

Introduction

Together, the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts comprise more than one quarter of the New Testament. As the author of both books, Luke tells the whole story of Jesus—from His life and ministry to the birth, expansion, and establishment of His church. This lesson looks at the beginning of the church and its subsequent growth, with the focus on how the corporate church relates to God, His covenants, Israel, government, and future world events.

The questions to consider include: Why did God establish the church? How does the church relate to Israel? How does the church fit into God’s ultimate plan of restoring creation?

This year we are memorizing Ephesians 2. This week’s verse is Ephesians 2:9:
“...not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

Day One

Read Acts 4; The Beginning of the Church

1. In Acts 4:1–4, what message were Peter and John preaching, and what were the responses of the Jewish religious leaders and the people who heard the message?

2. In verses 8–12, how did Peter respond to the Sanhedrin?

3. From verses 18–20, what warning did the religious council give to Peter and John, and what was their response?
 - a. According to Romans 13:1 and 1 Peter 2:13–14, what principle should direct an individual’s relationship with governmental authority? Do you think you are fulfilling that directive? Explain your answer.

 - b. In your own life, where do you fear man more than God, or seek the approval of men more than the approval of God? What steps can you take to grow in your reverence for God?

4. From verses 23–37, how did the church respond to the persecution of Peter and John?
 - a. What stands out to you from this text about the people’s response to opposition?

 - b. How do *you* respond to persecution and trials in your life? What principals from the example of the early church can you apply to help you grown to be more Christlike as you face opposition?

Day Two

Read Selected Scripture; The Purpose of the Church

1. From the following references, what are some purposes of the church? Then, as you continue to read through the book of Acts, look for how the early church fulfilled these purposes.
 - a. Acts 1:8;
 - b. Romans 11:11, 14

- c. 1 Corinthians 6:2–3
- d. Ephesians 1:9–10
- e. Ephesians 2:14–22
- f. Ephesians 3:10
- g. 1 Thessalonians 1:10
- h. 1 Timothy 3:15
- i. 2 Timothy 2:12
- j. 1 Peter 2:9
- k. 2 Peter 3:12
- l. Revelation 2:26–27

2. If you are a believer, how can you fulfill practically the directive in 1 Peter 2:9 to proclaim the “excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”?

Day Three

*Read Acts 5:1–8:3; **The Church Established***

1. From Acts 5:1–10, what were the sins of Ananias and Sapphira?
 - a. How do Matthew 6:1–6, 6:16–18, and 23:23–36 deepen your understanding of the text in Acts 5?
 - b. **Dig Deeper:** Using the study notes in your Bible or other resource, why do you think God immediately judged Ananias and Sapphira?
 - c. Find one or two other Scripture references that address how God regards sin. What implication does this have for the church and the culture today?
2. According to Acts 6:1–6, why did the apostles appoint men to help serve the widows instead of seeing to it themselves?
 - a. What were the qualifications of those chosen, and how does that reflect the priority of leadership?
 - b. What steps can you take to be more qualified to serve in the church as the Lord provides opportunity?

3. In verse 4, what was to be the focus for the apostles?
 - a. Though believers today are not apostles, should that priority be the same for the church now? Use Scripture to support your answer.
 - b. How can you strengthen these disciplines in your own life? Be specific and practical.
4. Read Acts 6:8–7:60, the account of Stephen who became the first martyr for his testimony of faith in Christ. What do you find particularly convicting or encouraging in this testimony?
 - a. How can you practically support believers around the world who are being persecuted for their faith?

Day Four

*Read Acts 8–9; **The Church Spreads/Saul's Conversion***

1. In Acts 8, how did God use the persecution of the church for good? Cite specific verses to support your answer.
2. From the account in verses 9–24, do you think Simon was a true believer? Explain your answer.
 - a. What does this account teach about true faith?
3. From Acts 9:1–18, in two or three sentences, briefly summarize Saul's conversion.
 - a. From Philippians 3:4–14, how did Paul describe his life before and after Christ?
 - b. Many people proclaimed faith in Christ and joined the church during this time, so why do you think Saul's conversion was described in such length and detail?

Day Five

*Read Acts 10–12; **Peter and the Inclusion of Gentiles in the Church***

1. Read the account of Peter and Cornelius in Acts 10. According to verses 34–43, what did Peter preach?
 - a. From verses 44–48, what was the result?

- b. According to Acts 11:1–18, what was the response of the church in Judea?

2. Read Ephesians 2:11–22 and explain in two or three sentences what is happening theologically in Acts 10–12.

3. What practical steps could you take to help make your local church more like the body of believers depicted in these chapters in the book of Acts? Consider specifically their example of prayer, community, purity, and evangelism.

Niednagel Adapted from Every Woman's Grace at Grace Community Church of Sun Valley, CA January 11, 2016