



ACTS

What happened next?

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

- Acts 2:46-47 -

Acts: What happened next?

When you strike a match, sparks start to fly and a small flame starts to burn. That small flame is used to light a fire and becomes part of something much bigger than it ever could be on its own.

Over 2000 years ago a match was struck and a flame was lit that would spread over the world, continuing to burn to this day. After the resurrection of Jesus Christ, a small group of disciples, who had once abandoned him, would now be empowered by the Holy Spirit. They would now be courageous to preach, teach, heal, and demonstrate God's love in synagogues, schools, homes, marketplaces and court rooms, on the streets, hills, ships and desert roads. They would now go wherever God sent them, lives and history would be changed, and the gospel of Jesus Christ would spread through out the world.

We are part of this story, this same flame, as we continue this work that started 2000 years ago. As we start our next sermon series '*Acts: What Happened Next?*', we will be looking at the first few chapters of the Book of Acts and how the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus began.

My hope is that, as we read these chapters, we put ourselves in the shoes (I should really say sandals) of these disciples and identify with them as they are filled with the Holy Spirit and see thousands respond to the gospel message. As well as their commitment and boldness to give everything to Christ, even in suffering and facing death, let's engage with how they took every opportunity to tell of their crucified and risen Lord. By the end of this series, let's commit to being a twenty-first-century version of those men and women of God.

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Warming up: Have you ever changed your mind about a core belief that you held? What was that belief and what changed your mind?

Read: Acts 2:14-47

1. Who is Peter and why does he make this speech?
2. Who is Peter's audience? Why is he speaking to them (Acts 2:1-3)?
3. In one sentence, how would you sum up Peter's speech?
4. What stories does Peter use to tell Jesus' story?
5. Is Peter's message positive or negative? Why?
6. If Peter were to get up and preach to your community today, do you think he'd say the same things? Why / why not?
7. Peter's sermon makes use of three quotations from the Old Testament (Joel 2:38-42, Psalm 16:8-11, and Psalm 110:1). What does this tell us about the Old Testament and how we should approach it today?
8. How do the people respond to Peter's message?
9. How would you respond to Peter if you had heard him that day?

Rubber hits the road: How can we ensure that the good news of Jesus Christ continues to go out and save lives today?



Warming up: Have you ever watched as someone experienced incredible joy? How did it feel to observe their joy?

Read: Acts 3:1-10

1. What is the context of this passage? What does it follow on from in Chapter 2? (note: Acts 2:42-43)
2. Why is it important to note that the man was crippled from birth?
3. Why do you think the man was begging on the steps of the temple as opposed to somewhere else?
4. If Peter had to ask for the man's attention, where do you think he was looking beforehand? Why?
5. What did the man expect to get from Peter and John?
6. Why does Peter use the name of Jesus to heal the man?
7. Do you think it is significant that Peter gave the man his hand to help him up? Why?
8. What are the similarities and differences between this story of Peter healing the man, and stories in the gospels of when Jesus healed people? (For example, have a quick look at Matthew 9:1-8)

Rubber hits the road: After this, the man clings onto Peter and John whilst Peter tries to explain the situation to those watching. How would you explain the power of Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit to others? Who can you pray for and share this good news with this week?

Notes / Prayer points / etc.

Prayer

Loving Lord God, we thank you for your willingness to make yourself known through your mighty works. We thank you, Holy Spirit, that you are not only our helper and our guide, but that you also empower us for ministry. Please help us to fix our hearts on you, and to be courageous as we love and pray for others. Amen.



Warming up: When have you needed to be bold and have courage in regards to your faith?

Read: Acts 4:1-22

1. Why were the priests, the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees disturbed/annoyed? (Acts 3:13-15, 3:17, & 3:23)
2. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection (Matthew 22:23). Why were they upset regarding what the apostles were preaching?
3. How did the church grow to a size of 5000?
4. What question are the rulers asking Peter and John?
5. Peter again gives an overview of who Jesus is and what happened to him. What are Peter's main points? How do these main points differ to those in Peter's previous sermon in Acts 2:22-36 & Acts 3:11-26?
6. What term does Peter use to explain the healing of the lame man? Why is this important?
7. In v.11 Peter quotes Psalm 118:22. This passage was also quoted by Jesus in Luke 20:17, and by Peter in 1 Peter 2:7. Why is this quote important in explaining salvation in v.12?
8. What is the reaction of rulers in regards to the apostles? Did they have a similar problem with Jesus? How would you sum up Peter and John's response to the leaders?

Rubber hits the road: If we were to have the same attitude as the early church, what might it look like for us?

Notes / Prayer points / etc.

Prayer

Lord God, we pray for boldness and courage so that we might proclaim the truths of your kingdom! Please forgive me when I shrink away, worry about people's thoughts, or even become ashamed of who you are and what you have done. Please help me to trust you in all circumstances and to worship you in Spirit and in truth. Amen!



Warming up: Have you ever given a big financial gift to a charity or church and regretted it? Why / why not?

Read: Acts 5:1-11

1. Why did Ananias and Sapphira sell their property and lay some of the proceeds at the apostles' feet (see Acts 4:32-35)?
2. How does Peter respond to the gift given? What does this tell us about the Holy Spirit?
3. What was wrong with the way they gave their money? Why were they giving this money?
4. What does the fact that both Ananias and Sapphira separately lie to the Holy Spirit tell us about their hearts at that time?
5. What are the consequences of the actions of Ananias and Sapphira for this couple and for the church?
6. Do you think Ananias and Sapphira forfeited their salvation through their actions? Why / why not?
7. What does this passage tell us about the authority of the Holy Spirit?
8. Do you think we respect the power and authority of the Holy Spirit today? Why / why not?

Rubber hits the road: How can you honour the person of the Holy Spirit in your heart and in your life this week? How are you tempted to lie to the Holy Spirit? What aspects of your life need to change?



Warming up: What is your favourite way to serve at church? If you haven't been involved in serving before – what would be your ideal way to serve at church in the future?

Read: Acts 6:1-7

1. What is the difference between a Hellenistic Jew and a Hebraic Jew? (Use a study Bible or Google to help you if you need.)
2. Why do you think that the Hellenistic Jews' widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food?
3. Why was food being distributed in the first place? What does this tell us about the natural workings of the early church?
4. What do the apostles need to focus on? What do the lay people need to focus on?
5. Does your church function like this? Why? Why not?
6. What are the pre-requisites for leading this food ministry?
7. In what ways are the pre-requisites the same, and in what ways are the pre-requisites different to serving at your church?
8. How does all of this enable the church to grow?

Rubber hits the road: Stephen took the role of leading the feeding program and brought many to Christ! How do you feel led to serve at your church? How can you share the gospel while you serve?

Notes / Prayer points / etc.

Prayer

Lord God, we thank you for joining us together in community and for distributing various and wonderful gifts amongst us. Please continue to stir up within us the gift of the Spirit, that we may confess Jesus Christ as Lord, proclaim the joy of the everlasting gospel wherever we may be, and serve our brother and sisters with the same love that you have so generously poured out onto us. By your grace and by your power, enable us to minister with your heart. Amen.



Warming up: Who do you find courageous and inspirational?

Read: Acts 6:8-7:60

1. Stephen has been put in charge of the food ministry. What does it look like for him to lead this ministry? Does anything surprise you about his description in v.8?
2. Why does Stephen face opposition? Is it because of his feeding program? What do they accuse Stephen of doing and saying?
3. What are the main points in this part of Stephen's sermon?
4. Why do you think Stephen has used so many Old Testament references? What benefit do they serve?
5. How does Stephen bring the narrative from the Old Testament into focusing on the current religious leaders?
6. Things have escalated quickly from the start of Chapter 6 to the end of Chapter 7. How did we get from Stephen being appointed to lead the feeding program to here?
7. What parallels do you see between the death of Jesus and the death of Stephen - the first martyr?

Rubber hits the road: How does Stephen challenge the way you serve at your church and in the community? What is one way that you can share the good news of Jesus this week?

Notes / Prayer points / etc.

Prayer

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for showing us trust in the face of uncertainty. Thank you for showing us faith in the face of fear. Thank you for showing us perseverance in the face of pain. Thank you that you endured the cross, scorning its shame, and made a path from death to life for us. Help us, like Stephen, to follow your example of sacrificial love and courageous proclamation of the gospel. Amen.

So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly.

- Acts 6:7a -



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