

PHYLLIS J. LE PEAU

ACTS 1–12

*Part 1: God's Power in
Jerusalem & Judea*



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GETTING THE MOST OUT OF ACTS 1–12

Just before Acts begins, the disciples are wallowing in the mire of their craven fear, self-doubt and personal shame. Apart from their master, they are a pathetic group indeed (John 20:19; Luke 24:11). However, by the second chapter of Acts, the same men who abandoned Jesus at Gethsemane have become irrepressible dynamos, preaching with utter conviction—and at great personal risk—“the mighty acts of God.”

Acts is an important book for us today because it confirms that the power of the Holy Spirit, which transformed the disciples’ lives, is the same power that can transform our lives today!

There are many benefits to studying Acts:

- *Acts serves as a distant mirror.* We see the dynamics of the earliest church, the nature of their fellowship, the intensity of their prayer life and their out-and-out zeal to declare the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. Our own situation will be called into question. What does it mean to be the church today?
- *Acts emphasizes the primary task of the church—evangelization.* In Acts we see the entire process of calling, healing, empowering and sending people forth to love and obey Jesus Christ.
- *Acts calls us to a vital experience with the Holy Spirit.* The book of Acts reveals the Holy Spirit as the driving force behind all meaningful ministry in Jesus’ name.
- *Acts forges a new sense of identity.* The disciples gradually realized they were no longer Jews (at least from the confessional and ceremonial points of view). They slowly began to understand that they were part of that new community of the Spirit that was prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures. And they saw the need to

call all people—Jews and Gentiles—to repentance and fellowship with this new community, the church.

Through these studies by Phyllis J. Le Peau, the explosive power of this living document will touch you. As you work through these studies, may you experience the calling, healing, empowering and sending dynamic of the Holy Spirit.

Louis Quetel

SUGGESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL STUDY

1. As you begin each study, pray that God will speak to you through his Word.
2. Read the introduction to the study and respond to the personal reflection question or exercise. This is designed to help you focus on God and on the theme of the study.
3. Each study deals with a particular passage—so that you can delve into the author’s meaning in that context. Read and reread the passage to be studied. The questions are written using the language of the New International Version, so you may wish to use that version of the Bible. The New Revised Standard Version is also recommended.
4. This is an inductive Bible study, designed to help you discover for yourself what Scripture is saying. The study includes three types of questions. *Observation* questions ask about the basic facts: who, what, when, where and how. *Interpretation* questions delve into the meaning of the passage. *Application* questions help you discover the implications of the text for growing in Christ. These three keys unlock the treasures of Scripture. Write your answers to the questions in the spaces provided or in a personal journal. Writing can bring clarity and deeper understanding of yourself and of God’s Word.
5. It might be good to have a Bible dictionary handy. Use it to look up any unfamiliar words, names or places.
6. Use the prayer suggestion to guide you in thanking God for what you have learned and to pray about the applications that have come to mind.
7. You may want to go on to the suggestion under “Now or Later,” or you may want to use that idea for your next study.

SUGGESTIONS FOR MEMBERS OF A GROUP STUDY

1. Come to the study prepared. Follow the suggestions for individual study mentioned above. You will find that careful preparation will greatly enrich your time spent in group discussion.
2. Be willing to participate in the discussion. The leader of your group will not be lecturing. Instead, he or she will be encouraging the members of the group to discuss what they have learned. The leader will be asking the questions that are found in this guide.
3. Stick to the topic being discussed. Your answers should be based on the verses which are the focus of the discussion and not on outside authorities such as commentaries or speakers. These studies focus on a particular passage of Scripture. Only rarely should you refer to other portions of the Bible. This allows for everyone to participate in in-depth study on equal ground.
4. Be sensitive to the other members of the group. Listen attentively when they describe what they have learned. You may be surprised by their insights! Each question assumes a variety of answers. Many questions do not have “right” answers, particularly questions that aim at meaning or application. Instead the questions push us to explore the passage more thoroughly.

When possible, link what you say to the comments of others. Also, be affirming whenever you can. This will encourage some of the more hesitant members of the group to participate.
5. Be careful not to dominate the discussion. We are sometimes so eager to express our thoughts that we leave too little opportunity for others to respond. By all means participate! But allow others to also.
6. Expect God to teach you through the passage being discussed and through the other members of the group. Pray that you will have an enjoyable and profitable time together, but also that as a result of the study you will find ways that you can take action individually and/or as a group.
7. Remember that anything said in the group is considered confidential and should not be discussed outside the group unless specific permission is given to do so.
8. If you are the group leader, you will find additional suggestions at the back of the guide.

YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES

Acts 1

I remember telling a friend, “If I were dying, what I would most need would be confidence that all I believed about Jesus was true.”

During the days between his resurrection and ascension, Jesus built the confidence of his disciples. He demonstrated and spoke truth about himself. And then he left them with a clearly defined task and the promise of the power to carry out that task. Thus, Luke was able to write with confidence to Theophilus about Jesus.

Group Discussion. When has your faith in Jesus Christ been encouraged by the words of others?

Personal Reflection. I need confidence that everything I believe about Jesus is true, not only when I am dying but also when I am living. What do you need to build your confidence in who Jesus is?

In this study we will consider the task of building the church of Jesus Christ and his promise to equip us for that task. *Read Acts 1:1-11.*

1. What did Luke, the author of Acts, report to Theophilus about Jesus' last days on the earth?

2. What gives credibility to this report?

3. How is your hope and confidence in Jesus affected by what you learn of him in the passage?

4. Put yourself in the shoes of the apostles. How would you feel if you were the first to be given the task described in verse 8?

5. How are we equipped for this task, according to the passage?

6. Imagine that you were there, looking into the sky. How do you think the followers of Jesus were affected by the promise that he would return?

7. How are you affected by that promise today?

8. Read Acts 1:12-26. How did the disciples respond to all that they had seen and heard?

9. Why was it important for them to be together?

10. How are you affected when you pray with other believers in this way—especially as you consider your part in this task (v. 14)?

11. Peter comes forth as the leader of this group. He goes to Scripture immediately when he speaks. How do the words of David affect their confidence, as well as give them direction?

12. What do you find in this passage to equip, motivate and give you confidence to complete the task that has been set before you?



Thank God for giving you the marvelous task of being his witness. Tell him about the fears and joys that you feel as his servant in this mission.

NOW OR LATER

Reflect on what it means for you to be Jesus' witness in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth. Where is your Jerusalem—those closest to you who need to know Jesus? Your Judea—your nation? Your Samaria—those in your world who are different from you, for whom you would have to cross lines of culture and prejudice and move out of your comfort zone to love? What is your role in taking the good news to the ends of the earth? That is, how might you support world missions?

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