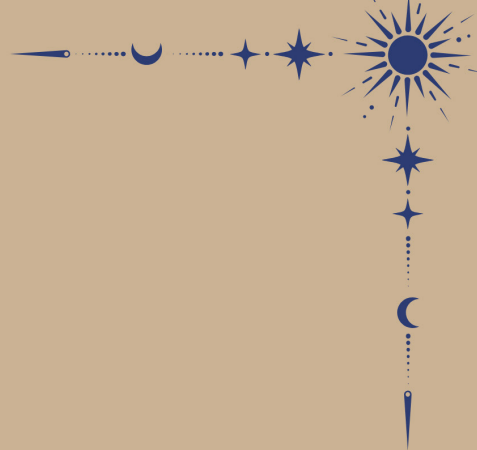
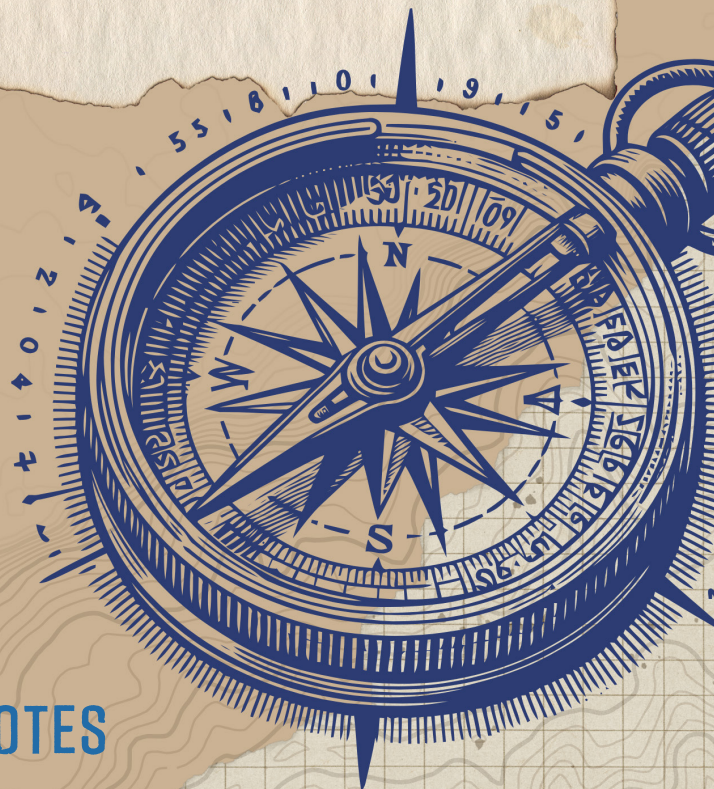


*i take this opportunity  
write you a few lines to inquire  
your health i hope you are in  
lth i miss you very much  
at i hope the time will  
when you will be re  
mily again for.*



# ACTS

LIVING AS A SENT PEOPLE



LEADERS NOTES

# small groups

LIFE TOGETHER

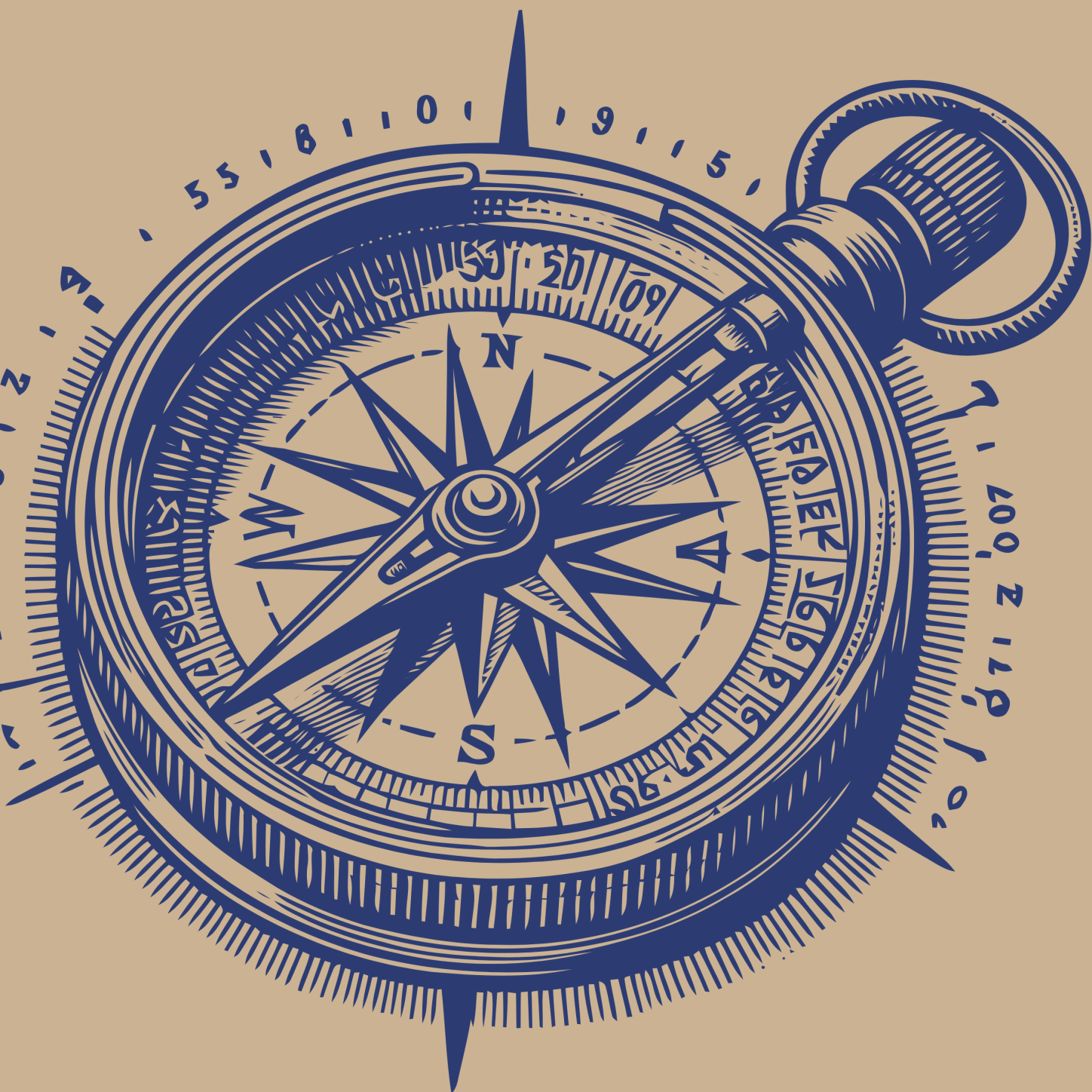
*“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

**ACTS 1:8**

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# INTRODUCTION

Acts and Luke were originally one work, written to 'Theophilus', by Luke, a physician and companion of the apostle Paul. It is unknown whether Theophilus was a real person. Theophilus means: 'lover of God', so this name may be symbolic of anyone reading the scriptures, as if Luke and Acts are dedicated to lovers of God.

The events of the book of Acts take place immediately after Jesus' ascension to heaven and outline the ministry of the apostles and the growing number of disciples as they lay foundations for the early church. It is where Christians are first mentioned in the scriptures as the church is established by those who are in Christ, which now includes Jews and the Gentiles. This series follows Acts from 1-12, ending right before Paul's three missionary journeys throughout the ancient world.

**Acts 1-7** takes place amongst the growth of the early church within Jerusalem describing the ascension, Pentecost and the increasing reach of the preaching of the disciples. **Acts 8-12** outlines the spread of the Gospel outside of Jerusalem as the disciples minister to people in Judea, Samaria, the road to Gaza, Caesarea, Damascus, likely Arabia, Lydda, Joppa, Antioch, Phoenicia, Cyprus and Cyrene.

Acts was written to outline the story of how the foundations for the early church were laid after Jesus' death and resurrection and the ways in which God sends out his spirit after Jesus' ascension.

Acts depicts God's sovereignty over the way the disciples carry out their ministry and are guided by the spirit. The identity of Christ is explained further as we learn of his lordship, the way he fulfilled Old Testament prophecies and how he grants us salvation through faith. **Acts outlines how God works through the spirit and his reign over the kingdom of God over the church. The establishment of the early church places emphasis on the ideas of the church as one united group of people, an introduction to evangelism, the message of the gospel and persecution for the sake of the gospel.**

Each study in this series follows the journey of the early church in Acts and weaves in the missional heartbeat of St Paul's Castle Hill: Bring, Build, Send. We see Jesus sending his people with the power of the Spirit to bring others to him, build them up in community and truth, and send them again – just as we are sent.

## STUDY ONE – ACTS 1:1–14

# WAITING TO BE SENT

“The church’s mission begins not with action but with expectation. Obedience is seen in their waiting.”

Darrell Bock, *Acts* (BECNT)

### OVERVIEW:

Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to empower his disciples for mission, redirecting their focus from political hopes to gospel witness. As they wait in prayerful unity, they model how the church is built up before being sent out.

### DISCUSSION STARTERS:

Share about a time you had to wait for something really important. What helped you stay hopeful?

What stood out to you from Sunday’s sermon?

### READ ACTS 1:1–14

1. What does Jesus promise in verses 4–5 and 8, and how does that shape the disciples’ expectations?

*Jesus promises the Spirit so they can be witnesses - sent with power to bring the gospel to the world.*

2. Why do the disciples ask about restoring the kingdom to Israel (v.6), and how does Jesus redirect them?

*They’re thinking politically; Jesus speaks of global mission. Being sent is about witness, not control.*

3. What’s the significance of Jesus’ ascension in vv.9–11?

*Jesus reigns now and will return. The church is sent in the time between, with a mission that matters.*

4. How does the promise of the Spirit (v.8) connect to being 'sent'?

*We're not sent alone - the Spirit empowers us to bring Jesus to others.*

5. How do the disciples respond in vv.12–14, and what does that show about being prepared to be sent?

*They pray, wait, and seek unity. Being sent begins with being shaped by God together.*

"Before they could witness, they must wait; before they could serve, they must be served; before they could go out into the world, Jesus must go up into heaven and the Spirit must come down."

**John Stott, *The Message of Acts***

6. Why is prayer such a key part of their preparation?

*It expresses dependence on God's timing and power. Sent people pray first.*

7. How does this passage lay a foundation for a "Bring, Build, Send" movement?

*The risen Christ sends his people to bring others, they gather in unity to be built up, and they are prepared to go again.*

## TRANSFORMATION

What would it look like to prepare your heart, home, or group to be sent?

Where is God calling you to wait on him before stepping out?

## STUDY TWO – ACTS 2:1–21, 42–47

# THE SPIRIT SENDS A NEW COMMUNITY

“Here is the first Christian community – Spirit-filled, gospel-shaped, radically generous, and consistently growing. This is a missional people.”

David Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Pillar)

### OVERVIEW:

The Spirit’s arrival empowers the church for multilingual mission and unites them in teaching, generosity, worship, and growth. This Spirit-filled community is built up in love and sent daily to bring others to Jesus.

### DISCUSSION STARTERS:

What’s something you’ve seen that created a powerful ripple effect?

What stood out to you from Sunday’s sermon?

### READ ACTS 2:1–21

1. What signs accompany the Spirit’s arrival, and how do they point to a global mission? (vv.1–13)

*Language and fire show God empowering his people to speak across barriers. The sent church begins.*

2. How does Peter explain what is happening (vv.14–21)?

*This is the fulfilment of Joel - God is sending his Spirit on all kinds of people for worldwide witness.*

### READ ACTS 2:42–47

3. What are the core commitments of the early church (vv.42–43)?

*Teaching, fellowship, prayer, breaking bread. Building one another up to stay strong and faithful.*



4. How does their generosity and life together reflect gospel Transformation (vv.44–45)?

*Sharing flows from hearts transformed by Jesus. They're being built into a new kind of family.*

5. How do joy and worship shape their daily lives (vv.46–47)?

*Their gladness and praise point others to Jesus. Being built in community prepares them to bring others.*

6. What is the result of their life together in the Spirit (v.47)?

*People are being brought to Jesus daily. A built-up church is a compelling witness.*

7. How do we see “Bring, Build, Send” in this passage?

*Spirit-filled people are built up in gospel community and sent into everyday life to bring more to Jesus.*

“The Spirit did not come just to create individual experiences but to form a new people devoted to the apostles’ teaching and the mission of God.”

Ajith Fernando, Acts (NIVAC)

## TRANSFORMATION

How could our church better reflect this kind of Spirit-empowered community?

Where are you seeing signs of people being sent and bringing others?

## STUDY THREE – ACTS 3:1–20

# A HEALING THAT SENDS THE GOSPEL FORWARD

“Peter gives the crowd more than a spectacle. He gives them Christ – and calls them to repent and receive refreshment from God.”

John Stott, *The Message of Acts*

### OVERVIEW:

A miraculous healing leads to gospel proclamation, showing how acts of compassion can open doors to truth. Peter calls the crowd to repentance, bringing them to Jesus and sending them into new life.

### DISCUSSION STARTERS:

Share about a time when someone’s compassion opened the door for a bigger conversation.

What stood out to you from Sunday’s sermon?

### READ ACTS 3:1–20

1. What do Peter and John encounter at the temple, and how do they respond (vv.1–7)?

*A man in need receives not money, but healing in Jesus’ name. Being sent means offering what only Jesus can give.*

2. What is the response of the man and the crowd (vv.8–11)?

*Praise and amazement. The miracle leads to a moment of gospel clarity. This is how ‘bring’ often starts: with visible grace.*

3. How does Peter explain who Jesus is in vv.12–16?

*He brings attention back to Jesus – the servant, the righteous one, the author of life. Sent people make much of Jesus.*

4. How does Peter speak both truth and hope in vv.17–19?

*He names sin, yet invites repentance and refreshment. This is how sent people speak: with grace and truth.*

5. What role does repentance play in this story of mission?

*It's the pivot point. People are brought to Jesus when they turn to him in response to the gospel message.*

6. How is this event connected to God's wider plan through the prophets (vv.18–21)?

*Jesus fulfils Scripture - the sent church continues a long-promised mission.*

7. How does this moment model the rhythm of “Bring, Build, Send”?

*The miracle brings people close, Peter builds with truth, and the call to repentance sends people to new life in Christ.*

## TRANSFORMATION

Where is God giving you opportunity to speak the name of Jesus with compassion?

What would it look like to “bring” someone through gospel truth this week?

## STUDY FOUR – ACTS 6:1–7:1; 7:51–8:3

# SENT THROUGH SUFFERING

“The scattering of the church becomes the scattering of the seed. Persecution spreads the gospel.”

Ajith Fernando, Acts (NIVAC)

### OVERVIEW:

As the church grows, leaders are raised up and the gospel spreads – even through persecution. Stephen’s bold witness and death mark a turning point, sending believers out to new regions with the message of Christ.

### DISCUSSION STARTERS:

When have you seen God use a hard situation to advance his work?

What stood out to you from Sunday’s sermon?

### READ ACTS 6:1–7:1; 7:51–8:3

1. What issue does the early church face in Acts 6, and how do they respond?

*They build the church by equipping new leaders - a vital “build” moment so that gospel work can expand.*

2. What do we learn about Stephen and his ministry in vv.8–10?

*Bold, Spirit-filled, wise. He models what it means to be built up and sent to speak courageously.*

3. How does Stephen confront the religious leaders in 7:51–53?

*He calls them to repent, echoing the prophets. Sent ones speak truth even when it costs.*



4. What vision does Stephen have as he dies (vv.55–56)?

*He sees Jesus standing - as if receiving him. Sent people live with eyes on heaven, not just earth.*

5. What is the impact of Stephen's death on the early church (8:1–3)?

*Scattering leads to gospel spreading. God sends through hardship — mission doesn't*

"Stephen's speech is not a defence but a prophetic confrontation. It is a missionary moment wrapped in martyrdom."

**Craig Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary***

6. How does this episode deepen our understanding of what it costs to be sent?

*Being sent might mean being misunderstood, rejected, or even harmed - but God is at work.*

7. Where do you see "Bring, Build, Send" in this story?

*Building strong leaders (6), sending Stephen with boldness (7), and scattering believers to bring the gospel wider (8).*

## TRANSFORMATION

What comfort or challenge do you draw from Stephen's example?

How can you prepare to be sent, even into hard places or situations?

## STUDY FIVE – ACTS 8:4–40

# THE GOSPEL CROSSES BORDERS

“Everywhere they went, the scattered believers gossiped the gospel. The mission advanced without a central strategy – just obedience to the Spirit.”

John Stott, *The Message of Acts*

### OVERVIEW:

Scattered by persecution, believers continue bringing the gospel to Samaritans and a high-ranking Ethiopian official. The Spirit sends Philip to a divine appointment, showing that God’s mission includes every people and place.

### DISCUSSION STARTERS:

Where have you seen the gospel move into unexpected places or groups?

What stood out to you from Sunday’s sermon?

### READ ACTS 8:4–40

1. What do scattered believers do after Stephen’s death (vv.4–8)?

*They preach Jesus. Even in loss, they are sent with a message to bring.*

2. How does Simon respond to the gospel (vv.9–24)?

*He believes, but his heart is confused. This is a cautionary tale - not everyone who is “brought” is yet built.*

3. How do Peter and John’s actions strengthen the church in Samaria?

*They ensure the Spirit’s presence and gospel clarity - vital for healthy mission.*

4. What is the Spirit’s role in sending Philip to the Ethiopian (vv.26–30)?

*The Spirit directs sent people into divine appointments to bring Christ to the world.*

5. How does Philip bring the gospel to the Ethiopian, and what is the response (vv.31–38)?

*He starts with Scripture, points to Jesus, and baptises him. A powerful picture of being sent to bring.*

6. Why is this Ethiopian's inclusion significant?

*A foreigner, eunuch, outsider - now part of the kingdom. God sends us beyond barriers.*

7. How do we see "Bring, Build, Send" in this chapter?

*The scattered are sent, Philip brings the gospel, the Ethiopian is built up through Scripture and baptism, and will likely bring it back to Africa.*

"God sends Philip not only to a person but to a people – this Ethiopian man becomes the firstfruits of Africa's response to the gospel."

Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People*

## TRANSFORMATION

What border – cultural, relational, or spiritual – might God be sending you across?

Who are you walking with that God might be preparing to send?

## STUDY SIX – ACTS 9:1–22

# SENT BY GRACE

“The same grace that saves also commissions. Saul is turned from persecutor to proclaimer in the same breath.”

John Stott, *The Message of Acts*

### OVERVIEW:

Jesus turns his fiercest enemy into his most passionate witness. Saul's radical conversion shows how no one is beyond God's grace and how being brought to Jesus leads immediately to being sent for Jesus.

### DISCUSSION STARTERS:

What was a low-stakes life-changing moment for you?  
(e.g. Starbursts being discontinued, learning the book of Revelation has no “s” in its title)

What stood out to you from Sunday's sermon?

### READ ACTS 9:1–22

#### 1. How did God confront Saul?

*Confronted by a flashing light from heaven, v.3, the voice of Jesus calls Paul to follow his instructions. This calling would have been very recognisable for a man who knew the scriptures, due to the blinding light (allusion to Moses speaking with God in Exodus 34) and the repetition of Saul's name (allusion to Samuel in 1 Samuel 3).*

#### 2. If Paul knew the Lord was speaking to him, why did he ask who he was?

*Paul was hoping that he was justified in his persecution of Christians. He heard that God said, “Why do you persecute me?” (v.4) Yet he still hoped the God that met with him was his idea of who God was, rather than that of whom he was persecuting.*

#### 3. What was the purpose behind blinding Saul for three days?

*God called a reluctant Ananias in a vision, calling him to heal Saul's blindness so that Ananias may heal him, give him new purpose, to be filled with the holy spirit and be*



*baptised (v.17-19). Paul was to be God's chosen instrument to proclaim the Lord's name to the Gentiles.*

#### 4. What caused Saul to change his mind and lifestyle?

*Saul learnt something that couldn't be forgotten that God can use anyone for his purposes and is gracious to those he chooses. Saul, receiving the holy spirit, now truly understands the weight of God's calling to him.*

#### 5. What was Saul's response to God calling him?

*Luke makes the point that after he was transformed, he at once he began to preach v.(20). He preached that Jesus is the son of God, the very one whom he persecuted. Soon after, he tried to join the ranks of the disciples who were scared of him (v.26).*

#### 6. What did it mean for Saul to suffer for God's name?

*v.16, the Lord outlines to Ananias that he wishes to use him to show Saul how he must suffer through his name. Saul is quickly introduced to this suffering in v.28-29, when Saul speaks boldly of the name of the lord and debates with Hellenistic Jews (much like Stephen did, following in the footsteps of the very one he killed), who then tried to kill him. The rest of Paul's life was riddled with suffering for the gospel, with beatings (Acts 14, Acts 16 and 2 Corinthians 11), imprisonment (Acts 16 and remains in custody throughout Acts 21-28), Shipwrecked (Acts 27 and 2 Corinthians 11) Physical exhaustion (2 Corinthians 11) and many more afflictions (Acts 13, Acts 17 and 2 Corinthians 12).*

"Conversion is not just a change of heart but a reorientation of purpose. God saves and sends."

Ajith Fernando, Acts (NIVAC)

## TRANSFORMATION

Do you think your idea of who God is contradicts who the Bible says he is?

Can you recall God provoking a transformative experience in your life? Was it a cause and effect?

What holds you back from suffering for God's name?

In your context, how might you find hope in the Lord and 'baffle' (v.22) those around you?

## STUDY SEVEN- ACTS 11:19-30

# SENT BEYOND BOUNDARIES

"The church at Antioch becomes the model for all mission-minded churches: diverse, gospel-shaped, and ready to send."

David Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles (Pillar)*

### OVERVIEW:

The gospel spreads beyond Jerusalem not through strategy, but through scattered, faithful believers. At Antioch, a new kind of church emerges—cross-cultural, generous, Spirit-led, and ready to send others.

### DISCUSSION STARTERS:

Can you think of a place where you have felt really welcomed?

What were your reflections leaving this place?

What stood out to you from Sunday's sermon?

### READ ACTS 11:19-30

1. Who are Barnabus and Paul preaching to in this passage? Who would be the modern-day equivalent?

*The people of Antioch located in Syria (modern-day Turkey), a Roman colony also with a large Jewish population.*

2. How did Barnabus respond to God's work amongst the nations?

*(Verse 23), expressed gladness for the work of the Lord. Yet Barnabus doesn't just leave the nations after God has worked, he continues to encourage the Lord's people to continue remaining true to the Lord wholeheartedly, because he cares for them.*

3. What was Barnabus' attitude to encouraging new believers in v.23-24?

*To use the gifts God had given him not to his own advantage but to have people brought to the Lord. This also included encouraging them in the faith out of love, Barnabas name also means 'son of encouragement' (Acts 4:36). His spirit given ability to discern the way God works in others gives him a glad and encouraging spirit.*

4. How do the disciples respond to prophets led by the spirit?

*They respond with generosity, assisting partnered churches and giving according to what each church had available. (Verse 29), the disciples each gave what they were able, much like the Parable of the rich man (Luke 12:13-21). They actively took notice of the prophets led by the spirit and allowed themselves to be led by the spirit also, by giving what they were able, not just what they could spare.*

5. Why might Antioch have been the first place to call believers Christians? (Verse 26)

*Antioch was an ethnically and religiously diverse area, with many Jews and Gentiles coming to faith because Jesus had told his people to take on a new identity. This can be found in Jesus' directions like 'take up your cross' (Matthew 26) and 'put off your old self' (Ephesians 4). Antioch made sense for the first ever naming of disciples as 'Christians' because God's people were now identified as not just one people group, believers are now comprised of people of all nations who have been brought into the faith.*

6. How does this church embody "Bring, Build, Send"?

*People are brought to Jesus through bold witness, built up by gifted leaders, and sent with resources and care to bless others.*

"God works through ordinary believers scattered by hardship. Mission is not postponed by suffering – it is often born from it."

Darrell Bock, Acts (BECNT)

## TRANSFORMATION

Have you ever felt like an outsider amongst Christians?

How can we be more inclusive and welcoming with new Christians, unfamiliar with the idea of a church family?

The church in Antioch didn't wait for the famine to arrive before acting. How can we be diligent in acting for our church family?

What does it look like for you to remain faithful to the lord in your life?

## STUDY EIGHT – ACTS 4:32–37; 5:12–29

# SENT TO SPEAK BOLDLY

“The apostles are not trying to preserve themselves but to proclaim the resurrection. The church is bold because they know whom they serve.”

David Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles (Pillar)*

### OVERVIEW:

Radical generosity and gospel power mark the early church, but opposition soon follows. Despite threats, the apostles are built up by God's presence and sent back into public witness, declaring that obedience to God comes first.

### DISCUSSION STARTERS:

What stops people from speaking about Jesus openly?  
What helps them do it?

What stood out to you from Sunday's sermon?

### READ ACTS 4:32–37; 5:12–29

1. What do we learn about the early church's generosity in 4:32–37?

*Radical unity and sharing reflect deep gospel Transformation. Built-up disciples hold loosely to possessions and live generously to bless others.*

2. How do Barnabas' actions model gospel-shaped living?

*His giving reflects both encouragement and sacrifice. He is being built up in the gospel and helps build others by meeting needs.*

3. How does God continue to work powerfully through the apostles in 5:12–16?

*Signs and wonders confirm Jesus' ongoing mission through his sent people. The church is visibly distinct.*



4. Why are the religious leaders threatened, and what do they do (vv.17–18)?

*The gospel's growth threatens their control. Sent ones often face resistance from those protecting power or tradition.*

5. What is surprising about the angel's command in vv.19–20?

*Despite imprisonment, the apostles are sent straight back into public ministry - a clear signal that the gospel can't be stopped.*

6. How do the apostles respond when questioned by the authorities (vv.27–29)?

*Their boldness is rooted in gospel clarity. Being sent means prioritising God's authority over human threats.*

7. Where do we see the rhythm of “Bring, Build, Send” in this passage?

*The apostles are built up through prayer and community, sent to preach boldly, and through their message many are brought to Jesus.*

“We must obey God rather than men. That is not just an act of defiance but a declaration of allegiance.”

Ajith Fernando, Acts (NIVAC)

## TRANSFORMATION

What would boldness look like for you this week?

How can we help each other be built up for courageous witness?

## STUDY NINE – ACTS 12:1–24

# SENT UNDER SOVEREIGNTY

“The final word is not Herod’s sword but God’s Word. The church is always safest in the hands of its sovereign Lord.”

John Stott, *The Message of Acts*

### OVERVIEW:

In the face of violent persecution, the church turns to prayer and sees God miraculously rescue Peter. Herod’s downfall and the gospel’s unstoppable advance affirm that those sent by God can trust fully in his power and plan.

### DISCUSSION STARTERS:

Have you ever seen God work powerfully when things seemed darkest?

What stood out to you from Sunday’s sermon?

### READ ACTS 12:1–24

1. What does Herod do to the church, and how does the church respond (vv.1–5)?

*Persecution intensifies. The church’s response is fervent prayer - depending on God as they’re built up in trial.*

2. How does God answer their prayer in vv.6–11?

*A miraculous rescue. Even when the church is powerless, God sends angels to accomplish his mission.*

3. How do the believers react to Peter’s escape (vv.12–17)?

*Their surprise reveals both their faith and humanity. God’s sovereignty often exceeds our expectations.*

4. What happens to Herod in vv.20–23, and what does this say about opposing God's mission?

*Herod exalts himself and is struck down. God is sovereign over every earthly power that tries to hinder his mission.*

5. What does v.24 say about the outcome of these events?

*The word of God spreads and flourishes. The sent church cannot be stopped because God himself is behind it.*

6. What roles do prayer, mission, and God's intervention play in this story?

*A praying, witnessing church is God's chosen instrument. Even suffering can't stop what God is doing through those he sends.*

7. How does this chapter reinforce the "Send" part of our mission?

*In the face of power and opposition, the church remains on mission. Sent people trust in a sovereign God and keep going*

"Herod's death contrasts with Peter's deliverance: God may not save every life, but He never lets His mission fail."

Craig Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*

## TRANSFORMATION

What would it look like to live as though God's mission truly can't be stopped?

How can you support others who are sent – whether near or far?

