

Read Acts for Easter...

Let us spend this Easter season celebrating with and learning from the first disciples. Journey with us in community as we read about, explore, and share in the mission of the early church.

Throughout this season (from Easter Sunday until Pentecost) we will read through the book of Acts. Our hope is that together we can grow in community, faith, and willingness to spread God's love to the ends of the Earth!

Week 1 (3/31-4/6) Acts 1:1—2:13

Week 2 (4/7-13) Acts 2:14—8:3

Week 3 (4/14-20) Acts 8:4—9:43

Week 4 (4/21-27) Acts 10:1—15:35

Week 5 (4/28-5/4) Acts 15:36—18:22

Week 6 (5/5-11) Acts 18:23—23:35

Week 7 (5/12-18) Acts 24:1—28:31

We invite you to pray the following prayer, or use your own words, as you begin your reading and reflections each week:

Come Holy Spirit,

fill the hearts of Your faithful and kindle in them the fire of Your love.

Send forth Your Spirit and they shall be created.

And you shall renew the face of the earth.

Amen.

Week 1 **Acts 1-2:13**



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

Acts 1:8

Discipleship Theme: **Believe; Gather**

Our readings this week will take us through Jesus’ Ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Reflection Questions:

1. Just like the disciples, we have received the power of the Holy Spirit to be witnesses to the ends of the earth. How have you experienced this?
2. How have you been a witness to God’s love?
3. How is God calling you to be a witness this Easter season?

Week 2 **Acts 2:14-8:3**



“The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common. With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great favor was accorded them all.” Acts 4:32-33

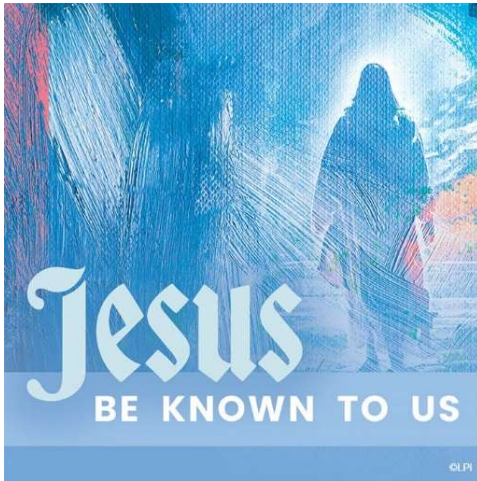
Discipleship Theme: **Believe; Gather**

Our readings this week take us through what life of the early Christians involved and the spread of the gospel throughout Jerusalem by the apostles. As the Christians increased in number, the first deacons are elected to help minister to the growing community. Stephen, one of the first deacons, gives an explanation of the belief in Jesus as the coming Messiah and the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. His boldness leads to his stoning at the feet of Saul, making him the first person martyr for professing his faith in Jesus.

Reflection Questions:

1. The strong belief in the resurrection of Jesus allowed the early disciples to boldly share their faith in Jesus. How have you shared your faith with others, both in bold ways and more hidden ways?
2. The early disciples also found strength through praying and gathering in community. What communal experiences have strengthened your faith life (ie. Mass, family meals, bible study groups, etc.)?

Week 3 **Acts 8:4-9:43**



“But get up and go into the city, where you will be told what you must do” Acts 9:6

“And so it was that the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had a time of peace. Through the help of the Holy Spirit it was strengthened and grew in numbers, as it lived in reverence for the Lord” Acts 9:31

Discipleship Theme: **Believe, Grow**

In this week’s readings, Philip shares the good news in Samaria and brings great joy to the people there. As the Church continues to spread, Saul is dramatically converted. He makes a drastic change from persecutor to preacher; he immediately begins evangelizing the nations who once feared him.

Reflection Questions:

1. Philip received a calling from God to share the news of Jesus to specific people. Who might you be called to share this news with?
2. What is God calling you to change in your life to make room to live for Him?
3. Who has been the person, like Ananais was to Saul, who helped you see or understand better once you knew God’s presence? How did they accompany you?
4. Saul did not work alone when preaching in Damascus and Jerusalem, but was open to the power of the Holy Spirit. How can you better welcome the work of the Holy Spirit?

Week 4 Acts 10-15:35



“In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him.” Acts 10:34-35

Discipleship Theme: **Believe, Lead**

Summary: This week, we follow the adventures of Peter as he baptizes Cornelius (a Gentile), attempts to convince the Jewish believers that salvation through Christ is meant for all, is arrested by Herod, and is visited in prison by an angel who helps him escape. We continue with what is commonly referred to as Paul’s 1st

missionary journey. Paul preaches boldly, heals a crippled man, and survives a stoning. At the Council of Jerusalem, the early church discerns that the Gentile converts need not become Jews.

Reflection Questions:

1. Which **place** that Paul visited on his 1st missionary journey stuck you the most? Explain.
2. Which **person** that Paul met/encountered on his 1st missionary journey stuck you the most? Explain.
3. Through the prompting of the Holy Spirit, Peter and Paul opened the doors to the Gentiles by sharing the Good News of salvation through Jesus. Who might be the unexpected person that you are being called to share the Good News with?
4. When have you presumed that God was showing partiality against someone that you were judging to be “unworthy”?
5. God sent an angel to unshackle Peter and lead him to safety. Do you believe that God has the power to break the chains in your life? Why not take a moment now to ask God to lead you to freedom?

Week 5 **Acts 15:36-18:22**



"What therefore you unknowingly worship, I proclaim to you."

Acts 17:23

Discipleship Theme: **Lead, Grow**

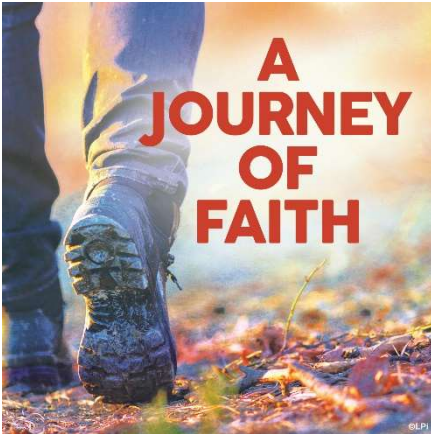
Our readings this week take us through what is commonly referred to as Paul's 2nd missionary journey (50-53 AD).

Reflection Questions:

1. Which **place** that Paul visited on his 2nd missionary journey struck you the most? Explain.
2. Which **person** that Paul met/encountered on his 2nd missionary journey struck you the most? Explain.
3. How do you think Paul and Silas' actions (witness) during their imprisonment in Philippi (Acts 16:19-30) prompted the jailer to ask "*What must I do to be saved*" (Acts 16:30)? Can you think of a time when someone's witness prompted you or someone you know to change?
4. One day Paul was speaking to those in Athens and said "*I see that in every respect you are very religious*" (Acts 17:22). Today we might use the word spiritual instead of religious. Do you know someone who describes themselves as spiritual, perhaps seeking God but doesn't accept Jesus as their savior? Have you ever asked them specifics about what they believe?
5. One night in a dream God said to Paul "*Do not be afraid. Go on speaking, and do not be silent, for I am with you*" (Acts 18:9-10). What reaction do you have to this statement? Is there someone in particular God might be pointing you to talk to?

Week 6

Acts 18:23-23:35



"Yet I consider life of no importance to me, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to bear witness to the gospel of God's grace."
Acts 20:24

Discipleship Theme: **Believe, Gather, Lead**

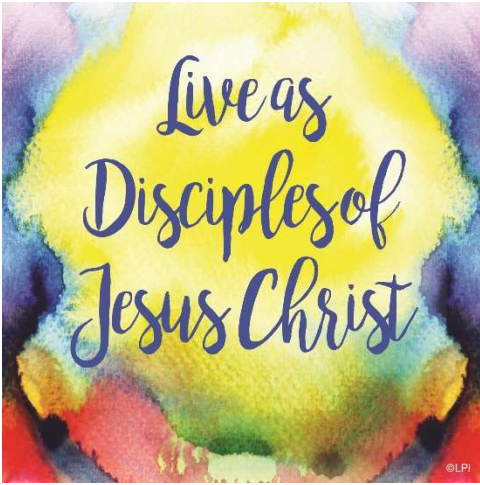
Our readings this week take us through what is commonly referred to as Paul's 3rd missionary journey (54-58 AD). This journey ends in Jerusalem with Paul's arrest and the beginning of his various trials before the Jews and Romans.

Reflection Questions:

1. Which **place** that Paul visited on his 3rd missionary journey struck you the most? Explain.
2. Which **person** that Paul met/encountered on his 3rd missionary journey struck you the most? Explain.
3. Throughout Paul's journeys, he leads the community by gathering them to break bread, preach the gospel, and pray. Who in your life has helped lead you closer to God? Who in your life have you helped lead closer to God?
4. In Paul's farewell speech to the leaders in Ephesus (Acts 20:17-36), he speaks about the trials that will encounter as they continue to preach the gospel. For him, the most important thing is to "finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus". How often do you reflect on the "course or ministry" that you have received from God? Does your life "bear witness to the gospel of God's grace"? If so, in what ways? If not, what actions could you take to start including the gospel in your daily life?
5. Once in Jerusalem, Paul defends his actions by retelling his encounter with Jesus (Acts 22:6-16). Have you had an encounter with Jesus that changed your life? Not all conversion stories are so dramatic, but we are called to continuing conversion all our life. In what small ways have you grown and continue to grow closer to Christ?

Week 7

Acts 24-28:31



“He received all who came to him, and with complete assurance and without hindrance he proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.” Acts 28:30-31

Discipleship Theme: **Believe, Grow, Lead**

Summary: Our adventure through Acts draws to a conclusion as we journey with Paul as he is held, questioned, and persecuted by authorities, survives a shipwreck, is unharmed by a snakebite, and travels to Rome. In spite of the obstacles, he continues to minister to all he encounters. Many are healed and converted to Christ.

Reflection Questions:

1. As part of his defense, Paul recounts his conversion story. When have you shared about an encounter that you had with Jesus?
2. In spite of all the hardships, Paul remains at peace and continues to serve the Lord. Who in your life is an example of this trust and faith? How can you emulate Paul in your life?
3. How has journeying through Acts enriched you this Easter Season?