

The Acts of the Non-Apostles

by Nancy Kuhlman

Leader's Guide

Lesson 2 – God's Purpose

Aim: to help class understand and accept that God desires all people to be saved and wants to use us to actively spread the Gospel.

Depending on the setting in which you are using this study, the review of the previous lesson may be presented as a lecture or by questions to the group. The key things to bring out:

- *Luke wrote the book of Acts to continue the account of the works of Christ, now in the person of His Holy Spirit*
- *God empowers Jesus' followers with the Holy Spirit to enable them to carry out His purposes.*

Read Matthew 18:12-14

1. What does Jesus say is God's will and desire? *It is God's will and desire that no one would be lost.*
2. How does the awareness and understanding of God's will and desire help you understand the mission of the church today?
God's desire—to look for the lost and bring them home—defines the mission of the church..
3. How does it help you understand *your* part in the church's mission? *Allow time to answer thoughtfully.*

Read Acts 2:41

4. What *beginning* do you see occurring here? *The Word going out and bringing people in; the beginning of the church as a significant entity with a specific identity - believers in Jesus Christ.*

Read Acts 2:42-47

5. Last week we looked at this passage to see what the new believers devoted themselves to following Pentecost. List again the activities in which they engaged.
The apostle's teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, prayers
6. Think of these activities as a pattern - a progression - toward a goal. What is that goal? (question 1)
salvation of souls. The church in Acts is a purposeful organization with a habit pattern of group behavior
7. What is the plan Jesus laid out for His disciples? See Acts 1:8, Mark 16:15.
His disciples empowered by His Holy Spirit would spread the Gospel to the world.
8. What does the behavior "pattern" followed in the early church look like in our church today?
Be as specific as you can in identifying the counterpart of each activity found in Acts 2:42-47.
Help people make the connections between Bible study today and the apostle's teaching then; activities that bring the church together, in both social and worship settings, as well as today's small group and caring ministries, correspond with the fellowship then; celebrating Holy Communion together today and breaking bread then; and a strong congregational and personal prayer life corresponds with devoted themselves to prayer.



9. From your own experiences and observations, what often follows when people make a commitment to devote themselves to doing God's will?
All manner of opposition and obstacles often appear. Satan will try to derail you.

Read Acts 8:1-4

10. What is happening here? *Persecution, scattering, proclaiming the Gospel. A "base" is left at Jerusalem.*
11. How does this relate to Acts 1:8?
They are being witnesses, just as Jesus said, but probably not the way they thought it would happen!

Read Acts 8:5-8, 26-40

Note: The Philip mentioned here (named in Acts 21:8 as Philip the Evangelist) is the Philip of Acts 6:5, not Philip the disciple/Apostle (Matthew 10:3 and Acts 1:13).

12. What is significant about the location where we first see Philip witnessing?
Samaria; There was historic animosity between Jews and Samaritans.

What general challenges are there for someone trying to witness in a situation like the one in which Philip found himself?

Prejudices on both sides, cultural differences, language barriers, social class issues, suspicions, etc.

What are some of the challenges our church faces from our society and culture as we work to carry out our mission? *Encourage open discussion.*

13. Look at verses 26-30. What did Philip do in these verses? *obeyed - went - observed - listened to God - met the Ethiopian where he was, and engaged him in conversation with a pertinent question that led to sharing the Gospel. Classic example of "seizing the moment."*
14. In verses 31-35, where do you see God's purpose?
The searching heart of the Ethiopian, the opportunity presented to Philip, and Philip' sharing the Gospel.
- The work of the Holy Spirit? *Getting Philip at the right time and place, giving him the words he needed, convicting the heart of the Ethiopian*
15. What are the results of what the Holy Spirit did through Philip in verses 36-40?
Ethiopian received and believed the message, received salvation, was baptized, was filled with joy. And Philip was moved by the Spirit to evangelize elsewhere.
16. What encouragement for your own role in fulfilling the mission of the church do you receive from Philip's example?

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