

C.R.O.S.S.

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CROSS Fall Quarter

"The Christian Community Comes Alive"

Every book of the Bible is important to our understanding of God's plan for the world. Some books, however, have particular significance regarding these things. The book of Acts certainly falls into the category of being one of those books that is absolutely essential to our understanding of the big picture of God's plan. The book serves as a bridge between the Gospels and the Epistles. Acts is actually the second half of a two-volume work by Luke, a physician and coworker of Paul.

Scholars have suggested a variety of purposes for the book of Act. At a very fundamental level, Luke was certainly outlining the spread of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. Since the apostles were to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and "the uttermost part of the earth" (1:8), this basic outline clearly shows how these events unfolded over a thirty-year period.

Others, however, have looked to the conclusion of Acts to discover its purpose. The last phrase in the book, "no man forbidding him" (28:31), is actually one word in Greek and literally means "unhinderedly" (Stagg, *The Book of Acts*, Broadman). This view suggests that Luke was attempting to show how the gospel overcame every obstacle encountered as the Christian faith spread. This will certainly be seen in this quarter's lessons. As Acts ends, Paul was bound (28:20), but the Word of God was not (II Tim. 2:9).

While our lessons will not cover all of Acts, enough will be studied to clearly show how the early Christian community came alive. Take time to compare your Christian life and your local church with the believers and churches we read about in Acts. Such a comparison may reveal either our faith or our failure to be the people God has called us to be.



Scripture of the Month

"Then they that gladly received His word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And all that believed were together, and had all things in common. Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved". – Acts 2:41, 44, 47

As I read these verses, the song, "Take Me Back" by Andraé Crouch, comes to mind. I would love to experience the Church gladly receiving His word, fellowshiping together with all thing in common, praising God!

These verses give us a first look at the early church. These traits characterized the daily lives of believers. There is beauty in the growing and developing church in their dedication and devotion to God and to each other.

In the book of Acts these believers became the church. Originally, they met in homes, however, as they continued to grow in numbers, the church began meeting in its own building. Yet the characteristics as described in these verses made them much more than the buildings they gathered in. The people, the body of believers *were* the church.

Do we have the qualities of the early church?

- *A people who received the Word—gladly (v.41)?*
- *A people who were together, sharing in ministry (v.44)?*
- *A people who worshipped and praised God daily (v.47)?*

In order to carry out the command of Acts 1:8 to be *witnesses for Him*, we must have the characteristics of the early church. We witness for Him by devoting ourselves to the word of God, devoting ourselves to one another having all in common, devoting ourselves to worshipping the Lord together, devoting ourselves to teaching the lost, and devoting ourselves to growing in the character of Christ. This is the model of the first century church and this is the pattern we must fashion ourselves after.

Series: The Malnourished Christian

Protection—Armor of God (Ephesians 6:11-17)

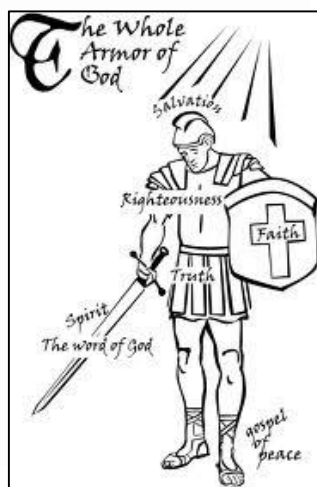
Part 6 of 7

As we continue our emphasis on the Seven Habits of Growing Christians, this month we will focus on protection from God which comes in the form of armor. The Christian life is not for the faint of heart, it is a war. We battle daily with the enemy in this war which is waged for the souls of men, women, boy and girls. The malnourished Christian is one who is unprotected; this Christian needs the armor of God.

Satan and his imps prowl around seeking those they may destroy (1 Peter 5:8). Just like Simon Peter, Satan desires to sift us as wheat (Luke 22:13). God's armor provides everything we need to stand firm against the attacks of Satan. He has given us defensive weapons to repel and defeat his strategies. God's armor leaves no part open for the enemy. Only the back is uncovered, so don't turn your back to the enemy. In other words don't ignore sin of any kind for there is no armor to protect us. If we pretend sin is not there or if we indulge it, we have left ourselves vulnerable.

Are you ready for combat? Do you have your war clothes on? God has prepared and provided the armor for us, but we must put it on. Dressed for combat you will be able to face your spiritual battles head on, wielding God's Word and standing strong. Fight knowing the victory is already won. That's Good News! Jesus has already won the war!

Satan will not give up even though he has already lost, so we have to keep on fighting. If we are to grow strong into an empowered, mature relationship with Christ, we need to put on our protection - the well planned suit of armor God has provided for us. We need to put on the whole armor of God. It is what believers need to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE



Acts of the Apostles

1. Before he ascended, what two things did Jesus command the disciples to do?
2. Who was appointed to replace Judas Iscariot as a disciple?
3. How many people were baptized on the day of Pentecost?
4. How did believers show their love through charity?
5. What sin did Ananias and Sapphira commit?
6. What did Stephen see when they stoned him?
7. Which book of prophecy was the Ethiopian eunuch reading from?
8. Who was the first person in Acts to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles?
9. What was the name of the first Gentile convert to Christianity?
10. Where were the believers of Christ first called Christians?

GOT JOKES!

The story of Adam and Eve was being carefully explained in the children's Sunday school class. Following the story, the children were asked to draw a picture that would illustrate the story. Little Toby drew a picture of a car with three people in it. In the front seat was a man and in the back seat, a man and a woman. The teacher was at a loss to understand how this illustrated the lesson of Adam and Eve. Toby was prompt with his explanation. "This is God driving Adam and Eve out of the garden!"

~ FOOD FOR THOUGHT ~

"Parents spend the first part of a child's life urging him to walk and talk, and the rest of his childhood making him sit down and keep quiet."



Test Your Knowledge Answers

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|-----------------|--------------------|
| 1. Acts 1:8 | 6. Acts 7:55 |
| 2. Acts 1:26 | 7. Acts 8:32 |
| 3. Acts 2:41 | 8. Acts 10:44 - 47 |
| 4. Acts 4:34-35 | 9. Acts 10:36-48 |
| 5. Acts 5:1-11 | 10. Acts 11:26 |