

REFLECTION GUIDE

ACTS 1:1-11 - GLAD HEARTS, BOLD CHURCH

KEY TERMS

Theophilus - The recipient of the book of Acts and also the recipient of the gospel of Luke.

Kingdom of God - The rule of God over his people in his creation, which is now present in the physical world, but is awaiting completeness (or fullness) at the second coming of Christ; however, most Jews anticipated the kingdom to be a visible, earthly, and political kingdom.

Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and the end of the earth - Jerusalem is a city in Israel and was the home base for the disciples. Judea is a region of Israel that includes Jerusalem and Samaria is a region of Israel that is home to the Samaritans, who were looked down upon as half-breed Israelites. Luke did not know the size of the earth when writing Acts, but when he says the end of the earth he is likely thinking of far away places he's heard of but never visited, such as Spain. These categories are significant because they show the gospel's progression from a few hundred disciples in Jerusalem, to the rest of the regions of Israel, to eventually the entire world.

DID YOU KNOW?

Luke uses the verb *katēkēō* (to teach) in the beginning of his gospel to Theophilus. One of the primary reasons Luke wrote Luke and Acts is so that his reader *may have certainty concerning the things [he] has been taught*.

We get our words *catechesis* and *catechism* from this Greek word.

BACKGROUND

In the first verse of Acts, we learn that Acts is the second book this author has written to a person named Theophilus. Although he is not named here, we know that Luke is the author of Acts and we know that the gospel of Luke is the *first book* he is referring to (v.1). In verses 1-5, Luke reminds his readers how the gospel of Luke ends and he sets the stage to begin his second book called Acts. In verse 6, the disciples ask Jesus "*Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?*" The disciples knew the Old Testament well and so they knew that God had promised to establish his kingdom forever; however, like many Jews in Jesus's day, they believed that this kingdom would be a visible, earthly, and political kingdom. So now that Jesus has been raised from the dead, they are anticipating that Jesus (or his followers) will usher in this kingdom, but as the book of Acts plays out, it becomes obvious that the kingdom of God is not what they expected.

GOING DEEPER

Read Ezekiel 36:26-27, Matthew 28:18-20, and Luke 24. How do these verses help inform your understanding of Acts 1:1-11?

Kingdom and *kingdom of God* are repeating terms in Acts. Do a search for these terms in Acts and make a list of where and how they are used. What themes are repeated? What is Luke trying to convey to his reader when he uses these terms?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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LEARNING THE WORD

1. Read Acts 1:1-11, and make 5-7 observations on these verses. What stands out?
2. Read Luke 1:1-4 along with Acts 1:1-3. How do these verses assure us of the historical accuracy of Luke's Gospel and of the book of Acts?
3. What do you see in these verses that points to the purpose or theme of the book of Acts?
4. Jesus' statement in Acts 1:8 reinforces Jesus' command in Matthew 28:19-20, which is known as the Great Commission. How do these verses inform your understanding of the mission that Christ has given to his followers?

LIVING THE WORD

5. For you personally, what are the biggest obstacles to sharing your faith?
6. Share about one experience, either positive or negative, you've had with sharing your faith. What did you learn from that experience?
7. How does it encourage you to know that God gave us his Holy Spirit to help empower us to be witnesses to others?

Close in prayer asking God to make us a bold church who lives out the mission of Jesus in our world.