



For the week of May 15

**Monday, May 16 — Acts 7**



**Chapter Summary:** Stephen testifies before the Sanhedrin. He gives an overview of the history of the Jewish people and how it all points to Jesus as the Messiah. He accuses them of betraying and murdering Christ. In anger, they stone Stephen to death. As he dies, Stephen asks God to forgive them. The men stoning Stephen laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.

**Devotional:** Stephen recounts all that God has done for the Jews throughout their history. As he tells the story of a God who has always actively cared for His people, Stephen calls the Jews to believe in Jesus as the Son of God. What has God done in your life to help you believe in Him today? Share stories of how God has blessed your family through the generations so that you can have faith today. Make sure to tell your story to the next generation in your family so that they will know God's faithfulness in a personal way. His faithfulness challenges us to be faithful, too.

**Questions for more thought/discussion:** The people who heard Stephen preach about Jesus had a very different reaction from those who heard Peter preach. What made the difference?

They covered their ears and refused to hear Stephen's lesson. How do we avoid God's message when we don't like what is telling us? How can we open our ears and listen even if it is difficult?

Compare Stephen's prayer in verse 60 to what Jesus prayed on the cross. What can we pray about those who hurt or persecute us?



## Tuesday, May 17 — Acts 8

**Chapter Summary:** Saul begins a large scale persecution of the church. Philip preaches Christ in Samaria and there are many baptisms, including Simon the Sorcerer who learns he cannot buy the gift of the Holy Spirit. Peter and John come from Jerusalem and strengthen the church. An angel sends Philip to teach an Ethiopian eunuch who gets baptized.

**Devotional:** After the death of Stephen, the persecution against the church is great. But it actually served to spread the gospel because as Christians fled, they shared the gospel with more people. While we don't face that kind of persecution in America today, we can practice that kind of evangelism! Who do you know you can talk to about Jesus? How can we have the same evangelistic spirit the early church did?

**Questions for more thought/discussion:** Simon thought he could buy the gift of the Holy Spirit. How are we tempted today to think we can earn or pay for the gifts of God? What other gifts does God give us today that cannot be purchased with money?



## Wednesday, May 18 — Acts 9

**Chapter Summary:** As Saul journeys to Damascus to persecute the church, the Lord speaks to Him from a bright light. Saul's heart is changed but his eyes are blinded. He goes on to Damascus where Ananias heals his eyes and baptizes him. Saul begins to preach Christ and is persecuted and has to escape to Jerusalem. Peter heals a man and raises Tabitha from the dead. Many more people become Christians.

**Devotional:** Saul believed with all his heart that Jesus was wrong and the Christians were wrong. The truth was that they were right and Saul was wrong! Many things about the way Saul had been taught led him to believe what he did. But when he truly encounters the risen Lord, everything changes. What do you think made Saul change his mind about Christ? What did it cost Saul to believe in Jesus? How can we trust God even if it costs us friends, family, or our social standing? How did that work out for Saul?

**Questions for more thought/discussion:** Ananias had heard all about Saul and all he had done. Ananias knew why Saul was coming to Damascus. But God told him to go to Saul anyway. What do you think Ananias was thinking about as he went to Saul? How do you think the early church responded when Saul began to preach the gospel he had just recently been teaching against? What does this show us about the power of the gospel and our own judgment of other people?



## Thursday, May 19 — Acts 10

**Chapter Summary:** Cornelius is a devout Gentile who is told by God to send for Peter. God sends Peter a vision to tell him to go with the men to Cornelius's house. He learns that salvation is Jews and Gentiles. He preaches to Cornelius and his household and the Holy Spirit falls on them which convinces Peter and the rest of the Jews with him that God has accepted Gentiles who obey the gospel.

**Devotional:** By almost any definition, Cornelius was a good man. If you make a list of the good things Cornelius did, you'll see he prayed regularly, knew the Scriptures, and helped the poor. But God knew something was missing in his life. So when Peter came to teach Him the gospel, Cornelius was well prepared to receive it. But he still needed to be baptized. Peter taught Cornelius about the gospel and what he needed to do and Cornelius immediately did what God wanted him to do.

Are bad people the only ones who need the gospel? How can you be what we would call a "good person" and still be lost? What can we do to reach people who are generally good people by the standards of society and teach them the truth about Jesus? What specific obstacles do we run into with "good people"?

**Questions for more thought/discussion:** Was Peter right to be concerned about the ceremonial laws of cleanliness regarding the Gentiles?

Cornelius had many good deeds he could have cited to prove he was acceptable to God. Instead of justifying himself, Cornelius just wanted to do whatever God told him to do. What is the role that good works plays in our salvation if it isn't how we earn salvation?

## Friday, May 20 — Acts 11



**Chapter Summary:** The Christians in Jerusalem question Peter about entering the house of a Gentile, but Peter explains what happened to them. In the end they rejoice that Gentiles can be saved, too. The gospel spreads into Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch. Barnabas goes and gets Saul and brings him to Antioch where the church begins to make plans to send relief to Christians in Judea from a famine which is coming.

**Devotional:** The name Barnabas means “Son of Encouragement.” When the church sent Barnabas out, he encouraged the Christians to remain faithful to the Lord. The Bible calls Barnabas a good and faithful man. It also says that after Barnabas encouraged the church, it grew some more.

Who encourages you? How can we be like Barnabas and encourage other Christians? What kind of growth happens when the church is encouraged?

**Questions for more thought/discussion:** Peter and the brethren from Jerusalem have a disagreement about Gentiles and salvation. How do they solve it and find unity again?

Barnabas encourages the church and it grows. Luke says this is the grace of God. How does God’s grace show up in the church?

When the church hears about a famine in Judea, they immediately plan to send help. What is the church’s role in helping out in times of disaster? How do we do that today?

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