

HEARING THE WORD



NIGEL BARGE

Acts 1 -5
Work Book

Hearing the Word Acts 1¹ – 5¹⁶ Work Book

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Nigel Barge, July 2021

Scripture Quotations taken from

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Resources

The *New Bible Dictionary* 3rd edition, published by Inter Varsity Press
The *New Bible Commentary* 21st century edition. A commentary on every Bible book, IVP

www.blueletterbible.org

Hearing the Word: A Tool for Bible reading



LOOK – What does it *say*?

- 1) The Text
 - a) What questions does it raise - *Who, What, When, Where, Why, How?*
 - b) What surprises you?
- 2) The Context?
 - a) the surrounding text
 - b) the Book of the Bible
 - c) the whole Bible
 - d) the place in the Bible Story



LEARN – What does it *mean*?

- 1) What type of writing is it?
- 2) Answer the questions
- 3) Summarise the passage



LISTEN – What is the *message*?

- 1) Which is the main point?
- 2) Which is the key verse?



LIVE – How should we *respond*?

- 1) What does it show about God, (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) :
 - a) His nature and character?
 - b) His grace*
 - c) Jesus / his salvation**
- 2) What should I do?

* God's undeserved generosity is evident throughout the Bible, and it is perfectly expressed in Jesus.

** The Bible, from 'the fall' onwards, describes God's plan of salvation through his Son. Thus, *all* the Scriptures speak in some way of Jesus (Luke 24:27).

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Reading Narrative

In seeking to hear the Word of God throughout the Bible, we need to take into account the *type of literature* in which each part is written. Acts is mainly *narrative* (story), the most common type, seasoned with preaching. To approach narrative correctly we need to keep these principles in mind:

1 In General: It is *God's story*

The whole Bible recounts the story of God's dealings with humankind. After creation and the fall in Genesis, the rest describes how God works out his unfolding plan of salvation for humanity in Jesus. The OT prepares for the arrival, life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The NT recounts these and looks forwards to his return at the end of time. It is *all* about Jesus. Therefore:

a) Every part relates to Him (Luke 24:27; John 5:39).

So as we read, we should be asking – ‘what does this show about Jesus; what is He doing?’

b) Everything is relevant.

In a film every scene plays some part in the overall story. Often, we are shown things in the early stages that make no sense until later. The Bible is the same. So, as we read Bible narrative – knowing how it ends – we should be asking ‘what relevance has *this* part of the story to the *main* story?’

2 In particular: ‘Follow the camera angle’

A film director focuses the viewer's attention on particular shots to tell ‘his story’. In the same way each narrator in the Bible is selective about what to tell us. They leave out much general detail, only giving us what is relevant to what they are trying to convey.

As we read, we should therefore be asking the question, ‘Why is he telling me this and in this particular way?’

3 Warts and all

Human beings often get things wrong. The Bible narrative faithfully records errors, even by people who are elsewhere commended. For instance, Moses murdered a man, King David committed adultery, and Peter, who was praised for realising Jesus was the Christ, was minutes later roundly scolded when he tried to stop Jesus being the Christ through suffering! (Exodus 2:12; 2 Samuel 11; Matthew 16:16-23)

So we can't treat every thought or action in a narrative as something to copy, just because ‘it's in the Bible’. We must ask the Holy Spirit to use the rest of Scripture to discern good examples to follow, and bad ones to avoid.

Background to Acts

The Author

Luke was a doctor and friend of the apostle Paul, who calls him ‘the beloved physician’ and ‘fellow worker’ (Colossians 4:14; Philemon 1:24). He began to travel with Paul at Troas (Acts 16:10). He was close to Paul near the end of his life (2 Timothy 4:11).

He may have come from Antioch in Syria, or Troas on the West coast of Turkey (as we now call it), or Philippi in Macedonia. He was a Gentile (i.e. not a Jew). Indeed, he is the only non-Jewish writer in the New Testament.

He had carried out careful research (see Luke 1:3, 2:51) to write down the account of Jesus’ life known as ‘The Gospel according to Luke’. He then wrote the story of the early church in the 5th book of the New Testament, whose full title is: ‘The Acts of the Apostles’. It takes us up to Paul’s imprisonment in Rome but not his trial, suggesting Luke finished writing it before that event.

The Date of writing

Luke probably wrote his gospel and Acts in the early sixties AD. before 63AD. Large sections of the second half of Acts (ch 16 onwards) are the report of an eye-witness, Luke himself.

Its purpose

Someone has described Acts as “How they brought the Good News from Jerusalem to Rome”.

Like Luke’s Gospel, it is addressed to someone called Theophilus. This may have been a real individual: could he have been an official in Roman government?... Someone who wanted details of Christianity before Paul’s trial in Rome?... Someone who paid Luke’s expenses while writing? Actually, the name means, ‘friend of God’, so it might refer to anyone, in any time or place, who *wanted to know the Gospel and be a friend of God*.

Acts continues where his gospel left off as it tells the story of the birth and growth of the Christian church, and its basic message.

Its structure

Luke’s use of a recurring phrase provides a thread which shows his narrative – and the church itself – progressing to a new section or stage. It concerns the growth of the church, usually numerical:

- A 1:1 – 6:7 The growth of the church and Peter’s preaching.
‘so the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem grew rapidly. . .’ (6:7)
- B 8:1 – 9:31 Its spread through Palestine to Samaria. Conversion of Paul *‘the church...enjoyed a time of peace. . .it grew in numbers . . .’ (9:31)*
- C 9:32 – 12:24 Peter’s ministry: west to the coast (Lydda, Joppa, Caesarea); Cornelius, the Gentile received into the church; Peter’s escape from prison.
‘the word of God continued to increase and spread.’ (12:24)
- D 12:25 – 16:5 Extension of the church through Asia Minor: Paul’s preaching tour of Galatia.
16:5 ‘the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.’
- E 16:6 – 19:20 Extension to Europe, Paul in Greece.
‘... the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power’ (19:20)
- F 19:21 – 28:31 Paul in Ephesus, in Jerusalem where he was arrested, which led to his being taken to Rome and imprisonment there.
‘Boldly, and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.’ (28:31).

The message of Acts

God was not ambiguous. He chose the Israelites *‘out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, to be His people, His treasured possession’* (Deuteronomy 7:6).

However this was not exclusive: provision was made for aliens to join them in the first Passover, provided they had been circumcised (eg Exodus 12:48).

The Old Testament gives indications of the times to come when *‘(God’s) ways may be known on earth, (His) salvation among all the Gentiles’* (Psalm 67). This is elaborated in Isaiah 25:6; 42:6; 49:6; 56:3-8.

After His resurrection, before his return to Glory, Jesus ‘fired the starting pistol.’ He told his disciples *‘all authority in Heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...’* (Matt 28:18,19). This reappears in Acts 1:8 with the promise *‘you will receive power when the Holy spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth’* (Acts 1:8).

The book of Acts tells the story of the church's response to those commands and the way God prompted their faithfulness.

Following Pentecost, the church grew amazingly quickly in Jerusalem: 3000 at Pentecost (2:41), 'about 5000 men' after the healing of the lame man (4:4), and a little later it says, '*the Word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith*' (6:7).

But therein lay the problem: '*people gathered from the towns around Jerusalem*' (5:16) and '*the church in Jerusalem increased rapidly*' (6:7). What about the great commission to the ends of the earth?! The Lord therefore had to 'winkle' his people out to fulfil his commission! The pattern of Acts shows the Lord bending the minds of His people, Israel, showing them that the Gospel of Jesus really is for the whole world – Jew and Gentile alike. For instance:

- 1) **8:1ff** Persecution breaks up 'the fire' in Jerusalem – but spreads the embers to neighbouring Samaria.
- 2) **9:1ff** The murderous Pharisee who persecuted the church is commissioned as God's '*chosen instrument to carry (the Lord's) name before the Gentiles*' (9:15).
- 3) **10:1 – 11:18** God shows Peter emphatically that He had poured out His Holy Spirit *on the Gentiles* and that Gentiles who believed should also be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ (10:45,47,48).
- 4) **11:19-12:25** Persecution continues in Jerusalem and the focus spreads about 400 miles north of Jerusalem to Antioch in Syria.
- 5) **13:1-14:28** Those Antioch Christians send out Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, preaching the Gospel of Jesus first in the synagogues but extending the invitation to the Gentiles.
- 6) **15:1-35** Amidst controversy, the council of the church in Jerusalem confirm Paul and Barnabas' preaching and practice: Gentiles did *not* have to become Jews first (be circumcised) to be part of Jesus' church.
- 7) **15:36-17:34** Paul and Barnabas part ways to preach the Gospel in separate locations, within the context of the local synagogue (17:2).
- 8) **18:1ff** Paul resolves to preach to the Gentiles (18: compare v5 with 6).

'*God's ways are not our ways*' (Isaiah 55:8) – for sure. It took a long time to convince the early church that God really meant – **the whole world!**

Study 1

Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-5

Wait, faithfully, for the Holy Spirit

Background

In the last few verses of his Gospel, Luke tells of the last time the risen Jesus appeared in physical form to the disciples before returning to heaven. We get more detail of the same episode in Acts 1:6-11.

In the opening verses of Acts, Luke recapitulates on what he wrote to Theophilus in his ‘former book’, (which we call the Gospel of Luke) and reiterates that the disciples had to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of the promised Holy Spirit.

Word List

Luke 1

3 *Theophilus* Greek name, meaning friend of God/dear to God

Acts 1

1 *former book* St Luke’s Gospel
Holy Spirit The Comforter/Strenghtener/Counsellor/Spirit of Truth whom Jesus had promised (John 14:26)
2 *apostles* a messenger, one sent forth with orders
3 *40 days* Represents a time of trying and testing (?)
Noah (Genesis 7); Jonah (Jonah 3:4); Jesus (Luke 4:2)
5 *John* John the Baptist who prepared the way for Jesus (Luke 3)

Bible Connections

Acts 1

3 *resurrection appearances* see 1 Corinthians 15:5ff
4 *gift the Father promised* see Joel 2:28-32, Luke 24:49;
John 14:16,26, 15:26, 16:12
5 *John the Baptist* see Luke 3

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

What surprises or confuses you?

2) The Context

What other parts of the Bible – surrounding passage, individual book, whole Bible, or Bible story – might help you understand this passage?

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions the passage raises?

- 2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?
- 3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

LISTEN

- 1) What is the lesson or the main point?
- 2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? v.

LIVE

- 1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?
 - a) His nature and character?
 - b) His grace?
 - c) Jesus and His salvation?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

- 2) What should I do?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Study 2

Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:6-14

Seek the Kingdom of God

Background

The disciples are still interested in the hope of seeing the kingdom of God realised as Israel's national independence is restored. Jesus rebukes them; they are to concentrate on spreading the gospel after they receive the Holy Spirit.

The angels make it clear that they will not see Jesus again. He will return when he 'comes in clouds with great power and glory.' (Mark 13:26)

Word List

Luke 24

50 *Bethany* Village about 3km from Jerusalem on side of Mt of Olives.

Acts 1:6-11

8 *Jerusalem* Their immediate locality
Judea Their own country
Samaria Country to the north *ie* countries around them
ends of the earth Worldwide
9 *taken up* A way of describing Jesus' last appearance to them
9 *cloud* The divine glory of God's presence (Hebrew: 'Shekinah')
10 *dressed in white* White was the conventional way of describing angels' clothes (*cf* Matt 28:3; John 20:12; Luke 24:4)
11 *men of Galilee* Disciples from around Sea of Galilee, an area in the north.
12 *Sabbath day's walk* Distance from home allowed before it counted as 'work' – forbidden on the Sabbath: (*c* 0.75 mile/1.1km)
13 *upper room* highest part of house, where the women resided.
Peter etc *ie* the 12 disciples minus Judas Iscariot

Bible Connections

7 *things revealed in God's time* *see* Deuteronomy 29:29
9 *cloud c.f. at Transfiguration* *see* Exodus 40:34; Mark 9:7;
Matthew 17:5; Luke 9:34f
10 *men dressed in white* *see* John 20:12
11 *Jesus coming back* *see* Mark 13:26; Matthew 16:27
13 *upper room (different word from Luke 2:7; 22:12)* *see* Acts 9:37,39; 20:8

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Now underline the application of the Main Point.

- 2) What should I do?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

The right thing at the wrong time is the wrong thing

Background

Despite Jesus' command in v4 to *wait* in Jerusalem for the promised gift of the Holy Spirit, impulsive Peter feels the need for action. He says 'it is *necessary*' to replace Judas with someone else who had experienced with them the entire length of Jesus' ministry and resurrection, to join their corporate witness.

In an aside (v18-19) Luke recounts what had happened to Judas Iscariot.

Peter responds to Judas' demise, quoting from Psalms 69:25 and 109:8. The two candidates, Joseph Barsabbas (*aka* Justus) and Matthias are not mentioned again in the NT. There is a legend that Matthias was martyred in Ethiopia.

'Casting lots' was an Old Testament method of reaching a decision with God's help. It was used in connection with the Scapegoat. (Leviticus 16:10).

There are no examples of casting lots in the early church other than this one. After the day of Pentecost, believers prayed for the Holy Spirit to guide them, perhaps followed by voting (Acts 6:2-6).

Word List

15	<i>believers</i>	Greek is 'brothers', a wider use of the term than in v14
16	<i>David</i>	King David, author of some of the Psalms

Bible connections

See also Matthew 27:3-10 for a slightly different account of Judas' death and reason for the name for the field.

20	<i>Peter's quotes</i>	<i>see</i> Psalm 69:25; Psalm 109:8
26	<i>casting lots</i>	<i>see</i> Exodus 27:15-30; Leviticus 8:8; 16:8 Numbers 26:55; 27:21;

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- 2) What should I do?

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Seek the Holy Spirit to enable you to share Jesus

Background

Pentecost was a harvest festival, held fifty days after the offering of the first barley sheaf at the beginning of the Passover. It was also known as the Feast of Weeks, and Day of the Firstfruits, the latter being the start of *wheat* harvest.

The festival celebrates 2 things: the giving of the Law at Mt Sinai and the start of the harvest, the ingathering of the grain.

Furthermore, the day of Pentecost was to be a holiday. No work was to be done (Leviticus 23:21; Numbers 28:26).

Vv 2-3 try to convey in simple, intelligible terms an unearthly, indescribable experience! God is showing himself in a new way at a vital moment in history.

v9-11 All the areas named had large communities of dispersed Jews: they represented North, South, East and West – ‘every nation under heaven’ (5).

Word List

1 <i>Pentecost</i>	Greek for ‘fifty days’
2-3 <i>wind and fire</i>	Accepted symbolism for the powerful and cleansing action of God’s Spirit.
4 <i>tongues</i>	<i>or</i> languages
5 <i>God-fearing/ devout</i>	In classical Greek it meant <i>discreet</i> or <i>cautious</i> , but Luke uses it of good and godly Jews <i>eg</i> Luke 2:25; Acts 8:2.
8 <i>native language</i>	Gk <i>dialektos</i> can mean ‘language’ as well as ‘dialect’.
11 <i>proselytes</i> (ESV)	converts to Judaism
13 <i>new wine</i> (ESV) <i>wine</i> (NIV)	There <i>was</i> no new wine at Pentecost time! Gk means ‘sweet wine’, perhaps from a certain kind of grape, or especially high in alcoholic content.

Bible Connections

1 <i>Pentecost</i>	<i>see</i> Leviticus 23:15-21
<i>Feast of weeks</i>	<i>cf</i> Exodus 34:22; Deuteronomy 16:10
<i>Day of the first-fruits</i>	<i>cf</i> Numbers 28:26; Exodus 12:16a
2 <i>Wind as breath of God</i>	<i>see</i> Ezekiel 39:9-14; John 3:8
3 <i>Fire as the divine presence</i>	<i>see</i> Exodus 3:2ff; 13:21; Matt 3:11; Luke 3:16

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Believe in Jesus

Background

Scrupulous Jews drank wine only when eating flesh. Following the pattern of Exodus 16:8, 11, they ate bread in the morning, and flesh in the evening, so it is unlikely that the disciples were drunk at 9am.

Jews viewed time in two halves: *the present age* – completely evil and would be totally destroyed; and *the age to come* – this would be the golden age of God.

Separating them would be *The day of the Lord* – the coming of the promised king / anointed one (Messiah). Peter is announcing that the King *has come* and the new age with His Spirit *has begun*. (cf Isaiah 2:12,13; 13:6ff; Amos 5:18; Zephaniah 1:7; Joel 2; 1 Thessalonians 5:2ff; 2 Peter 3:10)

Peter firmly anchors what he is saying in Scriptures familiar to his audience. As he recounts the facts of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, he shows how He fitted characteristics of separate OT Messianic figures. (Watch for at least two in each of his first two sermons, and in the believers' first recorded prayer.)

As OT prophesy frequently does, the Joel quotation in v19-20 runs three things together: the coming of Christ, the day of his grace, and future judgment.

The titles of Psalms 16 and 110 say they are 'of David', which may mean '*about* David' or '*by* David'. His tomb may be in the south of Jerusalem, near Siloam.

V40 indicates that Luke is giving us here a summary of Peter's sermon.

Word list

10 <i>prophesy</i>	interpret spiritual truth.
23 <i>wicked men</i>	ESV <i>lawless men</i> 'those not having The Law' ie Gentiles.
29 <i>patriarch</i>	'founding fathers'. The term was first used of Abraham. David here is founder of a royal dynasty.
31 <i>Christ</i>	Greek for 'anointed One'; same as Hebrew 'Messiah'.
36 <i>all Israel</i>	all Jews.
38 <i>repent</i>	turning away from wrongdoing in mind and action.

Bible Connections

16f <i>Joel's prophecy</i>	<i>see</i> Joel 2:28-32
17 <i>pour out my Spirit</i>	<i>see</i> Numbers 11:25; Isaiah 44:3; Ezekiel 39:29; John 7:37-39; Acts 10:45
18 <i>They will prophesy...</i>	<i>see</i> Acts 21:9-12
25 <i>David spoke of Jesus</i>	<i>see</i> Psalm 16:8-11, <i>also</i> quoted by Paul: Acts 13:35 Psalm 110:1 (<i>see also</i> Matthew 22:44)
34 <i>Sit at my right hand....</i>	<i>see</i> Mark 12:35ff; Matthew 22:41ff; Luke 20:41ff
36 <i>Jesus is Lord...</i> ... and Christ	<i>of</i> Romans 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3; Philippians 2:11. <i>see</i> Matthew 1:16; 16:16; John 1:41; 20:31.

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- 2) What should I do?

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The church's work, in a nutshell

Background

Fellowship is the keynote of this group of believers. Eating together in the East has always been a prime sign of fellowship.

V45 uses imperfect tenses: 'they used to sell...used to divide...' indicating a series of on-going actions that were now in the past. This sharing of *everything* did not last or spread. But it developed, as Luke will show later in Acts.

Word List

42	<i>Devoted</i>	From the Greek <i>proskarterountes</i> 'continuing steadfastly'; also used in v46 for 'every day they <i>continued</i> to meet together in the temple courts and breaking bread in their homes. (46)
	<i>Apostles' teaching</i>	The apostles were passing on what they had learned from Jesus. Imagine hearing for the first time, from the eye-witnesses, the narratives that later became the New Testament Gospels!
	<i>Fellowship</i>	The sharing together of a common belief and attitude. <i>Gk koinonia.</i> (<i>nb koinonikos</i> means 'generous')
	<i>Breaking of bread</i>	more than just eating together; regular observance of the Lord's Supper.
46	<i>Temple courts</i>	Solomon's colonnade, east side of outer court.
	<i>Generous</i>	<i>gk aphelotes</i> = simple

Bible Connections

42	<i>Apostles' teaching</i>	<i>see Matthew 28:20</i>
	<i>breaking of bread</i>	<i>see Matthew 14:19; Acts 20:7,11; 27:35; 1 Corinthians 10:16</i>
43	<i>awe (gk phobos = fear)</i>	<i>see Acts 5:11; 9:31; 13:16,26; 16:29</i>

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Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Receive the inexpressible gift of access to God

The outer court of the temple did not form part of the sacred area. Gentiles could walk about there, hence the name 'Court of the Gentiles'. Up some steps from it was a barrier separating this outer court from the inner courts. It had nine gates, of which one on the East side was the Nicanor gate, which the New Testament appears to call the 'Beautiful Gate'. This was the direction from which the Jews expected the Messiah to come. Jesus *did* enter from the East, the Mount of Olives, on his last triumphal entry (Luke 19:28ff)

The first of the inner courts was the Court of the Women, site of the treasury. Jewish *laymen* could go further into the Court of Israel, but no further. This would be where Peter and John were going for the afternoon time of prayer. Beyond this was the Court of the Priests and within it the sanctuary building itself, with the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.

Diagram of Temple – New Bible Dictionary, 3rd Edition, p1246

Physically handicapped people were not allowed into the temple.

Luke only tells us at the very end of the narrative, 4:22, that the man crippled from birth and thus excluded from the temple was *over forty years old*. Everyone knew him, and knew he'd been lame *all his life*.

Word List

1	<i>the time of prayer</i>	Jews prayed three times a day at what we would call 9am, 3 pm (AV the ninth hour) and 6pm i.e. sunset. Afternoon prayer, The Tephillim, consisted of 18 Benedictions, the first being, <i>Blessed art thou, O Lord, God of Abraham, God of Isaac and God of Jacob, Most high God, Lord of heaven and earth, Our shield and the shield of our fathers...</i>
	<i>Peter</i>	the principle disciple – the rock (Matthew 16:18)
	<i>John</i>	The disciple whom Jesus loved (John 21:20)
2	<i>Beautiful</i>	<i>gk horaios</i> can also mean 'happening at the right time'. Name given by Christians. Gate faced east. Jews expected Messiah to come from the east 'at right time'. Jesus came from east - Mt of Olives - on Palm Sunday.
	<i>lame from birth</i>	Contemporaries thought this a sign of sin (John 9:2)
6	<i>silver or gold</i>	Roman coins were of gold, silver, bronze or copper.

Bible Connections

See also Mark 2:1-12; Acts 14:8-10

6 *Healing in the name of Jesus* Acts 4:7,10; 9:34; 14:8-10; 16:18
8 *the lame - walking and leaping* see Isaiah 35:6.

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

What surprises or confuses you?

2) The Context

What other parts of the Bible – surrounding passage, individual book, whole Bible, or Bible story – might help you understand this passage?

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions the passage raises?

- 2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?
- 3) Give an overall ‘picture’ of the passage in a few sentences.

LISTEN

- 1) What is the lesson or the main point?
- 2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? v.

LIVE

- 1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?
 - a) His nature and character?
 - b) His grace?
 - c) Jesus and His salvation?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

- 2) What should I do?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Know your privilege in hearing of Jesus

Background

The dramatic healing of this well-known crippled beggar draws a crowd that demands answers. Peter makes clear to them that the man's complete healing came not from Peter and John themselves, but occurred in Jesus' name and through faith in Jesus.

Watch for more names for Jesus loaded with OT meaning, *eg* note the reference to 'prophet' –(vv 18, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25)

Word List

11 *Solomon's Colonnade* east side of outer court
13 *The God of Abraham, the God of...* the revelation of God Himself to Moses.
see Exodus 3:6, 15; 4:5 (NB the only other uses of this phrase in the Bible are also in Acts.) Peter is quoting the start of the first benediction in the Jewish Afternoon prayer, (see p33 above.)

Bible Connections

13 *God of our Fathers* see Acts 5:30; 7:32; 22:14
glorified His Servant Jesus see Isaiah 42:1; 52:13 – 53:12
14 *Holy and...* see 1 John 2:20; Revelation 3:7
... *Righteous one* Isaiah 53:11; 1 John 2:1
22 *a prophet like Moses* see Deuteronomy 18:15,18,19
25 *Through your offspring all...be blessed.* see Genesis 22:18

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I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me

Background

The high priestly family belonged to the party of the Sadducees.

As collaborators with the Roman order, Sadducees were sensitive to anything likely to disturb the comfortable status they had won.

While Pharisees believed in resurrection, Sadducees did not. When it was apparent that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the grave, the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus ‘as well’ as Jesus (John 12:9-10), *ie* Sadducees had taken over from the Pharisees the leading role in persecuting Jesus.

Word List

1	<i>captain of temple guard</i>	<i>ie</i> High Priest’s chief of staff /temple police
4	<i>men</i>	<i>ie</i> males as distinct from women and children, who were now too many to count. Think 5,000 families.
5	<i>rulers, elders teachers..</i>	<i>ie</i> the Sanhedrin, senate and supreme court of Jewish nation, where Sadducees were the majority
6	<i>Annas</i>	the senior ex-high priest
	<i>Caiaphas</i>	reigning high priest, son-in-law of Annas and president of Sanhedrin
	<i>John, Alexander</i>	nothing is known about them
7	<i>by what power</i>	not the usual word <i>exousia</i> for <i>by what authority</i> but <i>dunamis</i> , the word for miraculous power (perhaps speaking cynically?)
	<i>you</i>	The Greek has a scornful emphasis on this word
8	<i>filled</i>	aorist passive, denoting a special moment of inspiration
11	<i>capstone</i>	or cornerstone
13	<i>uneducated / common</i>	<i>gk</i> agrammatio / idiotai (!)

Bible Connections

8	<i>Peter speaking</i>	<i>see</i> Luke 21:14,15 – Jesus will give the words
11	<i>cornerstone</i>	<i>see</i> Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 48:16; Mark 12:10ff
12	<i>Only Jesus saves.</i>	<i>see</i> Matthew 1:21

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- 2) What should I do?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Fill us with Holy Spirit boldness to speak God's Word

Background

Peter and John have been ordered not to speak or act in Jesus' name (v18). They have replied that rather than obey men, they would obey God who said otherwise, and been further threatened.

When the other believers hear of these threats, they all take the matter to God in prayer.

The prayer (v24b –30) follows the same pattern as the Lord's Prayer, starting with God, his nature, will and actions, which influence the content of their requests. Their words are saturated with OT scriptures, as fulfilled in Jesus.

Word List

26 <i>Anointed One</i>	Greek = <i>Christ</i> , Hebrew = <i>Messiah</i> ie King provided by God.
27 <i>servant</i>	Gk <i>Pais</i> – child, in relation to parents. May mean servant (Matthew 8:6) - more intimate than 'slave'.
<i>Herod</i>	Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Pereia (Luke 23:7ff)
<i>Pontius Pilate</i>	Roman governor in Jerusalem
<i>people</i>	Greek is plural

Bible Connections

24 <i>lifted up their voices</i>	Unusual phrase. Expresses anguish (Judges 21:2; Ruth 1:9,14) cf Exodus 20:11; Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 146:6, Isaiah 42:5
<i>Sovereign Lord...</i>	
25 <i>You spoke by Holy Spirit through...David cf Hebrews 1:1-2; 2 Timothy 3:16</i>	
<i>Why do the nations rage...?</i>	see Psalm 2:1-2
27 'servant,' sin-bearing sacrifice 'anointed'	alludes to Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12, see Psalm 2:2c, 6
31 <i>Word of God</i>	see Hebrews 4:12

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Now underline the application of the Main Point.

- 2) What should I do?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Be gracious!**Background**

The phrase ‘from time to time’ in v34 indicates there is a time lapse between the prayer meeting following the Sadducees’ opposition, and this description of life among the believers.

The sharing of possessions first described in Acts 2:44-45 is again recorded here to introduce the contrasted attitudes to giving of Barnabas (4:36-37) and Ananias and his wife, Sapphira (5:1-10).

Barnabas was a Levite, a Cyprus Jew. The Cypriot Jews were wealthy after Emperor Augustus ‘gifted’ to Herod the Great half the income of the copper mines. Many Jews many money from these and related trades.

Barnabas was also a Pharisee and as such was actively awaiting the coming of the Messiah. Many Jews from the diaspora, if rich enough, came to Jerusalem and bought a plot of land in which to be buried that looked toward the Golden Gate where the Messiah was expected to appear. It was their extreme form of piety to be buried on such land so as to be some of the first to welcome the Messiah when he came. Now Barnabas believed Jesus was Messiah; it meant the Messiah had *already* come, so there was no need for the land for his burial.

Word List

32 *heart and soul* Combination used 11 times in Deuteronomy (eg 4:29)
 36 *Levite* ie a Jew, a member of one of the 12 tribes, Levi.
 Nb Tribe of Levi received no land inheritance (Joshua 3:4)
 Barnabas from Cyprus, the 1st stop on 1st missionary journey (13:4)

Bible Connections

32 *heart and soul* The greatest commandment (Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30; 10:27)
 32 *sharing possessions* see also 2:44-45; Galatians 2:10
 33 *grace* Matthew 5:43,44; Ephesians 2:8,9
 34 *occasional → systematic* 1 Corinthians 16:1-4
 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9
 36 *Barnabas* see Acts 9:27; 11:22-30; chapters 13 – 15
 1 Corinthians 9:6; Galatians 2:1,9,13

Lying to God

Background

Sacrificial giving by believers inspired by the Holy Spirit was entirely voluntary. Those that owned property did not *have* to sell it; if they did, the proceeds belonged to them. They were free to share all, some or none of the income. (v4)

We have to do some detective work to see what was deceitful about the gift by Ananias and his wife Sapphira. The clue is in comparing the two gifts, by Barnabas and the couple, and in Peter's question at v 8. There's a phrase implied but not explicit at the end of v2.

The deceit became even more awful in being the first sin in and against the community, rather like the serpent entering the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3 tempting Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. They then tried to deceive the Lord by hiding from Him.

Peter makes it clear to Ananias that he is lying not just to the believers, but to God.

Sapphira then colludes with her late husband in the lie.

Word List

1 <i>piece of property</i>	Greek = landed property <i>cf</i> v3
11 <i>church</i>	Greek <i>ekklesia</i> , lit <i>called out (people)</i> . In Greek version of OT, it was used to denote Israel as the 'congregation of Jehovah'; this is its first use in the original text of Acts, and refers to the community of believers in Jesus Christ.

Bible Connections

2 <i>keeping back for private use what has been devoted to God</i> <i>cf</i> Joshua 7:1 Jesus' views on hypocrisy	<i>see</i> Matthew 23
3 <i>lying to the Holy Spirit</i>	<i>see</i> Deuteronomy 23:21
9 <i>testing the Holy Spirit</i>	<i>cf</i> Exodus 17:2; Deuteronomy 6:16; Matthew 4:7; Luke 4:12

(There's an entirely different Ananias in Damascus, 150 miles to the north:
Acts 9:10-19)

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What other parts of the Bible – surrounding passage, individual book, whole Bible, or Bible story – might help you understand this passage?

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- 2) What should I do?

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Even the disobedient but faithful may be used by God

Background

This paragraph is another summary like those in 2:43-47 and 4:32-35, providing a transition to the next incident and stage of the church's life (v17.) Like Acts 2:47, it refers to the Church's numerical growth.

In Jerusalem (and other cities, e.g. Athens) it was common practice for like-minded groups to gather for instruction and discussion in the courtyards or porticos of public buildings. Bystanders could overhear what was being said without being part of the group. (13)

Miraculous signs and wonders happened for a purpose, *cf* the seven miraculous signs in John's gospel, which pointed to who Jesus was.

The general atmosphere is like that of the earlier days of Jesus' Galilean ministry (*cf* Mark 1:32-34)

Jesus commanded the disciples to '*go to all nations*' (Matt 28:19). He promised '*You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth*' (Acts 1:8)

Peter quotes Joel's prophecies that '*the Spirit will be poured on all flesh*'. (Acts 2:17). As yet it is only the Apostles who are doing the wonders, they are in *Jerusalem* and the people around are coming *to them*. That would all change soon!

Word List

12 <i>Solomon's Colonnade</i>	covered porch on the east side of outer court of temple, outside the court of the Gentiles. 10 m high, 10 m wide, 400 m long.
14 <i>the Lord</i>	<i>ie</i> the Lord Jesus
16 <i>evil</i>	Greek word is 'unclean'

Bible Connections

12 <i>miraculous signs and wonders</i>	<i>see also</i> Acts 2:43; 19:11-12
14 <i>added to their number</i>	<i>see also</i> Acts 2:41,47; 4:4
15 <i>Peter's shadow</i>	<i>cf</i> Matthew 9:20

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Sharing the Word

Use

‘Hearing the Word’ can be used alone, with one other person, or in a group

Preparing for a group

Time put in alone beforehand will greatly benefit time spent together.

Work through the stages - LOOK, LEARN, LISTEN, LIVE.

Write down your own questions and answers *

A format

If you have 45 mins together, you might like to try dividing it up like this.

(If longer or in a large group, you can extend the times)

1) Drink, bite to eat, chat	(10 mins)
2) A Bible reading	(2 mins)
3) A Bible study	
a. Any questions? (Whether answer is known or not!) (Don't answer any, till all questions noted!)	(2 mins)
b. Any relevant cross references?	(2 mins)
c. Discussion of answers	(13 mins)
d. Conclusion	(10 mins)
i. A Key verse and Main Point?	
ii. What does it show about God / Jesus?	
iii. What should I do?	
4) Sharing (Trials and joys – family, work, self)	(5 mins)
5) Prayer	(1 min)

Remember!

As we gather round God’s Word

- a) Listen to the views of others
- b) Make room for the novice. They can join in too when you start by listing ‘Any questions’
- c) Don’t let the ‘knowledgeable’ dominate. Encourage everyone to think for themselves.
- d) Try to include others’ especially, ‘seekers’ in your sharing together.

* The **process** is explained and practised in a four-hour course, suitable for all, called **‘An Introduction to ‘Hearing the Word’**. Email: office@tpc.org

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