

GOD’S SPIRIT, OUR POWER

PART I

BY JACKIE OESCH

STORIES FROM THE BOOK OF ACTS

LESSON 1: *REPENT AND BE BAPTIZED* - PENTECOST

LESSON 2: *IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST* – THE LAME MAN

LESSON 3: *NO OTHER NAME* – UNEDUCATED, COMMON, WITH JESUS

LESSON 4: *GO, STAND, AND SPEAK* – COURAGEOUS OBEDIENCE

LESSON 5: *A MAN FULL OF FAITH* – STEPHEN, THE MARTYR

LESSON 6: *GO!* – PHILIP, THE EUNUCH, AND SAUL

“...I have stored up Your Word in my heart...”

Psalm 119:11

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GETTING STARTED

You are embarking on an adventure that will shape the rest of your life. Your journey will be unique to you and will be determined in part by your eager and enthusiastic desire to grow in your understanding of the book called The Holy Bible. Your commitment to the study promises to enrich your life as God speaks to you through His Word. Because of the amount of material, *God's Love, Our Life* is divided into two units.

As you study you are encouraged to have some recommended supplies on hand:

1. This Bible Study unit: *God's Spirit, Our Power – Part 1*
2. English Standard Version of the Holy Bible (ESV). Note: If you are making a new purchase, look for a Bible, if possible, that has:
 - a. a cross-reference column preferably down the center of each page,
 - b. a Concordance usually found in the back of the Bible, and
 - c. a few basic maps also usually found in the back.
3. Pen or pencil and 3x5 or 4x6 index cards

With the three features listed in #2 you will be adequately supplied for your study and be ready to successfully navigate through these lessons. If, however, this is your first exposure to the Bible, you may want to consider beginning with the study entitled *Navigating the Bible*. This study provides navigational tools designed to help you develop skills and make you a more confident Bible student. *Navigating the Bible* may be downloaded at no cost or obligation from the CrossConnect Ministries website (www.crosscm.org). Although this study is recommended, it is not essential for success in studying *God's Spirit, Our Power*.

Do not hesitate to mark up your Bible. It's your Bible to study. Make it your own with your notes, your underlining, highlighting, circling and arrows! You may choose to use a notebook or tablet for recording thoughts, questions, and tracking your journey through the study.

The study material is written so that you are able to learn on your own. With a degree of self-discipline you will cover the material with little or no difficulty. At the same time, you will acquire new information, share new insights, and ask some challenging questions that will beg for answers. Anticipating this response you are encouraged to seriously consider inviting a couple of friends to study with you.

May you find joy in your study. May your heart be receptive as God speaks to you through His Word. May these Bible stories reassure you of His great love given to you through His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Editor's note: For clarification, capitalized pronouns reference God. i.e. "...what He said."

INTRODUCTION

The previous Bible study unit entitled *God's Love, Our Life* concluded with the commissioning of Jesus' disciples in Matthew 28:18-20. He said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." The Book of Acts is the account of the early Christian church as it set out to go and make disciples by baptizing and teaching. All of this they did in obedience to the One who sent them. Acts was the second book written by the Gospel writer Luke who wrote to Theophilus so he would know with certainty the things he had been taught (Luke 1:4). Luke, the physician, wrote to Theophilus again. This time Luke told him all that was accomplished by God's Holy Spirit who was at work in the lives of those who were followers of Jesus.

The Bible refers to the primary work of God the Father as the one who created all things in heaven and on earth. The primary work of God the Son, Jesus, is that of redeeming the world from sin, death, and the devil, by shedding His blood on the cross for us. And, the primary work of God the Holy Spirit is opening our hearts and minds both to believe and to receive by faith what God reveals to us through His Word. We have a God who wants an intimate relationship with us. Scripture teaches us that God chooses to live within us by His Spirit and that this same Spirit is active in our lives purifying us and making us more like God. We call this work *sanctification*. He sanctifies us, making us holy before God. We are taught that with Him living within us He enables us to bear much fruit but without Him we can do nothing. St. Paul in his letter to the Galatians tell us that the fruit which the Spirit bears within us are such things as joy, love, patience, and peace. He also empowers us to be gentle with one another, self-controlled, kind and good (Galatians 5:22-23).

As you begin your study of the early church, watch for similarities between Jesus suffering and the suffering of the persecuted church. Hardships and sufferings were expected. They happened to Jesus and His followers expected the same. See how His followers were arrested, falsely accused, imprisoned, and handed over from one group of people to another, just like Jesus. No one knew what to do with Jesus and no one knew what to do with His followers. Notice how God protected His people, delivered them from prison, and rescued them from those who attempted to kill them. Enjoy watching God speak to His people through visions, other people, and hardships on land and sea. Listen as He speaks embracing both

Jews and Gentiles. All who heard reacted either with belief and became part of the growing church or they refused to believe because their calloused hearts lacked understanding.

Luke wanted his reader to know that the salvation of God was for all people and it made no difference whether a person was Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female for all are made one in Christ Jesus. God's invitation to join Him in His mission is given to all! Go therefore and make disciples of all nations!

Enjoy watching the church grow. Begin your study by reading the following verses:

- a. Acts 2:41 _____
- b. Acts 2:47 _____
- c. Acts 4:4 _____
- d. Acts 5:14 _____
- e. Acts 6:7 _____
- f. Acts 9:31 _____
- g. Acts 11:21 _____
- h. Acts 13:52 _____
- i. Acts 14:27 _____

Now let's get started and see the ways in which God ignited His Church granting power to His people through the indwelling of His Holy Spirit!

LESSON ONE

REPENT AND BE BAPTIZED

ACTS 1-2 – PENTECOST

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INTRODUCTION

Men who were once locked in a room for fear of the Jews now waited for the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit, who would grant them power to be Jesus' witness to the whole world. As you study Lesson 1 imagine yourself patiently living with the disciples during these days of waiting. Consider what those who were gathered together on Pentecost must have been experienced—the sights and sounds, the multitude of spoken languages, and the awesome amazement of everyone as God's Spirit manifested Himself.

Listen as Peter spoke and the hearts of those who heard were convicted of sin and who could only ask, "What shall we do?" Permit yourself to be overwhelmed by the response of about 3,000 people who received Peter's message and were baptized for the forgiveness of their sins.

Enjoy the fulfillment of God's promise to all those who call on the name of the Lord! Do you find yourself in the crowd asking, "What shall we do?" and rejoicing at the comfort of Peter's words, "Repent and be baptized."

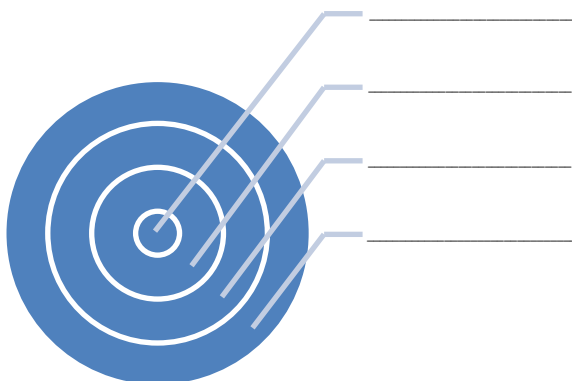
LESSON 1

Part 1

INTRODUCTION: In the study unit entitled *God's Love, Our Life* we learned that before ascending into heaven Jesus left His disciples with the command and responsibility of carrying His ministry to the world. His words were, "As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you (John 20:21)." He also said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19)."

ASSIGNMENT: Read Acts 1:4-8.

EXERCISE: Fill these blanks using the words from Acts 1:8.



1. For the disciples, where was their witness to begin? _____
Where would it ultimately extend? _____
2. Witnessing is not an option for Jesus' disciples.
 - a. God's promise in verse 5: You will _____
 - b. God's promise in verse 8a: You will _____
 - c. God's promise in verse 8b: You will _____
3. For what purpose were they to receive power given by the Holy Spirit? _____

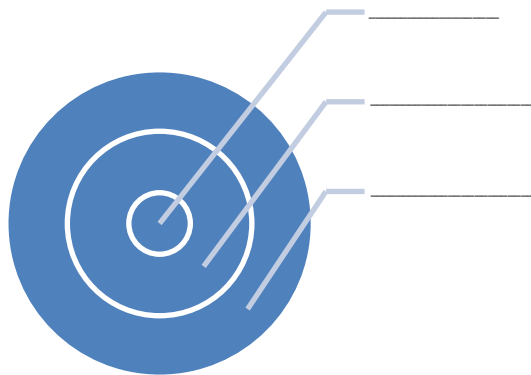
The disciples were sent to teach and preach. However, Jesus told them very explicitly that they were to return to Jerusalem and wait there for the gift of the Holy Spirit whom His Father had promised (Acts 1:4). With these words Jesus left His disciples. He was taken up and a cloud hid Him from their sight (Acts 1:9).

REFLECTION: We are given a chance to reflect on what Jesus said to His disciples and to begin considering what His Words mean for us. It is important as we begin to study the stories in Acts that we realize God has been on a mission since the beginning of time and we are now invited to join Him in His mission!

1. In John 8:31 Jesus had said, “If you abide in _____, you are truly My _____.” Does this mean that we are His disciples if you and I hold to Jesus’ teachings? If we are His disciples, does Jesus invite us to participate in His ministry plan of reaching the world? What He said to His disciples before leaving them many years ago, does this apply to me living in the 21st Century?
2. Your thoughts: _____

APPLICATION: As we begin to reflect, we ask that God’s Spirit work in us as He did in the disciples, giving us the imagination, energy, power, and encouragement for the work He has prepared for us to do (Ephesians 2:10). Together we ask that He strengthens us in our faith and in His promise that wherever we are working in His mission He will always be with us (Matthew 28:20).

1. Jesus had a plan for those who would be His witnesses, His disciples. His plan for them began right where they were, namely in Jerusalem. He caused His witnesses to spread as He moved them by various means out of Jerusalem into Judea and then out of Judea to Samaria and, ultimately, throughout the world. If Jesus calls you and me His disciples, where is my Jerusalem? My Judea? My Samaria?



2. Your observations and reflections: _____

Part 2

INTRODUCTION: The disciples returned to Jerusalem where they were told to wait. Waiting is an interesting experience. Few of us enjoy times when we need to wait. Waiting for news to arrive whether good or bad is difficult. Time seems to come to a standstill. Many times we don't know how to live in the "waiting room." We know that the disciples had to wait ten days for the Spirit to be given, however, they had no idea how long it would be. Day after day passed and they continued to wait. In Acts 1:13-14 we are told that all of the Eleven were gathered in the upstairs room along with the women who had followed Jesus throughout His ministry. Who else had gathered with them? _____
What are we told they were doing? How were they spending their time waiting? _____

ASSIGNMENT: Read Acts 2:1-13.

EXERCISE:

1. What day was it (verse 1)? _____
2. We are not told exactly where everyone was but we are told what happened. What is written about the sound in verse 2? _____
3. What are we told about what seemed like "tongues of fire" in verse 3? _____

4. And they were all _____ with the _____ and began to _____ in other _____ as the _____ enabled them (verse 4).
5. Because it was Pentecost God-fearing Jews from every nation were gathered in Jerusalem (verse 5). What was the reaction of the crowd? _____
6. What caused such a stir (verse 6b)? _____

7. What made this so unusual (verses 7-8)? _____

8. It's interesting that Luke the writer of the Book of Acts meticulously mentions each of the countries showing the diversity of those represented (verses 9-11a).
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
 - i. _____
 - j. _____
 - k. _____
 - l. _____

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| e. _____ | m. _____ |
| f. _____ | n. _____ |
| g. _____ | o. _____ |
| h. _____ | |

9. Not even language would separate these people and keep them from hearing the apostles telling the _____ (verse 11)

Note the number of times the phrase “in his own tongue” is used in these few verses.

10. Words such as bewildered, amazed, and perplexed are used to describe these visitors to Jerusalem when they heard the wonders of God being proclaimed in their own language. What is the question they asked one another (verse 12)? _____

11. Of course, there are always those who made fun of them (verse 13). What was their comment? _____

Part 3

TEACHING: The Day of Pentecost was established by God in the Old Testament. It was held fifty days after the Passover. This was the day of rituals and ceremonies when the first fruits were dedicated. In some churches Pentecost is noted as Whitsunday, the fiftieth day after Easter Sunday. God established this festival day when He gave the laws to Moses after Israel left Egypt. It has been said that the events recorded in Acts 2 transformed what was once a Jewish holiday into a Christian one. For the Christian Church Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost are the three primary festivals of the church year.

We learn that all those gathered together in one place for Pentecost were filled with the Holy Spirit and the Spirit manifested His presence to them as they began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them (verse 4). Their speech was heard and recognized by those from other countries who were visiting for Pentecost. Their speech was understood for the visitors marveled as they heard these people speaking of the wonders of God in their own language! The Spirit of God brought unity. In the letter to the Romans (15:5-6) St. Paul tells us: “May the God of _____ and _____ grant you to live in such _____ with one another; in accord with Christ Jesus, that _____ with _____ voice _____ the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Everything that broke down the relationship between God and humankind was destroyed through Jesus’ death and resurrection. Jesus declared victory over sin and death and Satan himself. The last piece that

separated humankind and needed to be destroyed was the language confusion that sin brought upon the human race. God used the language confusion to keep humankind from destroying itself. The people were scattered over the face of the earth. Turn to Genesis 11:1-9 and refresh your memory as you reread the story.

INTRODUCTION: Let's return to our story in Acts 2. With the extraordinary signs of sound and the appearance of the tongues of fire that alit on each of them came the filling of the Spirit as the people spoke in other tongues. One can't help but be amazed at the extraordinary change that took place because they received the Holy Spirit's power. These men who just a few weeks earlier cowered behind locked doors would now boldly speak in front of thousands and, as we will see, face imprisonment, stoning, and even death for the sake of bringing the Gospel to the world as the Lord had commanded. We can only marvel at the courage and boldness God wants to give His people, including you and me. Now the disciples were empowered by God's power and not by their own. They were released to be His witnesses. Let's begin by briefly focusing on Peter's message to the crowd.

EXERCISE:

1. Peter's message began by addressing the comments of those who thought these people were drunk. Read verses 14-21.
 - a. Why couldn't the men be drunk according to Peter (verse 14-15)? _____

 - b. What in particular did the prophet Joel say regarding the outpouring of His Spirit (verse 17)? _____
 - c. How would His Spirit be manifested (verse 17b)? _____
 - d. God said that He would pour out His Spirit on both _____ and _____ servants (verse 18).
 - e. What would be the responses of nature (verse 19-20)? _____

 - f. But, above all, what promise of God does His Spirit reveal (verse 21)? _____

2. Peter's message continues as He reviews historical facts, including what had been done to Jesus whom God the Father had handed over into the hands of wicked men in order that His set plan of redemption would be completed. Scan through verses 22-36 and write down some of the events Peter reiterates in His message to the people.
 - a. _____ (verse 23)
 - b. _____ (verse 24)

- c. _____ (verse 33)
 - d. _____ (verse 36)
3. Peter’s message touched the hearts of the people (verse 37). What did they ask? _____

4. What was Peter’s response (verse 38)?
- a. _____
 - b. _____
5. What was the promise Peter offered in the name of the Lord (verse 38)?
- a. _____
 - b. _____
6. And, the very last thing we read in verse 41... “Those who _____ his _____ were _____, and there were _____ that day about _____ thousand souls.” The people responded to the Spirit of God who convicted the hearts of the people as He spoke through Peter! Only God’s Spirit could stir those who heard him to respond.

REFLECTION:

1. After reading this story one can’t help but ask a lot of questions:
 - a. Did this really happen?
 - b. What was it like to hear a sound that filled the whole house? Was it like a fire alarm going off in one’s home?
 - c. Tongues of fire? The people saw what seemed to be tongues of fire resting on them? So, what was that all about?
 - d. Then to top everything off, they all started to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them? We can’t help but ask the same question they asked one another, “What does this mean?”
 - e. We may also wonder if this event was what the disciples were expecting as they waited in Jerusalem for the gift of the Holy Spirit to be given to them.
 - a. What do you think they might have expected? _____

 - b. What would you have expected? _____

 - f. Other questions: _____

2. Then Peter got up and gave a sermon that cut to the hearts of the people. Those who accepted his message were baptized and 3,000 were added. That was exponential growth!
 - a. They *repented*.
 - b. They were *baptized*.
 - c. They were *forgiven*.
 - d. They *received the gift of the Holy Spirit*.

3. Peter shared the events that were taking place (verses 14-21). Then he told them about salvation through faith in Jesus' death and resurrection. He concluded his message with Jesus' ascension into heaven where He rules and pours out His Holy Spirit (verses 22-36). Then Peter extends the invitation to repent and be baptized for in baptism their sins were forgiven and they received the gift of the Holy Spirit.
 - a. In baptism our sins are washed away, cleaned out, if you will. This brings Christ's redeeming work to us personally. Then the Holy Spirit fills the empty soul with Himself, with His presence. He begins His work of *sanctification* which is His ongoing act of making us holy, making us more like Him.
 - b. The ongoing act of repentance and forgiveness reminds us of our *redemption*, God's work through Jesus in which He rescued us with His blood and brought His presence into our lives by claiming us to be His own.
 - c. In baptism God claims us to be His and His Spirit reassures us that our relationship with the Father has been reestablished by Jesus. We are His and He is ours!
 - d. Your reflections: _____

4. We cannot overlook the gift of the Holy Spirit and His power at work in those who accepted Peter's message and were baptized. The act of converting the hearts of humankind to believe that God made Jesus both Lord and Christ (verse 36) is God's work, the work of faith His Holy Spirit creates in each of us. Recall Ephesians 2:8-9. Your thoughts: _____

MEMORIZATION: The pivotal verse in Acts 2 is verse 38. Write this passage on an index card note the words repent, baptized, forgiveness, and Holy Spirit. Keep these words in mind as you memorize the verse. Now look for opportunities in which you are able to share with others this invitation of God to receive the gift forgiveness through Jesus and the call to live a life generated and empowered by His Holy Spirit.

PRAYER: Spend time in prayer asking God's Spirit to lead you to a life of repentance and gratitude as you receive His forgiveness and the gift of eternal life. _____

LESSON TWO

**IN THE NAME OF
JESUS CHRIST**

ACTS 3 – THE LAME MAN

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INTRODUCTION

The early church developed practices which strengthened and encouraged this new fellowship of believers. They valued the study of God's Word and prayer. They knew that sharing fellowship and meals together made them stronger and enriched their faith as a community. Learn how they gave a strong witness to others as they supported and provided for one another.

The story in this lesson is about Peter and John and the lame beggar they encountered on their way to the temple one day. He wanted what Peter and John did not have, namely money, but they gave him what they did have—the Name of Jesus! Have you ever felt as though you had nothing? Have you ever felt as though what you had wasn't enough? The Name of Jesus was enough for these men. They knew the power of Jesus' Name!

Watch the reaction of the lame beggar as he stands up. Observe the people who saw what had happened to him. Listen as Peter seizes the opportunity to speak of Jesus, the crucified and risen Lord. He calls them to repent and turn away from their sins in order that they might be refreshed by the presence of the Lord.

LESSON 2

Part 1

TEACHING: While Jesus lived here on earth He taught His followers a new way of life. He instilled in them new behaviors, different ways to respond to life, to people and situations. Matthew 5-7 contains Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. In His teaching He shared many new personal and social habits for living that He wanted for His followers. For example, He taught them spiritual habits as they watched Him go off to lonely, quiet places for rest, reflection, and prayer and He taught them new relational habits as He went to eat with sinners, visited with those of questionable moral character, met secretly with church leaders, and recognized those who were physically blind and emotionally possessed. These behaviors or disciplines were countercultural to what they had been taught in the Law by their Jewish rabbis.

But, what would happen to these followers once He left them? Would they revert back to their old habits, their former behaviors, or back to the confines of the Law? Jesus did something that propelled them forward and embedded these habits deeper into their being. He gave them a new identity. Earlier He had told them, "Follow Me." Now, just before He ascended into heaven He told them, "You will be My witnesses." They had followed Jesus and learned His ways and now they would be a reflection of Him to the world. Now they would be what they had been created to be, a reflection of God's image to the world (Genesis 1:27). They were now filled with the Spirit who enabled them to give witness to all that they had seen and heard.

In Acts 2 we learn what some of these new behaviors looked like. How did His followers live after Jesus ascended and after the gift of the Holy Spirit had been given?

ASSIGNMENT: Read Acts 2:42-47. You will notice as you read that words like they, everyone, and all are used throughout this section. These verses describe the early church and how this fellowship of believers lived together in community. What are some of the behaviors or habits they established with one another?

EXERCISE:

1. What four social habits do you notice in verse 42 that aligned them as a fellowship?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

2. What was the reaction of the fellowship as God’s Holy Spirit did many (verse 43) signs and wonders through the apostles? _____
3. The believers lived in community. They shared generously with one another and did all that they could to help anyone in need (verse 44, 45). They held on lightly to their possessions and willingly yielded their goods if others had need. What do you notice about their lifestyle according to these verses? _____

4. Verses 46-47a speak of the worship habits of the believers. They participated in both formal worship within the temple courts and private worship within their homes where they also ate together with _____ and _____ hearts.
5. And verse 47a tells us that they _____ God and had the _____ of all the _____. What do you think would be the anticipated outcome of the facts that “they enjoyed the favor of all the people?” _____
6. Verse 47b reveals the outcome. The Lord added _____

Evangelism, sharing their faith, was one of their daily habits!

Part 2

REFLECTION: The early church had four basic habits:

1. Life was centered in the Word of God with teaching, study, prayer, and sacraments
2. Life was experienced in fellowship, the joy of one another’s presence and the generosity of providing for those in need
3. Life was worship in both large (formal) and intimate (informal) settings
4. Life was the expected and anticipated growth of the fellowship

APPLICATION:

1. What is your reaction to how the early church dealt with their new identity as His witnesses?

2. What habits are particularly intriguing to you? _____

3. What habits might cause you some discomfort? _____

4. What are your observations regarding the behavioral and social (relational) habits of the contemporary church? _____

5. Having been given this new identity as His witness, do you see your habits conflicting with this new identity? Explain. _____

6. What might be done to help align your habits with those of the Lord Christ and with His picture of the authentic church (Acts 2:42-47)? What changes would improve your ability to more accurately reflect God's image to the world? _____

PRAYER: O Lord, by Your Holy Spirit You continue to teach me. I am reminded daily to follow You and by following You I learn Your will and ways to live. You not only want me to follow You but You remind me that I am in mission with You wherever I am. You have washed me clean of all my sin in the blood of the Lamb and have filled me full of Your Holy Spirit in my baptism. Enable me to be an authentic witness of who You are. Forgive and encourage me to be faithful to this new identity, this new calling, and when I fail I ask You to restore me, strengthen and uphold me by Your Spirit to live as a strong witness of Your grace and mercy to others. _____

Part 3

INTRODUCTION: Followers of Jesus watch what Jesus does and learn from Him. The witnesses of Jesus are the embodiment of Jesus and do what Jesus did. In Matthew 28:18 Jesus said that all authority had been given to Him and by His authority He empowered His followers to be His witnesses, making disciples. In Mark 16:17-18 we are told that signs would accompany those who believe, including some gifts of healing, driving out demons, and speaking in new tongues. We need to remember that it is Jesus who heals and now uses us as His agent to heal others. In Acts 3 and 4 we learn the story of the crippled beggar who was healed.

ASSIGNMENT: Read Acts 3:1-10.

- Who are the characters in the story?
- What took place?
- What was the response of the people?

EXERCISE:

1. Who are the two disciples (verse 1)? _____ and _____
2. Where were they going? _____
3. Why were they going? _____
4. What time of the day was it? _____
5. We are told some very specific things in verse 2:
 - a. What are we told about this man? _____
 - b. Where was he carried? _____
 - c. What was the name of the gate? _____

If you have a map, locate the gate and where it is in relationship to the courts of the women and Gentiles on the east side of the temple. The gate opened into the Court of Women and apparently was the main temple entrance. The gates were impressive, made of Corinthian brass and stood at an impressive height.

- d. We can assume that he was brought daily to the gate by family and friends. Why was he put there? _____
6. He saw Peter and John. What did he ask them (verse 3)? _____
 7. What was the response of Peter and John (verse 4)? _____
 8. And then, what did Peter say to him? _____
 9. What did the man do (verse 5) _____ Why? _____
 10. Instead, what did Peter tell him (verse 6)? _____
 11. Peter took his right hand to help him up and “_____ his _____ and _____ were made _____.”
 12. What are we told the man did in verse 8a? _____
- How did he enter the temple courts with Peter and John (verse 8b)? _____

13. When all the people saw him...
- What was he doing (verse 9)? _____
 - Verse 10: They _____ him.
 - How did they know him? _____
 - And they were filled with _____ and _____ at what had _____ to him.

Part 4

REFLECTION:

- Peter and John were certainly not strangers to the temple and the Gate Beautiful since this was the primary entrance into the courtyard. They had most likely encountered this crippled man before since he had been brought every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. But, today was different. We are told that when he asked them for money that Peter looked straight at him. Peter and John did not pass by him as though he was just another beggar at the gate. Instead, they stopped and we are told they looked him in the eye. We can surmise that the beggar was looking ahead for the next passerby giving little to no attention to Peter and John. The gentleman might even have been a little annoyed at these two strangers blocking him from the view of other. But, Peter and John stopped, looked him in the eye, and said, "Look at us!" It's as though Peter was saying, "Notice us! We've stopped. You are somebody. You are not just a part of the entrance décor. You are a man." So the man stops scanning the passing crowd. He gives them his attention.
- We're told that the man expected to get something from them. What must have gone through the man's mind when the first words out of Peter's mouth are, "I have no silver and gold ...?" Did the man think something like: "That's just fine; just keep moving along. It's just the nature of my job. Some have money to give and some don't. I just keep asking."
- Then Peter goes on to say, "...but what I do have I give to you." Did that perk the man's interest? What did Peter have to give him? "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." No more does Peter get the words out of his mouth and He's helping the man stand up! Instantly strength comes to the crippled man's feet and ankles. He jumps up and walks! Peter only had the name of Jesus but the name of Jesus was all the man needed! Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Peter acted. By faith in Jesus' name Peter took the crippled man's hand and helped him stand up. The power that the Holy Spirit had given to Peter, Peter used and the man was healed.
- The response of the man was to worship and praise God. For the first time he walked into the temple courts. He walked with Peter and John giving praise to God. Never before had he been

able to go without being carried. This time his life was a testimony of God's power at work through the lives of His witnesses Peter and John.

5. The people recognized him as the man who begged by the gate. Now he was walking and leaping and praising God. We are told that they were amazed and filled with wonder at what had happened to him. Considering his life in bondage as a cripple, what had just happened? Your thoughts: _____

INTRODUCTION: Peter notices that a crowd is running to him and John. The people are astonished at what had happened and Peter saw this as an opportunity to speak of Jesus, the one who healed this crippled man.

ASSIGNMENT: Read Acts 3:11-20.

EXERCISE:

1. Peter begins by asking two questions (verse 12):
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
2. The man was healed by the name of Jesus. Who does Peter say glorified Jesus (verse 13)?

3. What did Peter tell the people that they (the people) had done (verses 13b-15a)?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
4. What did Peter tell the people that God had done (verse 15b)? _____

Then Peter says, "To this we are _____."

5. Peter goes on to explain further in verse 16: "By _____ in the His Name has made this man strong whom you _____ and _____, and the faith that is through _____ has the _____ this perfect. In the presence of you all.
6. Peter continues his exhortation to these men of Israel making reference to the prophets who foretold the coming of Christ, the one who would suffer and die. Then in verse 19 Peter calls

them to _____ that your _____ may be _____
out.

7. In verse 25 Peter reminds them that they are heirs of the covenant promised to their fathers just as God had promised Abraham, “And in your _____ shall all the _____ on _____ be _____.”
8. Then Peter spoke of Jesus, the one whom God _____ up. He was sent first to Israel to bless you by _____ every one of you _____ (repenting) your wickedness (verse 26).

LESSON THREE

NO OTHER NAME

ACTS 4 – UNEDUCATED, COMMON, AND WITH JESUS

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INTRODUCTION

Peter and John's message greatly annoyed some people who had them arrested. We can't help but stand in amazement as we listen to their bold testimony before some of the very same people who had Jesus arrested and crucified after His bogus trial. Would the same thing happen to them? Did they hesitate to speak? Luke tells us they were "filled with the Holy Spirit" and spoke of the things that had happened, namely that by the Name of Jesus the lame man walked.

Did they speak timidly? Did they hesitate to speak of the things they had seen and heard? What was the reaction of those who listened to them? What did the members of the Sanhedrin observe about them? When forbidden to speak or teach about the Name of Jesus, what was their response?

Once released, they returned to give a report to their friends. Imagine hearing their story as they acknowledged the awesome privilege of being Jesus' witnesses. Now sit quietly and pray with them. Consider all they prayed and listen closely as they acknowledge before the Lord that the rulers of the people were not fighting against them but against the Lord and against His Anointed One, Jesus!

LESSON 3

Part 1

INTRODUCTION: In his message Peter used the word of the prophets like Moses, Samuel, and Abraham to foretell the coming of Christ, the Messiah, and to foretell that God would raise Him from the dead. Peter's message went along just fine until he spoke of the Messiah's resurrection from the dead. The Sadducees were a Jewish sect that did not believe in the resurrection of the dead.

ASSIGNMENT: Read Acts 4:1-22

EXERCISE:

1. Who came up to Peter and John while they were speaking (verse 1)? _____

2. What had them greatly annoyed (verse 2)? _____

3. What did they do to Peter and John (verse 3)? _____
4. In spite of their arrest, what happened (verse 4)? _____

5. Who did Peter and John stand before the next day (verses 5-6)? _____

Do some of these names sound familiar from Jesus' trial?

6. What did these men want to know (verse 7)? _____

7. Peter was filled with the _____ (verse 8) and said that if you want to know why kindness was shown to a crippled man and are asking how he was healed then know this... What did he declare to those accusing them (verse 10)? It is by the _____ of _____ of Nazareth, whom you _____, whom God _____ from the _____, that this man is standing before you _____.
8. In verse 12 Peter declares that there is _____ in no one else! What does he go on to say? _____

9. What did the courtroom see in Peter and John (verse 13)? _____

10. What astonished them about these two men? _____
11. What else did they notice? _____
12. The crippled man who was healed was standing with Peter and John. What could they say? So, they ordered them withdrawn from the court (Sanhedrin) and they _____ together (verse 15).
13. What was their concern (verse 16)? _____
14. What was the problem?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
15. What was their solution (verse 17)? _____

16. They called Peter and John back in the room. What did they command them (verse 18)?

17. What was Peter and John's response to their command (especially verse 20)? _____

18. The court threatened them again and _____ (verse 21).
19. What couldn't they figure out? _____
20. What was causing them a problem? _____
21. What are we told about the crippled man who was healed (verse 22)? _____

MEMORIZATION: Acts 4:12 is a verse that speaks profoundly to modern society. People have created countless ways in which they believe they will be saved. Some believe it is by good works. Some believe it is because of the faith of their ancestors. Others believe that they are saved by their own goodness. Regardless of what someone might think about how they will be saved, Acts 4:12 declares the truth according to what God says, "There is _____ in no one else, for there is no other _____ under _____ given among men by which we must be _____." We are saved only by the name of Jesus! Write this passage on another index card. Note on the back of the card different things you observe about people that tell you the way they believe they will be saved. Remember, salvation comes only through Jesus!

Part 2

REFLECTION:

1. This is far more than an interesting story when we consider that only a few weeks before Jesus had been crucified by the same religious leaders that had Peter and John arrested. Peter preached

boldly to those who had gathered and were astonished by what had just happened as the crowd was entering the temple that afternoon. The crippled man was healed! Not only was he healed but he was walking, jumping around, and praising God making quite a spectacle of himself. Peter and John didn't try to quiet him but rather found the opportunity once again to speak about Jesus of Nazareth, the one their leaders handed over, disowned, and killed but the one whom God raised from the dead. Peter stressed that it was faith that comes from Jesus and that in the name of Jesus this man was given complete healing.

2. Everything seemed to be going along just fine until the priests, the captain of the temple guard (Luke 22:52) and the Sadducees arrested Peter and John. Why did they arrest them? Peter and John were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. Remember, this same group who immediately after Jesus rose from the dead had been the ones to pay off the guards with hush money so the rumor might be spread that Jesus' disciples had taken His body while they were asleep (Matthew 28:13). Also, remember that the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection.
3. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead causes a reaction in people. What was Peter preaching and what was the reaction of the people in Acts 2:32, 37? _____

4. What was Peter preaching in Acts 3:15 and what was the reaction in Acts 4:2? _____

APPLICATION QUESTIONS: The Bible teaches us about Jesus' resurrection from the dead. In Romans 10:9 we are told: If you _____ with your _____, that _____ is _____, and _____ in your _____ that God _____ Him from the _____, you will be _____.

1. What is your reaction to this teaching? _____

2. What does His resurrection mean for your life now and for your own resurrection that is to come? _____

TEACHING: Admittedly, many in our world do not believe in the resurrection, certainly not in Jesus' resurrection and therefore have no hope for their own. St. Paul talks about what it would mean if Jesus had not been raised from the dead. Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-22.

1. If there was no resurrection, then what does it say about Christ (verse 13)? _____

2. What then does St. Paul say about his preaching and our faith (verse 14)? _____

3. Paul intensifies the argument. What does that say about us (verse 15)? _____

4. According to verses 16 and 17 what does it say about our faith? _____

5. In verse 18 Paul speaks about those who have already died. What about them? _____

6. Finally, Paul says that if we only believe that Christ is for this life only, then what about us (verse 19)? _____
7. Verse 20 starts out with a big little word, _____! What is the truth that Paul writes?
“But in fact _____ has been _____ from the
_____... For as by a man came _____, by a man has come
also the resurrection of the _____. For as in _____ all _____,
so also in _____ shall all be made _____.”

Part 3

REFLECTION (continued): Let’s return to the courtroom where Peter and John are standing as the accused before the Sanhedrin.

1. Verse 13 helps us to keep things in perspective. Those Peter and John faced were learned men. They were scholars of the Old Testament Scriptures. They knew the Law and had it memorized. They even added a few laws of their own which gave them the appearance of being more religious than others. They prided themselves in who they were because they had disciplined themselves and kept the letter of the law. Now they have standing in front of them two men who demonstrated extraordinary courage, courage that was visible to those assembled. In verse 8 and following Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, makes bold and profound statements. He was not intimidated by their position, power, or knowledge. He testified to what He knew and believed. He was “My witness” as Jesus had declared Him to be (Acts 1:8). Such courage came from some other source because these accusers realized that they were _____, _____ men (Acts 4:13). Being referred to as uneducated (unschooled) and common (ordinary) were disparaging words they used to describe Peter and John.

2. The next thing that astonished the courtroom attendees was they noticed that these men, Peter and John, had been with _____ (verse 13). Who recognized them? Was it the woman who accused Peter when he was warming himself by the fire in the courtyard when he ended up denying His Lord? Was it Malchus the one whose ear Peter cut off? Was it the temple guard or the chief priests or the Pharisees who made Jesus' arrest in the Garden when Peter and John were present? We can know that neither the woman nor Malchus were present in this room and we don't know who recognized the men but we can know what they said about them: "These men _____."

APPLICATION QUESTION: Once people have encountered you, would they say the same thing they said about Peter and John, that they "had been with Jesus?" Your thoughts: _____

REFLECTIONS (continued):

1. Once again the Sanhedrin and all who were gathered didn't know what to do with these followers of Jesus. "What are we going to do with these men?" Remember, earlier during Jesus' trial they didn't know what to do with Him either so they handed Him over and over and over again. He was brought to Annas and Caiaphas, then handed over to Pilate, then handed to Herod, then handed back to Pilate, and then handed over to the crowd. Was this what was going to happen to Peter and John? What was the problem (verse 14, 16)? _____
2. It's almost comical. They thought they could stop the spreading news of the miracle. Then they thought they could stop the spreading of the name of Jesus by warning these men to speak no longer to anyone in this Name! So they commanded Peter and John not to speak or teach at all in His Name. Once again the boldness and courage of Peter and John were manifested. What did they reply (verse 20)? _____

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. If you had been Peter and John would you have stopped speaking? _____
2. Have people ever contemplated what they were going to do with you because they needed to stop this "Jesus-thing" from spreading any further? _____

3. What would keep you quiet? Is something already keeping you from speaking out about what you have seen and heard? _____

Part 4

INTRODUCTION: We cannot leave this story without looking at what happens next. The men are released because the court could not decide how to punish them and that was because all the people were praising God for what had happened (Acts 4:21-22). So, where did Peter and John go? What happened to them?

ASSIGNMENT: Read Acts 4:23-41.

EXERCISE:

1. In verse 23 we find Peter and John returning to _____
and they _____ all they had been told by the priests and elders.
2. What was the response of the people to all that they reported (verse 24)? _____

3. First came the report and then came the prayers.
 - a. They acknowledged their Creator: _____
 - b. They knew from their forefather David that the persecution was against _____
_____ (verse 26b).
 - c. They recalled what had happened by those who conspired against Jesus. What did they recognize (verse 28)? _____

4. What was their prayer in verse 29 and 30? _____

5. God affirmed His presence in their midst in an unusual way. What are we told happened after they prayed (verse 31)? _____

APPLICATION:

1. What do I have to report? _____
2. With whom am I sharing my report? _____
3. Who is praying with me about my report? _____
4. What is our prayer for God’s mission as we go forth? _____

PRAYER: O Father, You made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and you made everything in them. You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of Your servants, the holy writers of all Scripture. Through Your Word, You have revealed that persecution was against Jesus, against the Lord and against His Anointed One. People conspired against Your holy servant Jesus whom You anointed, yet they did what Your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable me Your servant to speak Your Word with great boldness. Stretch out Your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.

TEACHING: This prayer that was written for you is an example of prayer in which we use God’s Word and pray His Word back to Him. This prayer used the prayer of the early church when Peter and John returned to them. The same words apply to our lives. They acknowledged who God was as their Sovereign Lord and Creator of all. They remembered the words spoken by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of their forefather David. He spoke of the persecution that was against Jesus, the Anointed One, the Messiah. They recalled the action of those who conspired against Him and these were the same people who were now conspiring against them. Their prayer was that they speak with great boldness and asked that God would stretch out His hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the Name of Jesus.

You are encouraged to make this your daily prayer asking that God would enable you to speak with great boldness and ask that by whatever means that God would stretch out His hand to “heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the Name of Your holy servant Jesus.

LESSON FOUR

GO, STAND, AND SPEAK

STORIES FROM ACTS 4 AND 5 – COURAGEOUS OBEDIENCE

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INTRODUCTION

In Lesson 4 we observe the unity of the early church believers. Their unity was expressed in the way they lived their lives. Acts 4 shares how eager they were to be of one heart and mind. They regarded the things that they had for the well-being and common good of all. Their life together was community. As you study verses 32-37 consider how the church of the 21st Century models unity and expresses itself as a witnessing community.

Why were Ananias and Sapphira dealt with so harshly? Why was it necessary? What trouble would their actions bring on the community that was just beginning to figure out life as “My witnesses?” How would such deceitful conduct threaten and corrupt this early church?

And, one can’t help but ask, “Won’t they ever learn?” The apostles have been arrested again and are standing before the council and ruling leaders. Yes, it would be safer to hide rather than boldly and courageously speak up in the temple courts. One can’t help but recall the words of Jesus when He said in the presence of His disciples, “If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it (Matthew 16:24-25).”

LESSON 4

Part 1

INTRODUCTION: In Lesson 2, Part 1 we looked at some of the habits of the early church found in Acts 2:42-47. Before we move on to more stories from the Book of Acts, St. Luke shares with us a few more habits the church developed as the believers lived together in community as witnesses of the resurrected and ascended Lord.

ASSIGNMENT: Read Acts 4:32-36.

EXERCISE:

1. What are we told about the believers in verse 32a? _____
2. How did this unity of heart and mind express itself (verse 32b)? _____

3. Resurrection talk caused the religious leaders difficulty. This resulted in Peter and John's arrest and they were warned not to teach or speak at all in the Name of Jesus (Acts 4:18). What are we told in verse 33? _____

Not only did they continue to testify about the resurrection of Jesus but we are told that they did it with _____ !

4. What had they told the religious leaders in verse 20? _____

They kept their word!
5. God's presence was evident. His _____ was poured out on them all (verse 33b).
6. We have learned about the unity of the early church and their generosity with their possessions. We also learned of their ongoing witness as they testified to the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. God's grace was on all of them. Verses 34 and 35 tell us more about the characteristics and habits of the early church. What are we told? _____

7. Then in verse 36-37 we are given an example of one person in particular. Who was it? _____

What are we told about him? _____

APPLICATION:

1. What must it have been like to have unity and oneness among all the believers? Strife and division all too often are the habitual behavior among God’s people. Unity is as attractive as division is abhorrent. What has been your experience with unity? What have you found to be so attractive about those who are one in heart and mind? Consider the behaviors that bring unity to:
 - a. the marriage _____
 - b. the family _____
 - c. the office/work place _____
 - d. the church _____
2. How might you be a Barnabas, one who offers support and encouragement to others through the gifts of your possessions, especially giving to the needy of those who belong to the fellowship of believers where you live? _____

Part 2

ASSIGNMENT: Read Acts 5:1-11, the story of Ananias and Sapphira. Barnabas is the example of one who was one in mind and heart with the believers. This next story is an example of a couple who chose to deceive the believers.

EXERCISE:

1. What did Ananias and Sapphira do (verse 1)? _____
2. What did Ananias do with the money (verse 2)? _____

3. What did Sapphira know about the sale of the property, keeping some of the money, and bringing the rest to the apostles (verses 2-3)? _____

4. In verse 3 Peter calls Ananias to account for what he has done.
 - a. Who had filled his heart? _____
 - b. What did this cause him to do? _____
 - c. He not only lied but what else did he do? _____
5. Peter did not accuse him because he owned the land. He did not accuse him of possessing the money that was his when he sold the property. What was his lie? What made Peter say, “Why is it that you contrived this deed in your _____? You have not _____ to

_____ but to _____ (verse 4)”? What did Ananias do? _____

6. What happened to Ananias (verse 5a)? _____

7. What happened to all who heard about him (verse 5b)? _____

8. Ananias was carried out and buried (verse 6). What happened about three hours later (verse 7)? _____

9. What did Peter ask her (verse 8)? _____

10. And, she replied: _____

11. Then Peter asked her, “How is it that you have agreed together to _____ the Spirit of the Lord?”

12. Then what did he tell her (verse 9b)? _____

13. At that moment (verse 10a) _____

Then the young men (verse 10b) _____

14. What are we told about the church and all who heard about what happened (verse 11)? _____

REFLECTION: This is the first recorded story of an offensive sin that was done within the early church. Ananias and Sapphira knowingly and willfully lied to the Church and to God. They gave the impression that all of the money they received from the sale of their property they gave to the disciples to disperse to those in need. Death may seem like such a severe punishment.

1. Consider why it was crucial that the sin was dealt with and dealt with severely: _____

2. What made the sin of deceit so catastrophic for the Church? _____

PRAYER: O Lord, I share the same propensity to sin with Ananias and Sapphira. I, too, want to appear good even though I know that within my flesh dwells no good thing. I even have to admit that I want to make a good impression on others even if it means I have to lie and put up a false front. Lord, forgive me. Enable me to understand and believe that You alone make me look good. You alone cleanse me from all of my secret faults. You alone create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me. Empower me to believe that Your goodness is all that I need to stand boldly and confidently before my Heavenly Father. _____

Part 3

TEACHING: In Acts 5:12-16 we learn more about the habits established by the early church.

1. We are told in verse 12 that the apostles _____

2. We are also told in verse 13 that all the believers used to _____
but they were highly regarded by the people as you can imagine when the others heard about
Ananias and Sapphira.
3. Verse 14 tells us that _____

4. Then we read something new. What are we told in verse 15? _____

5. The sick and those tormented by evil spirits were brought to the apostles and _____
_____ (verse 16).
6. What have you learned about the habits of the church with regards to healing the sick? _____

7. What are we beginning to see as we read in verse 16 that crowds gathered also from towns around
Jerusalem? _____

INTRODUCTION: But we observe in the next story that trouble is beginning to stir. The high priest and all who were with him were filled with _____. Isn't that interesting? In Acts 4:8 and verse 31, for example, we read that Peter and all were filled with the _____. Those filled with jealousy were making arrests in order to hush the apostles. Those filled with the Holy Spirit spoke the Word of God boldly!

ASSIGNMENT: Read Acts 5:17-42

EXERCISE:

1. The apostles were arrested and put in jail. What happened during the night (verses 19-20)? _____

2. So, what did the apostles do (verse 21)? _____

3. Meanwhile, who were all those gathering together (verse 21b)? _____

4. They sent for the apostles. What did the officers find (verse 22)? _____

5. What did they report (verse 23)? _____

6. What was the reaction of the religious leaders (verse 24)? _____

From a human perspective the jail was securely locked with guards standing at the doors. But, when the doors were opened they found no one inside (verse 23).

7. Everyone was puzzled and wondered what would come of this. To make everything more complicated someone came in to report where the apostles were who had been arrested. Where were they (verse 25)? _____
8. What were they doing? _____
9. So, the captain and his officers brought the apostles. What are we told about their arrest in verse 26? _____

Part 4

REFLECTION:

1. This is a strange little turn of events, or is it? It appears as though these religious men are now afraid of the people. Is this the way it has always been? What are we told in the following references:
 - a. Luke 22:2 _____
 - b. Mark 11:18 _____
 - c. Matthew 26:4-5 _____
2. From a human standpoint, the apostles were the ones who should be afraid. They are the ones who were in jail by order of the same people who crucified Jesus. Instead, they are given the command to “Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life (Acts 5:20).” And, they do just that! Once again we see how the Spirit emboldens them. At daybreak they are back at the temple courts teaching the people. How do you explain their boldness and courage? Weren’t these the same men who were locked in the upper room “for fear of the _____ (John 20:19)?” What has happened to them? _____

EXERCISE:

1. The apostles were brought before the council (verse 27). What were their accusations (verse 28)?

2. What was Peter's reply (verse 29)? _____
3. Peter continues and what does he bring up again in verse 30? _____
4. Because of His resurrection what did Jesus provide (verse 31)? _____

5. Who gives witness to these things (verse 32)? _____
and _____
6. We are told that when they heard this that they were _____ and
wanted to _____
7. Who was Gamaliel? _____
8. Gamaliel reasons with the court. In your own words, what does he say (verses 35-39)? _____

9. Those who heard him speak took _____ (verse 39). What did they do
next? _____
10. What was the response of the apostles (verses 41-42)?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____

APPLICATION:

1. They rejoiced in their suffering and they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the Good News that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah. To what extent am I willing to suffer as the apostles did for the sake of the Gospel? To what extent am I willing to never stop boldly teaching and proclaiming the Good News of Jesus regardless of the risk? _____

2. Do I believe the angel has delivered me and given me the command to "Go, stand in the temple courts and tell the people the full message of this new life?" What might be the temple courts in which I am to stand and share Jesus? _____

PRAYER: O Lord Jesus, thank you for empowering Your apostles to live as Your bold and courageous witnesses. They obeyed You rather than men. They were compelled to speak of all the things that they had seen and heard. They were not afraid of imprisonment, suffering, or persecution but rather obeyed You and were found once again standing in the temple courts and teaching the people the full message of this new life. May I be faithful to You and delight to walk in Your ways. May I be courageously obedient to You in order that my life gives testimony to You and to Your great love for all humankind regardless of the cost. Empower me with boldness and courage to speak of the things I have seen and heard. _____

LESSON FIVE

A MAN FULL OF FAITH

ACTS 6-8 – STEPHEN, THE MARTYR

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INTRODUCTION

The early church had become burdened with social ministry needs. The disciples determined the qualifications for serving in this area. Thoughtfully consider their list of requirements. Write them down and attempt to determine why would they choose the things they did for those ministering to the cares and needs of others? What might be the qualifications that would be on your list? Are the lists similar?

Stephen was chosen and doing wonderful work but soon came under the critical attention of others. To what extremes were they willing to go in order to do away with Stephen? Whose trial might you recall as you consider Stephen's? It's interesting that when questioned by the council, he regarded this as an opportunity to testify to Jesus Christ.

St Peter reminds us to "always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you (1 Peter 3:15)." Listen attentively as Stephen makes his defense before his accusers. He reviewed Jewish history and then culminated his testimony with the words, "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit." With this bold accusation they rushed him, cast him out of the city, and stoned him to death.

LESSON 5

Part 1

INTRODUCTION: In this next story we are going to see the church at work. Christianity is not just a personal one-on-one with God. The Christian also becomes part of a community, a community of believers. The love God pours into us flows through us to meet the needs of others. This is the church in action as a community, a Christian community. See the church at work in Acts 6.

ASSIGNMENT: Read Acts 6:1-7.

EXERCISE:

1. What problem had developed according to verse 1? _____

2. The Twelve apostles gathered together all the disciples and discussed the problem:

a. What did the Twelve believe their responsibility was (verse 2)? _____

Note the different work or ministry of those who were a part of the church. The apostles were involved in the pastoral work, “the ministry of the word of God.” The Word goes hand in hand with the social work so they needed to identify those involved in the social work, the social work of “the waiting of tables.” Both are significant. Both are callings. Each utilizes different gifts.

b. The responsibility was given to the disciples to choose _____
from _____(verse 3). For what were these men to be
known?

i. _____

ii. _____

c. The apostles would give their attention to _____
and _____

3. In verse 5 we are given the list of those chosen. The first one mentioned that they chose was

_____ How was he described? _____

4. These men were presented to the _____. Then what are we told in verse 6?

5. What was the result of the action that was taken (verse 7)?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

REFLECTION: We often minimize the gifts that we have and consider the calling of service to be nothing important. In this story it is made very clear that both the Word and the work of caring for others, in whatever capacity, are vital for the Gospel to be spread and for an increase in numbers of those who become disciples. God wants to use everyone's ministry calling for the growth and outreach of His Kingdom on earth. He utilizes us as His witnesses!

It should be noted that the apostles were sensitive to the culture. The Greek-speaking widows needed help. The apostles appointed Greek-speaking men to be the deacons. They were sensitive to the practices and culture of those they served.

Question: What might we learn from this regarding the fact that God uses each of us with our background to effectively serve others? _____

APPLICATION:

1. What insight does this give to me as I consider my own ministry to others? _____

2. Do I regard my ministry calling as my work? Do I live proactively believing that I am His witness and that He uses me to spread and expand His Kingdom? _____

3. What changes might be necessary for me as I consider...

a. my work? _____

b. my attitudes? _____

c. my gifts, talents, abilities, interests? _____

d. my relationships? _____

REFLECTION: Reflect for a moment on the results (verse 7) of the action of these early disciples. Reflect on what God did through Stephen and the others. The leaders were looking at the reputations and godly character of those who were chosen for the work. They were to be known as men full of the Spirit

and wisdom. Stephen, specifically, had the reputation of being a man full of faith and full of the Holy Spirit.

APPLICATION:

1. What do people know about me? What is my reputation in my neighborhood, my office, and other places that I frequent? What would others say about my character? Would they say that I am full of faith and full of the Holy Spirit? _____

2. Does my reputation reflect God's character or are there some changes I want God's Spirit to make in me? What might one change be? _____

Part 2

ASSIGNMENT: Stephen's story continues. Read Acts 6:8-15.

EXERCISE:

1. We learn significantly more about Stephen in verse 8. What are we told about him? _____

2. Not surprisingly, some _____ up and _____ with Stephen (verse 9). But what are we told in verse 10? _____
3. When they realized that their arguments didn't work what did they do next (verse 11)?

Do these arguments sound familiar? See Matthew 26:59-61.

4. What was the result of the false testimonies (verse 12)?
 - a. Verse 12: _____
 - b. Verse 12: _____
 - c. Verse 13: _____

Note: The holy place, or the temple, and the Law also referred to as the customs of Moses, were two of the most sacred possessions of the Jews and their religious leaders.

5. It is interesting to read that those present in the Sanhedrin noticed Stephen's face (verse 15):

INTRODUCTION: In Acts 7:2-53 Stephen addresses the Sanhedrin who has accused him of blasphemy and now the high priest asks him, “Are these charges true (verse 1)?” Stephen realizes that he has an opportunity to give witness to his accusers concerning Jesus. Take a look at his sermon outline and see God at work as Stephen tells Israel’s history from Abraham to Jesus. God is a God on the move; our God is out to seek and save; our God moved Abraham to Canaan and Moses to the Promised Land. He is a sending God who sent the prophets and sent His Son and now sends us. This will be a review of your previous units of study!

ASSIGNMENT: Read Acts 7:2-53.

EXERCISE: Verses 2-8

1. Who is the primary character in this section? _____
2. What was God’s command in verse 3? _____
3. Where did God send him (verse 4)? _____
4. What did God promise (verse 5)? _____
5. What did God foretell (verses 6-7)? _____
6. What was the covenant God made with Abraham (verse 8)? _____
7. Let’s review (verse 8).
 - a. Who is his son? _____
 - b. Who is his grandson? _____
 - c. Who were his great-grandsons? _____

EXERCISE: Verses 9-19

1. Who is the primary character in this reading? _____
2. How did God manifest Himself to Joseph (verse 10) _____

3. What happened because of the famine (verses 11-16)? _____

4. Another king became ruler in Egypt. This Pharaoh did not know Joseph (verse 18-19). What are we told about him? _____

EXERCISE: Verses 20-29

1. Who is the primary character (verse 20)? _____

2. What are we told about his life as a child (verses 20-22)? _____

3. What was Moses' faulty assumption in verses 23-25 and why did he flee Egypt (verses 26-28)?

4. (Verse 29) After Moses killed a man he fled to Midian where he lived as a _____.

Part 3

EXERCISE CONTINUED: Verses 30-37

1. After 40 years in Midian what happened to Moses while tending his sheep (verse 30ff)?

2. God had seen the oppression done to His people and had heard their cries. What did He intend to do (verse 34)? _____
3. What does God intend for Moses to do? _____
4. Moses was sent to be Israel's _____ and _____ by the _____ of an angel who appeared in the burning bush (verse 35b).
5. We are told that Moses led the people out and performed _____ and _____ (verse 36).
6. Moses told the people that God would raise up a _____ like me from your _____ (verse 37).

EXERCISE: Verses 38-43

1. In spite of the "living words" Moses received to pass on to the people (verse 38) how did their fathers respond (verses 39-42)?
 - a. _____ to obey.
 - b. But _____ Him aside.
 - c. In their hearts they _____ to Egypt.
2. What did they worship (verses 40-41)? _____
3. What was God's response (verse 42)? _____

4. God chose to send the people into _____ beyond _____ (verse 43).

EXERCISE: Verses 44-50

1. These verses talk about the _____ that remained with them in the desert. It was brought with them under _____ leadership.
2. What did David ask of God (verse 46)? _____
3. Who actually built the house, the temple (verse 47)? _____

Note: The implication of Stephen’s words was that the Jewish leaders attached themselves to a place, specifically to the temple, but not to God. They did not trust the One who delivered their forefathers but rather trusted both their laws and practices connected to the temple. God certainly could not be confined there! Jesus said that those who truly worship God will worship Him in “Spirit and in truth (John 4:24).” His words cut through to the Jewish leaders’ hearts and revealed their idolatry. They were being called to repentance which they vehemently resented.

EXERCISE: Verses 51-53

1. What does Stephen say about those accusing him (verses 51-53)? _____

2. They said they revered the law. It was sacred to them. Yet what are we told in verse 53?

ASSIGNMENT: Read Acts 7:54-8:1.

EXERCISE:

1. What was the response of the high priest and the others to what Stephen had said (verse 54)?

2. What about Stephen? What had caught his attention (verses 55-56)? _____

3. What are we told in verses 57-58b)? _____

4. One wonders if Stephen had been present at Jesus’ crucifixion. What words did he say as he was being stoned (verses 59-60)? _____

Recall Jesus’ words on the cross. See also Psalm 31:5. _____

Part 4

REFLECTION:

1. Stephen died as the first martyr of the faith. He was a man full of God’s grace and power (Acts 6:8). Those who opposed him couldn’t stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke (Acts 6:10). Regardless of all that we read about him, he died, stoned to death by those whom he declared guilty of killing the Messiah, the Christ, the Righteous One (Acts 7:52). Your thoughts: _____

2. What was the battle that was going on? What was the war that was raging between those who were the members of the Synagogue, the elders and the teachers of the law and against Stephen? What was the issue according to Acts 7:51? “You _____!
_____!”
Stephen “full of the Holy Spirit” looked up and saw _____
_____ (Acts 7:55).
A life filled with the Holy Spirit sees Jesus and recognizes Him to be the Living Lord. A life that resists the Holy Spirit is dead for the Spirit gives _____ (2 Corinthians 3:6)! Read John 6:63-65. Write out verse 63: _____

APPLICATION:

1. Would it be said of me that I am stiff-necked and stubborn with uncircumcised heart and ears? Would it be said of me that I always resist the Holy Spirit? Or, would it be said of me that I have welcomed Him to live in me and that He has made my heart receptive to letting Him have His way with me? What would I say of myself? _____

2. The Spirit works faith in me and enables me to believe in Jesus as my Lord and Savior. When has His Spirit empowered me to be His witness to others even though my witness was resisted and disregarded as foolish? _____

INTRODUCTION: In the first verse of Acts 8 we are told that a great _____ broke out against the _____ in Jerusalem and people _____ throughout _____ and _____. Recall the words of Jesus in Acts 1:8. His

witnesses were now expanding their outreach and sphere of influence beyond Jerusalem. In Acts 8:4 we are told something about those who were scattered: _____

These people had a story to tell and they told it wherever they went!

In this lesson we will become acquainted with a man named Philip. This Philip is not one of Jesus' twelve disciples but is rather one of the seven deacons (Acts 6:5) who served the apostles caring for the widows with the daily distribution of food (Acts 6:1). He was one who was reputed to be of _____, _____ and of _____ (Acts 6:3).

ASSIGNMENT: Read Acts 8:4-8.

EXERCISE:

1. One of those who was scattered was _____. He went down to a town in _____. Locate this region on a map in the back of your Bible. You may recall that Samaria was located between Galilee to the north in the land of Israel and Judea to the south. We are not told the name of the town in Samaria where Philip was. Remember that Jesus said His witnesses would begin in Jerusalem and then move on to Samaria (Acts 1:8).
2. What did Philip do in Samaria (verse 5)? _____
In Samaria Philip makes a public proclamation of the Gospel. We are told he was in a city and that crowds heard him proclaim the Christ, the Messiah.
3. What was the reaction of the crowd to what Philip said and did (verse 6)? _____

4. What were a couple of the miraculous signs he did (verse 7)?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
5. What was the response of the people to the Word and the healings (verse 8)? _____

Part 5

TEACHING: We are told in Acts 8:9-13 about a man named Simon. Simon practiced sorcery or magic and amazed all the people so the people believed that he was the “divine power known as the Great Power.” The people continued to follow him because they were amazed with his magic. However, along came Philip who preached the Good News of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. The people believed him and were baptized. We are told that even Simon believed and was baptized. He was astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw. We learn later in the chapter that Simon was intrigued

by what he observed and offered money in order that he might purchase the ability to give the Spirit to those on whom he laid his hands. Peter and John had come from Jerusalem to Samaria. What did Peter tell Simon (verses 20-23)?

1. Verse 20: _____
2. Verse 21: _____
3. Verse 22: _____
4. Verse 23: _____

What was Simon's response (verse 24)? _____

REFLECTION:

1. We dare not move on without understanding what was going on with Simon. Simon practiced sorcery. He used sorcery and magic to make a name for himself. He boasted that he was someone great. He thrived on the accolades of the people who gave him their attention and exclaimed, "This man is the divine power known as the Great Power." He was doing fine until Philip came to his town preaching the Gospel and performing many miraculous signs. Simon's intent was to add the powers given to Philip and Peter to his repertoire of tricks and told Peter in no uncertain terms that he wanted to receive the gift in exchange for money. Peter tells Simon vehemently that the gift of God cannot be bought. Peter discerned that Simon had a heart problem. His heart was not right before God. He then called him to repent.
2. What has been your experience with sorcery and magic? _____

3. Was Peter too harsh with Simon? How did Peter and John regard the laying on of hands?

4. From Simon's perspective how did he regard the laying on of hands? _____

THOUGHT QUESTION: What place does the practice of sorcery have in the life of one filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom? _____

LESSON SIX

GO!

ACTS 8-9 – PHILIP, THE EUNUCH, AND SAUL

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INTRODUCTION

“Go!” What a small but powerful word! Go into the whole world. Go make disciples. Go toward the south to Gaza. Go over and join the chariot. Go to the street called Straight. Go, for he is My chosen instrument. Go! Jesus had told His disciples, “As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you.” He could have added, “Now, go!”

Our assignments and journeys become similar. Jesus was sent by the Father to make disciples, to meet people along the way—like when He was passing through Jericho, or while He had to go through Samaria—and to be His chosen instrument for bringing salvation to all.

As you work through this lesson consider what it means for your life that He also says to you, “Go!” Am I listening to my Shepherd’s voice and responding with, “Here am I! Send me! Send me!”? Philip ran to the chariot grateful for the opportunity connect someone to Jesus. The eunuch went on his way rejoicing because he was a forgiven child of God. And Saul was converted, given his sight, and commissioned to “Go!” in response to God’s call through Ananias.

As you study, listen and hear your Shepherd’s voice when He says, “As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you.”

LESSON 6

Part 1

ASSIGNMENT: Read Acts 8:26-40.

EXERCISE:

1. Where was Philip's next assignment (verse 26)? _____

2. Philip was sent. He was told by an angel of the Lord to go! So, he started out. Philip obeyed. The journey from Jerusalem to Gaza was approximately 50 miles. Who did Philip meet (verse 27)? _____

3. We are given a rather lengthy description of who this man was. Where had this man been?
_____ What was he doing when Philip found him?
_____ This man was a God-fearing Gentile nobleman.
4. Again, Philip was sent. What did the Spirit tell Philip (verse 29)? " _____
_____ "
5. Then Philip _____ to the chariot and _____ the man reading _____ the prophet.
6. What did Philip ask him (verse 30)? _____
7. And the Ethiopian answered (verse 31): _____
8. So he invited Philip to come up in his chariot and sit with him (verse 31). What was the man reading (verse 32-33)? Where was it found? (See the cross-reference or possible footnote.)

9. Then he asked Philip, " _____
_____ ."
10. Where did Philip begin to teach the man (verse 35) about Jesus? _____

11. As they traveled along they came to some _____. What did the man ask (verse 37)? _____

12. He ordered that the chariot be stopped and he and Philip went down into the _____ and Philip _____ him (verse 38).
13. What are we told about Philip in verse 39? _____
14. The eunuch went on his way _____. Recall the response of the people to Philip’s ministry in the city of Samaria (verse 8). There was great _____.
15. Philip next appeared at Azotus (Ashdod), a town located halfway between Joppa and Gaza along the coast. In verse 40 we are told that “as he passed through he preached the _____ to all the _____...”
16. What more do we learn about Philip the Evangelist in Acts 21:8-9? _____

REFLECTION: Philip has been sent and he goes. He was an evangelist. He really wasn’t told much except that he was to head south on the road that led from Jerusalem to Gaza. So, he obediently started out (verse 27). Then comes an interesting phrase, “and on his way...” One can’t help but wonder how many times God has assignments for us when we are on our way. Philip lived believing he was sent by God. Believing he was sent undoubtedly kept him alert to opportunities God had given to him to give witness of Jesus.

APPLICATION:

1. As I consider my life, do I live my life believing that I have been sent by God? Do I look for opportunities each day when I can sit with someone in their “chariot” and speak of God’s great love for them in Christ Jesus? _____

2. Do I allow for time as I’m “on my way” throughout the day—running errands, attending meetings, talking with fellow workers, children, and family members—to speak of Jesus or is my life so pressured with the do-this-and-do-that routine which has acquired more than can ever be accomplished in a day anyway? What needs to change in order that “on my way” allows me to listen as the Spirit directs what He initiates for me “on my way?” _____

Part 2

REFLECTION:

At some point, Philip knew he had been sent to the eunuch’s chariot where he was reading aloud as was the custom of the day. We are told that he ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading from Isaiah 53.

Philip approached him with the question, “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip was eager and enthusiastic about the opportunity to help connect this man to Jesus. He was ready to sit with the man in his chariot.

APPLICATION:

1. Imagine Philip’s childlike eagerness to share Jesus with this man and help him understand the words of Isaiah 53 as they related to the Good News about Jesus. How eager am I to sit with someone in their “chariot” and talk about Jesus? I have the best news in the world. Who can I tell? _____
2. Philip asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” What a great question! Have you asked a child reading a Bible story, “Do you understand what you are reading?” Have you asked a friend, a coworker, a student, “Do you understand what you are reading?” Lord, make me eager, enthused, bold, and available to bring Your Spirit to others that together we might grow in our understanding of Your Word. _____

REFLECTION: Then we are told in verse 35 that Philip began with the very passage of Scripture that the man was studying and told him the Good News about Jesus. He began where the man was. Philip didn’t try to elevate him to a position where he thought the eunuch needed to be but rather Philip accepted the man where he was and began at that point to connect him to Jesus.

APPLICATION:

1. God’s grace breaks through prison walls. His grace releases stubborn hearts that are stuck in past experiences and relationships. His grace permeates hatred, bitterness, doubt, and conflicts. What are ways in which I communicate to others that God’s grace is theirs right where they are? _____

2. How might I bring love to someone today by accepting them as they are and where they are in their journey? _____

REFLECTION: Towards the end of the story we read in verse 39b that the eunuch went on his way rejoicing. Philip met the eunuch “on his way.” Now the eunuch is “on his way.” One wonders who the Lord might have brought to him as he headed home, back to Ethiopia, “on his way.” God’s Spirit brought Philip into his life that day. He now sends the Ethiopian eunuch with a similar assignment. We are also

told that he went on his way rejoicing! One who is experiencing great joy cannot help but speak of what has been seen and heard (Acts 4:20). *Note:* History tells us that Christianity reached Ethiopia and a church was started very early. Many believe it was because of the witness back home by this man that the church began. God can use even one person to begin tremendous things.

APPLICATION: It's time for an attitude check: How is my attitude of joy? Am I living my days rejoicing? Lord, fill my heart with songs of thanksgiving and praise! _____

Part 3

INTRODUCTION: One of the most dramatic conversions recorded in the Bible happens to a man named Saul. We first read about him in Acts 7. Verse 58 tells us that those who stoned Stephen laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named _____. He witnessed Stephen's death and Acts 8:1 says that Saul _____ of his _____. Then in Acts 8:1, 3 we learn about the great persecution that broke out against the church. Describe the persecution that was taking place. _____

We are told nothing more about Saul until Acts 9.

ASSIGNMENT: Read Acts 9:1-19a. Additional references to his conversion are recorded in Acts 22:3-16 and Acts 26:9-18.

EXERCISE:

1. Saul was acting intentionally against the Lord's disciples. What are we told about him (verse 1)?

2. What did he acquire from the high priest (verse 2)? _____
And, for what purpose? _____
3. What happened as Saul approached Damascus (verse 3)? _____
4. We don't know if his horse threw him but we do know that he _____
and he heard a _____ saying to him, " _____"
_____?"
5. What was Saul's response (verse 5)? _____
and what was the answer? _____

6. What was he commanded to do (verse 6)? _____

7. What was the reaction of Saul's traveling companions (verse 7)? _____

8. What condition was Saul in when he got up from the ground (verse 8)? _____
9. His companions "led him by the hand" and took him into _____.
10. What are we told about the next three days (verse 9)? _____
11. In verse 10 we are introduced to a disciple, Ananias. The Lord came to him in a vision. Where was Ananias sent (verse 11)? _____
Who was he to ask for? _____
What was he to do? _____
12. Ananias has a problem with what the Lord has asked him to do (verses 13-14): _____

13. The Lord insists that he goes! What does God reveal to him about Saul (verses 15-16)?

14. Ananias obeyed and went to where Saul was. He placed his hands on him (verse 17).
 - a. Who does Ananias say sent him? _____
 - b. Why was he sent?
 - i. _____
 - ii. _____
15. What happens next (verses 18-19)?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____

REFLECTION:

1. As you reflect on this story of Saul's conversion, what are some immediate thoughts that come to your mind? _____

2. It's difficult to imagine what changes God can make in the life of one so dead set against Him. Saul's story is like that. He was breathing murderous threats, traveling with authority to arrest all those who called on the name of the Lord, and was determined to destroy the church. He appeared extremely powerful and yet a light from heaven flashes and he finds himself on the

ground blinded and hearing a voice that simply asks, “Why, Saul, do you persecute Me?” Jesus came to Saul and told him that when he persecuted the people of God, His church, he was persecuting Him. And, the Lord simply asked him why.

3. Next came the command... He was told to get up and go to Damascus. Who was in charge of Saul’s life now? Instead of entering the city with the power of the law, he came humbled by the grace of God. He could see nothing. He was totally dependent upon those who were standing there speechless. So, they led him by the hand. He was totally vulnerable and at the mercy of those who led him. Hmmm. Question: Have I ever found myself that helpless? Have I ever found myself that dependent? _____

4. About the same time there was a man in Damascus named Ananias who was a disciple, a follower of Jesus. One would probably surmise that he was minding his own business when we are told that the Lord came to him in a vision. Once again we read that little word “Go!” Ananias was sent by God to Saul. From his perspective that was as good as sending himself to be arrested. One can’t blame him for checking out if this is what God was really asking him to do. And God reassured him with the word, “Go!” Then He tells Ananias what He has in store for Saul who was God’s chosen instrument to carry His name to both Jews and Gentiles, even to their kings. He was also about to be shown how much Saul must suffer for His name. Ananias went and told Saul that he had been sent by the Lord that he might see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

APPLICATION:

1. Maybe you have been one, or know someone, who has been spiritually blind and has determined to persecute those who carry the name of Jesus. What may be going through your mind as you hear Jesus say, “_____, why do you persecute me?” _____

2. Who might the Lord bring into your life and use to enable you to see with spiritual eyes the things of God? _____
3. Ananias was sent so that Saul would be filled with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit comes through the Word of the Lord, through both the written and spoken Word. The Spirit comes and fills us full of Himself. Ask the Lord to come to you through His Word and His people that you might be a person with spiritual sight and filled with His Holy Spirit. _____

Part 4

DIGGING DEEPER: Before we move on you are encouraged to read 2 Corinthians 11:21b-29.

1. Verses 22-23a: Who does Paul (Saul) say he is?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____

2. Verses 23b-25: What does Paul tell us he's endured for the sake of the Gospel?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
 - e. _____
 - f. _____

3. Verses 25b-29: What are other things we learn about Paul and the dangers and suffering he endured? _____

MEMORIZATION: The Lord told Ananias in Acts 9:16 that Saul would suffer much for His name. In 2 Corinthians 11 we were told some of the sufferings that he endured. Saul, who became known as Paul, however, did not turn his back on God because of what he had to endure but rather spoke about these persecutions, hardships, and even a thorn in the flesh that tormented him (2 Corinthians 12:7ff) as God's power at work in him. Write out what the Lord said to him in verse 9? _____

1. What is Paul's response (verses 9b-10)? _____

2. Be sure to put verse 9a into your memory library. Write the verse on an index card to help you remember that like Paul we, too, can delight in weaknesses and difficult circumstances for when we are weak, then we are strong!

PRAYER: O Lord, sometimes I feel like Saul, so eager to fight against You. Forgive my resistance. Break down my stubbornness and bring me into Your loving arms. Hold me tight. Keep me steadfast in the faith that Your indwelling Spirit has created within me. O Lord Jesus, may I willingly, joyfully, and eagerly go to share Your love wherever You send me. _____

CLOSING: This unit *God's Spirit, Our Power—Part 1* ends with Saul's conversion. He has been called by God as His chosen instrument to carry the Name of the Lord to Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. He will suffer persecution for the sake of the Gospel. We have come to the conclusion of Part 1. You are encouraged to press on and begin *God's Love, Our Life – Part 2!*