



TOMS Bible Studies  
Term 1 2017

**Acts**

**10-19**

# Acts

At TOMS we looked at the opening chapters of Acts in our Bible Study Groups in 2016. In this series we continue this study through Acts. We look at what Luke (the author of Acts and gospel of Luke) tells us about the Apostle Paul's missionary journeys but ultimately we see gospel going out to people of all nations. What a timely group of studies as we plan for Good News week and the gospel going out in our community! However, these studies should remind us that it is not just in big events or focused periods of time in which people were reached with the gospel. We will be reminded that it is in conversations (sometimes sought out, sometimes unplanned) and the manner in which we conduct our daily lives that opens doors to the gospel.

So let us study the next section of Acts rejoicing in how the gospel went out in that period of history, listening to the passion of the believers and the conviction they maintained unswervingly, seeing the character of God laid out for us, and living thankful that we live this side of the cross with the entire Bible sitting in our hands. Let's treasure his Word together.

Some notes about using these studies:

1. For those who have always thought it a good idea to memorise parts of God's Word but have not known where to start or do not have a systematic system for doing so there is a "Verse Worth Remembering" section in each study. It identifies a key verse. By memorising verses from what we are studying our memories can use these as a stepping stone to recall the other things we learnt 'around' that verse. These key verses are not intended to always identify the main verse in the passage, sometimes they are chosen for the universal message it conveys about God's truth or simply practically it is an easier verse to memorise.
2. In the application section (also called Thinking it Through) there are a variety of questions due to the range of people and situations these studies will be used in. **Please choose one or more.** Some groups may only need to look at one question in this section.

3. These studies of Acts are intentionally short. Our Bible Study Groups do more than merely study the Bible, accumulating knowledge about Jesus. We meet together in our groups in order to **mature one another as disciples who make more disciples**. To help us keep on this track, before each study is a “Discipleship focus”. Please don’t skip over this, or allow only a few people to respond. For the good of your whole group, everyone needs to have a chance to think and share about being a disciple.
  
4. Please keep in mind that these studies are designed to be completed within 60 minutes, allowing groups who only meet for 90 minutes at least half an hour to share and pray. However, if you have more time, flesh out the questions more, tackle an extension question, and also give more time to talking to God.

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## Discipleship Focus:

*In what ways would you like to grow as a disciple of Jesus this year?*

# Study One – A Dream, A Feast, A Gift, A new Family

## God's Mission to Save All – This Includes Gentiles!

### VERSE WORTH REMEMBERING

*Then Peter began to speak: "I now realise how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right."*

Acts 10:34-35

### Getting Started:

Imagine you are at a church pot-luck dinner (at pot-luck dinners everyone brings a dish and it is 'pot luck' seeing what ends up on the dinner table for the meal). Someone has brought 'that' – it could be frog's legs, sheep's bladders, snails, whatever it is it is something that makes your tummy turn because it has always been something you have not considered as 'food'...as you look around it would appear that others feel the

same way. But you stop and consider, what would this person feel if no-one ate their dish... what do you do?

*Extension for the adventurous: Can you name any Gentiles who were included in God's people in the Old Testament?*

### Peter – A Jew among Jews? Read Acts 9:32-43

I. List the things that remind you of the ministry of Jesus.

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*Did you know?*

*A tanner was a person involved in treating the skins of dead animals.*

*Implication: According to Jewish law they were contacting the unclean, making themselves unclean. (Lev 19:39-40)*

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**Read Acts 10:1-11:30** (Yes, both chapters!)

2. Who was Cornelius? (particularly 10:1-2, 22)

3. When God sent the vision to Peter of the food to kill and eat, why did Peter respond “Surely not, Lord!” (10:14)? Look also at Leviticus 20:24-26.

4. What does Jesus teach about this? Look at Mark 7:18-19

5. What does Peter learn ...

- about those who are different from him? (10:15, 27-29)

- about God? (10:34-35)

6. In his speech in 10:36-43, how does Peter demonstrate this new knowledge of “every nation” (10:35) being included in God’s plan?

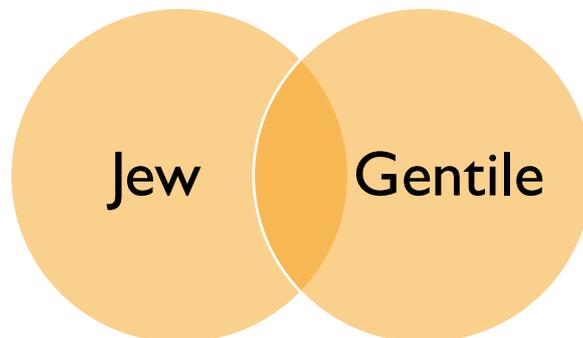
7. What was the surprise in 10:43-46 and 11:15-17?

## Thinking it Through

a) What have you or other Christians in the past (or present) labelled as “unclean”?

b) When have you said to God “surely not, Lord”? (or in what situation could you imagine doing so?)

c) The diagram below demonstrates something we see happening at this point in Acts. However, there is a label missing. Label the section where the circles are overlapped.



d) God lays out his salvation plan in Acts 1:8. How do the following passages link with this plan?

- The encounter with Peter and Cornelius (10:1-11:18)

- 11:19-26?

e) What cultural barriers are there at TOMS (hopefully unintentional) that prevent us sharing the gospel with a particular group of people? (grouping may be due to race, ethnicity, socio-economic situations, family demographics, education, or....)

What can you do to help minimise these barriers?

### **Putting into Action for Good News Week**

Name three people who you want to break down barriers that may prevent them hearing the gospel. Pray that you can help set aside these barriers.

*Discipleship Focus:*

*Take 2 minutes to explain how you came to be a disciple of Jesus. (Half the group can share this week and half next week)*

## **Study 2– King Herod vs King Jesus – A Clash of Kings**

**God is the one who enables the gospel to continue to spread. He is in control.**

### **Getting Started:**

When in life does it seem that something or someone else has control instead of God?

### **Read Acts 12**

1. King Herod was \_\_\_\_\_ the church (12:1-2)

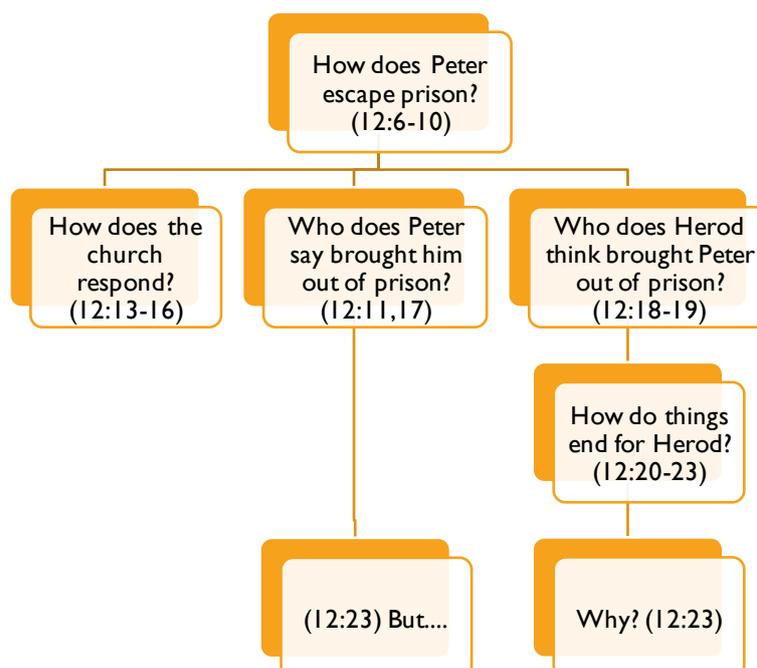
2. King Herod had Peter seized because it \_\_\_\_\_ (12:3-4)

3. While Peter was in prison, the Church \_\_\_\_\_ (12:5)

4.

*Did you know?*

*The Festival of Unleavened Bread (Acts 12:3) was a week-long festival. In New Testament times it was common for the name Passover (12:4) to be used interchangeably with it (see Luke 22:1)*



In Acts 12 we read about a time when the believers may have been tempted to see Herod in control and preventing God's mission. Peter in prison may have wondered how this showed that God was in control. But God showed that he is powerful to overthrow human plans and to put his own plans in their place. The spread of the gospel cannot be stopped because the risen Lord Jesus himself is behind the mission.

## VERSE WORTH REMEMBERING

*But the word of God continued to spread and flourish*

Acts 12:24

### Thinking it Through

- a) How were Herod's plans contrary to God's plans? How can our own plans be contrary to God's plans (perhaps in less dramatic ways, but still potentially as detrimental)?
  
- b) What does Acts 12 teach us about those who try to oppress the church and stop the gospel spreading?
  
- c) What does Acts 12 teach us about God's sovereign authority? (don't forget the choosing to save Peter and not James)

### Putting into Action for Good News Week

Pray that you can be part of God's plans for Good News Week.

Pray for the three people you prayed for last week, that they will also be part of God's plans for Good News Week.

## Discipleship Focus:

Take 2 minutes to explain how you came to be a disciple of Jesus. (Half of the group who didn't share last week)

# Study Three – The King is Central

## VERSE WORTH REMEMBERING

*When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honoured the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.*

Acts 13:48

## Getting Started:

What are some of the tough questions people have asked you about Jesus or Christianity?

## Read Acts 13:1-3

1. What impression do we get of the church in Antioch? (cf. 11:19-30)

## Read Acts 13:4-12

2. What role did the blinding of Elymus play in Sergius Paulus (the proconsul) believing?

## VERSE WORTH REMEMBERING

*We tell you the good news: What God promised our ancestors he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising Jesus.*

Acts 13:32-33

## Read Acts 13:13-37

3. What type of message does Paul bring to the “fellow Israelites and you Gentiles who worship God” (13:16)? (see 13:15)

4. What does Paul concentrate on in the first part of his speech? (13:16-24)

5. What place does Jesus have in God's work?  
(13:23, 25, 32-33)

6. What does Paul emphasise as he speaks about  
Jesus death and resurrection? (13:26-37)

## VERSE WORTH REMEMBERING

*Through him everyone who  
believes is set free from every sin,  
a justification you were not able  
to obtain under the Law of Moses*

Acts 13:39

### **Read Acts 13:38-41**

7. Through Jesus, what is proclaimed?

8. What happens to those who believe?

9. What is the warning that Paul finishes with?

### **Read Acts 13:42-52**

10. In the face of opposition, Paul and Barnabas “answered them boldly” (13:46). In what situations are you facing opposition and should take courage to answer boldly for your faith?

11. How do Paul and Barnabas respond to those who oppose the gospel of Jesus? Is this different from how you respond?

### **Thinking it Through**

Paul's speech reminds us again that Jesus is at the very heart of God's plans. He is the one who fulfils what is promised in the Old Testament. This knowledge should help us in answering questions about what we believe. Try developing an answer to some of the questions that were raised in the Getting Started section or try some below (remember to keep Jesus at the heart of it).

How do you know God exists?

I've been a good person, even given to charity. So isn't it enough to pray to God just before I die so that I can go to heaven?

How can a good God allow suffering in the world?

### **Putting into Action for Good News Week**

Pray for confidence to respond to those who may oppose our gospel. Pray that we will make ourselves available to questions being asked, and gracious with the answers we give.

Write a short statement about what you believe (aim for one sentence).

*Discipleship Focus:*

*Who do you most desire to become a disciple of Jesus? What's the next step for you to help them do this?*

## Study 4 – The Path to the Kingdom

### Getting Started

What opportunities did you take in the last 24 hours to share the gospel? What stopped you from doing so for the rest of those hours?

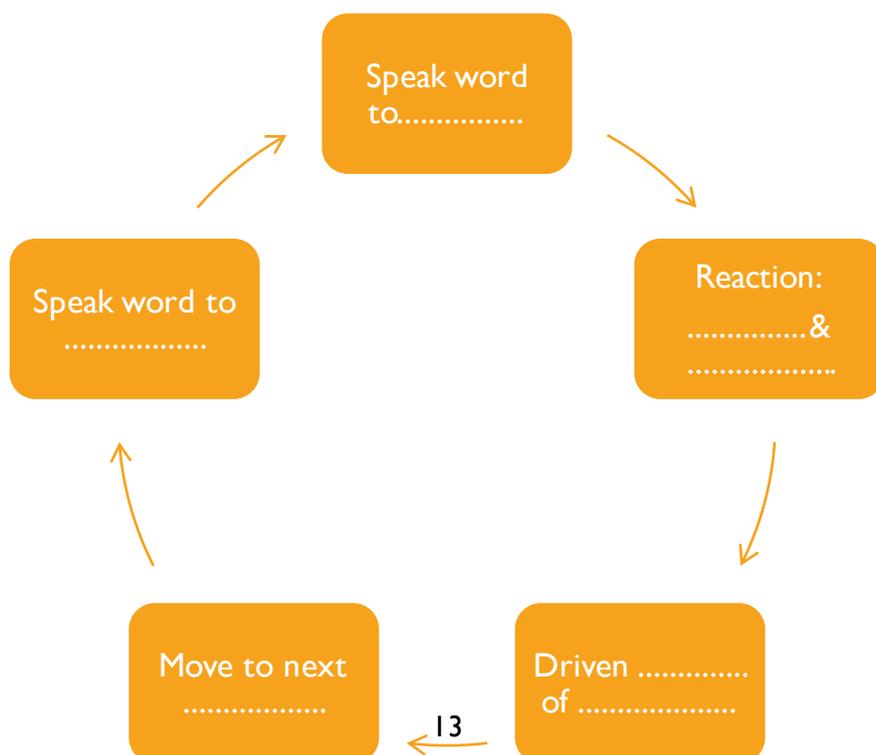
### VERSE WORTH REMEMBERING

*We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God*

Acts 14:15b

### Read Acts 14

1. List all the times “good news” or “the word” is spoken of in the chapter.
2. There is a pattern we can see in Acts 14. Try and fill in the gaps.



3. What does Paul do each time he is driven out of town? (14:6-7, 20-21)

4. The people of Lystra were not as well educated as they were in Iconium. How does Paul change his approach when speaking about the good news? (14:15-17)

5. What did Paul and Barnabas return to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch to do? (14:22-23)

6. Does Paul promise the Christian life will be easy? What does he promise? (14:22)

### **Thinking it Through**

a) What is the risk we face when we are persecuted or 'hit a brick wall' when sharing the gospel?

In light of what Paul and Barnabas do (14:6-7,20-21), what must we do when we face persecution and hardship?

b) Paul's approach was never to change the substance of his message but to vary his approach depending on the people listening.

How can we explain the gospel with different approaches?

What parts of our explanation are essential?

### **Putting into Action for Good News Week**

Think about the three people you've been praying about since Study One. Explain how your approach would be different when you explain the gospel to them (remember Paul's approach was different in Iconium and Lystra).

1.

2.

3.

Pray we will continue to speak the good news in spite of hardships.

*Discipleship Focus:*

*Where might you meet someone new this week? How could you start the relationship to best use it as an opportunity to make disciples?*

## **Study 5: The Law of the Kingdom Acts 15:1–16:5**

**God's salvation for all the world**

### **Getting Started:**

What things do people think they need to do in order to be a Christian?

### **Read Acts 15:1-16:5**

1. What were some people teaching? (15:1,5)

2. What did Paul and Barnabas do about this teaching? (15:2-4)

3. Who are the 3 people who address the assembly? (15:6-21) Summarise what they say.

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4. What does Peter conclude is the correct understanding of salvation? (15:11)

5. How does the Council decide to deal with the problem between Jewish and Gentile Christians? How was it received? (15:22-35)

## VERSE WORTH REMEMBERING

*As they travelled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey. So the churches were strengthened in their faith and grew daily in numbers.*

Acts 16:4-5

6. What happens immediately after this letter is sent out? (15:36-6:5) It seems as though Paul is contradicting the conclusions found about obeying the law. Why did Paul circumcise Timothy?

### **Thinking it Through**

a) Do we need to follow the requirements set out in the letter? (Most of us are Gentile believers)

b) How do we fall into the trap of thinking like the rigid Jewish Christians, making up our own set of standards of behaviour and rules that we think make us Christian?

c) What 'laws to belong' might a new person at TOMS feel like they have to follow?

d) How might we need to be flexible to accommodate fellow Christians so that we may be unified?

### **Putting into Action for Good News Week**

Pray that it would be really obvious that we are saved only by the grace of our Lord Jesus.

## *Discipleship Focus:*

*Who is someone who helped you grow when you were ‘young in the faith’? What did they do that was encouraging?*

# **Study 6 – Postcard from Philippi Acts 16:6-40**

## **We’re a Weird Mob**

### **Getting Started:**

Share with one another your story of coming to faith in Jesus. Include things about your background (such as your nationality, occupation, attitude to things of God, etc)

## **VERSE WORTH REMEMBERING**

*They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household.”*

Acts 16:31

### **Read Acts 16:6-10**

1. What influenced the travel plans of Paul and his companions?

2. How does Paul respond to the vision?

3. How do Paul and his companions conclude they should “help” the Macedonians?

4. **Read Acts 16:11-40** and complete the table below.

	Person converted	Background information	What do we learn about Paul's message
16:11-15			
16:16-19			
16:26-34			

In the Roman Empire, religions had to be legalised. In 16:20-21 Christianity is put on trial. Paul and Silas end up in prison. Paul insists on being escorted from prison to show his innocence for the sake of the church in Philippi and its future.

**Read Philippians 1:27-28**

5. What is it that united the Philippian church? Was this unity automatic?

## **Thinking it Through**

a) How can we show the unifying power of the gospel in our life as God's people at TOMS?

... In your congregation?

... Across congregations?

... In Good News Week?

b) How do we celebrate the different stories of how God has drawn us to him? How could we be better at this?

c) What opportunities are you missing to reach people of different backgrounds?

### **Putting into Action for Good News Week**

Pray that we would be unified in and by the gospel of the Lord Jesus. Pray that as we work together our differences may become our strength. Pray that we would seek to share the gospel with people from a range of backgrounds.

## *Discipleship Focus:*

*What people have you met over the past few weeks? How have you started these relationships with a view to making disciples?*

# **Study 7 – Postcards from Greece Acts 17**

## **God made known**

### **Getting started:**

In what situations do you feel pressured to know all the answers? (or more than you do)

## **VERSE WORTH REMEMBERING**

*The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands.*

Acts 17:24

## **VERSE WORTH REMEMBERING**

*For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising his from the dead.*

Acts 17:31

In Acts 17, Paul visits three cities, Thessalonica, Berea and Athens. In these cities Paul spends his time explaining and proving the truth about Jesus using the Scriptures. Have you ever had the opportunity to explain and prove the truth about Jesus using the Scriptures?



State 3 facts about God's judgement mentioned by Paul (all in 17:31).

## VERSE WORTH REMEMBERING

*In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.*

Acts 17:30

## **Thinking it Through**

a) In all three cities, the word of God is a central issue. Do you ever fear being questioned about the Bible?

b) The Bible speaks the truth about God. How can this knowledge give you courage to talk to others even when you don't have all the answers yourself?

### **Putting into Action for Good News Week**

Pray and give thanks to God for making himself known to us through Jesus. Pray we can make that known to others in our community.

Look at the program of events in Good News Week and identify to which event(s) you can invite the people you have been praying for.

Pray for these events that God would be made known through them.

## *Discipleship Focus:*

*In what moments of your life have you found hardest to stand firm as a disciple of Jesus? What things helped you stay strong?*

# **Study 8 – Postcards from Corinth Acts 18:1-21**

**The battle is long and tough, but the Risen King is with you**

## **Read Acts 18:1-6**

1. Why did Paul work with Priscilla and Aquila as a tentmaker? (see also I Cor. 9:15-18)

### **VERSE WORTH REMEMBERING**

*When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah.*

Acts 18:5

2. Why did this change when Silas and Timothy arrived?

3. How did the Jews react to Paul's teaching?

4. What is the meaning of Paul's action in Acts 18:6? (cf. Matthew 10:14)

5. What can this tell us about our responsibility as Christians?

**Read Acts 18:7-11**

6. Why did Jesus choose this moment to comfort Paul?

7. Is this the usual way for Jesus to comfort his people? Should we expect this? Why/why not?

7. How did Paul go about finding these “many people”?

8. How can we be encouraged by the content of Paul’s vision?

**Read Acts 18:12-21**

9. Why does Gallio dismiss the Jews charges?

10. What is the importance of Gallio’s decision?

## **Thinking it Through**

a) How does Jesus' promise to Paul apply to us?

b) Where are we tempted to be silent due to fear? Where should we find our confidence? How can we do that?

### **Putting into Action for Good News Week**

Pray that we would persevere in inviting people to Good News Week, and in our preparations and fulfilling our responsibilities for Good News Week.

Pray we would persevere knowing Jesus is with us and using us to call his people home.

*Discipleship Focus:*

*How are you involved at Good News Week? How are you going to make the most of this opportunity to make disciples?*

## **Study 9 – Postcards from Ephesus Acts 18:22–19:41**

### **Confident followers of the King**

#### **Getting Started:**

What gives you confidence that Christianity is true?

#### **Read Acts 18:22-19:10**

1. What is the difference between a baptism of repentance and baptism into the name of the Lord Jesus?
2. How does this demonstrate what Paul said earlier in Antioch (Acts 13:32-33)?
3. Paul followed his usual pattern of preaching first to the Jews then when they chased him out he went to the Gentiles. What was the result of Paul's preaching in Ephesus? (19:10)

### **Read Acts 19:11-20**

4. Acts 19:17 says “the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honour”. What events led to this attitude in all the Greeks and Jews living in Ephesus?

5. What was the end result? (19:20)

### **Read Acts 19:21-41**

6. What did Demetrius object to? Why?

7. What impression do you get of “the crowd”? (perhaps you’d like to draw some facial expressions to show the different attitudes and reasons for being in the crowd)

8. The city clerk makes a speech declaring the greatness of the goddess Artemis. But who is the victor at the end of his speech?

### **VERSE WORTH REMEMBERING**

*One day the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you”*

Acts 19:15

## Thinking it Through

a) Do we hold the “name of the Lord Jesus” in “high honour”? How might this be shown?

b) The city clerk calls on the followers of Artemis to keep quiet and do nothing rash, knowing ‘the truth’ about their goddess Artemis. How is this advice different from what we should advise fellow Christians who know the truth about Jesus?

c) Looking over the passage, we see people standing up publicly debating and arguing from the Scriptures (Acts 18:25; 19:8-9). Their words caused public hostility and opposition to the gospel and to Christians. Should we follow in their footsteps? Why/why not?

### **Putting into Action for Good News Week**

Go into Good News Week confident in the truth of the gospel. Look for opportunities to serve and be involved so that you may help share this truth or encourage those who are doing this.

Pray that the truth of the gospel will be evident to all around us.

