

Spirit-Fuelled Living

1: Theophilus, This is Your Life!

Intro: This series follows the stories of people we read about in the first part of the Book of Acts. As we read their stories, I hope and pray that we will each be inspired to live more Spirit-filled lives ourselves.

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Each share: What books or TV programmes do you remember from your childhood? Which did you like or dislike and why?

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Find the words of a simple worship song you can sing without instruments (eg Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me'). Sing it through a few times, finish with a time of silence, then a prayer.

WORD

To start, please watch the video introduction to Acts we saw a clip of one Sunday... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CGbNw855ksw>
(Note: You can find many similar good videos about Bible books and themes at thebibleproject.com – highly recommended!)

- Was there anything in the video that you found helpful or unhelpful?

Read Acts 1:1-11

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?

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- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

Luke wrote the book of Acts as a sequel to 'Luke'. He addressed both books to 'Theophilus' – meaning 'Friend of God'. It could therefore be addressed to any one of us who regards ourselves as a 'friend of God'.

- If the Book of Acts had been written to you, how would you feel and what would you do with it?
- Why are stories about the first followers of Jesus relevant today?
- What difference do you think reading Acts might make to you?

Imagine yourself as one of the disciples in this story. How do you think you would have felt at each of these stages in the story...?

- * v3: When Jesus appeared after his resurrection
 - * v4-5: When you were told to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit
 - * v6-7: Why would the disciples ask this question?
 - * v7-8: How might you feel about Jesus' answer?
 - * v9-11: How would you feel at the ascension and after?
- If you were there, what question would you have asked Jesus (v6)?
 - * Given how Jesus answered the disciples' question, how do you think Jesus would have answered your questions?

WHAT NEXT?

- Share things you want to give thanks for or to ask God for, then pray for one another.
- **Take Away:** If you would like to read more of Acts on your own over the next few weeks, you could try reading '**Acts for Everyone Part 1**' by Tom Wright or '**The Essential Question**' by Whitney Kuniholm

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2: Peter - Life Transformed

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Share: What are the things you find it hardest to wait for?

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Each take a paper & pen (or other art materials) and draw a picture of how you imagine the Holy Spirit. It can be as simple or complicated as you like. Don't worry about the quality of the artwork(!) instead, talk about what you've tried to show and why. Finish by praying together an ancient prayer: 'Come, Holy Spirit'

WORD

Watch another Bible Project video, this time on the Holy Spirit:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNNZO9i1Gjc>

- What did you find helpful or unhelpful in the video?

Read Acts 2:1-24; 37-47

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

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- Crowds of people had gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate an annual festival similar to harvest (Pentecost). It's 10 days after Jesus has ascended. How do you think the disciples are feeling?
- How do you think the disciples felt during the events of verses 2-4?
- Verse 4 says they were all 'filled with the Holy Spirit'. This happens at different times in the next few chapters of Acts (eg 4:8, 4:31, 9:17, 10:44, 13:9, 13:52)
 - * Have you ever had an experience when you felt you were 'filled with the Holy Spirit'? Share what it was like.
 - * What other effects might there be when someone is 'filled with the Holy Spirit'?
 - * In Ephesians 5:18, the most accurate translation (which fits with the events of Acts) is 'Go on being filled with the Holy Spirit'. Whether or not you've had experiences of this in the past, how do you feel about being regularly 'filled with the Holy Spirit' now and in the future?
- When the crowd hear Peter's message (v37), they ask him what they should do. What do you think about his reply in v38-41?
- In verses 42-47, we get a brief description of how the first believers lived in the earliest days of the church. How does this match with how we live as Christians today? In what ways are our circumstances similar or different?

WHAT NEXT?

- In 2s/3s: In silence, say sorry for things you've done wrong to God (repent), then each pray for one another a simple prayer such as: 'Lord God, please fill xxx with your Holy Spirit. Amen.'
- **Take-Away Challenge 1:** During the week, you could try spending longer on creating a picture of the Holy Spirit & talk to God about what you've made.
- **Take-Away Challenge 2:** For the next fortnight, try and remember to ask God to fill you with his Holy Spirit each day.

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3: Prayer Week

This week, please have a Prayer Week. There's a separate set of notes on the church website at the top of the Growth Group Notes Page.

Please pray in particular for Christ Church – the particular challenges of the year ahead, the church leaders and our youth work. You may like to use Acts 2:38-47 as a focus for reflection.

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4: Stephen - Living 100% for God

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Whether you use social media, texts or phone calls, share ideas on how you could use them to share the good news about Jesus in a practical way.

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

In silence, each think of one thing you have done in the last week – however mundane or exciting. Ask yourself: ‘How did God see that time?’ ‘What was he thinking and feeling?’ Now share your thoughts briefly. Finish by saying a simple prayer together such as: ‘Thank you God for being with us always. Amen.’

WORD

Read Acts 6:1-7:1 and 7:51-8:4

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you’ve been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven’t noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- In Acts 6:5, Stephen is described as ‘a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit’.
 - * What sort of characteristics of someone’s life might cause you to describe them in this way?

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- * How could you live a life more 'full of faith and of the Holy Spirit'?
- What do you think were the underlying motives of Stephen's opponents?
 - * What different motives do people have today for opposing the good news about Jesus?
 - * What might cause people inside or outside the church to 'resist the Holy Spirit'? (v51)
- When Stephen is before the High Priest, he chooses to stand up for his faith and gives a long explanation. As a result, he is killed and there is a great persecution (8:1).
 - * Would Stephen have been wiser to keep quiet?
 - * What do you think you would have done in Stephen's shoes?
 - * When are the times that you are most or least likely to let people know you're a Christian?
- How could you, like Stephen, do more to 'Love the Lord God with all his heart, soul, mind and strength'?
- What do you make of Stephen's last words (7:60)?
 - * What impact do you think they had on the people around him – his opponents or friends?
 - * What are the hardest things to forgive?

WHAT NEXT?

- Pray for Christians around the world who are being persecuted for their faith. You can find out more on the CSW (Christian Solidarity Worldwide) or Open Doors websites.
- **Take-Away Challenge:** Pin up Mark 12:30 somewhere at home. Each day, ask God to fill you with his Holy Spirit and to follow Jesus' words more.

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5: Ananias - Trust & Obey

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Play a game where you have to trust someone else – for example, being led round an obstacle course blind-folded.

WORD & WORSHIP

Watch a couple of contrasting video stories of people's lives on greatcommission.co.uk

- Talk about what you think about them
- Which stories have parallels with your own life?
- Who do you know who you would like to have a similar story of transformation?

Pray: Spend time saying short prayers of thanks for what God has done in your life.

Read Acts 9

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- If Saul had answered Jesus's question: 'Why do you persecute me?' (v4), what do you think he would have said?
- Jesus says Saul is persecuting him, but Jesus has ascended. What does this reveal about Jesus' attitude towards his followers? How does this make you feel?

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- Do you know of anyone who has had a 'Damascus Road Experience'? (It might be you). Share the story.
- How do you think Saul felt for the three days that he was blind?

- What words would you use to describe Ananias's response to God's call to him in verse 10? Share as many as you can.
 - * Which of those words describe your response to God at times?
- Why do you think God causes Saul to be blind and to involve Ananias in this story?
 - * Would you have liked to be in Ananias's shoes?

- Saul was a gifted scholar and passionate about his faith. However, he had been using his gifts for the wrong purposes.
 - * Who do you know who would not describe themselves as a Christian but has clear gifts that could be used for God's Kingdom?

WHAT NEXT?

- Pray for people you know who are not yet Christians – that they would come to know Christ and use their God-given gifts for him.
- Continue to pray for our church - in particular for those with responsibility as leaders, that we would be sensitive to God's guidance.
- **Take-Away Challenge:** If you haven't already, take the Thy Kingdom Come challenge of praying for friends to come to faith.

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6: Cornelius - A Responsive Life

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Share: What are your favourite sounds and why?

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Read a Psalm of praise to God together – such as Psalm 8 or find a video reflection on a psalm of praise to watch.

WORD

Read Acts 10:1-23; 34-48

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- What do you think God was wanting to do in this story and how did he do it?
- How do you think Peter and Cornelius felt about being part of what God was doing in this story?
 - * How do you feel about being part of God's plans, rather than wanting him to be part of yours?

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God communicated with Cornelius by sending an angel. He gave Peter a message via pictures in a vision, then words (v19). He did this at the exact timing of the arrival of Cornelius's servants.

- How do you feel about God guiding people in these ways?
- Have you experienced anything similar or know of anyone who has?
- How does God speak to you?
- In what ways can we get better at recognising God's voice and responding to him?

- How did Peter and Cornelius respond to God's prompting? How do you think you would respond in their shoes?
- How do you think Peter felt when his talk was interrupted by the Holy Spirit (v44)?
- When Peter and his friends heard the listeners speaking in tongues and praising God, they recognised that the Holy Spirit had been 'poured out on them'. Share any experiences that you have of the gift of tongues. Not everyone has this gift, but if you do, then share how you discovered you had it.
- Contrast the surprise of what happened in Acts 11:44-48 with Paul's advice in 1 Cor 14:26 & 39-40. What implications do these passages have for our gathered worship as a church or Growth Group?

WHAT NEXT?

- In 2s or 3s, share any decisions or difficult situations you are faced with in the coming days or weeks. Pray for one another in turn that God would fill you with his Holy Spirit and guide you.
 - * Also share any particular gifts you would like God to give you – or gifts that you think you have that you would like him to use more. Pray for one another to receive and use these gifts.

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7: Lydia & Paul - Living Good News

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...
Share a few (clean) jokes you have heard recently!

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Take a mixture of objects and put them in the middle of the room. In turn, each choose one and explain how it could illustrate something about God or life as a Christian. Then pray some prayers of thanks and praise based on what's been said.

WORD

If you liked part 1, you could watch the Bible Project Introduction to Acts Part 2 at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-17KxpjL0Q>

Paul is on his second expedition. He's travelling with Silas & Timothy.
Read Acts 16:6-15

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

The journey from Iconium to Troas was approx 400 miles. It would have taken several weeks. They walked west, then north, then west again

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having been 'stopped' by the Holy Spirit twice! They eventually end up at the sea in Troas with nowhere left to go. (vs 6-8)

- Imagine you were with Paul and Silas from Iconium to Philippi, what would you be thinking/saying at each stage of the journey ...to the others? ...to yourself? ...to God?
- God guides the group step by step, just telling them what not to do! He reveals the final destination at the last minute. What does this reveal about God and about his ways of dealing with people? Why does he do it? How do you feel about it?
- Has God ever dealt with you in a similar way to this story or is he now? If not, how do you think you would react?
- Have you ever felt like you were going God's way, despite it seeming foolish to those around?
- Paul responds to God's 'promptings' and a vision. He then does the 'logical thing' in Philippi, by finding the 'place of prayer'. How easy do you find it to hear God through either promptings or logic?

Lydia is the first person to become a Christian in Europe. Like Cornelius, she worshipped God but didn't yet know about Jesus. She was quick to respond to the good news.

- Have you had experiences where people God has led you to people who were more open than you expected to hearing about Jesus?
- Who do you know who seems open to receiving the good news of Jesus? How could you help them discover it?

WHAT NEXT?

- Together: See how many of the stories from Acts that we've covered on Sundays and in our Growth Groups you can remember. Which ones stand out for you and why? How can you grow as a result?
- Pray for one another and for the church that we would be filled with and guided by the Holy Spirit and share the good news effectively.