**Summer 2020 Journey Through Acts**

We are spending the the summer of 2020 whilst we are seeing together to find out what it means to be a kingdom community in a time of dislocation and lockdown looking at the Book of Acts as a model of how the followers of Jesus decided to be, to live and to act in the very beginnings of the ‘church’ of Jesus Christ. There are similarities and differences between the circumstances they found themselves in and where we are now, but if there has ever been an opportunity to imagine and re-imagine what it means for us to be followers of Jesus, that time is arguably now.

This document is designed as an outline for you to work through, either individually or as part of a group. All feedback and suggestions for modification is most welcome.

**A Session Outline - 40 mins total, but can be longer or flexible if you wish**

**Introduction - 10 mins (longer if you’re in a group I suspect!)**

1. How are you?
2. What notable things have happened recently?
3. Is there anything distracting you from focusing on God today? If yes, think or talk about that and then pray and give it to God as you begin.

**Time With the Bible - 15-20 mins**

*What does this passage tell me abbot God?* To answer this question, you might want to think about whether the passage speaks about God directly or indirectly. Is there a prophecy quoted, or does the passage remind you of another part of scripture? If so, spend some time following the leads. How does the passage remind you of what you’ve known about God before? Does it make you think differently about God than you have done before?

*What does this passage tell me about myself?* To answer this question you might want to ask how you felt as you read the passage and how you feel as you reflect on it now. Do you identify with a particular character? Does it make you feel happy or sad, hopeful, excited, confused or any other emotions?

If you feel challenged, or as if something in the passage is really speaking to your or feels personal to you today, spend a few minutes thinking: what is it? What about it feels important to you?

*What is this passage inviting me to do differently?*

As Christians we are meant to live according to the truth that is in Jesus and to not be the same as before we knew him (Ephesians 4:20-24). As we learn the good news of Jesus and the truth about his love we are bound to change.

Spend time thinking about things in your life you might want to be or to do differently as a result of today’s study and pray about those things.

For each session, we will also provide a few questions to pick out the key elements of the passage and try and help you to be guided through the study.

**Time in Prayer - 10 mins**

Each time you meet or spend time reflecting alone, make sure you leave plenty of time to pray. You could pray about:

The Church and its leaders, both ours, Churches nearby and the worldwide Church

Situations locally or in the world around us

Things shared by people during your time together

Those who are afraid, sick or those who are bereaved

Committing to God that you will follow through on what you’ve been invited to do by today’s study.

Your neighbours and the street you live in.

Those who govern us locally, nationally and internationally.

**Week 8: Acts 5:1-11**

**5**Now, a man named Ananias and his wife, Sapphira, likewise sold their farm. **2**They conspired to secretly keep back for themselves a portion of the proceeds. So when Ananias brought the money to the apostles, it was only a portion of the entire sale. **3***God revealed their secret to Peter*, so he said to him, “Ananias, why did you let Satan fill your heart and make you think you could lie to the Holy Spirit? You only pretended to give it all, yet you hid back part of the proceeds from the sale of your property to keep for yourselves. **4**Before you sold it, wasn’t it yours to sell or to keep? And after you sold it, wasn’t the money entirely at your disposal? How could you plot such a thing in your heart? You haven’t lied to people; you’ve lied to God!”

**5**The moment Ananias heard those words, he fell over dead. Everyone was terrified when they heard what had happened. **6**Some young men came in and removed the body and buried him.

**7**Three hours later, his wife came into the room, with no clue what had happened to her husband.

**8**Peter said to her, “Tell me, were the two of you paid this amount for the sale of your land?”

Sapphira said, “Yes, that’s how much it was.”

**9**Peter told her, “Why have you agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? I hear the footsteps of those who buried your husband at the door—they’re coming here to bury you too!” **10**At that moment she dropped dead at Peter’s feet.

When the young men came in, she was already dead, so they carried her out and buried her next to her husband. **11**The entire church was seized with a powerful sense of the fear of God, which came over all who heard what had happened.

1. This is a difficult and challenging story. What is the key thing you take away from it?
2. In v3 we’re told that God revealed the secret Annanias and Sapphire kept to Peter. What does this tell you about whether we can keep secrets from God?
3. What does v4 tell us about the importance of keeping our hearts and minds clean, with God’s help?
4. As I was reading this passage, I was reminded of the phrase ‘take every thought captive’. How easy or hard do you find it to do this?
5. What do you think it means to be seized with a powerful sense of the fear of God? (v11)
6. This passage, following on from the end of Acts 4, is uncompromising about the things the believers were willing to give up and to share with one another. Do you think we live in the same way today?

**Something To Do This Week**

Spend some time in prayer and reflection this week. Is there anything you are holding back from God? What makes you hold on to it? What would help you give it to him?