

Building a Community that Stands - a study in the Book of Acts - Peter Burton

- Share stories of how God has been at work in your lives this week

Peter introduced the theme for this 8 week series - just as Acts uncovers core values of the Christian church through the ages. We are part of 24-7 Prayer DNA. We have 3 Values, each with 2 practices:

WE PRAY (following Jesus) - Prayer/Worship & Learning

WE PLAY (loving one another) - Hospitality & Creativity

WE OBEY (loving the world) - Mission & Justice

These will be explored over the coming weeks.

- Discuss the core values and practices. Which ones are we better at? Which need working on?

The goals of the series are:

1. Moving more in the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives;
2. More courageous about sharing our faith;
3. Clearer about the spiritual realities of this world;
4. More confident in the authority that we have in Jesus Christ;
5. More hopeful for the future;
6. Full of faith for what could happen in Guildford/Woking

ACTS OVERVIEW

- A sequel to Luke’s gospel, a crucial bridge to Paul’s later writings. (Luke and Acts = 25% of NT).
A helpful slide to show the continuum of Luke’s writings:

LUKE		ACTS	Great Commission	>>> Ends of the Earth
Jesus’ birth	The gospel spreads through Jesus’ earthly ministry	Pentecost	The gospel spreads though the Spirit empowered church	

- Provocative - much is hard to understand
- Confidence - an orderly account (Luke 1v1). Primarily theological. NB Speeches are abbreviated to give essence. Events are corroborated with Paul’s accounts.
- Historical credibility indicating what the events signify. Cf. Lk 2v30-32, Author not just relaying the fact of Jesus’ birth, but offering us the interpretation of this event. Acts is the same.

A HELPFUL WAY TO DIVIDE THE BOOK:

Acts 1	Link with gospel, introduction, set-up, mission statement 1v8
Acts 2-7	Church in Jerusalem but spreading despite persecution. Stephen, first martyr
Acts 8-12	In Judea and Samaria (as Jesus said) Church becoming multi-ethnic and international
Acts 13-20	Missionary journeys. Clash of cultures. Jew/Gentile question
Acts 21-28	Paul in Rome, writing to churches from prison/house arrest

THREE THINGS TO NOTICE

1. *It is the ACTS of the Holy Spirit* - Holy Spirit is mentioned 57x.
 - Ask: What is the Holy Spirit doing? What is he saying? What is the Holy Spirit doing now?
2. *Nothing can stop the Gospel* - Even during persecution the church spreads. Then as now. (Before cultural revolution the Chinese church was c. 100k now over 100m)
 - Ask: How can we help God?
3. *The good news is for everyone!* Acts emphasises the marginalised, the sick, the women. There was geographic and social spread (cf. Lk 8v41ff; Acts 10)
 - Ask: Do we believe that? Have we given up praying for someone?

BUILDING A COMMUNITY THAT STANDS

“Stand” used 30x “Raised up” used 30x. Standing means we’re ready, engaged, confident, with authority. Acts 2, 5 Peter Stands to speak; Acts 3, 9 Healings; Acts 7v56 Jesus stood for Stephen cf Heb 12v2 etc. where Jesus is described as being seated in Heaven.

- How resilient are we as a community? How can we build resilience further?