

SAMPLE CHAPTER
NOT FOR RESALE

SAVED

EXPERIENCING THE PROMISE OF
THE BOOK OF ACTS



NANCY GUTHRIE

PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY



SAMPLE CHAPTER
NOT FOR RESALE

Saved Personal Bible Study

Experiencing the Promise of the Book of Acts

Nancy Guthrie

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Saved Personal Bible Study: Experiencing the Promise of the Book of Acts

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A Note from Nancy

I'm so glad you're planning to work your way through this study of the book of Acts! The following personal Bible study questions are intended to help you get the most out of each chapter in the book or video session. I suggest that you work through them *before* you read each chapter or watch each video. You'll get far more out of what I present if you do.

You may choose to do each personal Bible study lesson in one sitting, or you might want to plan on doing a couple of questions each day during the week so that you have some time in the Bible every day. As you study, understand that the goal is not to get the "right answer." If some of the questions seem difficult (and some of them may be!), please know that my aim is not to frustrate you or to make you flip back and forth in your Bible as busywork. My aim is to get you into the text of Acts, thinking deeply about what is transpiring in this story and how it fits into God's salvation plans for history and for his people.

You may be left wondering at times why I've asked certain questions, or feel like some things are still unclear. If you find there are questions you can't completely answer, that's okay! This personal Bible study is just one part of the learning process. Some of the

questions serve to lay the groundwork for what I will explain more fully in the chapters or video sessions. Hopefully my purpose in certain questions will become clear when you read each chapter or watch the videos, and even more clear as you discuss them with your group. Working through the text in advance using these questions will equip you to grasp more fully what is being taught in the corresponding book chapter or video session.

You'll find that this personal Bible study is primarily focused on helping you dig into and understand the text itself—what it says and what it means. Often we want to put in a few minutes of Bible reading and come away with a feel-good bit of encouragement or a clear to-do list. We want a quick “How does this apply to my life?” takeaway. Applying the Bible to our lives is indeed essential! But appropriate applications or implications are not always immediately clear. We're going to find throughout Acts that much of the narrative is more descriptive than prescriptive, with broad takeaways from the book as a whole. It's good for us to press in and think deeply to gain clarity about what the text meant to the original audience, and how it relates to the larger story of redemption through Christ, before we bring it into our own context.

You'll find that I've included maps along the way for you to identify countries and cities in the story of Acts and to trace where various characters take the gospel. My hope is that these exercises will help you visualize the action and gain a firmer grip on the progression of the story being told in Acts.

A first question for many people is, How long should these questions take to answer? There is no set time frame. Each lesson has nine to twelve questions. Some of them require more reading in other parts of the Bible than others. I would hope that you would

be able to read the pertinent passages and complete the questions in thirty to sixty minutes each week.

We're all different in the way we approach a page of questions and blank space for answers. Some of us are brief, jotting down a few words that may represent more comprehensive thoughts and ideas that we might share verbally with a group. Others of us want to record a thorough written answer to every question. I hope you'll feel the freedom to do what works for you. I've sought to include enough space on these pages to record the answer I came up with for each question as I created it. And my answers are usually brief.

Certainly some weeks you will have more time than others, but we all know that we get more out of study if we put more into it. What is most important is not how much time you take but taking the time to work through the personal Bible study and keeping that appointment. You may want to write down at the bottom of this page when you plan to work on these questions each week, making an appointment with yourself. And I hope you'll keep it! I think one of the best times to work on something like this is on Sunday afternoon or evening. It's the Lord's Day. Spending time engaging with him through his word is a wonderful way to make the most of his day and to make sure you get your lesson done each week.

Another particular challenge with this study will simply be to keep going. Acts is the longest book in the New Testament. We will cover its twenty-eight chapters over seventeen lessons (the introduction session has no personal Bible study). I hope you will decide now to persevere to the end so that after you've completed the study, you'll have a firm grip on the events of the initial spread of the gospel from Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. More than that, I hope that persevering through the

study will fill you with a sense of confidence that God's purposes of salvation in this world are unstoppable.

If you are reading the book or watching the videos with a group, I suggest you bring your copy of these answered questions when your group meets. As your leader works through the discussion questions that are provided in the leader's guide, he or she may bring in some (but not all) of these personal Bible study questions. Having them with you will also give you the opportunity to ask other group members for help with any questions you struggled to answer.

I'm convinced that God works through his word. The Holy Spirit uses the written word to open our eyes, to change our perspectives, and nurture our love for Christ. I pray that he will use your time in his word to do exactly that. And I pray that as you seek to grasp the significance of what Luke recorded for us in the pages of Acts, you'll grow in your confidence that God still works by his Spirit through his word to add to his church. I pray you'll believe more deeply than ever that his gospel is what the world most needs to hear. And I hope you'll be filled with gratitude for what God has done to make his gospel known to the ends of the earth—and more specifically, to you.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy Guthrie". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned centrally below the text of the note.

Lesson 1

You Will Be My Witnesses

ACTS 1:1–26

1. Read Acts 1:1–3, which serves as a summary of what Luke wrote in the Gospel of Luke and what he is going to write in this first chapter of Acts. When you read that Jesus spent forty days “speaking about the kingdom of God” with the apostles, what kinds of things do you think he might have discussed? (You might also want to read Luke 24:44–48, which provides another statement about what Jesus taught the apostles, or use your concordance to find other passages that refer to the kingdom.)

YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES

2. Read Acts 1:4. Jesus tells the disciples to wait for “the promise of the Father.” What do the following verses reveal about this promise?

Isaiah 32:14–15:

Isaiah 44:3:

Joel 2:28–29:

3. Read Acts 1:6–7. The disciples’ question, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” could be understood a number of ways. How would the following passages have shaped the disciples’ expectations of “restoration”?

Isaiah 49:5–6:

Ezekiel 37:20–28:

Zechariah 2:10–11:

4. Read Acts 1:8, which provides a rough outline for the entire book of Acts. Consider who Jesus was speaking to. Why might this statement from Jesus have been challenging for them to grasp?

5. Read Acts 1:9–11. What details do these verses provide about the ascension and return of Christ?

6. Read Acts 3:19–21. What does Peter come to understand about the time of restoration?

7. Read Acts 1:12–20. In verse 16, Peter says that the psalms of David he is quoting (Psalms 69:25 and 109:8) are fulfilled in

Judas. How do you think Peter has been able to come to that conclusion? (See Luke 24:25–27, 44–47.)

8. Read Acts 1:21–26. What requirements do you find for the replacement apostle according to these verses? (You might also consult Acts 10:39–41.)

9. The time the apostles spent with Jesus between his resurrection and ascension helped them to grapple with the ways the kingdom of Jesus was not what they had expected it to be. They had to make some adjustments in their understanding and expectations. Has your life, as a citizen of the kingdom of God, been what you expected it to be? What truths from Jesus's teaching about the kingdom could help you adjust your expectations toward what Jesus has promised?

Lesson 2

I Will Pour Out My Spirit

ACTS 2:1–47

1. Read Acts 2:1. The events of this chapter take place on “the day of Pentecost” (2:1), one of numerous Old Testament feasts. To see the significance of this, it’s helpful to review some other feasts and how they were brought to ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ. The original Passover recalled the sacrifice of the lambs in Egypt (Ex. 12), but it pointed forward to Jesus, who was sacrificed as the Lamb of God on Passover (Luke 22:7). On the first day after the Sabbath of Passover week was the Feast of Firstfruits (Lev. 23:9–11), in which Israelites offered the first of their harvest to God. And three days after his death, Jesus rose from the grave as the “firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor. 15:20–23).

Then seven weeks after the Feast of Firstfruits came the Feast of Weeks, also called the Feast of Harvest (Ex. 23:16) or

Pentecost, which celebrated the completion or fullness of the harvest. And what we read about in Acts 2 takes place seven weeks after Jesus's resurrection, on Pentecost. Skip ahead to Acts 2:41. What kind of harvest is celebrated on this day of Pentecost?

2. Read Acts 2:2–4. The 120 believers gathered in the room hear a sound “like a mighty rushing wind” and see “divided tongues as of fire.” Numerous times throughout Old Testament history there was wind or fire as heavenly and earthly realms came together. What examples do you find in the following verses?

Exodus 3:2:

Exodus 14:21:

Exodus 19:18:

Job 38:1:

Ezekiel 1:4:

3. What do you think is the significance of the fire appearing as tongues in this instance?

4. Read Acts 2:5-13. On this map, circle all of the countries or areas from which Jews have gathered in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost.



5. Read Acts 2:14–21. What do you think Peter is trying to communicate by connecting what is happening at Pentecost to Joel’s prophecy? How would this be different from what a few Old Testament believers experienced to accomplish particular tasks (for example, Bezalel in Ex. 31:1–5; Balaam in Num. 24:2; Saul in 1 Sam. 10:10; and Daniel in Dan. 4:8)?

6. The prophecy in Joel is typical of lots of Old Testament prophecy in that it foresees future events that are separated by time, but speaks of them as one event. Part of Joel’s prophecy is being fulfilled at Pentecost, but what still-future event is described in Acts 2:19–21?

7. Read Acts 2:22–32. What event does Peter say David wrote about in the Psalms that could not have been about David?

8. Read Acts 2:33-36. What events does Peter say David wrote about in Psalm 110?

9. Read Acts 2:37-41. Peter says that those who repent and are baptized will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. How do you see the power of the Spirit at work in the following verses?

v. 36:

v. 37:

v. 38:

v. 39:

v. 41:

10. Read Acts 2:42–47. The Spirit’s power might seem most obvious in the “wonders and signs” the apostles were doing. But how else do you see the power of the Spirit at work in these verses?

v. 42:

v. 43:

v. 45:

vv. 45–46:

v. 47:

11. In this passage, we see the impact of the Holy Spirit's coming on and in the first believers. In what ways has the Holy Spirit moved powerfully in your life? What are some ways you would like to see the Holy Spirit work further in your life?

Lesson 3

In Jesus the Resurrection from the Dead

ACTS 3:1–4:31

1. Read through the following passages from the Old Testament prophets. What do they have in common?

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
then shall the lame man leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.
For waters break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert (Isa. 35:5–6)

Behold, I will bring them from the north country
and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth,
among them the blind and the lame,

the pregnant woman and she who is in labor, together;
a great company, they shall return here. (Jer. 31:8)

“Behold, at that time I will deal
with all your oppressors.
And I will save the lame
and gather the outcast,
and I will change their shame into praise
and renown in all the earth.
At that time I will bring you in,
at the time when I gather you together;
for I will make you renowned and praised
among all the peoples of the earth,
when I restore your fortunes
before your eyes,” says the LORD. (Zeph. 3:19–20)

In that day, declares the LORD,
I will assemble the lame
and gather those who have been driven away
and those whom I have afflicted;
and the lame I will make the remnant,
and those who were cast off, a strong nation;
and the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion
from this time forth and forevermore. (Mic. 4:6–7)

2. Read Acts 3:1–10. How does this story connect to the prophetic passages you've just read?

3. Read Acts 3:11–26. How would you summarize Peter's argument in this sermon?

4. Read Acts 3:11–26, in which Peter speaks about who Jesus is and what he does. What things in these verses do you think would have been especially difficult for Peter's audience to hear? What would they have found encouraging to hear?

Difficult to hear:

Encouraging to hear:

5. Read Acts 4:1–4. How does Luke summarize what Peter and John were teaching (v. 2)? How do those who heard it respond?

6. Read the following Old Testament passages and note a phrase from each that would have shaped what Peter’s listeners would have understood or expected regarding “the resurrection from the dead.”

Job 19:25–27:

Isaiah 25:6–9:

Isaiah 26:19:

Daniel 12:2:

7. Read Acts 4:5–12. Peter and John are interrogated by the rulers, elders, scribes, and the entire high priestly family, including Annas (the high priest) and Caiaphas. For what “crime” are they examining Peter and John? What accusations does Peter make against them?

8. Read Acts 4:13–22. How does this passage connect to Acts 1:8: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come

upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”?

9. Read Acts 4:23–31. How do the believers relate Psalm 2 to what Peter and John have just experienced? How does the quote from Psalm 2 relate to the statement in 4:28?

10. Peter and John are incredibly bold in speaking of Christ despite the pressures of the religious leaders. In verse 29, we read that they prayed for boldness to keep speaking the word of God. How would you rate your own boldness in speaking of Christ? What do you think it would look like for you to be bold? Are you willing to pray for boldness?

Lesson 4

You Will Not Be Able to Overthrow Them

ACTS 4:32–5:42

1. Read Acts 4:32–36. How would you characterize what is “great” or impressive in the following verses?

v. 33a:

v. 33b:

vv. 32, 34–35:

2. Read Acts 5:1–11. How are Ananias and Sapphira’s actions characterized in verse 3?

How are their actions characterized in verse 9?

Why do you think Ananias and Sapphira do this?

3. Like Ananias and Sapphira, we too face the temptation of seeking to appear more spiritual or sacrificial than we actually are. Can you identify any specific ways or situations in which you face this temptation? What changes might you need to make in order to be more truthful with how you present your devotion to and relationship with Christ?

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4. Read Acts 5:12–17. Why do you think the high priest and the rest of the religious council respond this way to the signs and wonders of the apostles?

And where have we heard this before? (See Matt. 27:18.)

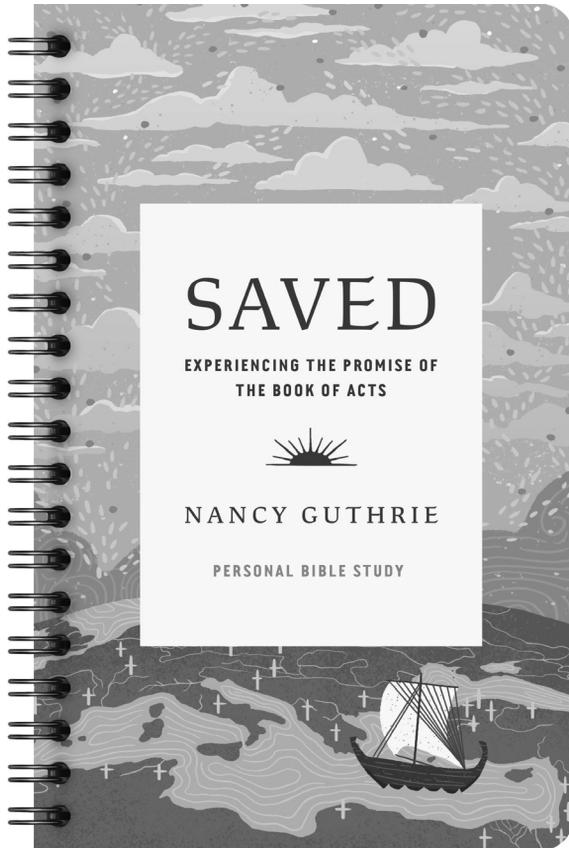
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5. Read Acts 5:18–32. How is the charge to the apostles from the angel who brought them out of prison the exact opposite of the charge to the apostles from the religious council?

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6. After the council charges them not to teach about the gospel, they immediately announce the gospel to the council. What are the key elements of the gospel, according to verses 30–32?

7. Read Acts 5:33–39. In verse 39, Gamaliel makes a profound statement. We are still early in the book of Acts, but from what you know about how the story will progress, how will his statement prove true in this book?

8. Read Acts 5:40–42. Notice what they are instructed to do and what they actually do. What do you think generates the joy and persistence in these apostles?

9. Being beaten for speaking of Christ is likely outside of your experience, but suffering dishonor for speaking about or identifying with Jesus may not be. How difficult is it for you to imagine rejoicing in that? What fueled the apostles' rejoicing that could also enable you to rejoice?



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Over 17 lessons, the *Saved Personal Bible Study* will take you deep into the book of Acts so that you'll be able to see clearly its connections to the Old Testament, the life and ministry of Jesus, and what is to come in the new creation. Designed to be used by those studying the book of Acts on their own or with a group, these carefully crafted questions on the text will prepare readers to get the most out of reading the corresponding chapter in the *Saved* book or viewing the corresponding session in the video series.

Each study takes about 30 minutes per week and includes 9–12 questions on the text. The questions can be answered as briefly or thoroughly as the reader prefers. After completing the personal Bible study, readers will have a firm grip on the events of the initial spread of the gospel from Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

NANCY GUTHRIE teaches the Bible at her home church, Cornerstone Presbyterian Church in Franklin, Tennessee, as well as at conferences around the country and internationally, including her Biblical Theology Workshop for Women. She is the author of numerous books and the host of the *Help Me Teach the Bible* podcast with the Gospel Coalition.

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