

Central Study Hour – Sabbath School Lesson Notes

“Book of Acts”: Lesson 3, “Life in the Early Church”

SABBATH AFTERNOON

Soul winning was a major part of life in the early church (3000 baptized in one day - Acts 2:41). *But, what about other aspects of life? How did the early church nurture new relationships? Read the memory text. Does it sound like a lot of fellowship and friendship? Seems like strong nurturing of new relationships!*

There was a sense of urgency in the early church. There was expectation for the “establishment of the Messianic kingdom” with the return of Jesus, which they hoped and believed would be soon. “Sensing that the time was short, they sold all they had and devoted themselves to learning and to fellowship while continuing to witness about Jesus, but only in Jerusalem.” They also developed a communal life that was “effective in helping the poor.”

SUNDAY: “Teaching and Fellowship”

Read first sentence.

Read Acts 2:42. Note the 4 key points; teaching correct doctrine, fellowship, sharing food and praying together (1 is teaching, 3 are fellowship).

Read Acts 2 :46. Read the last sentence of the first paragraph.

For teaching and learning, share highlights or read the 2nd paragraph.

For fellowship, share highlights from the 3rd and 4th paragraphs.

Read Acts 2:43-45. Early Christians saw miracles, shared freely, and took care of each other. They were helping those in need (Some may have been disowned and expelled from their homes for accepting Christ).

Read Acts 4:34-35. *What additional information is in these verses that wasn't in what we just read from Acts 2?* There was no one “**among them that lacked**” is the point.

“This sharing allowed them to experience a deeper sense of unity.”

Read Acts 4:32-33, and 2:47. *What were the results of such oneness and selflessness?* New believers were added to the church every day!!!

Ask the question from the box at the bottom.

Will Christians in our time ever experience the kind of sharing and caring that we see in Acts?

MONDAY: “The Healing of a Lame Man”

Hit highlights of the story from **Acts 3:1-11.**

This miracle gave Peter an opportunity to preach another sermon.

What did Peter preach?

Share highlights from Peter’s sermon in **Acts 3:12-26.**

- **(13-15:** Jesus the Holy One, the Prince of life you crucified, but God raised up.
- **16:** Jesus is the One whose power healed the lame man.
- **19:** Repent and be converted. **20:** Jesus will return.
- **23-24:** The prophets foretold this. Listen now! **26:** Jesus came to save you from sin.)

Read the next to last paragraph. (“Now, though the situation....”)

What do we have to share in addition to this?

Early NT Christians in Acts didn’t understand all of Daniel’s prophecies, and they didn’t even have the book of Revelation yet. There were many things that they didn’t know that we are supposed to share today, such as; who the antichrist/beast is, about the true vs. false Sabbath, the USA in prophecy, the mark of the beast, the millennium, and exposing the myriad of deceptions that have come into the church over the centuries.

Read the quotation from Gospel Workers, pp 156-157, at the bottom of the page.

TUESDAY: “The Rise of Opposition”

Highlight **Acts 4:1-3**. *What was the key thing that riled up the Sadducees?* Resurrection talk!

Highlight **Acts 4:6-7**. *When asked by what authority they had been acting, how did Peter reply?*

Read Acts 4:8-11. *What impresses you most about Peter’s answer?*

Read Acts 4:12. *What was so shocking about Peter’s words in verse 12?*

Hit Highlights of **Acts 4:13-22**.

Read the next to last paragraph (“Without being able..”). There was urgency to maintain power.

Read from the box and ask the question at the bottom of the page. Power easily ruins people because of human ego and desire for control.

Read Acts 4:29-31. (Just too good to miss.)

WEDNESDAY: “Ananias and Sapphira”

Background: Review key points of **Acts 4:32-35**.

Read the 1st sentence of the narrative. “Voluntary generosity inspired the whole community.”

Read Acts 4:36-37. *Who especially was noted for his generosity?* Barnabas.

Hit highlights of the story in **Acts 5:1-10**.

Covetousness and greed was surely a serious problem. It led them to do wrong, however, lying to the Holy Spirit made it much worse.

Does it seem that God dealt too severely with Ananias and Sapphira? Consider the following:

1.) Likely, their motives in selling property and committing the profit to the church was to gain influence or admiration among the brethren. Their actions were premeditated at each step.

2.) Their greed and deceit had the potential of seriously damaging the early church as it “could disparage the importance of loyalty to God and become a bad influence among the believers.” God had to intervene for the sake of the church and its witness.

3.) In Bible history we see that the greater the revelation of God, the greater the accountability and the seriousness of sin. It was so in the OT Exodus event. In the NT context of the revelation of Jesus life, death, resurrection and ascension followed by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, lying to the Holy Spirit was unthinkable. (In most historical contexts, punishment is deferred which constantly reminds of the graciousness of God. His patience and long suffering shows His compassion for our ignorance and His desire to save us. However, when God is more powerfully revealed, sin is no longer ignorance, but rebellion of a most brazen nature.)

Read Acts 5:11-12, 14-16. *How did things go in the early church after the death of Ananias and Sapphira? The witness and prosperity of the church increased rather than diminished. What impressed you most about these verses?*

THURSDAY: "The Second Arrest"

If desired, share highlights from the opening paragraph.

"The more the apostles were filled with the Spirit, and signs and wonders multiplied, the more the religious leaders were filled with jealousy."

Hit highlights of **Acts 5:17-33.**

Read or share highlights of **Acts 5:34-37.** *How did Gamaliel try to dissuade the Sanhedrin from killing the apostles? He gave examples of others who raised up movements that faded into nothing when the leader was killed.*

Read Acts 5:38-39. Read the last 5 lines of the narrative ("The lesson he drew....").

Read Acts 5:40-42. *How impressed were the apostles with the commands of the Pharisees and Sadducees?*

Conclusion: Thoughts from "**Just for Teachers**" at the bottom of the page 40 in the Teachers' Comments, and the quotation from *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 12 continuing to the top of p. 42 would make a good conclusion.

Another good conclusion would be "**Consider This**" from the bottom of p. 42.

Note: If your highlight summaries are well planned and concise, it will go a long way toward controlling the time.