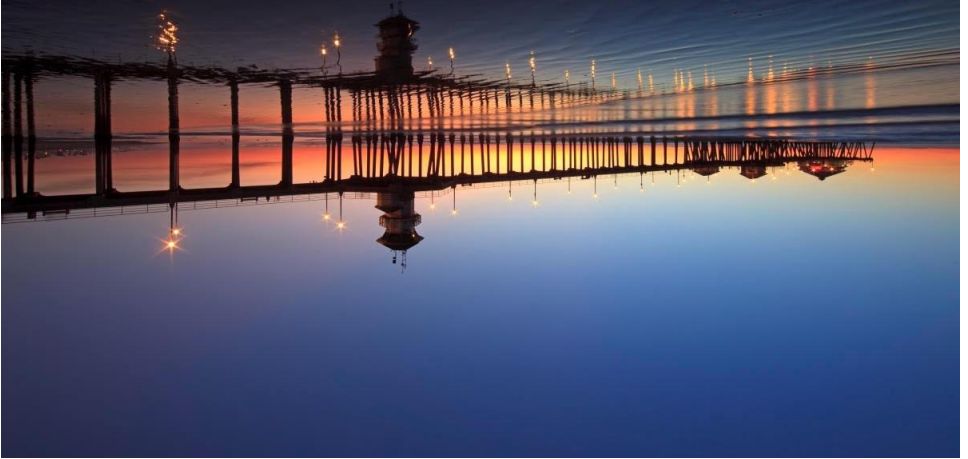


UPSIDE DOWN



**A Study Through
The Book of Acts**



Introduction

Welcome to the Upside Down study. This booklet matches up with our sermon series with the same title. The purpose of both the sermon series and the study is to see the story of Acts as *our story*. Like the disciples of Jesus we see in the book, we take part in Jesus' mission. God's Spirit works through us to accomplish God's redemptive purposes. Like these disciples, we too can be people who have "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6).

During this series, we are focusing on what it means to follow Jesus. *Who are disciples of Jesus?* Disciples are those who **know** Jesus as Lord and Savior, who **grow** together to become like Him, and who **go** on mission with Jesus. This framework of know-grow-go will be used in each week's study. It is our hope that this study might help you to embrace this identity and calling.

Not Just a Ticket to Heaven (Acts 1:1-11)

This week's passage kicks off our series and the Kingdom story of the book of Acts. Jesus had made Himself known to His apostles and taught them about God's Kingdom. But they were still not truly understanding what Jesus mission was and is. Acts 1:1-11 helps us to understand the mission of Jesus' followers in all times and places.

KNOW



According to Acts 1:1-3, Jesus spent many days preparing the apostles for the mission He had for them. Why do you think Jesus taught them about “the Kingdom of God”? How might you define God's Kingdom? What does it mean to know Jesus as King?

It is clear from Acts 1:4-11 that Jesus' apostles were not on the same page as Jesus. The apostles were concerned about the restoration of Israel as a nation. How did Jesus redirect them in 1:6-8? How will they be able to accomplish this mission?

GROW



Jesus calls all who follow Him to be His witnesses. How prepared do you feel to do this? What stories do you have to tell about how Jesus has changed you? How can you get ready to tell others the good news about Jesus?

GO



You can be a witness to Jesus in any area of your life. Consider who in your world does not know Jesus as Savior and King. Pray with others for opportunities to share this good news and your faith story.

In Other Words (Acts 2:1-13)

In this week's passage, God begins to fulfill His promise to send His Spirit to Jesus' followers (see Acts 1:4-8). This is also the beginning of God's Spirit empowering them to be Jesus' witnesses. This includes speaking so our hearers can understand God's message. We see here the start of Jesus' mission to spread the good news to all peoples.

KNOW



Acts 2:1-4 tells the story of the outpouring of God's promised Spirit on Jesus' disciples. What did they see, hear, and experience? What thoughts and feelings might they have had?

In 2:5-13, we see the first reactions to the Holy Spirit coming at Pentecost. Later, Peter would explain the meaning and significance of this event (see 2:14-41). What were the different responses to Jesus' disciples being "filled with the Holy Spirit"? What might be the significance of all these different people hearing God's "mighty works" in their own languages?

GROW



Read Galatians 5:22-24. In this passage, Paul lists some major ways that living by God’s Spirit leads to becoming more like Jesus. Which ones do you see in your life or want more of? Which of “the fruit of the Spirit” might God’s Spirit be growing in you?

GO



What fears do you have about being a witness to Jesus? How can you prepare yourself to meet others where they are at with the good news of Jesus?

According to Jesus in Acts 1:8, the Holy Spirit empowers Jesus’ disciples to be His witnesses. Have you ever experienced this empowerment? How would you describe this experience? How do you desire God’s power and leading to witness for Jesus?

Inside Out Community (Acts 2:43-47)

Jesus told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem for God's promised Spirit to come upon them. After Jesus had ascended to heaven, they obeyed Jesus' command to wait. While waiting and praying, the Holy Spirit came upon them in power during the Jewish Feast of Pentecost. This week's passage is a short summary of what life was like for them after the Spirit came. Basically, they were turned *inside out*.

KNOW



In Acts 2:42-47, Luke summarizes the community life of Jesus' first disciples. What stands out to you in these verses about their life together? To what were they committed? What were they valuing?

Now, consider the impact of Jesus' disciples on those around them. How were the inhabitants of Jerusalem viewing them at this time? How was God working among and through them?

GROW



In what ways does this picture of community life seem attractive or compelling? What might be some challenges for Jesus' disciples in pursuing this?

The picture of Jesus' followers together is an "inside out" community. How might you need Jesus to turn you inside out to be a part of it? Ask God to give you wisdom and direction in answering this question.

GO



Think of how you can become a part of the kind of community we see in Acts 2:42-47. How does our church currently reflect this pattern? How do we still need to grow together? To what can you commit to make this more of a reality? Tell another follower of Jesus about this commitment.

Peter Unfinished (Acts 4:1-21)

In this week's passage, we get a clear picture of Peter's transformation by God. During the trial of Jesus, Peter denied Jesus (see Luke 22:54-62). Now, Peter is boldly proclaiming who Jesus is and willing to face death in serving Him. We, too, are unfinished and need God's transformation.

KNOW



In Acts 4:13, many Jewish religious leaders are astonished by “the boldness of Peter and John” as “educated, common men.” What message did Peter and John proclaim about Jesus in 4:8-12? In what ways was their message bold? How does their message help you to know Jesus as Savior?

The Jewish religious leaders knew that they could not “punish” Peter and John at this point. Instead, they warned them to not “speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.” What was their response to this warning in 4:19-20? What do their words reveal about what it means to know and follow Jesus?

GROW



Consider the example of Peter and John in their bold witness. This boldness came from the power of the Holy Spirit. What might it look like for you to follow this example? How might you need to grow in your trust of Jesus to be a *bold* witness?

GO



Share about your fears and desires in being a bold witness to Jesus. In what ways do you need encouragement?

This week, ask Jesus to give you opportunities to share your faith in Him. Pray that the Holy Spirit would guide and empower you. Trust that the Holy Spirit can speak through you about Jesus.

A Divine Encounter (Acts 8:1-3, 26-40)

Acts 8:1-3 records the first major persecution of the church. This led to most of Jesus' followers being scattered from Jerusalem. As Jesus' followers fled persecution, the Gospel spread beyond Jerusalem. We see in Acts 8:26-40 one example of a divine encounter, when God's Spirit works through one of Jesus' followers.

KNOW



God's Spirit led Philip to meet an Ethiopian eunuch who was a Gentile believer in God. In Acts 8:29-38, how did the Holy Spirit use Philip to lead the man to Christ? In what ways was Philip a witness to Jesus?

The Ethiopian eunuch was reading from Isaiah 53, where Jesus is lifted up as the Suffering Servant. Read Isaiah 52:13-53:12. How do you see the story of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection told here? How does this passage help you to know Jesus?

GROW



God's Spirit worked through Philip's knowledge of the Old Testament. How would you describe your engagement with the Scriptures? In what ways is God's word life-giving for you? How would you like to grow to become more dependent upon God's word?

GO



Philip was bold in sharing "the good news" from the Scriptures. Describe your level of comfort in sharing what Scripture says about Jesus. What can you do to increase your knowledge about the good news of Jesus? What habits can you start or renew in engaging with Scripture?

Paul's Conversion (Acts 9:1-22)

When persecution broke out against the church back in Acts 8, Paul was at the forefront of it. Now, Jesus will confront Paul and call him to be Jesus' servant. In Paul's conversion story, we see how Jesus wants to radically reorient our lives, turning us upside down.

KNOW



Paul encountered Jesus on his way to further persecute Jesus' disciples (see Acts 9:1-9). How did Jesus confront Paul about what he was doing? What kind of impact do you think this had on Paul? What does Paul's encounter with Jesus reveal about who Jesus is as Lord?

Previously, Paul was persecuting those who called on the "name" of Jesus. In 9:15-16, Jesus told Ananias about Paul's calling. What was Paul going to do now as Jesus' "chosen instrument"?

GROW



Sometimes, Jesus' disciples change through times of crisis, like Paul did. But we also grow slowly as we follow Jesus. Looking back on your faith in Christ, how has God been at work? Can you identify ways in which God has been present to make you more like Jesus? What does that look like?

Think about Jesus' calling to suffer for the sake of Jesus' name. What do you think about the idea of suffering for Christ? How might you need to grow to be prepared for this calling?

GO



When we go on mission with Jesus, there is always the possibility of suffering. How might Jesus be calling you to face opposition or hardship to serve Him? How might your witnessing to Jesus lead to hostility from others? Ask other followers of Jesus to encourage and pray for you.

Saved From Religion (Acts 11:1-18)

In this week's passage, Peter explains what God did through him to save Cornelius' household (see Acts 10 for the account). Peter's report demonstrates that he and other Jewish followers of Jesus needed to be saved from certain religious ideas. The emphasis here is on the repentance of Peter, because he had limited God's grace to the Jewish people.

KNOW



In Acts 11:4-12, God worked through a vision to teach Peter about God's grace for all peoples. How did God teach Peter to make "no distinction" between Jews and Gentiles?

Peter gives the full report of what God did in Cornelius' household (see Acts 11:13-18). What conclusions did Peter and these Jewish believers draw about God's "gift" of "life"? What does this passage reveal about God's grace and Jesus' identity as Lord?

GROW



Peter had pride in his religious and ethnic identity as a Jew. This became a hindrance to being used by God. Thankfully, God showed Peter his need to repent. Is there anything in your background that might be a hindrance to showing God's grace? How might God be calling you to repent of certain preferences? How can you take off the limits of God's grace for others?

GO



Consider people you run into on a regular basis. Think of any people with whom you are hesitant to share the Gospel. What might be the source of this hesitancy? Fear? Preferences? Share these answers with other followers of Jesus. Ask God for guidance.

Bright (Acts 13:42-52)

The story of Acts covers the spread of the Gospel to both Jews and Gentiles. This week's passage is from Paul's first missionary journey (see Acts 13-14). Paul's words in Acts 13:47 help us to understand our part in Jesus' mission. God also calls us to be a light to the world.

KNOW



In Acts 13:47, Paul declares that his ministry is fulfilling a prophecy from Isaiah 49:6. How was Paul doing this in Acts 13:42-49?

Like Paul, Jesus calls us to be the light of the world (see Matt. 5:14-16). What does it mean to be the light of the world? What can we learn about being a light for Jesus from Paul's example here?

GROW



Paul faced both acceptance and rejection in his ministry. Describe your willingness to be rejected for the sake of the Gospel. What fears do you have? How do you need to grow in your boldness?

GO



To be a light for Jesus, you have to be willing to shine for Him. How bright is your witness to Jesus? When you think of your relationships and influence, how can you let your light shine?

Upside Down Grace (Acts 15:1-21)

In this week's passage, the first Church council takes place. The gathering debated whether Gentile believers needed to keep the law to be saved. It was decided that both Jews and Gentiles are saved only by God's grace through Jesus. This conviction lies at the heart of Jesus' mission to the world.

KNOW



In Acts 15:6-21, the leaders of the Church in Jerusalem consider how the Gentiles should follow Jesus. What can we learn about how God saves people from these verses?

Peter's testimony about God's ways in 15:7-11 was crucial in the debate. What do Peter's words reveal about what it means to know Jesus as Savior?

GROW



At the Jerusalem Council, the early Church reemphasized God's grace in God's plan of salvation. Define and describe the grace of God. How do you depend upon God being gracious to you? How can more of your life be a response to God's grace?

GO



God's grace is central to our mission to spread the good news of Jesus. What is your story of how God's grace through Jesus brought you to faith in Jesus? How can you creatively share this story to proclaim the good news of God's grace?

The Gospel for Intellectuals (Acts 17:16-31)

In this week's passage, we encounter Paul sharing the good news with a group of intellectuals. These philosophers would spend much time discussing the latest ideas. Paul presents the Gospel here as relevant to both their intellects and their everyday lives. God calls us to be thoughtful in knowing what we believe and how we witness.

KNOW



In Acts 17:22-31, Paul meets his audience where they are at spiritually. They do not have a Jewish background and need to hear about God as their Creator. What does Paul make known to them about the one, true God (see 17:24-29)? What does Paul tell them about the importance of knowing and obeying God (see 17:26-31)? How does this passage help you to know Jesus?

GROW



There are different kinds of barriers for people to believe the Gospel – intellectual, emotional, and relational. Which kind of barrier is most natural for you to address? How can you grow to speak more effectively to more people about the Gospel?

GO



Paul crafted his message to prompt his hearers to seek God. How can you get to know more people in your world who do not know Jesus? How can you encourage them to pursue knowing Jesus? Ask God for opportunities and wisdom to do these things.

Suffering (Acts 21:27-36, 2 Cor. 11:16-33)

This last week's sermon covers Paul's arrest, trip to Rome, and imprisonment there in Acts 21-28. The major focal point in these chapters is Christ's calling to follow and serve Jesus, including suffering for Christ. To understand what it means to suffer for Christ, we will study Acts 21:17-36 and 2 Corinthians 11:16-33.



KNOW

Read through Acts 21:17-26, which is an account of Paul being arrested at the Jewish temple. Put yourself in Paul's shoes. What would you be thinking and feeling? How would you react?

In 2 Corinthians 11:16-33, Paul gave testimony to his sufferings as an apostle. What sufferings did Paul face for the sake of Christ? How did Paul boast about his weakness? What does this reveal about knowing Christ and His strength?

GROW



Paul gives us an example of relying on Christ's strength during suffering for Him. How is it difficult to follow this example? What other sources of strength do you lean on? How can you learn to rely more on Christ?

GO



Followers of Jesus should never look for suffering. However, we must not let it deter us from following Jesus. How can you be more courageous in living out your faith? Take some time this week to tell Jesus about your fears and how you want to trust Him more.

Christ Pacific Church
20112 Magnolia Street
Huntington Beach, CA 92646
714-968-4940
www.cpchb.org