**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 10: Acts 5:17-26**

**17**The high priest and his officials, who formed the party of the Sadducees, became extremely jealous over all that was happening, **18**so they had the apostles arrested, placed in chains, and thrown into jail. **19**But during the night, the Lord sent an angel *who appeared before them*. He supernaturally opened their prison doors and brought the apostles outside. **20**“Go,” the angel told them. “Stand in the temple courts and preach the words that bring life!” **21**So early that morning they entered the temple courts and taught the people. The high priest and his officials, *unaware of their supernatural release from prison*, convened the members of the supreme council. They sent for the apostles to be brought to them from prison. **22**But when the officers came to the prison cell, it was empty! They returned to the council and informed them, **23**“We found the jail securely locked and the guards standing by their cell, but when we opened the door, there was no one inside!”

**24**When the captain of the temple guard and the leading priests heard this report, they were perplexed and at a loss over what to make of it.

**25**Someone came and informed them, “The men you put in prison are out there standing in the temple courts, teaching the people!”

**26**So the captain of the temple guard and his officers went to arrest them once again, but without using force, for they were afraid the people would stone them.

1. Luke, the writer of Acts, seems to make it clear here that the high priest and his officials persecuted the believers because they were jealous about what was happening.

Have you ever felt under pressure because of your faith?

2. And look what happens when the believers are imprisoned! God sends an angel who immediately sets them free and tells them to shout aloud the words that bring life - the woads of Jesus. What stops you trusting God?

3. What do you think God was trying to do by releasing the believers from prison in this supernatural way?

4. What do you think was happening in v26 that made the guards scared that the people would stone them?

5. The way this passage reads, as well as the whole of the rest of chapter 5, gives the idea that the ‘words that bring life’ were truly powerful and exciting. Do you think we do a good job of speaking these words today? If not, how could we do it better?

**Something To Do This Week**

1. Follow the example of the first believers and speak ‘the words that bring life’ to at least one person this week.