Acts 8:1-8

Introduction to the Daily Devotionals

Introduction to the Book of Acts

Day 1: Acts 8:1-8

Day 2: Acts 8:3

Day 3: The Way

Day 4: Acts 8:4-8

Day 5: Acts 8:1-8

7 The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul.
8 The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple.
9 The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart.
10 They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold;
   they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb.
   Psalm 19:7-8, 10 (NIV)

There is a blessing that comes to those who set aside time every day to dig into God's Word—the Bible. As you spend time feeding on His Word, your faith will be strengthened and you will receive wisdom and direction for your day. Our prayer is that these devotionals will not only help you get connected with God and His Word every day, but also prepare you for the upcoming sermon each week.

How do you get started?

First, find a quiet place where you can get alone for 5-10 minutes without being distracted or interrupted. Start your devotional time by talking to God—praying and asking that He would speak to you through the Scriptures. Pray that God would give you a spirit of wisdom and a revelation in the knowledge of Him (Ephesians 1:17-18).

Then read through the devotional for the day, thinking about the Scriptures as you’re reading them. Sometimes there will be challenges with action steps for you to consider. Other times there will be words of encouragement to strengthen you in your relationship with God and your knowledge of His love for you.

Once you’ve read the Scripture and considered the questions, finish your time with God in prayer, thanking Him for His love and asking Him how He wants you to apply the Word you have just read.
Introduction to the Book of Acts

This fall, Pastor Jay is preaching on Acts 8 through 13.

The author of the Book of Acts is Luke the physician, who also wrote the Gospel of Luke. He most likely wrote both of these books between 58-66 A.D. We know that Luke traveled with Paul on many of his journeys (2 Timothy 4:11), and during this time, Paul spent a lot of time in prison waiting to be transported to Rome. This would have given Luke the time he needed to research his Gospel and record the accounts of Acts. His history in Acts tells the story of the early church from Christ's resurrection around 30 A.D. to Paul's first imprisonment in Rome about 63 A.D.

The message and structure of Acts is described in Acts 1:8:

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (ESV)

Acts 1:8 is an outline of the book of Acts:

Acts 1 – 7: the believers’ witness in Jerusalem
Acts 8 – 12: the believers’ witness in all Judea and Samaria
Acts 13 – 28: the believers’ witness to the ends of the earth

Day 1: Acts 8:1-8
Read Acts 6 and 7 to provide context to where we begin in chapter 8.

Read Acts 8:1-8. Luke begins his account in chapter 8 of the young Church’s witness beyond Jerusalem.

1a. What happened in Jerusalem on the day of Stephen’s stoning? Where did most of the Christians go? Who stayed?

1b. How did these events fulfill Acts 1:8? (8: 1)

God has a purpose and will disrupt our lives to get us on track with it. Have you ever seen God interrupt your plans in order to get you onto His plans?

- Ask God to make you flexible with interruptions to your plans, especially trusting His loving purposes when you are frustrated by circumstances.
Day 2: Acts 8:3

Acts 8:3

*But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.* (ESV)

**Acts 22:4-5 (ESV)**

4 I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brothers, and I journeyed toward Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished.

5 I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brothers, and I journeyed toward Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished.

**Acts 22:20 (ESV)**

And when the blood of Stephen your witness was being shed, I myself was standing by and approving and watching over the garments of those who killed him.

2a. How would you have felt if you had been a believer in Jerusalem?

2b. What risks would you be facing?

2c. God used persecution in the first church to fulfill His plan. Where in modern history has the gospel spread in spite of resistance by human authorities? How does this affect your view of persecution and resistance?

**Acts 26:9-11 (ESV)**

9 “I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. 11 And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

- Are you regularly praying for the persecuted church throughout the world to be empowered by the Spirit to boldly share the gospel and live for Christ?


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Day 3: The Way

Isaiah 30:21 (NIV)
Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, “This is the way; walk in it.”

Isaiah 35:8 (NIV)
And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way; wicked fools will not go about on it.

Hebrews 10:19-20 (NIV)
19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body,

John 14:6 (NIV)
Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Isaiah is prophesying of God’s gracious redemption of His stubborn yet loved people. Ultimately, God provided His Son as “the Way.”


3b. What do these verses add to the meaning of the title, “the Way”?

• Praise Him that He not only provided a way, but He is the Way.

Throughout the book of Acts, Christianity is referred to as “the Way.” Read Isaiah 30:21 and 35:8.

3a. What do these verses add to the meaning of this title?
Acts: the Church in Action
Week 1 Devotional Questions

Day 4: Acts 8:4-8

Acts 8:4-8 (NIV)

4 Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. 5 Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. 6 When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. 7 With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. 8 So there was great joy in that city.

Now Luke records the way God used Philip as an example of what He was doing all over Judea and Samaria through His “scattered” servants. The word “scattered” in Greek is used to refer to sowing seeds.

4a. Who was Philip? (See 6:5; 21:8.) What was his message (see also 8:12), and how did God authenticate it?

4b. What was the city-wide result? (8:8)


According to the Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, joy is the:

State of delight and well being that results from knowing and serving God. A number of Greek and Hebrew words are used to convey the ideas of joy and rejoicing. We have the same situation in English with such nearly synonymous words as joy, happiness, pleasure, delight, gladness, merriment, felicity, and enjoyment. … Joy is found over 150 times in the Bible. If such words as “joyous” and “joyful” are included, the number comes to over 200. The verb “rejoice” appears well over 200 times.

Joy is the fruit of a right relationship with God. It is not something people can create by their own efforts.

Many people think that God is the great killjoy. [This is a big lie.] God Himself knows joy, and He wants His people to know joy. Psalm 104:31 speaks of God Himself rejoicing in His creative works. Isaiah 65:18 speaks of God rejoicing over His redeemed people who will be to Him “a joy.”

Joy is a deep, inner gladness—an attribute of God given to us by the Holy Spirit (John 15:11; Galatians 5:22).

- Is joy in the Lord evident in your life? It can be. Ask Jesus now to give you His joy.

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**Acts 8:1-8 (NIV)**

1. And Saul was there, giving approval to his death. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. 2. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him.

3. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison. 4. Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.

5. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. 6. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. 7. With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. 8. So there was great joy in that city.

The death of Stephen (Acts 7) launched a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem. The believers, except for the Apostles, were driven out and scattered.

Matthew Henry wrote in his *Commentary on the Whole Bible*,

> "The enemies designed to scatter and lose them, Christ designed to scatter and use them."

In the Old Testament, Joseph understood this principle. In response to his brothers’ anxiety concerning their crimes against him, Joseph said,

> You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

*Genesis 50:20 (NIV)*

Christ’s own death on the cross is the best example of how God turns the enemy’s actions into God-glorifying results. Jesus was no victim. Out of love, He sacrificed Himself according to the Father’s good plan.

- Have you seen God’s good come from bad? Will you encourage someone with that story this week?
- Will you trust Him with His good plan even when you don’t see it yet?