

Sample Lesson

Bible Passage: Context for the Book of Acts

His Story Continues Acts

LESSON OVERVIEW

CONNECT//



Church Family Announcements

SUPPLIES

- Customizable Series: [Acts image](#) *

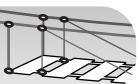
Connect Activity Speed Friend-ing

SUPPLIES

- [Speed Friend-ing title image](#) *
- [Speed Friend-ing blank image](#) *
- [Speed Friend-ing Question images](#) *
- [Ding sound effect](#) *
- [Connect Question image](#) *
- [Optional: #WitnessActs image](#) *
- Optional: chairs (1 per student)
- Optional: small prizes or candy

Connect Question Worship and Prayer

ENCOUNTER//



SUPPLIES

- Optional: [HomePage student handout](#) *
- [God Statement image](#) *
- [His Story Continues video](#) *
- Optional: Customizable Series: [Acts image](#) *
- Pens or pencils (1 per student)
- Bibles (1 per student)

God's Word

Lesson Commentary Lesson Outline

RESPOND//



Worship as Response God's Grand Redemptive Timeline

SUPPLIES

- [Person cards](#) *
- String or clothesline (enough to span the length of your room)
- Small clothespins (1 per student)
- Scissors
- Pens (1 per student)
- Suggested worship songs: "Here for You" by Phil Wickham, "Spirit of the Living God" by Bryan and Katie Torwalt

Series Response Station: Map

SUPPLIES

- Map of your area
- Optional: corkboard (approximately 36" x 24")
- Optional: poster board
- Pens
- Pushpins or tacks or sticky flags (1 per person)
- Suggested worship response song: "God of This City" by Chris Tomlin

Transition to Respond

BLESS//



SUPPLIES

- [At Home Weekly: Lesson 2](#) *
- [Acts bookmark](#) *
- Optional: [HomePage](#) *

Further Resources

To help you plan and lead:

Customizable copy of Lesson 1

[Truidentity Scope and](#)

[Sequence](#)

[Truidentity How It Works](#)

[document](#)

[At Home Weekly: Lesson 1](#)

The weekly for the next lesson—to be sent home for preteaching by parents—is found in BLESS.

If you have questions about Tru curriculum or are looking for great training, blogs, and other support resources, visit truidentity.com.

LEADER PREP

Each week you'll find a list of resources along with encouraging articles that help you prepare your heart to present the lesson.

Inspire *Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives*

Clayton went home to be with the Lord Jesus on March 16, just 40 days shy of his 19th birthday. When he learned that he had three months left to live, he asked his mom to get him a microphone and gather an audience. She did, and 500 students packed out our youth room to hear Clayton's story.

"Don't pity me. I'm going to die in the next few months. I actually pity you, because you think you have forever." Clayton continued, "It's not hard for me to live today like it's my last—all in for Jesus—because I know how little time I have left. But when you think you have forever, it's easy to waste your breath trying to get people to like you."

Clayton then shared the good news of Jesus Christ.

Students surrendered their lives to God and entered His redemptive story. Although Clayton had every reason to be consumed with himself and focused on the terrible cancer that was killing him, Clayton continued speaking, and in doing so, joined in God's work in the lives of an entire community.

God's story isn't confined to the pages of Scripture. We're living in the midst of God's redemptive narrative today because **His story continues** ... through us.

Megan Marshman

Director of Women's Ministries and Young Adults Pastor

Ministry Partner Suggestion

The story of Clayton is such an inspiring story, and it really hit our leaders because we have a student who has been battling cancer for the last three years. He has been such an inspiration to our group. After hearing Clayton's story, the leaders are now looking for opportunities for him to use his situation to share the gospel; he is ready, willing, and excited about the possibilities.

—Jeremy Thompson, Youth Pastor, Cornerstone Hemet

Equip *Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage*

As we enter our series in the book of Acts, we're going to discover what the early Christians believed about themselves. The disciples' lives were surrendered to, infused with, and transformed by Christ, which is why they were given the name "Christians" or "Jesus people" (Acts 11:26). According to Luke's witness, they were a people called by God the Father to live the life of Jesus in their own bodies through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. The narrative action of the book of Acts begins with a rather daunting commission:

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

What do you think of when you hear the word *martyr*? Typically, we picture someone who has given his or her life for the sake of the gospel. And that's very true. *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* is full of such examples. But what many don't realize is that *every* Christian is called to be a martyr. To clarify—not every Christian is necessarily called to die for his or her faith, but every Christian is called to *give his or her life*.

Acts 1:8 reiterates this idea of giving one's life: Jesus tells His disciples that they'll be witnesses. The Greek word for *witnesses* can also be translated *martyrs*. Jesus is calling us to be witnesses; to be martyrs. We need to expand our understanding of what it means to be a martyr to include a life dedicated to serving God—to bearing witness to who He is.

Scripture uses the word *martyr* both as a noun and as a verb. As a noun, this word informs my identity. Who am I? I am a witness. That's what God made me to be. My life exhibits the characteristics of one who is wholly dedicated to God. As a verb, the word *martyr* speaks to what I do. I witness. This is what God has called me to do. My purpose is to obey the Great Commission—to make disciples.

How are we to accomplish this mission? By reflecting God's character to the world, we bear witness to God's love, message, desires, and will. We were made in His image for this very purpose. We are, in essence, created to reflect God to those around us, "to the ends of the earth." The question, then, is how clear and accurate is our reflection?

Support *Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word*

In a modern courtroom, a trial relies on witnesses. These are people who, by going about their business on life's path, experienced something and are now called to give an account of what they have knowledge of. In a trial with several witnesses, the commonalities and discrepancies of several incomplete testimonies are used to paint an entire picture of what really happened.

God sends us to be His witnesses, to give an account of our experience with Him in the course of our daily lives. Through the combined testimonies of all His witnesses, God paints a true picture of Himself. No one has a complete picture of God, so hearing other perspectives can help us fill

out our understanding. Some of our stories focus on God's faithfulness, while others may focus on His forgiveness and love.

Write down a few instances where you've witnessed God in your everyday life. What has He done? How did you experience Him? What was the outcome of your interaction with Him? Get together with other leaders, and share these testimonies with each other. Where do you see common threads in each other's stories? Where has God revealed Himself uniquely to each of you? When you combine your testimonies, what picture of God emerges? Spend time listening, sharing, and practicing being witnesses to God.

LARGE GROUP

SECTION

CONNECT//



Creates space for students to connect with God, their peers, and their leaders through announcements, activities, discussion questions, personal testimonies, and worship.

Church Family Announcements

SUPPLIES

- [Customizable Series: Acts image](#)

PREPARE AHEAD

Optional: *Cue Customizable Series image.* It's important to share church-wide announcements so students can see youth group as a part of their greater church congregation. Feel free to customize this image or the blank activity image (below) to share any church or program information with your students.

Connect Activity: Speed Friend-ing

Students will be paired up and presented with questions to answer quickly, then move on to the next person.

SUPPLIES

- [Speed Friend-ing title image](#)
- [Speed Friend-ing blank image](#)
- [Speed Friend-ing Question images](#)
- [Ding sound effect](#)
- [Connect Question image](#)
- Optional: [#WitnessActs image](#)
- Optional: chairs
- Optional: small prizes or candy

RELATE

Cue the Speed Friend-ing Question images. Today we're going to play a game called Speed Friend-ing, where you'll quickly ask and answer 10 questions to several other students in a short amount of time. To begin, choose a partner. You'll form two lines, facing your partners. A question will appear on the screen, and you'll have 30 seconds to share your answer with your partner. Then your partner will have 30 seconds to share his answer with you. When the bell dings, one line will shift to the right and you'll be facing a new partner. Then, the next question will appear on the screen to answer. The person at the end of

the shifting line will need to run around to the beginning of the line for each new question. Continue until you've gone through all the question images. If your group is large, break into several smaller groups to play the game.

We're beginning a series in the book of Acts. Over the next couple of months, we're going to be talking about the family of God, or the church, and how God has welcomed us into His grand redemptive narrative—the story He has planned for us. Because of that, it's important to get to know a bit about the other people who are also part of the family of God.

Ministry Partner Suggestion

We offered a prize for any students who remembered all 10 answers for their 10 people. We actually only ended up with one winner, which actually shows how difficult it is to be a good listener. Often we're so focused on what we're going to say in a conversation that we miss what others are saying.

—Jeremy Thompson, Youth Pastor, Cornerstone Hemet

Leader Note

Today's CONNECT Question includes an option to use social media to share stories. If engaging with social media isn't a good fit for your group, skip it and encourage students to answer the question in small groups or with the person sitting next to them.

Connect Question

What's some good news you've heard this year?

For today's CONNECT Question, give students a few minutes to think about what's happened this year. If kids have their phones with them, they may want to pull them out and check Instagram or their camera rolls to find a picture that represents their good news. Invite students to share their good news stories and photos with someone sitting nearby. Then encourage them to add the hashtag #WitnessActs to their pictures. Have students put away their phones as you head into teaching time.

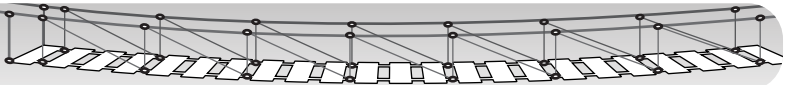
Transition to Encounter

Learning about people is a great way to connect with them. Once you start making connections, you may want to share more and more with them. Good news is meant to be shared! We're beginning a series on the book of Acts in which we'll explore how the good news of Jesus spread after His resurrection, and how it continues to impact our lives today. Over the next two months, we'll be talking about the family of God and the unique ways He has invited people to serve within His family.

Worship and Prayer

Suggested worship songs: "Build Your Kingdom" by Rend Collective, "At Your Name (Yahweh, Yahweh)" by Phil Wickham, "God With Us" by All Sons & Daughters. Lead students in a Prayer of Release. This is a time for students and leaders to pause and in the stillness ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds. If you would like, encourage students to hold their hands out in front of them, palms up, as a physical posture that represents the releasing of any worries and distractions, in order to better receive what the Holy Spirit might have for them. For more information, please see the Trulidentity How It Works document.

ENCOUNTER//



With the Holy Spirit as Teacher, students can encounter God and learn more about His character and work through His Word, videos, God-centered teaching, and sharing of personal stories.

His Story Continues

SUPPLIES

- Optional: [HomePage student handout](#)
- [God Statement image](#)
- [His Story Continues video](#)
- Optional: Customizable Series: [Acts image](#)
- Pens or pencils (1 per student)
- Bibles (1 per student)

GOD'S WORD

Scripture reflects truth about God's actions and unchanging character. Invite a student you've selected ahead of time to come up and read the following section of God's Word. Note: If the passage of Scripture is long, invite several students to participate and "popcorn" the reading to keep everyone engaged, or ask a leader to read. **Let's stand as we read God's Word together.**

In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them

this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 1:1–5)

Distribute the optional HomePage, along with pens or pencils and a Bible to each student, and encourage them to take notes or jot down questions in the available space. Show the His Story Continues video before you begin teaching, if you'd like. For a visual during ENCOUNTER, the God Statement image can be projected, or adapt the Customizable Series: Acts image with your teaching points.

Leader Note

The video for this week's lesson is longer than usual and provides good background information—well worth it! Be sure to preview it to decide how you'll want to integrate it into your plans.

Ministry Partner Suggestion

I used the video and continued from that point to the remainder of the lesson, starting in Acts. We focused a lot on the confusion of the disciples, because students are often unsure or confused about what they're commanded. The disciples were confused, yet God used them because they were willing. They were given the Holy Spirit to help them.
—Jeremy Thompson, Youth Pastor, Cornerstone Hemet

Lesson Commentary

This supplemental resource helps leaders go deeper into the meaning of the text. It is a hermeneutical tool and is not meant to be a teaching script.

The first verse of Acts holds the key to understanding the entire book: “In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach” (Acts 1:1).

The story of Acts, as remarkable as it is, is incomplete and ultimately incomprehensible when read in isolation. It can only properly be understood as a sequel, the continuation of a much grander story: the story of Jesus. The narrative Luke began in his first book, the gospel of Luke, is continued here in the second volume of Luke's masterwork. The life and ministry of Jesus didn't end with His death, resurrection, and ascension; instead, it continues through His church by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, just as He said it would (see John 14—17).

As we prepare to embark on our journey through the book of Acts, we must recognize that simply reading Acts in the context of the gospel of Luke isn't enough. As remarkable as that story is, it's only part of a much larger story—the most important part, to be certain, but still only a part. The book of Acts is a continuation of the life of Jesus, coming near the end of the biblical narrative and forming the climactic chapter of The Big God Story. And so, in order to understand the gospel (and the book of Acts), further context is needed. We have to go back to the beginning:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth
... God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.
(Genesis 1:1, 31a)

The beginning of the story shows that the world we know isn't the world we were made to know. There is still tremendous beauty here and remarkable capacity for goodness, but the world we experience day to day is but a shadow of the one depicted in Genesis 1. That world was a perfect reflection

of its Creator—a mighty display of His creativity, power, and love. Each successive cycle of creation, each unique expression of creativity, power, and love, leads us back to the same revelation: It is good because He is good. In other words, creation is a reflection not only of God's power, but also of His character. The pinnacle of this God-reflecting, God-glorifying world is humanity, created in His image, which mirrors and represents God in form and function. We were created to enjoy—enjoy God, enjoy His creation, and enjoy our purpose in it. However, in Genesis 3, the story takes a tragic turn:

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.
(Genesis 3:6)

God forbade one thing in all creation, and His children simply would not resist it. They forsook dependence on God and therefore forfeited the enjoyment that was their birthright, and each of us—with one notable exception—has followed in their footsteps. The results have been catastrophic. We've lost our knowledge of God and, therein, our capacity for relationship with God. We, the pinnacle of God's creation, have damaged His creation through our disobedience, leaving it a hollow shell of what it was intended to be. In doing all of this, we've lost our purpose and are no longer able to fill the earth with the glory of God as we reign in humble dependence on Him. To paraphrase Paul in the book of Romans, we've brought death into the world through our rebellion, and now the creation that was designed to increase in splendor as it grew in the knowledge of the glory is subject to entropy, to inevitable decay, as we stray ever farther from our good Creator. Within three chapters, we ruined the world and ourselves with it.

But thanks be to God, this isn't the end of the story. There are many more chapters that follow in which God unveils and enacts a plan, not for the destruction of the universe (which we've earned), but for its redemption, restoration, and re-creation (which we can never deserve). In fact, though Genesis 3 is the most horrible chapter in the history of world literature, even this chapter doesn't end with despair but with hope, as God, in our darkest moment, chooses once again to reveal His creativity, power, and love.

So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." (Genesis 3:14–15)

And so began God's redemption story, a story that involved patriarchs, priests, prophets, and kings; a story of perpetual wandering and relentless faithfulness; a story of desperation and rescue. This is a story in which God chose one man, Abraham, and through that one man, God created a chosen people through whom He blessed the world. The story followed the exploits of that chosen people as they sought to find their way in a world controlled by an enemy dead set against their mission to be faithful witnesses to God's saving message. This chosen nation had moments of experiencing the joy of faithful obedience and worship, but for the most part theirs was a story of failure, sin, and forsaking the One who saved them. Yet, all the while, God was faithful. That's the story of the Bible—a faithful God who never ceases seeking after a wayward people (you and me included). This is the story of a God who never gives up on us. This story follows Israel all the way to the point where their sin cost them their very nation. They were destroyed and scattered, yet God forgave and restored them. This is a story that, because of our rebellion and sin, will finally climax at a cross and an empty grave.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:16–17)

At the cross, God poured His wrath out upon Jesus and irrefutably won salvation for any who, through faith, participate in Christ's death and so receive His righteousness. Through the empty grave, Jesus became the "firstfruits" of the resurrection and unleashed God's power on the world, beginning the restoration of all things (1 Corinthians 15:23). But the story is not yet finished. Though the work of redemption is complete in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, His life and ministry didn't end when He ascended into heaven but rather continued. As relayed in the book of Acts, His story continues today by the power of His Holy Spirit at work in His church.

Read Acts 1:1–11. When the physically incarnate Christ left the earth to prepare a place for us (John 14:1–3), He didn't abandon the earth but gave the gift of His Holy Spirit. Now, as we can see in the above narrative, the disciples weren't entirely prepared for this plot twist. They had been baffled and devastated by their Messiah's crucifixion but were elated at His resurrection and fully expected the immediate restoration of the kingdom of Israel by their conquering King. Jesus, however, had other plans. He told them to return to Jerusalem and wait—wait for a promised and long-expected presence and power, the indwelling of God among all people (Joel 2:28–29), which would inspire not an influx of all nations to Jerusalem but a scattering of God's people from Jerusalem across Judea and Samaria, ultimately reaching to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

It would take some time for the disciples to fully understand what Jesus was doing in and through them—something we disciples still struggle with today—but eventually they came to realize the kingdom of God was about nothing less than the restoration of creation to its God-intended "good." Jesus was more interested in saving His enemies than in destroying them. Rather than establishing His throne and immediately inaugurating "the day of vengeance of our God" (Isaiah 61:2b), Jesus ascended to heaven and empowered His disciples to become His witnesses. Christ's Spirit living in them would enable them to once again fulfill their God-ordained purpose: to "be fruitful and increase in number; [and] fill the earth" with the image and glory of God (Genesis 1:28).

"In my former book, *Theophilus*, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach" (Acts 1:1). This introduction is far more than mere literary interest. It's an identity-shaping, world-changing idea. The man who wrote those words did so under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and on behalf of a community, a church, who believed this to be true of them. They knew God the Father had called them to live the physical life of Jesus, empowered by the presence of the Holy Spirit, to the ends of the earth. This is the only rational explanation for the events of the book of Acts. The commission they received was well beyond their capacity. Not only were they intrinsically ill-equipped for the task (lack of education, social standing, resources, credibility, etc.), but they also faced immense external challenges. Roman-occupied Jerusalem—where, incidentally, Jesus had been crucified just a short time earlier—didn't seem to be fertile soil for the gospel message, yet Jesus told them to be His witnesses in Jerusalem. Jesus Himself received decidedly mixed reviews in Judea, and the disciples had nowhere near His charisma, authority, or power, yet Jesus commanded them to spread the gospel across Judea. Relations between Jews and Samaritans were cold at best, yet Jesus instructed them to make disciples in Samaria.

The obstacles, challenges, and perils awaiting them among the nations were numerous and overwhelming, yet Jesus called them to be His ambassadors to the ends of the earth. Even more amazing than the commission is the fact that, by the end of chapter 28, within 30 or so years, the disciples

were well on their way to witnessing in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, and were beginning to reach the ends of the earth. The only logical explanation for this is the one that Luke gave us at the beginning of his book: The story they were living was no longer simply their own. Jesus' story continued through them, which, of course, is why they began to refer to their community, their *ekklesia*, their church, as the "body of Christ."

This story of the early church, of ordinary men and women who believed themselves to be living the continuation of the story of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit, is a truly remarkable one, but we have yet to touch on its most astounding feature: the fact that it is still unfinished, two thousand years later. Though the book is famously referred to as The Acts of the Apostles, those who read its pages know it's really the acts of the Holy Spirit through the apostles. The flame that was lit on the day of Pentecost as the Spirit came and empowered that small community of Jesus people has now swept across the globe, transforming individuals,

families, communities, nations, indeed the whole world, yet the commission isn't complete. The ends of the earth still await, and creation still longs for the full revelation of God's children. God's redemptive story continues.

The body of Christ, born among us through the power of the Holy Spirit all those generations ago, is still living and active. He is still building, empowering, and sending His church. Therefore, all who, through faith, have confessed Jesus as Lord now find that the things that were most true of those early Christians are still true of us today. We too have been chosen by God the Father to live our physical lives modeled after Jesus, empowered by the Holy Spirit. We too have been called to be His witnesses in our own Jerusalems, our Judeas and Samarias, and to the ends of the earth. The story continues. His story continues.

Josh Harrison

Teaching Pastor, ROCKHARBOR Church

Lesson Outline

The Lesson Outline is provided as a foundation for building your message to your students based on the Scripture passage that supports today's God Statement.

Context for the Book of Acts

Note: The video for this lesson contains a rich, wonderful recounting of the story of Scripture—starting in the beginning with Genesis and moving throughout history all the way to today—connecting you and me to the story God is still writing.

1. HIS STORY.

- A. **God created.** "In the beginning God created" (Genesis 1:1). The Bible's story begins with these simple words. Without using any tools or preexisting materials, God, the main character of the Bible, created everything from nothing by simply speaking. On the sixth day of creating, God lovingly made humankind in His image (and as His representatives; vv. 26–27), granted them authority over all His creation (v. 26), blessed them (v. 28a), and gave them the job of developing and protecting His newly created world (v. 28; 2:15). The God of abundant power graciously gave His people a new life, a new world, and a new work. It was all very good (1:31) until ...
- B. **Man rebelled.** "Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" (Genesis 3:11b). God gave the entire world and everything in it to humankind (i.e., Adam and Eve) except one tree: the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (2:16–17). God told Adam and Eve not to eat from this tree and warned them that doing so would result in death. Sometime later, after being tempted by the serpent to eat from the tree (3:16), Adam and Eve chose to rebel against their good and loving King; they chose death. But death didn't have the last word ...
- C. **God pursued.** "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Genesis 3:15). It's here in the garden God promised to send a Savior who would destroy the one who tempted Adam and Eve to sin. God gave this promise of a Savior to a man named Abraham (12:1–3) who became the father to an entire nation, Israel.
- D. **God provided.** "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness" (Romans 4:3b). The story of salvation began in the garden, continued through the life of Abraham and the patriarchs, was exemplified in the history of Israel through the good and the bad, hit a roadblock in Babylonian captivity where Israel was seemingly destroyed, and was revived as God brought them back to the land. It's above all a story that God provides. He provided for Israel and promised He would provide a Savior.
- E. **God saved.** "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (John 3:16–17). Centuries after the nation of Israel was formed, the One whom God had

promised finally came. The New Testament books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John tell the story of how God sent His Son to save those lost in sin through His death and resurrection.

Transition

Jesus' death and resurrection perfectly completed the work of salvation. However, the story of Jesus doesn't end in the gospels but continues in the book of Acts.

2. HIS STORY CONTINUES.

A. **Jesus' story isn't over.** So where does the book of Acts begin? Where the gospels left off.

- i. **A sequel to Luke.** "In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven" (Acts 1:1–2a). Luke (the author of the gospel of Luke and Acts) began Acts by reviewing where he left off in his gospel. Luke wrote about what Jesus began, and in the book of Acts he shares about what Jesus continued to do after His resurrection.
- ii. **Jesus' promise.** "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised" (v. 4). During the forty days Jesus had with the disciples after His resurrection, He told them to wait in Jerusalem to receive the Holy Spirit as He (John 15:26–27) and the Father (Joel 2:28–29; Ezekiel 36:26–27) had promised them.
- iii. **The disciples' confusion.** "Then they gathered around him and asked him, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?' " (Acts 1:6). Knowing that Jesus died and rose again, and hearing about the promised Holy Spirit, the disciples thought the salvation of Israel from her enemies had finally come. Rather than correcting their ideas about a coming promised kingdom, Jesus said this was simply not the time. He had offered Israel the kingdom but they rejected it. It would now be put on hold. The disciples' job now was to spread word of His love.

B. **The story of Jesus will spread.** Jesus unpacked the church's mission in one verse.

- i. **God's power.** "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you" (v. 8a). Jesus promised that the disciples would be given the Holy Spirit that they might be empowered. Throughout the gospels, Jesus promised the disciples that God the Holy Spirit would come upon them so they could do the work Jesus would call them to (see John 14:15–18, 25–27; 15:26–27; 16:7–15). Here, Jesus reminded His disciples of those promises and told them it was going to happen soon. But why would the Holy Spirit empower them?
- ii. **God's mission.** "And you will be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8b). The Holy Spirit is given to God's people so they may be "witnesses" for Jesus Christ. A witness is a person who sees or experiences something. The disciples were empowered by the Holy Spirit to witness to others about what they had seen and experienced from their time with Jesus (see 4:20). This became the primary work of the church throughout the book of Acts and has been the primary work of the church ever since (see 2:32; 3:15; 5:32). All worshippers of Jesus are given the mission of being His witnesses.
- iii. **God's target.** "In Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (1:8c). Jesus told the disciples their witness must start in Jerusalem (the city they were in) but spread to the ends of the earth. The entire world is lost in sin and in need of a Savior. After dying and rising to life, Jesus empowered the disciples with the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses so others might be saved! The work of salvation is finished; Jesus has paid it all, but this message needs to be spread and Jesus has given this job to His people.

Transition

So what does this mean for us? Where are you on the timeline of God's big story?

3. OUR RESPONSE.

- A. **Where are you with Jesus?** Jesus calls His disciples to become His witnesses, but we should first understand our relationship with Jesus. Have you made the decision to trust Jesus with your life and see yourself as a part of His story? Have you come to trust Him as Lord and Savior? Take some time to think about the question, "Who is Jesus in my life?" When you become a witness for Him to others, you also believe in Him as your Savior and follow Him.

- B. **As part of God's story, how and where is He leading you to witness to others?** When we become witnesses of Jesus, we're called to living a life of obedience to Him. Where has God placed you to be His witness? Before thinking about how you can witness to the ends of the earth, how does God want you to witness in the places you are now? What is your version of "Jerusalem"? How is Jesus calling you to be His witness? What about your neighborhood, your school, or your sports teams? Or your family?

RESPOND//



As a large group, students are invited to meet with the living God and engage in a variety of reflective worship responses.

Worship as Response

God's Grand Redemptive Timeline

In relation to God's timeline of redemption, students will be invited to consider their role as witnesses for Jesus to the world.

SUPPLIES

- [Person cards](#)
- String or clothesline (enough to span the length of your room)
- Small clothespins (1 per student)
- Scissors
- Pens (1 per student)
- Suggested worship songs: "Here for You" by Phil Wickham, "Spirit of the Living God" by Bryan and Katie Torwalt

PREPARE AHEAD

Print enough Person cards for each student in your group to have at least one.

SET UP

Hang a long string or clothesline across your room near your teaching area. Make sure it hangs low enough for students to reach it.

RELATE

Jesus' story didn't end when He ascended into heaven. Before He left, He gave His followers an important mission: to be His witnesses throughout the world and to continue to share His story. If you've made the decision to trust Jesus with your life and follow Him, you also are called to be His witnesses to the world.

If you've made the decision to trust Jesus with your life and you see yourself as a part of His story, I invite you to write your name on one of these cards (hold up Person card) and pin it to the line. Your life plays a role in God's grand redemptive story. You are a witness.

If you haven't yet trusted in Jesus, take a card, representing your life, and spend some time thinking. Do you want to be a part of His story and trust in Him? If you do, I invite you to talk to a leader about what it means to

give your life to Jesus and trust Him as your Savior. Or if you have questions about it, you can also talk about them with a leader or a parent.

Keep the response line up throughout the series, and give students the opportunity to add the people they witness to onto the line as weeks continue.

Optional: Offer a second string where students can add a Person card to represent someone they feel called to witness to. They can write a prayer to God on the Person card and string it up on the second string in the room. The second string will encourage students to begin thinking missionally after they spend time aware that they're a part of God's story.

Suggested worship songs: "Here for You" by Phil Wickham, "Spirit of the Living God" by Bryan and Katie Torwalt

Ministry Partner Suggestions

Rather than hanging the cards on a string we had students place them on the wall near a cross in the room. It was cool to see students make the public declaration to follow Jesus and be a part of God's story. Nearly every student in the room participated. We're leaving our Person cards on the wall for the whole series as a reference to the commitment they've made to be witnesses!

—Trevor Lawrence and Haley Downey, Junior High Pastor and Junior High Associate, Grace Fellowship Church

We gave each of them a Person card and asked them to write down a person/people, and encouraged them to take the card home and put it somewhere they'll see it daily, as a reminder that they're part of God's story and they too can be witnesses! One of our students, after spending some time just quietly thinking, asked if he could have more Person cards, because he felt there were more people he could witness to.

—Amelia Powell, Youth Director, The Beacon

Series Response Station: Map

For this response station, provide a map of your community where students will be able to commit to outreach and prayer.

SUPPLIES

- Map of your area
- Optional: corkboard (approximately 36" x 24")
- Optional: poster board
- Pens
- Pushpins or tacks or sticky flags (1 per person)
- Suggested worship response song: "God of This City" by Chris Tomlin

PREPARE AHEAD

Suggestions for creating a worship response map of your area:

1. Go online (try Google Maps or MapQuest) and type in your city. If students come from a broad area, be sure to include neighboring cities. Zoom in to select the area you desire. Transfer the map of your area onto a poster board by drawing it, including main streets and landmarks. Pin the poster board to the corkboard.
2. Go online (try Google maps or MapQuest) and type in your city and any neighboring cities. Zoom in to select the area you desire. Take a screenshot of your map and then resize it to fit the corkboard (approximately 36" x 24"). Print the map and pin it to the corkboard.
3. Purchase a map of your local community and attach it to the corkboard.
4. Empower and equip students and leaders to create this map on a poster board together during response time using local city maps you've printed on 8.5" x 11" pieces of paper.

RELATE

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He told His disciples that the Holy Spirit would empower them to continue sharing His story by being His witnesses throughout the world. But first they were told to wait in Jerusalem, where they were, for His Spirit to come. God has called us to be His witnesses, but like the disciples, we're to begin right where we are. Have you thought about where your Jerusalem might be? Where has God placed you? God has specifically placed each of us in homes, communities, and neighborhoods so that we might be witnesses right where we are. Even if your home life isn't easy, God has you there for a reason!

Locate where you live on the map and put a pin in that spot as a reminder. Then spread out in the room and spend some time in prayer for your home and your family. Talk to God about where He has placed you. Pray for each person by name and ask God how He might want to use you there.

Note: Leave the map up in your room throughout the series for future response times. Optional: Invite students to go back to the board throughout the series and place pins where they go to school or practice for their teams or hobbies.

OPTIONAL

For a simpler option, and one that's sensitive to students who haven't yet made a decision to trust in Jesus, don't use the map response but otherwise start with the same opening. **I'm going to lead you through some questions. Spend some time thinking and praying through these questions, and ask God to speak to you.** Leave around a minute between each question to give time for the Holy Spirit to teach and lead each student.

- How is your relationship with Jesus right now?
- As a part of God's story today, where are some places you're feeling called to witness?
- As a part of God's story today, who are some people you're feeling called to witness to?
- What questions do you have for God right now? Feel free to ask Him. Or talk to a leader or a parent—someone you trust.

Transition to Respond

Within small groups, encourage intentional conversation between students and leaders as they talk through the God statement for the lesson and experience the Holy Spirit's leading.

- What's your favorite book or movie sequel?
- Read Acts 1:1–11. Describe the beginning of Acts. What had Jesus just done? Where were Jesus and His disciples? What were the disciples' expecting Jesus to do? Why do you think they were confused?
- In verse 8, what does Jesus say His disciples are going to do? How does Jesus encourage them?
- What does it mean to be Jesus' witness? How can we be witnesses in our everyday lives?
- When you think of the Holy Spirit, what do you think of? Do you find it comforting that Jesus has sent us the Holy Spirit? Why or why not?
- In what ways do you think the Holy Spirit gives us power in our lives? How have you experienced the Holy Spirit's power at work in your own life? Share a story, if you'd like.
- Jesus specifically gave us the Holy Spirit to empower us. How can we better rely on the Holy Spirit each day? How can we become more aware of His presence in our lives?
- When was the last time you told someone else about Jesus? Describe the scene. What prompted you to do it? Have you ever passed up an opportunity to share about Jesus? Why?

Ministry Partner Suggestion

Each week we choose one question to frame the entire discussion. The question we used was, "What does it mean to be a witness?" From there our leaders used the other questions as follow-up questions in the discussion, which was great!
—Trevor Lawrence and Haley Downey, Junior High Pastor and Junior High Associate, Grace Fellowship Church

Give students time to answer the questions, but don't feel pressured to get to all of them. Leave space for the Holy Spirit to direct the conversation and lead where it should go. On the other hand, if students don't seem comfortable or ready to share, take the time to ask additional questions or be ready to share your own thoughts to get things started. It's important to allow for silence and not fill it by talking too much. A successful small group can involve students talking more than the leader and listening to the Holy Spirit and each other. Another way to engage students more is to have them ask each of the questions.

While you're gathered in your small group, you may want to take time together to commit the first Series Focus Verses to memory:

In my former book, *Theophilus*, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. "For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." (Acts 1:1–2, 5)

BLESS//



Leaders send students out with scriptural truth and blessing so they can in turn be a blessing to their families and others.

SUPPLIES

- [At Home Weekly: Lesson 2](#)
- [Acts bookmark](#)
- Optional: [HomePage](#)

Leader Suggestion

As we journey together through the book of Acts, the Holy Spirit working in the lives of fellow believers will become a recurring theme. Before students head out to their routines and stresses, help equip them to serve and encourage each other well through a blessing. If the concept of blessing is new to your students and leaders, assure them how easy it really is. Share the following tips:

- Be yourself.
- If it feels appropriate, lay a hand on the other person's shoulder or hand.
- Make eye contact.
- Speak words of empowerment, truth, and love.
- Speak into who you know this person to be and what he is facing.
- Be generous with your blessings.
- A prompt can be as simple as: (Person's name), may you know that your heavenly Father loves you ...

RELATE

And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you. (Romans 8:11)

Bless each student individually with the following blessing:

(Student's name), **may you feel the power and joy God has given you through His Holy Spirit dwelling in you. May you be bold to share, knowing He has given you a purpose ... to be His witness to the world.**

Ministry Partner Suggestion

Love the blessing! We do the blessing as a group, but still call the students individually by their names.
—Amelia Powell, Youth Director, The Beacon

As students are blessed, remind them they have the opportunity to also be a blessing to others. Encourage them to freely share with others the joy and love they've received from God.

[HomePage](#) is designed for students to go deeper with their families, leaders, and friends. These challenges and questions can be shared with the students verbally, printed on the back of the notes page and sent home with them each week, or delivered directly to their inbox. Feel free to customize the HomePage to work for your students and your specific context.

Don't forget to send the [At Home Weekly](#) and the [Acts bookmark](#) home with each student. Both are great resources for empowering students to know God as they read and remember His Word. With the Acts reading plan and Series Focus Verses, students will be inspired, equipped, and supported to go deeper in their personal relationship with Jesus each day. Be sure to check in throughout the series to find out how kids are doing with their reading. There are passages that won't be covered at youth group, so ask them if they have questions or what their impressions are as they discover the Scriptures. Encourage them along the way. Make extra bookmarks available for those students who arrive after the series begins.

Ministry Partner Thought

I think this was a good intro to our series. The idea that we're part of God's ongoing story (just like the early church in Acts) inspired our students and gave them a new perspective on sharing the good news. We also showed a map so students would understand the context of Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. The map illustration was especially helpful. I loved watching kids be excited about making their mark on the map of Orange County and praying for their community.

—Josh Simpson, Middle School Pastor, Calvary Church Santa Ana