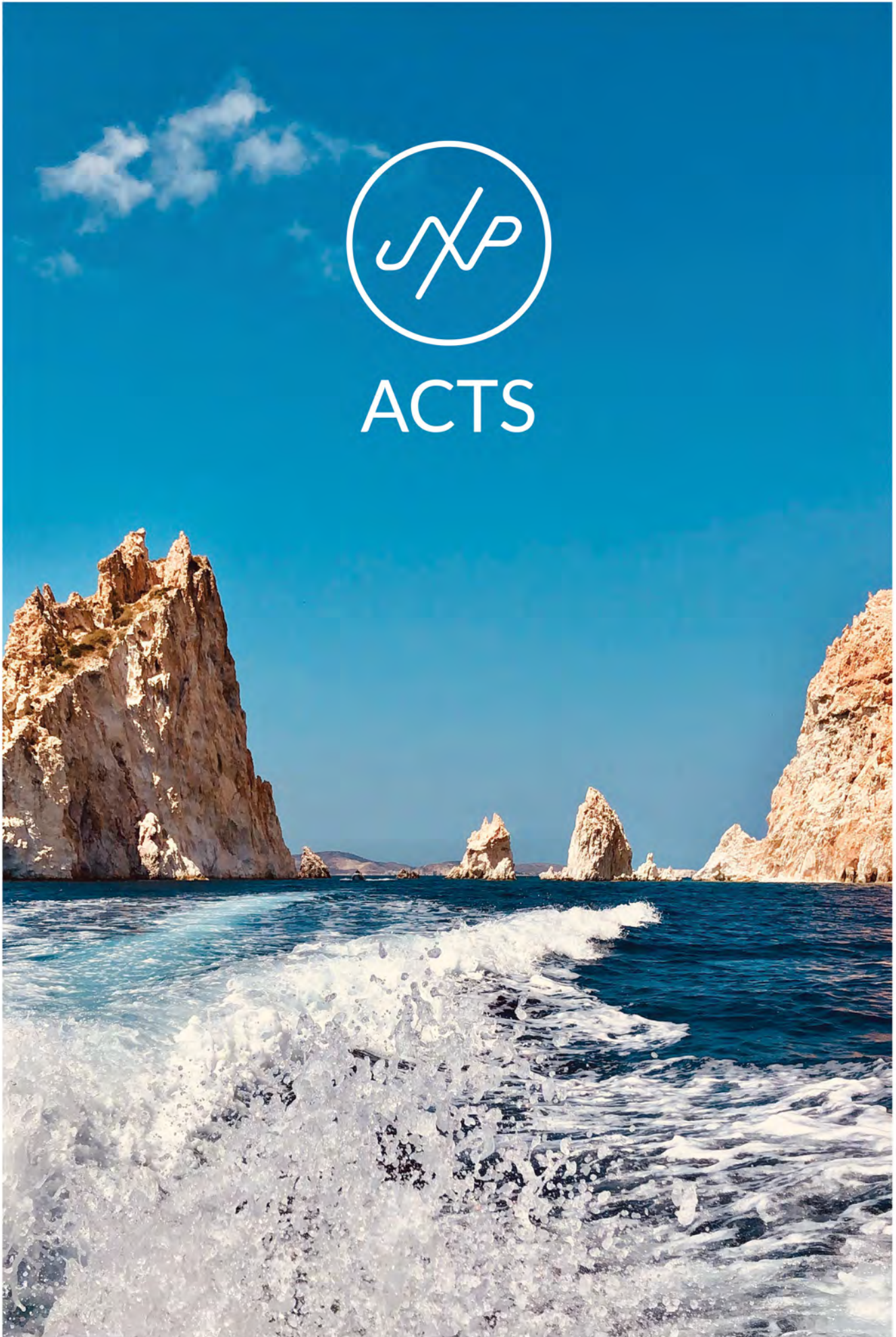




ACTS





WHAT IS JESUS XP?

Jesus XP is a group-based, Jesus-centered discipleship experience. Together, groups explore the ways Jesus connected with God and others by reading The Bible, discovering practices that center us in the Jesus way and learning how to apprentice with Jesus in everyday life.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING A JESUS XP SESSION?

Jesus XP sessions include the following: Check-in, Bible reading and Practices.

THE CHECK-IN

The check in creates space for participants to unpack what Jesus is inviting them into through the Bible reading and practices. Every week, the group will check in with each other on life, what you've been reading, and the practices you are trying out as you experience Jesus.

BIBLE READING

The Bible portion helps participants immerse themselves in the words and ways of Jesus. Most groups read at least a portion of a chapter out loud together each week and share about what pops up. There is a chapter summary and some "example guiding questions" included in each week's session. Feel free to use those questions or come up with your own.

PRACTICES

A practice exploration provides participants with tangible ways to connect with God, themselves and others. There is no right order to do the practices in. Sometimes, groups will try a new practice each week or spend a couple weeks on a practice that seems to be life-giving. It's also fine to do more than one practice at a time. Choose together as a group how you want to approach the practices included in Jesus XP.





ACTS OF THE APOSTLES OVERVIEW

ACTS IS THE STORY OF SOME OF THE FIRST FOLLOWERS OF JESUS—A STORY FULL OF DISCOVERY: EVERYTHING WAS NEW & UNEXPECTED. “WHAT WOULD HAPPEN NEXT?”
“WHAT WOULD IT MEAN TO FOLLOW JESUS NOW?”

“THE MYSTERIOUS PRESENCE OF JESUS HAUNTS THE WHOLE STORY OF ACTS. JESUS IS ANNOUNCED AS KING AND LORD, NOT AS AN INCREASINGLY DISTANT MEMORY BUT AS A LIVING AND POWERFUL REALITY, A PERSON WHO CAN BE KNOWN AND LOVED, OBEYED AND FOLLOWED, A PERSON WHO CONTINUES TO ACT WITHIN THE REAL WORLD. WE CALL THE BOOK “THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES,” BUT WE SHOULD THINK OF IT AS “THE ACTS OF JESUS: PART TWO.”

- N.T. WRIGHT

AUTHOR

Luke—the author of one of the four Gospels found in the New Testament of the Bible also composed Acts. Luke intended his Gospel and Acts as a two-volume set.

Luke is the only known Gentile (non-Jewish) writer in the New Testament. Interestingly Luke was not an eyewitness of Jesus. Luke—based on the prelude in Luke chapter 1—is functioning as an historian in a way the first century reader would understand.

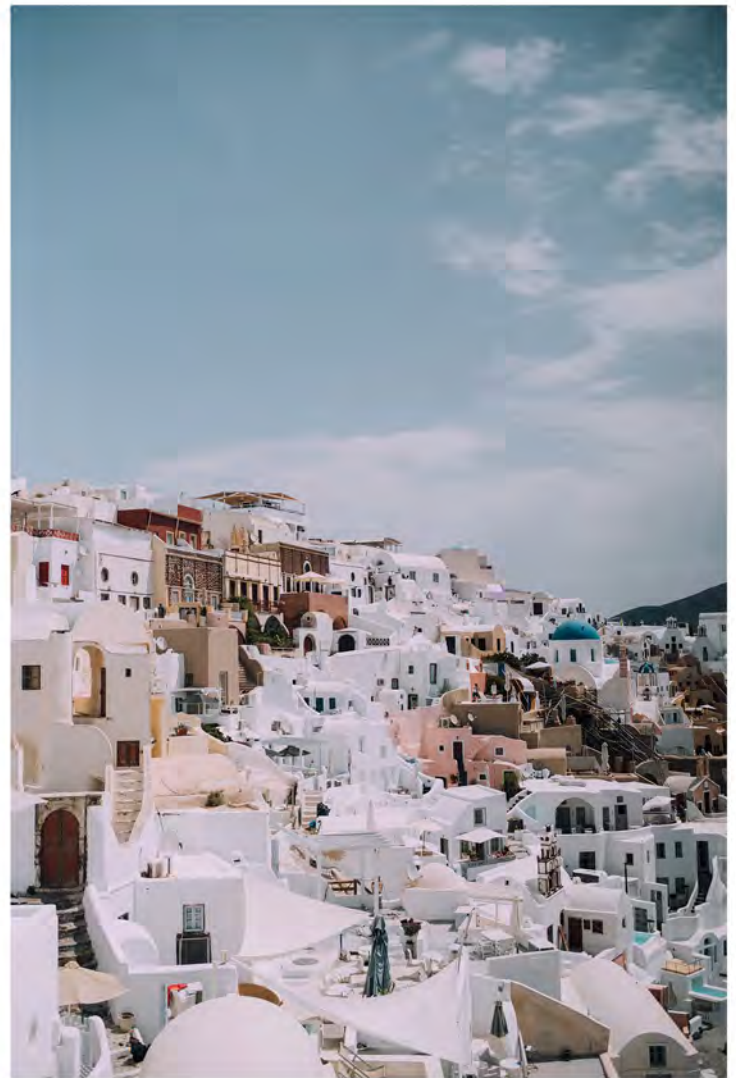
Luke collected eyewitness accounts of the life, stories and teachings of Jesus —and collated them together in his two volume set. Fun fact: roughly 50% of Luke's collected stories of Jesus are NOT found in any other Gospel! Fun fact 2: Luke records 18 parables not found in the other Gospels—including “the Good Samaritan” and “the Prodigal Son.”

Luke was a co-worker with Paul the apostle – who contributed to a large portion of the writings of the New Testament – and is believed to have been a native of Antioch. It's possible a fair amount of Acts – from Antioch on – is potentially a first-person eyewitness account of this unfolding Jesus Movement.



TITLE & GENRE

The title "Acts of the Apostles" was not part of the original text. It was first used by a second century church leader named Irenaeus. Some have suggested that the title "Acts" be interpreted as "The Acts of the Holy Spirit" or even "The Acts of Jesus." Acts 1 gives the reader the impression that this is an account of what Jesus continued to do and teach. The word "Acts" is a recognized genre in the ancient world: "characterizing books that described great deeds of people or of cities."



DATE

The original edition of Acts undoubtedly was written in the second half of the first century-within 30-40 years of Jesus' resurrection. Since Acts does not mention the death of Paul the apostle nor the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, this original edition was likely penned before both events. (Paul was beheaded by Caesar Nero in Rome between 62-67CE. The Jerusalem Temple was destroyed by Rome in 70CE)

STRUCTURE

Luke chose a series of overlapping themes based on geographical expansion of the Good News, expansion of the Good News from Jews exclusively to the inclusion of Gentiles and following the stories of key apostolic leaders in the early church. Luke shows remarkable skill in weaving all the themes together in a compelling narrative!

Themes to note:

From Jerusalem to Rome

This structure can be also seen as a series of concentric circles, where the gospel begins in the center, Jerusalem, and is expanding ever outward to Judea & Samaria, Syria, Asia Minor, Europe, to Rome and eventually to the ends of the known world. Luke-quoting Jesus in Acts 1:8- highlights this geographic expansion theme.

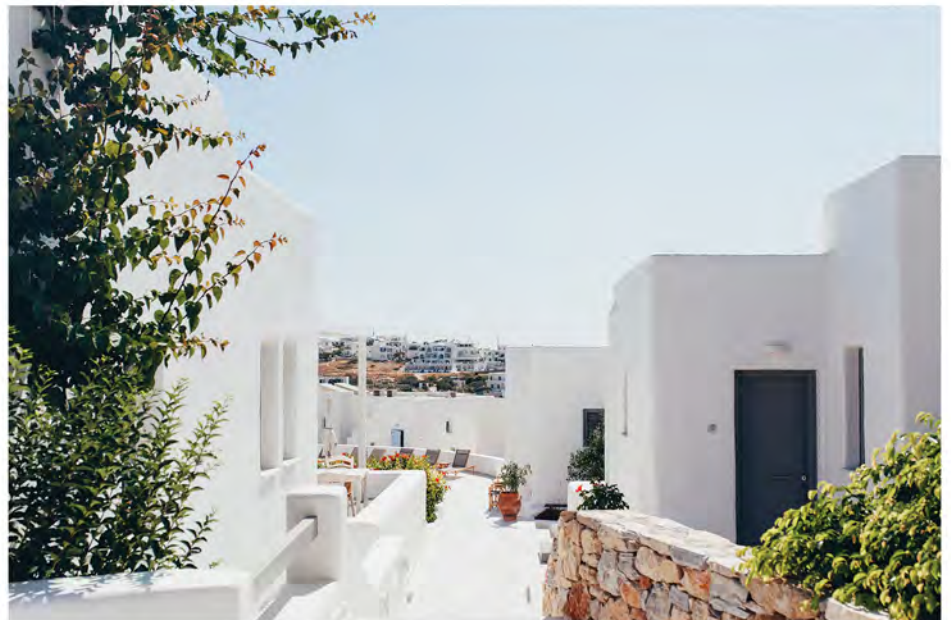


From very Jewish to unexpectedly Universal

The first two sections in Acts (chapters 1–9) focus on the apostolic witness to Jews, while the last section (chapters 10–28) focuses on the witness of the apostles to the Gentile world.

From Peter to Paul

The book of Acts can also be structured around two major characters shared in the book: Peter (chapters 1–12) and Paul (chapters 13–28).



3 KEYS TO UNDERSTANDING ACTS

Everything is based on (or hinges on) the resurrection of Jesus.

The closing chapter in the Gospel of Luke describes scenes in which Jesus met his followers after being raised from the dead: he was really alive, richly alive, in a transformed body that could eat and drink as well as walk and talk but which seemed to have . . . some unexpected properties. His body could, for instance, appear and disappear, and come and go through locked doors.

Jesus' transformed body is ground zero of God's new creation. Jesus' risen body is the beginning of a brand new reality which is both at home in this physical world, and which is at home in the heavenly sphere.

Without the resurrection there is no gospel, no ongoing work of Jesus. There would only be the sad memory of a great, but failed teacher and would-be Messiah.

The Holy Spirit is the continued presence of Jesus.

Luke insists that the Holy Spirit is present – guiding and leading these first followers of Jesus—just as Jesus promised when he called the Holy Spirit his “representative” who will “lead [us] into all truth”.

This Jesus movement is for EVERYONE.

One of the core central themes of Acts, indeed of the New Testament, is that Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and teachings were for all of humanity—Jews and Gentiles, young and old, men and women, rich and poor. Over time, this Jesus Movement was increasingly seen as distinct from Judaism, which both unleashed a movement of unexpected radical hospitality in Jesus's name while also unleashing waves of resistance and persecution from the Roman government and cultural elites.



SPOILER

ACTS doesn't really end . . . it has an ending which isn't really an ending: the story just keeps going and going: we are literally living out the continuation of Acts today.

What might Jesus be up to as you go about living your everyday life? What would it look like for you to join Jesus in his mission through you?



1 | ACTS 19

FAKE GODS

Summary: This chapter doesn't unfold how you think it would. Paul sees the Holy Spirit come upon new believers, and he reasons persuasively in a lecture hall for two years. God works powerfully through Paul to the point that even his clothes were thought to have healing powers. And yet, with signs from God's Spirit, persuasive philosophy, and miracles, the people of Ephesus still shouted for their god, Artemis, over Paul's God. It gets more perplexing! There is even a point in the chapter when evil spirits admit to knowing Paul by name. The Holy Spirit and the evil spirits all respond to the authority that God had given Paul, but people seem to continue to resist him. Do you notice any similarities between Paul and Jesus here? Jesus exercised authority over evil spirits, commanded the wind and the waves, and broke the back of death. Yet, many people who looked him in the eyes never chose to believe in Him or follow Him. It seems as though the power of God, and the persuasiveness of man, aren't always enough to make people follow Jesus. Paul never used this metric as a marker of success. Neither did Jesus. The message of God's love, shown in Jesus, is meant to allow folks to do with God what they please. Some will follow. Others will shout for another. What will you do?



EXAMPLE GUIDING QUESTIONS:

What was the significance of Paul's life showing God's power if it didn't persuade everyone to believe?

If there was one thing that would cause you to be more committed to the Jesus Way, what would that be?

The Jews and Greeks shouted for their god, Artemis, during a riot. What do you cry out for when life is "rioting" against you?

2 | ACTS 20

FAREWELL

FOREVER

Summary: Don't be fooled by Luke's brevity of Paul's trip to Macedonia and Achaia (Greece). Although it is the most brief account of his travel in all of the book of Acts, it's when he wrote 2 Corinthians and Romans. Paramount to his writing is the farewell speech that he gives before leaving for Jerusalem. Paul's heart aches, and you could see it in his eyes. Before leaving for Jerusalem, he commissioned his listeners to keep watch and be shepherds. Against who? Clues are given elsewhere in the chapter that Jewish legalism and religious opposition are the threat. It could be argued that this is why Paul tells them that he would never see them again. Since he was planning on entering Jerusalem, he knew the chances were high that the religious leaders would take his life. If you have ever read the book of Romans, you might remember the magnificent theme of being justified by faith alone. While Paul was writing Romans, do you think he wondered where the greatest threat to this message was? The timing of his books, and the passion of his speech, are indicators to the reader of Acts that Paul could no longer only minister to the Gentiles. The biggest danger to the Jesus message were the ones who crucified Him, and Paul needed to seek their salvation as well. He had to plant the seed of the Good News in the epicenter of religion.



EXAMPLE GUIDING QUESTIONS:

How do you define the Good News of Jesus?

When have you ever had to say goodbye to people you loved dearly for a mission you felt called to?

What does it mean to be compelled by the Spirit? Does it always seem illogical to others?

3 | ACTS 21

RELIGIOUS UPROAR

Summary: Remember in the last chapter when Paul told his disciples that he was “compelled by the Spirit” to go to Jerusalem? What does it mean, then, that followers of Jesus are now trying to keep Paul from going to Jerusalem and they are saying the Holy Spirit is telling them to give him these warnings? Perhaps we will never know. What we do know, however, is that the Holy Spirit is with all those who compassionately seek the betterment of another. This is why Paul couldn’t be swayed from his mission. He had developed a compassion for even the people who would seek to kill him. In fact, Luke writes the narrative in such a way that we are supposed to see Paul as finally walking the path of Jesus. A walk of compassion, not anger – knowingly headed toward his death. Note the similarities between Luke’s accounts of Jesus’ trip to Jerusalem and Paul’s. Both stories involve a plot by the Jews and handing over to the Gentiles. Not one, or even two, but three times along their way to Jerusalem there were predictions about their demise. Both Jesus and Paul steadfastly resolved to go there despite opposition, and both surrendered themselves to God’s will. Following Jesus means you will face opposition and have a choice to surrender or give up. Stay on mission. Face your cross.



EXAMPLE GUIDING QUESTIONS:

How should we handle advice from others who say they have heard from God about our situation? How can you test what others have to say?

Was Paul ever this relentless about the mission in previous chapters?

This chapter is the third time Luke used the pronoun “we.” He included himself in the narrative once again. What emotions did Luke feel as he reminisced Jesus’ commitment to die for the ones he loved?

4 | ACTS 22

RETELLING YOUR STORY

Summary: While being arrested, Paul was allowed to turn and speak to the crowd. He told his story. The story of how Jesus of Nazareth appeared to him as a bright light and he was transformed from the inside out. It's the story that you read earlier in Acts, only Paul's original listeners lost interest at one key phrase, "Then the Lord said to me, 'Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'" Religious crowds reel at the thought of Jesus calling us to love the ones they love to hate. This emotional reaction caused the crowds to carry Paul away to get flogged. However, being a Roman citizen by birth meant that Paul couldn't get flogged. It was his autobiography that caused both interest and disgust. Was it Paul's story that offended them? Or was it the inclusiveness of God that they wanted to flog? So what's the lesson from Paul's story now? We should never retreat when God's goodness makes our story offensive.



EXAMPLE GUIDING QUESTIONS:

Is there a part of your story that makes religious people cringe?

Why do you think Paul doesn't just let himself get flogged to death if he knows "to live is Christ, to die is gain?"

How would you tell your story to a room full of people who don't know you?

5 | ACTS 23

BE ENCOURAGED

Summary: Have you ever seen spiritual authorities abuse their powers? Perhaps you experienced it first hand. There is no shortage of headlines about some type of spiritual leader who has manipulated money or people (or both) for personal gain and reputation. This is the scenario that Paul found himself in Acts 23. The High Priest in the story was a despicable person. "He seized, for his own use, tithes that should have gone to the ordinary priests, and he gave large bribes to Romans and Jews." He hired assassins for political gain and he had no regard for the spirit of the law. Paul publicly spoke against his hypocrisy by calling him a "whitewashed wall." There is even a hint of sarcasm when Paul follows his comment up with, "I had no idea you were a High Priest." Many commentators think this was said by Paul to point out the absurdity that any spiritual leader would act in such a way. Consequently, this triggered a strong reaction from a few Jews who made it their mission to kill Paul. However, The Lord spoke to him and encouraged him to go to Rome and a centurion's army helped him flee safely to Caesarea. Paul continued to face the hypocrisy of religious leaders and God continued to encourage him. It's as if his divine encouragement from God was directly linked to his decisive obedience. And to think! Paul used to be just like the High Priest, doing everything he could to silence the message of Jesus.

EXAMPLE GUIDING QUESTIONS:

Do you think Paul's aggressive response to the High Priest was from the leading of the Holy Spirit?

Have you experienced the kind of encouragement Paul got from Jesus? Tell the story.

There seems to be a lot of strong, felt emotion from the crowds when Paul talks about the Good News. Why?



6 | ACTS 24

CONVENIENCE

Summary: Surprise, surprise. Paul is once again accused of being a troublemaker and stirring up riots among the Jews. He is even called the ring-leader of the Nazarene sect. The Nazarene sect was the same group as The Way. They were Jesus-over-religion people. Paul had a keen ability to identify common ground with his listeners before discussing the resurrection of Jesus. He did this with the Gentiles in Athens (Acts 17) as well. The message he was carrying required two things from Paul on a continual basis: authenticity to who he was and clarity around who God is. Both of these created tension in the crowd. Felix, the leader over the trial, held that tension for two years, hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe to be released. Paul wasn't interested in bribes. He was committed to authenticity and a Jesus-looking-message. This is what allowed him to live with a clear conscience before God and man – in that order.

EXAMPLE GUIDING QUESTIONS:

What does it mean for you to be authentically who God has formed you to be?

How can you find meaning and patience in a two-year misunderstanding between you and someone who holds power over you?

What is your initial reaction to misunderstanding? Does it change with time?



7 | ACTS 25

POWERFUL PEOPLE

Summary: What do you do when someone you don't know questions your character and life mission? Felix was replaced by Festus and now Paul has someone actively siding with the Jews who were trying to kill him. Remember- Paul had been warned many times by those he loves that he needed to steer clear of Jerusalem. Nevertheless, Paul's commitment to the mission forged his current reality. While on trial, Festus presented Paul's case and made a telling statement to King Agrippa and Bernice. Pertaining to the centerpiece of Paul's life (the resurrection of Jesus), Festus explained, "I was at a loss how to investigate such matters..." Fascinating. How does someone investigate the matter of the resurrection other than the testimony of another? It's the question everyone must wrestle with. Every worldview will have to say something about the Person of Jesus, and whatever is said about Him, it needs to be investigated. Notice how Festus stays spiritually perplexed. He didn't even know how to investigate. Be it his time or his passion, he wasn't willing to do the hard work of finding out for himself the truth behind Paul's claims. It's the unfortunate dilemma Jesus followers find themselves in. No matter how many times they graciously discuss, and portray, the truth of Jesus' life, some people will always set their faces against it.



EXAMPLE GUIDING QUESTIONS:

What might God be saying to you through this story?

Regarding the testimony of others, which statement do you identify with more: "I would like to hear this man myself." Or, "I was at a loss at how to investigate such matters."

When is a time you were wrongfully accused by those who were supposed to show the love of God?

8 | ACTS 26

PATIENT WITNESS

Summary: Here, Paul converted his great hall into a church and acted as the preacher he was. His speech in Athens was good, but this would be considered his greatest oration. Luke gave us a telling detail when he said that Paul stretched out his hand and made a defense. This symbolized him taking the pose of someone who was giving a speech, well thought through, and magnificently powerful . . . not to mention vulnerable. Paul admitted his folly as one who formerly persecuted people of The Way. Paul, a zealous Pharisee, had a deathly grip on the law only to learn that the law actually had a death hold on him. This part of his testimony would have resounded with the Jews who were present at his trial. Everyone was leaning in until that pesky detail that he just had to share – Agrippa listened until Paul declared the resurrection of Jesus. At that, “madness!” Agrippa shouted. It is the stumbling block to so many. The risen Messiah is the offense to the world. But why? Why would people detest a God who walked among them and conquered death? Were they wanting more of the same old religion? Or, were they not wanting to give up the certainty and power that they had established over the years? Perhaps it's not a question just for the Jews. This is also a question for us Gentiles. What part of Jesus' story do we continue to hold on to? What part of his Lordship makes us cry “madness”?



EXAMPLE GUIDING QUESTIONS:

Where did you find yourself reading slower in the text?
Why did that part stick out to you?

Why is the resurrection of Jesus the most offensive part of Paul's testimony to Jews? How about to Gentiles?

What part of your religion makes you cry “madness” when you hear the Jesus story?

9 | ACTS 27

SHIPWRECKED

Summary: It's both encouraging and terrifying. Yet, Luke wrote this story in such a way that it echoes that of Jonah. God wasn't going to let Paul die before he went on trial in front of Caesar. A storm. The crew discussions. God preserved their lives on behalf of Paul. It all is a reminder that the salvation of the Gentiles is of utmost importance to God. This is also the fourth time that Luke includes himself in the narrative by using the pronoun "we." There is a sense in which God's protection over the people on board the boat was directly linked to God's protection over the mission. Not that everyone who cooperates with the mission of the Kingdom will have protection in this life. However, Paul and Luke were experiencing protection because they had a strategic role to play. God didn't alleviate the storm. He just held it on a tight leash for the sake of the gospel. In fact, storms often symbolized evil forces or unforeseen circumstances. Is it possible that this chapter is a declaration that evil will always come against the true Gospel message, but God will always give his followers the upper hand?



EXAMPLE GUIDING QUESTIONS:

What does it mean that God is relentless in using his followers to reach the Gentiles?

Who are you taking to "sail with you" as you continue to reveal God to those who don't know Him?

10 | ACTS 28

UNFINISHED

Summary: A unique mission will always require an unimaginable story. That's the life of Paul as it's told in the book of Acts. Chapter 28 tells another unthinkable story of Paul being bit by a deadly snake, but it created no delay to the mission. The people of Malta who witnessed this were also healed of their diseases, and they honored Paul, Luke, and the rest of them by giving them supplies for their journey. And then it happened- Paul finally reached Rome. Paul met with the Jewish leaders there and shared the fulfillment of the prophecies made in Jesus. He concludes his speech by telling them that God has made salvation available to the Gentiles "and they will listen." Acts never tells us what the exchange was like between Paul and Caesar. Instead, we are left with these words: "He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!" If you have read any of his letters, especially Ephesians, you will remember that Paul talks about the battle we wage not being against flesh and blood. It is against powers that we can't see. Powers that want to stop the movement of God's Kingdom in this world. So when Luke says that Paul proclaimed in such a manner, he didn't do it to convince the world that he was right and they were not. On the contrary! Paul was bold and without hindrance for the sake of the other, not to come against them. He fought from victory, not for victory.

He continued to engage without being enraged. He was concerned about the cosmic battle, not the culture war. It would be at least another two years before Paul met with Caesar. The only hint we have at their meeting is Paul's greeting to the church in Philippi. From Rome, he wrote: "All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household." Is it possible that Caesar's household had become friends of Paul? It remains a mystery. What stands clear and true today is that the gospel is for the Gentiles and they will, in fact, listen. One last thought . . . the story doesn't have an ending. Acts ends with a story that still needs telling . . . maybe that's because we are still telling this story . . .

EXAMPLE GUIDING QUESTIONS:

Do you still have ears to hear the Good News? Is it still Good News to you?

Who have you abandoned because you are convinced they won't listen? Is God still calling you to them?

Why do you think Acts doesn't end?



PRACTICES

There is an invitation Jesus gave to people he wanted to do life with. You can find it all throughout the gospels (or the eyewitness stories about Jesus).

He would look at someone and say to them, "Follow me." This invitation gets at the active, bodily . . . A disciple is a student – someone who is learning from a teacher. We are all invited to be disciples of Jesus. The goal of Jesus XP Practices is not to have you fill out worksheets and journals, but to put the ways of Jesus into practice in your everyday life.

Throughout Jesus XP you will be invited to try out and experience a variety of practices (some may call them spiritual practices or spiritual disciplines). Some may be new, while others may cause you to stretch beyond what is common and comfortable.

In the same way that you might engage in a new workout routine, don't short-cut the process. You might notice throughout Jesus XP that one or two practices really resonate and you connect to God, others and your true self. Maybe you'll consider adopting them into your regular rhythm of life.



Remember: The goal is not more knowledge but turning knowledge into love. The best life change happens as the words of Jesus move from your head to your heart through your hands.

During JesusXP | Acts you'll encounter practices that you and your group will explore together. The intent is that they help you discover and live every day with a growing awareness that Jesus is with you in every moment, and inviting you to join him to help heal the world.

"You don't think your way into a new kind of living. You live your way into a new kind of thinking."

—Henri Nouwen

PRACTICE: DAILY READING

Start your day with Jesus.

Meet with Jesus before you look at your phone each day. Here's how:

1. Read a small section of scripture.
2. Read it slowly.
3. Read it three times (Head, Heart, Hands)

FIRST TIME: HEAD

As you read, ask yourself:
"What do I notice?"

SECOND TIME: HEART

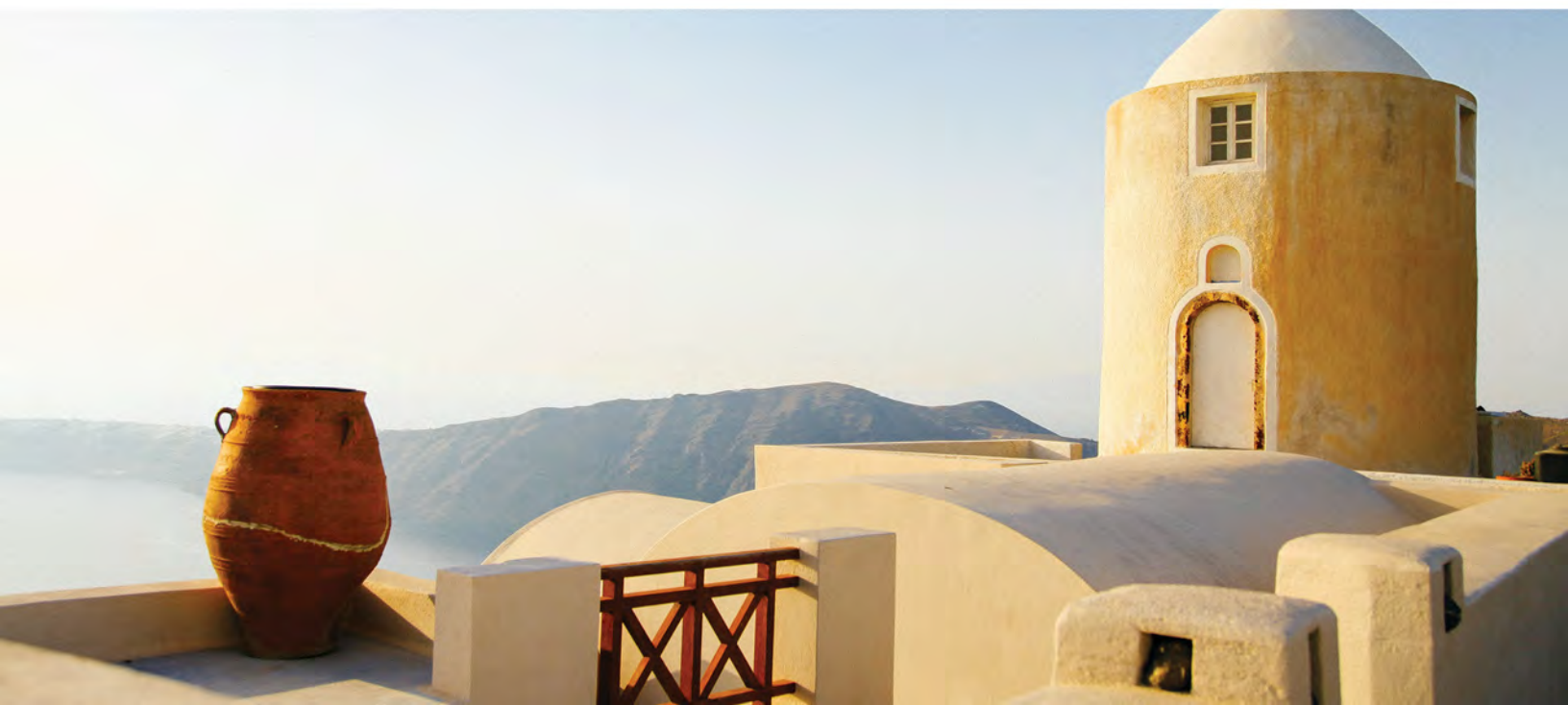
As you read, ask yourself:
"What do I feel?" and
"What do the characters in the story feel?"

THIRD TIME: HANDS

As you read, ask yourself:
"What is Jesus inviting me to do?"



*This practice is adapted from a reading style called "Lectio Divina" which means spiritual reading. You can find out more at newlife.tv/jesusxp



PRACTICE: SHARING MEALS

Go be with people.

Jesus spent a lot of time eating with people and so did his followers. Some of the most powerful moments in Scripture include a meal. Who can you plan to share a meal with in the coming weeks – especially someone unexpected?

SHARE A MEAL

Who is in your life on a regular basis? Neighbors? Friends? Invite people in your life to a meal . . . Don't like to cook? Order takeout! At school or work? Have lunch with someone new.

GO TO A MEAL

Say yes when someone new invites you to a meal. Allow yourself to be a guest at someone else's table.

THE LORD'S TABLE**

Jesus invited his followers to remember him with a special meal sometimes called communion or the Lord's Table. When you are with your friends who follow Jesus, try taking communion together this week.

**HOW TO CELEBRATE COMMUNION OR THE LORD'S TABLE

All you need is something to eat, something drink, and some people who want to remember how good Jesus's life, death, and resurrection are to them.

This special meal is a remembrance – something followers of Jesus throughout history have done because Jesus asked us to. (You can read Luke 22:14-20 together or to prepare).

You can take communion anywhere with any food items, but Jesus used bread and wine. The bread represents Jesus's body and the cup represents Jesus's blood.

You might say to one another as you eat and drink: This is Christ's body that was broken for you. This is Christ's blood shed for you.

Share about your gratefulness for Jesus around your table together.



PRACTICE: GIVE GOOD AWAY

Meet real needs in practical ways

Everything good we have comes from God. How can you use what God has given you to bring good to those around you? Here are three ideas:

STUFF

Some of us have a lot of stuff – maybe too much stuff. What if you look at the stuff you have and give the stuff you don't need to people who actually need it?

PROJECTS

With your group (or friends), think about the needs in your community. If there is way you can meet that need, do it together. EX: Clean up, support schools, serve meals . . .

MONEY

Something good happens in your heart when you are generous with your money. Is there a local church or organization you can be generous to? When you give, you'll see that good things will happen!

PRACTICE: MISSIONAL IMPULSE

Where is Jesus sending you?

This is an anywhere/anytime practice.

START WITH PRAYING:

“Jesus, show me what you see.” or “Jesus show me what you want me to do.”

PAY ATTENTION to the impulses that pop up . . .

Who do you think of?

Do you see someone who looks lonely?

Do you notice a need you can meet?

Do you feel drawn to show kindness?

DO what you can do:

Send a text

Stop by to see someone

Bring a gift

Give an encouraging word

Meet a need

*This might be scary at first, but it gets easier with practice. It's important to learn the difference between missional impulse and your own impulse.

Reading the words of Jesus and recognizing how He responded to people and their needs will help.



PRACTICE: NIGHT TIME PRAYER

End your day with Jesus

At the end of your day it's good to look back and notice how Jesus was with you, and to ask him where he is leading you next.

Here's a 3-step night-time prayer to try:

ONE

Tell Jesus you know he is present with you wherever you are. (Some people like to light a candle to represent Jesus with you).

TWO

Start to think about your day. It helps to play it back in your mind like a movie. Without judgment, notice where you saw Jesus with you in your day. When did you follow his voice? When did you lean away?

THREE

Make a plan for tomorrow. Sometimes, it helps to pray, "Jesus, what should we do tomorrow?"

*This style of prayer is sometimes called Examen.
For more information on this practice
and others, check out newlife.tv/jesusxp

PRACTICE: CREATE YOUR OWN PRACTICE

How do you best connect with Jesus?

Maybe you like to go on a walk or play a game with your kids? Maybe you want to serve your neighbor or make them cookies? Do you have a hobby that causes you to feel close to God? God made you uniquely and the way you connect with God is unique. Spend some time thinking about something you love to do that you can make into a spiritual practice.

1. Choose the thing you love to do
2. Pray before you do it - "Jesus, may I experience your presence while I _____."
3. Enjoy the activity you chose knowing Jesus is with you.
4. Think about or write about what you experienced during your practice.



PRACTICE: DAILY RHYTHM

Daily connection with Jesus

SCRIPTURE BEFORE PHONE

How we start the day matters. Refusing to check messages, social media, etc – until after reading a passage of Scripture – is a way of replacing the question "What do I need to do today?" with a better one, "Who is Jesus and where is he leading me today?"

WORSHIP SOUNDTRACK

Playing some worship music when you make space to connect with Jesus can help get your heart in the right place. Make a playlist of your favorite worship songs - let them become a soundtrack for your soul and your day.

NO PHONE WHILE WAITING

We are made for presence, but so often our phones are the cause of our absence. To be two places at a time is to be no place at all. Choosing to be present with ourselves, others and God's good creation is an act of love. What unexpected moment might you encounter today as you look for Jesus all around you?





