

# The Acts of the Non-Apostles

by Nancy Kuhlman

---

## Leader's Guide Lesson 5 – God's Plan for Action

*Aim: to encourage class participants to offer God their gifts and abilities for His service*

*Review: We've seen how God is using all kinds of situations, circumstances, and people to work together toward ONE goal: the salvation of souls through the spread of the Gospel to the ends of the earth.*

Who has been empowered and instructed by God to carry out His work?

*people - individually and corporately*

What kind of identity among the early believers is becoming evident?

*The corporate identity of the believers - the Church - the body of Christ*

*God uses people in a variety of situations and circumstances to advance His action plan for the church. The astonishing growth began at Pentecost, also called the Feast of Weeks, one of the three times each year when the Jews followed God's command (Deuteronomy 16:16) to "appear before the Lord your God at the place He will choose," ultimately, the temple in Jerusalem after the Israelites took possession of the Promised Land.*

*Pentecost was the "circumstance" God used, when many Jews from all over were gathered together. Soon after the "new" events of Pentecost—the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, the many hearts touched by the Gospel proclamation, the phenomenal growth in numbers of believers in Christ—persecution of the believers ensued, resulting in dispersing the believers all over the known world. These believers carried the Gospel with them and they shared it. The church grew. People were saved. Soon the Gospel broke down the dividing wall between the Jews and Gentiles, as Jesus Himself called Paul to proclaim the Gospel to the Gentile world.*

### Read Isaiah 55:11 with Acts 1:8

1. What do these two verses tell you about God's plan for His ongoing work on earth?

*God's Word always has power (remember its role in creation!). It was always God's plan to have people spread His Word. Now we see that plan coming together into something we know and recognize and are part of—the Church. We get to see details!*

### Read Acts 8:1; 9:31; 11:19-21

2. Under what conditions and circumstances is this work to occur?

*All circumstances, convenient or otherwise!*

Explore how we, living with the realities of life in the 21st century, can realistically follow the example of the early Christians.

*Possible answers: putting Jesus, rather than our "to do" lists, first in our lives; Romans 12:1 - offering our very lives to God; the "bloom where you are planted" concept.*



Today's world is shrinking, with advances in high speed travel and advances in communication technology. How do we enfold this into God's plan?

*Possible answers: Internet allows us to reach more and more people. How many names are in your address book? How many individual opportunities do you have to personally witness to someone in an email? Corporately, church services are available on the Internet. Pastors' sermons can be heard on many church websites. Missionaries share what God is doing in far away places with the press of a key on a computer. People can more easily go to "the ends of the earth" on jets.*

*There are two main characters in Acts: Peter and Paul. The Holy Spirit worked through them in mighty ways, but it was not God's plan to give only a few individuals the responsibility for spreading the Gospel. Because God desires that all people might be saved, He uses a variety of people individually and corporately to do this work.*

Read Acts 9:23-25; 29-30, 43; 10:23b; 11:12

3. What are some of the things people (non-Apostles) did in these verses?

*Helped Paul escape from those who wanted to harm him; they protected Paul; fetched Peter and brought him to Cornelius; Simon the tanner opened his home.*

How did these "background" activities relate to spreading the Gospel?

*All were critical "support" activities that made it possible for the specific individuals God chose to do the actual "going" and "proclaiming." The support allowed other people to do the work to which God called them.*

Into what sorts of comparable works might the Holy Spirit move us today?

*Prayers and financial support for missionaries; physical assistance in local missions, etc.; support roles within our congregation (cleaning and maintaining the building, folding bulletins, etc.)*

4. All believers have spiritual gifts. Those gifts are given for the purpose of enabling the body of Christ to work together to accomplish God's mission. What possible spiritual gifts might Simon the Tanner have had? (Acts 9:43)

*Hospitality, serving*

How do we see these gifts operating in our church today?

*Individual members of a congregation might provide housing for visiting pastors, choirs, etc; people with such a gift might host a church celebration; people hosting small groups in their homes, or hosting the coffee fellowship after worship*

How might these activities be extended toward spreading the Gospel to those outside the church?

*Individuals who entertain in their homes have an opportunity to witness to their guests. Church events could be structured to appeal to the community and such an invitation could be extended. Members with the gift of hospitality could lead the congregation in welcoming the community. These gifts also find expression in ministries like greeters. There is a big difference between being welcomed by someone who has the gift of hospitality and someone who just agrees to stand at the door and shake your hand when you come in.*



5. In Acts 10:23b and 11:12, we see people accompanying Peter. How can we “go with” prominent proclaimers of the Gospel today?  
*Prayer, encouragement, provision*

*If your church already helps members discover their spiritual gifts, be prepared to share that information with your group. If not, you might wish to discuss the issue with your pastor in advance and see what resources he recommends.*

### **Read Acts 13:1-3**

7. What appear to be some regular practices of the Antioch church?  
*Bible study, prayer and fasting, serving, sending missionaries*

How might those practices relate to their ability to “hear” the Holy Spirit?  
*They focus their attention on Christ and His Word.*

What do we do in our church that model these practices of the Antioch church?  
*Bible study, prayer, serving (all our various ministries), commissioning (sending) missionaries*

Are there any we might consider expanding? Which, and how?  
*Answers will vary. How about an hour of fasting and prayer prior to a Voter's Meeting instead of ,or in addition to, lunch—providing something for everyone!*

Copyright December 2007. Nancy Kuhlman is a Bible study leader at Christ Lutheran Church, Costa Mesa, California. Distributed by Karen Kogler, author of the paper of the same title on which this study is based. The study's six lessons, with Leader's Guides, and the paper are available at [www.TheEquipper.org](http://www.TheEquipper.org) > Resources.

