section and use the questions in the *Out of the Story* section to guide your study. As you read and respond to the questions, what are some of the key themes that you see in the story? What do you think were some of the emotions that went racing through the disciples as they heard Jesus say these words and then rise up and disappear into the heavens? Are there moments in your life when what God calls you to is clear and real? Perhaps there are other times when Jesus seems far away and you are not sure what the next step is. How might this story encourage you in the times when you feel like you don't know what to do?

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Monday

Read Acts 1:7, 8.

The Key Text to memorize this week declares God's plan to communicate His story to the world. Imagine the challenges that faced the disciples as they thought about being witnesses in Jerusalem. What would that cost them? The chief priests and general prejudice against Christ were still very strong. The next phase would be taking the gospel to Judea and Samaria. Already their perceptions of Samaritans were hateful. Who would listen? Why should they care? And how would they be able to take this news about Christ to the ends of the earth? Think about what these three phases of ministry look like today in your world. What phase would you say seems to be the most challenging? Why?

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Tuesday

Read Isaiah 43:10-12.

Read the quote from *The Acts of the Apostles* in the *Flashlight* section and compare this statement with the perceptions people have about your church. How can your church keep this mission at the forefront of all that you do in your community? Whom do you know in your church who is passionate about witnessing to others? Consider inviting them to share with you how they share their faith with others in such an effective way.

Wednesday

The *Punch Lines* in this week's lesson echo the call to be witnesses for Christ to the world. Some are the words of apostles while other passages are the very commands Christ gave to people who came to know Him as Savior. As you read these selections from Scripture, which verse is speaking to you today? What do you think God is trying to say to you personally?

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Thursday

Read 1 John 1:5.

This week's lesson is about being ready to bear witness to the risen Christ. Being ready to share what Christ means to you is a practical way to be prepared for any opportunity. Your testimony might follow three simple questions: (1) How did you come to know and trust Christ as your personal Savior? (2) Why do you think everyone should choose to become a follower of Christ? (3) What difference does Christ make in your life today? It is important to choose passages of Scripture that support your answers as well. Keep a copy of your testimony in your Bible, and be ready to share it with someone when the opportunity arises.

Friday

Read Romans 1:16.

Think about some of the experiences you have heard others share that describe how they were able to witness to others about their love for Christ. How does their story impact you? Reflect on the moments you have had a chance to share your faith in Christ with others. How did you experience God leading you to others? How do you think sharing your belief in Christ with someone else strengthens your walk with God?

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this week's reading*

The Acts of the Apostles (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 1-3.

* Unlikely Leaders is a special adaptation of *The Acts of the Apostles* created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.