

40 DAYS TO BE THE CHURCH



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Introduction

The number 40 is used often in Scripture. God used 40 days and 40 nights of rain to purify the earth while Noah and his family were in the Ark.

Moses was on the Mountain with God for 40 days and 40 nights.

Elijah fasted for 40 days as he sought God's direction.

Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days to begin His ministry.

The time between Jesus' resurrection and His ascension into heaven was 40 days.

Early Christians (the 4th century) celebrated a preparation time prior to Easter of 40 days.

Over and over again God uses this period of time to denote a time set apart for a deeper encounter with God that leads to changed lives.

The beginning of a new season of ministry in the church is a great time for us to take a 40 Day Adventure as well. Reading or re-reading the Book of Acts is a great way to "climb the mountain of God" and come face to face with His love for us and all people who need to come to know Him.

Grab your Bible and a pen and let's start this dynamic adventure together!

Love,

Pastor Steve

Day 1

Read Acts 1-28 & Answer The Following Questions

1. Who is the author?
2. Who is he writing to? See Luke 1.
3. What is the main setting in each chapter?
4. Look at the maps in the back of your Bible and see the various locations mentioned in Acts.
5. What is the main theme of this book?
6. Who are the key "characters"?
7. When (what years) did this take place?
8. Why is this book in the Bible?
9. Why did Luke write it?
10. Why did the main characters do what they did?
11. How does this apply to me / we / us?
12. How can God use this book in my life now?

Most questions in this booklet adapted from the book Acts: Seeing God's Power in Action.

Week 1: Acts 1-5

Acts 1: You Will Be My Witnesses

1. How would you feel if you were given the task described in verse 8?
2. How are we equipped for this task according to this passage?
3. Read 1:12-26. How did the apostles respond to all that they had seen and heard?

Acts 2: Receiving the Power

1. What do you think it would be like if the Holy Spirit were suddenly withdrawn from the church?
2. The power of the Holy Spirit transformed Peter who was once a coward who denied Jesus. Scripture, again, is the foundation of Peter's proclamation of truth. What message do the book of Joel and the Psalms have for the bewildered crowd (vv. 17-35)?
3. What is there in Peter's sermon that would reassure Theophilus about his faith and help him "know the certainty of the things" that he'd been taught?
4. Describe the fellowship of the believers in this young church, including their priorities (vv. 42-47).
5. What do you think it would be like for the Lord to add daily to the numbers of your Christian community those who are being saved?

Acts 3: Healing Power

1. In your experience, what causes non-Christians to be open to hear about Jesus?
2. What is the significance of the fact that they found the crippled man at the temple gate?
3. When Peter saw the response of the crowd, he saw his opportunity and talked to them about Jesus. According to Peter's message, what had God done to Jesus (vv.13-15)?
4. Focus on verse 21. The wait for Jesus to return from heaven may seem very long—but this verse gives us some perspective. What are your thoughts and feelings about waiting for Jesus to return?
5. How do you respond when you have opportunities like Peter's to talk about Jesus?

Acts 4: Called into Question

1. God wants to connect with you. Shut out the distractions of life. As the Holy Spirit moves to the forefront of your mind, allow His presence to bring you peace and joy.
2. How do you feel and how do you respond when you are challenged or criticized about your faith in Jesus?
3. Read verse 20 - How have you seen and heard Jesus at work in your life?
4. Imagine that you had been in a group of believers to whom John and Peter returned and told what had happened. What would have been your reaction?
5. Read Acts 4:23-31. What was the reaction of the believers to John and Peter's account?

6. What does their prayer tell about their faith in the character, power, and faithfulness of God?

Journal Time:

On a separate piece of paper write a letter to God. Tell him about areas in your life and witness where you are stretched, criticized or challenged. Tell him where you need his strength and grace. Write specifically how you would like for your words and life to proclaim Jesus, raised from the dead. Ask him to make you a person of courage, proclaiming Jesus.

Write about specific places and ways that you would like to see this life of proclamation happen. In what ways would you like to faithfully obey God rather than human beings? Describe the kind of prayer partner or group that you would like for him to give you. Finally, tell him how you would like for your own prayer life to change and grow more like the prayers of those in this chapter.

Acts 5: Oneness of Heart

1. Who has God given you to meet specific needs in your life recently? How have they met those needs? Take the time to write a note to express your gratitude to them.
2. What do you think it would be like for you to be a part of the kind of community described in verses 4:32-37 and 5:12-16?
3. What did Ananias and Sapphira do that was not consistent with Christian community (5:1-2)?
4. How does this story demonstrate the high value that God places on truth and unity within the body of Christ?

Journal Time:

Journal on the following questions:
How do I testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus?

What do I do to make sure there are no needy people in my community?

How do I lie to my brothers and sisters in Christ? To non-Christians?

What miracles have I witnessed?

Week 2: Acts 6-10

Acts 6: Persecution & Expansion

1. Read Acts 6:1-7. As the number of disciples increased, what practical needs began to present themselves?
2. How does this response demonstrate sensitivity to these needs and their commitment to God's primary direction to them?
3. What is the spirit of those who are involved in the work of God throughout this passage?
4. What were the qualifications for the men we would call "deacons"?
5. Acts 6:7 implies that the deeper these men and women went with God the wider their influence. How could that be true?

Acts 7: Spirit & Wisdom

1. Describe someone you know who makes you want to know God better.
2. Sometimes the speech in chapter 7 is called "Stephen's Defense", although it is actually a defense of pure Christianity as God's appointed way to worship. What are the main points of this defense?
3. Throughout this whole passage we see in Stephen the evidence of being full of the Spirit and wisdom. What are the evidences today of being full of the Spirit and wisdom?
4. In what aspect of your life would you like to reflect more of the Spirit and wisdom?

Acts 8: The Power of Suffering

1. What do you feel you need to do to become a more effective witness for Jesus?
2. The command to be witnesses in all of Judea and Samaria (Acts 1:8) is fulfilled. What are the causes and extent of the spread of the gospel at this time?
3. How are you seeing the command to be witnesses fulfilled in your life and community?
4. The story of Simon the sorcerer demonstrates that becoming a Christian does not instantly resolve all problems and character flaws. What do you learn from Peter concerning nurturing young believers? What results do you see in Simon?
5. What are the factors involved in the eunuch's coming to know the Lord (vv. 26-39)?
6. How does Acts 8 connect with Acts 1:8?

Acts 9: Saul's Conversion

1. Review what you know about Saul (7:58-8:3). What further insights do you get about him from 9:1-2?
2. Describe Saul's encounter with Jesus Christ in verses 3-9. What is the emotional, spiritual, physical, and social climate?
3. What do you learn about obedience to God through Saul and Ananias?
4. What does Saul's conversion teach us about those in our lives who are most likely not to believe?
5. Barnabas means "Son of Encouragement" (4:36). When have you experienced someone being a Barnabas to you or you to another?

6. Put yourself in the room with Peter in verse 32-43. What would that be like?

Journal Time:

Think back to what your life was like before you met Christ. On a separate piece of paper write a prayer and thank God for the transformation that he has made in you—both your instant rebirth into his kingdom and the gradual remolding of your character since then.

Acts 10: Salvation for Every Nation

1. When have you felt separated from people because of cultural or racial differences?
2. How is God's power demonstrated throughout this chapter?
3. How did God prepare Cornelius for Peter (10:1-8)?
4. According to 10:4, what caused God to take notice of Cornelius?
5. To what extent are prayer and giving to the poor priorities for you?
6. What would have been the consequences if Cornelius or Peter had not obeyed God?

Week 3: Acts 11-15

Acts 11: The First Jewish-Gentile Church

1. "No good deed goes unpunished" is a phrase we sometimes hear. When have you been criticized by other Christians for doing what is right?
2. What kind of reception was awaiting Peter when he went back up to Jerusalem?
3. What can we learn from the way Peter responded to his critics?
4. What kinds of evidence of new life do you look for in new believers?

5. In the meantime the gospel is spreading to Gentiles at a tremendous rate in Antioch as a result of the believers who were scattered because of persecution. What kind of care is provided for new believers (vv. 22-30)?
6. In this passage, how do you see the true meaning of "Christian" being more fully discovered and lived out in a multicultural church?

Journal Time:

In the face of change, how do you handle the need for a new perspective? Resistance? Excitement? Uncertainty? Fear?

In what areas of your life and Christian community do you face change now? How are you responding to this change?

Acts 12: Miraculous Escape

1. Recall a time when God answered one of your prayers. Describe the joy of receiving his gracious blessing upon you.
2. Describe how each character responds to what is happening.
3. What does the church's response to James's death and Peter's being in prison (vv. 5 & 12) demonstrate about prayer?
4. How quickly and persistently do we and our support team resort to prayer?
5. When have you been like those who told Rhoda, "You're out of your mind" (v. 15)?
6. The earnest prayer of the church significantly affected the outcome of events in this chapter. How is your motivation to pray influenced by this truth?

Acts 13-14: The Character of Evangelism

1. What characteristics and qualities do you have that make sharing the gospel natural for you? What makes it difficult for you to share your faith?
2. What role did the church of Antioch play in Paul's first missionary journey (13:1-3; 14:26-28)?
3. Where was the first place Paul and Barnabas went? Why?
4. What price did Paul and Barnabas "pay" to serve the Lord in Iconium, Lystra, Antioch?
5. Read 2 Cor. 11:16-12:6 and see what many commentators think happened to Paul during the time of Acts 14:19-20.

Acts 15: Conflict in the Church

1. Describe the conflict that arises between believers in this passage.
2. Describe the steps that were taken to resolve this conflict and the spirit of those involved.
3. Read Acts 15:36-41. In what ways do you see (or assume based on the first part of this chapter) unity between Paul and Barnabas?
4. Paul and Barnabas decided to agree to disagree and went their separate ways. What were the benefits of this temporary solution?
5. No matter how strongly we feel about an issue, we do not see the whole picture. How should that fact affect the way we respond to people with whom we are in conflict?

Week 4: Acts 16-20

Acts 16: What Must I Do?

1. What makes it easy for you to obey God? What makes you hesitate?
2. How do you see Paul directed by God throughout this passage?
3. Paul responded immediately to God's call to preach the gospel in Macedonia. How was his obedience confirmed on arriving in Macedonia?
4. There are many reasons that people reject the gospel. The owners of the slave girl resisted the gospel because of material gain. What are reasons that you see today for rejecting the truth?
5. Paul and Silas speak the truth of the gospel as well as live it out. How do you give both a verbal and a living witness to Jesus?
6. It is clear in the book of Acts that God is concerned that the nations and the world be reached with the gospel. But he is also concerned about reaching individuals. What individuals were affected by Paul's obedience to God's leading (vv. 14, 18, 30-31)? How?
7. What person or task might God be calling you to?

Ask God to give you courage as you step out in faith to obey him and tell those around you about the good news of the gospel.

Acts 17: An Unknown God

1. Do you feel overwhelmed by the dismal spiritual conditions of this world? Remember and even savor the knowledge that Jesus is Lord over it all—the sin, deceit and pain around us are all subject to his will.
2. Describe Paul's approach in Athens

3. What are the main points of his lecture?
4. Paul speaks of "the objects of your worship." What are some of the objects of worship for people in our culture?
5. In Athens Paul begins to tell them about the living God with an inscription from one of their altars — "To An Unknown God." What are "points of truth" from which you can start to communicate the gospel to those in your world?
6. What do you need to do and know in order to more effectively communicate the good news about Jesus to people in your life from different cultures?

Journal Time:

On a separate piece of paper write out your "3 Minute Testimony" and then think of 2 or 3 different cultures you intersect with and how you might adapt your testimony to that culture.

Acts 18: Companions in Ministry

1. When have you felt alone in the ministry of bringing others to Christ, and why do you think you felt that way?
2. Let's look more closely at some of these relationships. What was the significance of Paul's relationship with Priscilla and Aquila (vv. 2-4, 18-19)?
3. We are told in 1Thessalonians 3 and Philippians 4 that Silas and Timothy brought Paul not only good news about the faith and steadfastness of the Thessalonians but also a gift of money from the Philippians. This gift relieved him from having to support himself by leather working. What impact did their relationship have on Paul's life and ministry?
4. In verses 18-23, What do you learn about Paul's relationships?
5. How was Apollos's ministry affected by his relationship with Aquila and Priscilla (vv. 27-28)?

Acts 19: In the Name of Jesus

1. How would you like to see the power of God revealed in our church family?
2. Wherever the gospel is communicated with effectiveness there will be both positive and negative responses. What are the positive results throughout this passage? Where are the negative responses?
3. In 19:1-7 Paul encounters some disciples. What is his concern for them? What did he do to interact with them effectively?
4. Throughout this entire passage it is evident that Paul has a strategy for communicating the gospel. Specifically, what strategy does Paul have for his ministry in Ephesus (19:8-10)?
5. What happened with the Jews who were driving out evil spirits in the name of Jesus (19:11-14)? Why? How did this become a testimony to the power of God (19:15-20)?
6. How can you prepare yourself for both positive and negative responses as you communicate the gospel of Christ?

Acts 20: Saying Goodbye

1. What does Paul say about his ministry to the Ephesians (vv. 18-21, 26-27, 31, 33-35)?
2. What instructions did Paul give to the leaders of the church at Ephesus (vv. 28-31)?
3. In summary, according to this passage, why would Paul be able to say with integrity and humility to these leaders, "Follow my example"?
4. How are you preparing those that you nurture spiritually to be left with this same confidence?

Week 5: Acts 21-25

Acts 21: Facing Opposition

1. Notice the word "we" in 21:1. Does it matter that Luke is a participant in some of what he is reporting? Why or why not?
2. What were the warnings to Paul concerning going to Jerusalem and his response to them (vv. 4-5, 10-13)?
3. Think of a person you know who is focused on radical obedience to God. How are you affected by his or her obedience?
4. Paul arrives in Jerusalem, is greeted by the elders, and reports what God has done through his ministry. What are the elders concerned about for Paul (vv. 20-25)?

Acts 22 & 23: God at Work

1. Compare Paul's description of his conversion here with the account in chapter 9. Are there any changes?
2. Baptism comes up again as Paul tells of his experience. Look up Leviticus 8:6; Psalm 51:2; Ezekiel 36:25; John 3:5; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Ephesians 5:26; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 10:22; 1 Peter 3:21; and Romans 10:13 and see what they may offer to help us understand baptism better.
3. In 23:1-10, what is the source of the conflict? How is Paul protected in this time?
4. Why was Paul struck on the mouth for saying, "My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day" (23:1)? What was he claiming about himself?
5. In Acts 23:12-25 the Jews are frustrated because they cannot get rid of Paul through the law, so they decide to ambush and kill him on their own. How is Paul protected?
6. Think about God's hand in your life and ministry. How have you seen him work to protect and direct you toward his will?

Acts 24 & 25: Falsely Accused (Part 1)

1. How do you respond to the unfairness in the world around you? The unfairness in your own life?
2. What are the accusations brought against Paul by the Jews?
3. What does the extent of the flattery lavished on Felix tell you about the accusers?
4. How would you describe Paul's defense? (Consider the content and the attitude and tone.)
5. What do you think might be the significance of the fact that Felix was well acquainted with the Way (v. 22)?

Journal Time:

Make a list of at least ten people in your life who do not know and follow Jesus. By each name describe, as best you can, what is keeping them from Jesus. What are ways that you can serve them, get to know them better, or spend time with them? Ask God to give you his heart for each of them and to work in their hearts and yours—that you might share the gospel with them.

Acts 24 & 25: Falsely Accused (Part 2)

1. Read Acts 25:1-12. Two years have passed since his trial, and Festus has become the new governor. The Jews have not given up. They continue to plot to kill Paul and ask Festus to have him transferred to Jerusalem. Festus refuses and tells the Jewish leaders to come to Caesarea for the trial. What evidence is there in this passage that Festus knows Paul is innocent?
2. Describe a time you have been falsely accused because of your faith.
3. Why does Festus suggest that Paul go back to Jerusalem to be on trial? How does Paul respond to this idea?
4. What do you think of Paul's response?

Week 6: Acts 26-28

Acts 26: Testimony Before Agrippa

1. To what degree are you concerned about your not-yet-Christian friends becoming Christians?
2. Read Acts 26. What are the main points about himself that Paul presents in his defense?
3. Why does Paul say that he is on trial (26:6-8)?
4. Contrast the commission of the Sanhedrin (26:9-11) to the commission of Christ (26:15-18).

Acts 27 & 28: Paul in Rome!

Day 40

1. Though Paul had every reason by this time to become very self-centered, how do you see him continue to minister to others throughout these two chapters (27:9-10, 21-25, 31-28, 42-43; 28:3, 8-9, 17-20, 23-31)?
2. How freely do you allow others to care for and encourage you as you live for Jesus?
3. What do you think it says about Paul that Julius let him go see his friends (27:3)?
4. What do you see of Paul's confidence in God throughout this passage?
5. Look at the maps of Paul's travels one more time. How do his travels reflect his passion for Christ?
6. In Rome Paul continues to preach under guard. What are the results (28:17-30)?
7. What are the situations or relationships in your life with non-Christians in which you are tempted to give up on your proclamation of the gospel?
8. What truths from this study of Acts encourage you to not give up?
9. The words "boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ" (28:31) summarize not only Paul's two years in Rome but his whole Christian life. To what degree would you like this to be a summary of your life? Explain.

Re-read the whole book of Acts. What are the key lessons you've learned about "Being The Church" from this book? How will you be different?

