

Acts of the Holy Spirit - 1
Final preparations for the upcoming mission – Week of Sept 18, 2016
Bay Park Life Groups

We're so glad to have you on board for this eight-week journey through the first 8 chapters of Acts. Of all the books of the bible, why study Acts? Though the New Testament contains four Gospels chronicling the life of Jesus on earth, there is only one that covers the birth of the church and it's early growth – Acts. Luke, a companion of Paul, wrote Acts. His interest wasn't just accurate history. Luke's interest was in the church as a movement, that empowered by God breaks through cultural, geographical and political barriers. A rescue mission that starts small and goes viral, that is persecuted yet turns the world upside down. Acts is the history of mission, God's mission. Acts was most likely written around early 60 A.D. given that Luke never mentions the Neronian persecutions (64 A. D.) in which the likes of Paul and Peter were executed. That places the writing of Acts within about 30 years after the death of Jesus. Since then much has changed in the world we live, but God and his mission haven't changed. As a church on mission, Acts is our blueprint for success in mission.

1. Bono of U2 fame said, *Religion is what happens when the Spirit has left the building*¹ . . . *A list of instructions where there was once conviction; dogma where once people just did it; a congregation led by a man where once they were led by the Holy Spirit. Discipline replacing discipleship.*² Do you agree or disagree, why or why not?

Read Acts 1:1-11

2. Read Luke 1:1-4. What do these verses contribute to our understanding of the historical accuracy of the book of Acts?
3. What does verse 1 tell us about Luke's theme and what difference does this make for Christians?
4. Why did Jesus first prepare the apostles' minds (3) before sending them power (4)?
5. What does the apostles' question reveal about their understanding of the kingdom (6)? How does Acts 1:1-11 help shape our understanding of the Kingdom of God?
6. Acts 1:8 gives the outline for the book of Acts, and more importantly for how God plans to build his church. What insights does verse 8 give us into how God is building his church today?

¹ Bono: <http://www.u2.com/news/article/1060/>

² Bono: *In Conversations with Michka Assayas*, (Riverhead Books, 2005) p 201

7. The church is God's people on God's mission in God's power. The mission is one of profession (believing) AND proclamation (witnessing). The Spirit empowers both our believing AND our witnessing. Share either one positive or negative experience you've had with respect to being a witness. How has God spoken to your past experiences through your time in Acts?

8. On Sunday the thought was planted that one way to show our full dependence on the Holy Spirit and our desire to be on mission with him is to consistently pray that God would empower our witness. What did you think of the challenge?

Optional question: What irony, even humour, is hidden in the events Luke records in 9-11 and what implications can we draw for today?