

## ACTS - A to E

This series is linked to the Sunday Series and each session follows the Sunday when the session is introduced. These notes are for everyone- to use during the series, and to keep for reference afterwards. The first Christians had very little organisation, but they accepted and belonged to each other, and were open to welcome those who were attracted to what they had to offer - a new life, for ever in the care of God, made possible through faith in Jesus Christ, who had shown himself to be God in human form.

What drove them in their mission was the inspiration and strength of God himself which came through the work of the Holy Spirit. The agenda was God's, not theirs. Where the Holy Spirit showed them to go, they went; what the Holy Spirit told them to say, they said; what the Holy Spirit guided them to do, they did. They did nothing without prayer and fasting. They knew nothing of committees and formal structures. They belonged to God and to each other and lived their lives in prayer, praise and mission. The Holy Spirit was the starting point for all that they did.

In the book of ACTS we learn how to follow this pattern of church life and Christian living.

This study can only touch some of the dynamic experience. Read ALL the book and every time you read the words Spirit or Holy Spirit -pause - and see what is going on. It records the first 30 years of the Church. A framework for growth as a church is belonging in small groups. The Holy Spirit inspires us to work together.

Here is an A to E of how this works:		
A ccept .....	everyone	= Welcome
B elong .....	to God and to each other	= Worth
C elebrate .....	new life in Jesus Christ	= Worship
D eclare .....	the Good News	= Word
E ngage .....	in action	= Works

There are two sessions on each of these headings

### Session 1: Accept Everyone (Acts 9:1-19)

Spend a few minutes thinking how you yourself were accepted among Christians or in a church.  
 What is difficult about joining any group?  
 What can make it easier?  
 What makes us feel at home with people?

Now read Acts 9:1-9

How might churches react to some one like Saul according to his description in vv1-2?  
 How is Saul's encounter with God different from your own? What was your first encounter like?

Read Acts 9:10-16

Why was Ananias reluctant to do what God asked him?  
 Which types of people would you find it difficult to go to? Why is this?  
 What is God saying about our accepting people?

Read Acts 9:17-19

Why are these actions and experiences so vital for Saul?

- Laying on of hands
- Be filled with the Holy Spirit
- Be baptised

When Jesus touches us, fills us with the power of the Holy Spirit and we are baptised, we have eternal acceptance with God.

### Session 2: Accept Everyone (Acts 8:26-40)

Think of some of the ways Christians try to tell others about Jesus Christ.

Read Acts 8:26-29

What or who motivated Philip to speak to the man? What did he have to do?  
 What are the difference and the outcome of our good ideas versus Holy Spirit's guidance?

Read Acts 8:30-40

What did Philip do before he spoke?  
 Why are listening and observing so important prior to our saying anything?  
 What was the advantage of using the passage that the man was reading?  
 How do we make people feel accepted among us?  
 What IS the good news about Jesus?

Why was Philip so willing to baptise the man?  
What does a person have to do before they are baptised? Why?  
Why did Philip leave the new Christian?  
In what state should we leave people if we have to move on?  
We accept others because Christ accepted us; we are to make it easy, not difficult/or them to follow Christ too. This will happen if we are led not by human rules but by the Holy Spirit.

### **Session 3: Belong to God and to Each Other (Acts 2:42-47 and 13:1-12)**

Think of all the things that take place in a church monthly (or yearly) programme.  
Which of these have to do with Christian Teaching, Sharing what Christ means to us. Holy Communion and Prayer\*?  
If anything doesn't fit into these headings - then why are we doing it?

Read Acts 2:42-47

This corporate lifestyle was given by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost- when the first Christians were ALL together (Acts 2:1-4).

So why are the four headings\* so vital to church and Christian living?  
How can we ensure that they remain priorities? If we do this, what will the Holy Spirit do among us?

Read Acts 13:1-12

How did the Holy Spirit lead the church to release people into different kinds of ministry?  
What does this say about the human way of selecting people for jobs?  
What made them go to Cyprus (warm weather and they speak English?!?)?  
Why was Paul (formerly Saul) able to speak with such conviction and with such result?  
When do you think he was "filled with the Holy Spirit"?  
Belonging happens when we are all involved in the things that matter and when God appoints us to tasks.

### **Session 4: Belong to God and to Each Other (Acts 1:1-8: 2:1-4, 14-21, 36-41)**

Read Acts 1:1-8

How did Jesus ensure that the first Christians would continue to belong to him when he had left this earth?  
Why is the Holy Spirit given to us?

Read Acts 2:1-4

What needed to happen before the Holy Spirit came in power on this group?

Read Acts 2:14-21

Why did the Holy Spirit come to fill the followers with power?

Read Acts 2:36-41

What has to happen before the gift of the Holy Spirit is given to those who wish to respond to Christ?  
What happens when a person repents before God?  
Why is baptism important? (Matthew 28:19-20)  
What should happen next when a person commits their life to Christ?  
Belief and repentance, baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit are the hallmark of belonging in the church.

### **Session 5: Celebrate New Life in Jesus Christ (Acts 10:30-48)**

The introduction to this text is rather long but could be read first (Acts 10:1-29).

Read Acts 10: 30-35

When we find people who want to hear about what Jesus can do for them, how do we respond to their request? What is the advantage of responding at once?

Read Acts 10: 36-46

How did the Holy Spirit endorse the message of the Good News of Jesus Christ?  
What actually happened here?  
Why was this cause for celebration? Celebration for whom?

Read Acts 10:47-48

In what way is baptism a celebration of new life in Jesus?  
How will a new Christian want to celebrate what God has done for them in Christ?  
How do we continue to celebrate?  
Celebration of new life in Christ is personal and public - the inward grace of the Holy Spirit and the outward sign of baptism.

### **Session 6: Celebrate New Life in Jesus Christ (Acts 3:1-10, 11-20)**

When we make our way to corporate worship - what do we expect to happen?

Read Acts 3:1-10

What does God teach us here about our offering?

How does the Holy Spirit guide Peter in this encounter with the man?

How can the Holy Spirit guide us in everyday encounters with people?

Read Acts 3:11-20

Peter and John were going to an act of worship - how did the healing of the man change what they next did that day?

Note how the place of the healing became known and further Holy Spirit ministry became possible – Acts 5:12-16

How might we make our place of worship a place where God is known to be working miracles?

Life in Jesus needs regular celebration in worship -expecting the Holy Spirit to do the amazing in our midst

### **Session 7: Declare the Good News (Acts 17:16-34)**

What is the prevailing culture in our country? What has made it so?

And where do people turn to for spiritual experiences? Why?

Read Acts 17:16-21

How do we feel about the pagan influence in our land?

What did Paul decide to do about it?

What can we do?

How might we be "incorporated" into the "supermarket of beliefs" without being seen as radically different? (Notice how they thought Paul was preaching about two gods - Jesus and Anastasis =the Greek word for resurrection)

Read Acts 17:22-34

How does Paul use the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to capture the attention of his hearers?

How can we also get on people's wavelength?

What do people think they know about God?

What unknown facts can we declare to them?

The Holy Spirit gives us the inspiration and the courage to meet people where they are - in the known - and declare the unknown to them.

### **Session 8: Declare the Good News (Acts 8:1-25)**

Read Acts 8:1-8

How did the Holy Spirit turn Saul's programme of persecution into good?

What can happen when Christians are scattered?

Each week when we leave our time of corporate worship we are scattered into the community, home and workplace - what opportunities are there here to tell others about Jesus?

How can we bring healing and joy to those among whom we live?

Read Acts 8:9-25

Why was Philip's ministry more powerful and acceptable to people than the magic arts of Simon the Sorcerer?

Why are people attracted to "magic"?

How are the signs and wonders of the Holy Spirit different?

Why was it important for Peter and John to offer the gift of the Holy Spirit to these new believers?

What can happen when a person believes, (even goes through some initiation ritual) but does not ask God to be the controlling power in his life? (i.e. wants to be a kind of believer in human strength but not fully committed to God)

What was wrong with Simon's attitude? What did he lack - or need to do in order to let God into his life?

How can a "nominal Christian" become a Spirit-filled Christian?

The Holy Spirit is the gift of God and cannot be obtained except through repentance and faith.

### **Session 9: Engage in Action (Acts 16:6-15)**

How do we - in general life -decide which areas and people have the greatest need?

Read Acts 16:6-10

How did Paul and his group know which people and places to go to in their mission?

How could the Holy Spirit actually prevent Christians going to a particular place?

Do you know of a time when it seems he was preventing you from doing something? Why would this be?

What do we do when we realise that God does not want us to do something?

How did the Holy Spirit make it clear to Paul where he was to go and to what people?

Can you recall any guidance like this in your own experience? What do we learn from this?

Read Acts 16:11-15

What was the result of following the prompting of the Holy Spirit? What do we learn about Paul's being led to a "place of prayer"? How were Lydia and her group helped into further relationship with God?

Being led by the Holy Spirit is the only way in which we do what God wants

**Session 10: Engage in Action (Acts 16: 16-24, 25-36)**

Read Acts 16:16-24

What can be the consequences of action for Christ?

Why should we take a stand against moral and spiritual evil - as here?

What is the difference between our own spirit (or soul), an evil spirit and the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of God).

Read Acts 16:25-36

How can any Christian receive enough presence of mind and strength to praise God in a crisis?

What practical and spiritual thing did they do for the jailer? (Bearing in mind his question probably relates to saving his mortal life from execution rather than the word, which has to do with salvation in Christ)

Why were the spending time with his family and the meal so important in their ministry to him and his ministry to them? (This act was the first expression of his new found Christian love)

The Holy Spirit gives us the power to confront evil and difficult crises and come through it all to victory and peace.

Bill Smith 09 September 2004

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