



# Connect to the Bible

## Leader's Guide

### Week 5

#### Topic week 5: John and Acts

**PREWORK: Before class read the full leader's guide and watch the videos on the website.**

**Note the time of the videos so you can plan well.**

**Study these teaching points covered in the video (*refer to week 5 in the participants guide*)**

- 1) Purpose and meaning of John's Gospel
- 2) The history of the early Church
- 3) The ministry to the Gentiles and the disputes in the early Church

Speaker: Pastor Shawn Allen

#### **Transcript\*\*\*\***

Hello, and welcome to week five, as we continue to journey through the entire Bible together. Last week we covered the synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. And this week we're moving on to the next two books in the Bible of the new Testament in John and Acts. Now, as we mentioned, it might've been natural to keep Luke and Acts together because they're written by the same person, but I wanted to keep the synoptic gospels together because of the commonality. So, this week we're going to look at these two books. Let's start with John, the fourth gospel.

Who was John? Well, John was one of the disciples and he's probably the beloved disciple. In several places you will see references to "the disciple that Jesus loved". There are some different theories on who that is, but generally it's assumed that that is John referring to himself there. This was the last gospel written. They think it was written closer to 90 AD. And John is the only disciple that was never martyred. It does contain some similarities with the synoptic gospels, for example, the feeding of the 5,000 and obviously the crucifixion of Christ. Those stories are in all four of the gospels, but it doesn't have all the same stories you see in the other three. They think that John obviously was aware of the other books, but maybe wanted to tell something different. And this is a more spiritual story of Jesus. As the other ones, had a lot of his teaching and were a little more biographical, if you will. Instead of the narrative we talked about, this is a little more of the spiritual life of Christ. One thing that's of note, there's many references where John talks about the Jews and that has been used to declare that John's book was a bit anti-Semitic and I want to be clear that that's not the case, obviously. John and

Jesus and the disciples, they were Jewish. And so, when you read this, what you'll see is what he's referring to when he says "the Jews", he's talking about the leaders who they did have significant problems with. He's not talking about all Jewish people. And I think that's important because sometimes that gets brought up.

The primary purpose of John is that the reader will believe in Jesus and by believing in Jesus will have eternal life. So read this verse here: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name." That's found in 20:30-31. So, it's not necessarily written for those witnesses, but the ones who come after. The other purpose is to show that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of man, the Son of God, but he's more, he's the logos. He is the Word. He was with God in the beginning and He is God. This comes back to the idea of the Triune, God, the Trinity. This book starts off with the very famous "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God. And the word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to being through him and without him, not one thing came into being, what has come into being in him was life. And the life was the light of the people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it." And then if you actually go a little bit further again with the word he says, "and the word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son." So, this is once again him explaining that Jesus is the word. And then, also obviously Genesis that we know "in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and God said, let there be light." God spoke the world into existence. And Jesus was the word through which this happened. This is more spiritual than what we see in the other books. Jesus was both man, and God, he never gave up his divine nature and he never gives up his human nature. He is fully human and fully divine. And I think that probably this gospel does the best job of capturing all of that. There are four parts to John. The prologue, the signs that he's the revelation of the father, there are many different disputes with the leaders, and then about halfway through there is a shift and the glory of Jesus is revealed to those who accept him. Then you have the post-resurrection experience.

Here are a couple interesting aspects to John. Obviously, we can't cover everything in this short time. John uses the term father 120 times in talking about God. This shows the divinity of Christ. The passion of Christ doesn't reflect any agony, which is unique amongst the gospels. Jesus also never cast out any demons in John. And, and I really don't know why, but that's something that you see in the other gospels but you don't see here. John also shows a division that's happening between those that are coming to him and those that are falling away. A couple of the verses I chose are: "since he came to his own and his own people did not receive him, but to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God". John 1:11-12 And here is one you all probably know very well "For God so loved the world that he gave His only son that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the son of God, the only son of

God.” So once again, we see the dichotomy between those that are coming to him that are saved and those that are falling away that are not. There are two other things of note in John: 1) the seven statements – we didn't get a chance to go in detail in Exodus, but in Exodus, there was a point when, God has called Moses to talk to the Israelites. And, Moses says, “if they ask what's your name is, what should I tell them?” And God says to Moses, in Exodus 3:14 “I am who I am. He said further, thus, you shall say to the Israelites, I Am has sent me to you.” God is the great I Am. And then we see reflected in that in John the seven, I Am statements of Jesus. “I am the bread of life. I am the light of the world. I am the gate for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I am the resurrection and the life. I am the way the truth and the life. And I am the true vine. And my father is the vine grower.” So once again, a reflection of his divinity with the I am statements. The other thing that is well known is the seven signs, he doesn't call them miracles. The first being changing water into wine, there's the healing of the officials, healing of the paralytic, feeding of the 5,000 (as I noted this is the only one that's in all the gospels), walking on water, healing the blind man, and raising of Lazarus. That is a very quick overview of John as a more spiritual telling of Christ. And so, when you read one of the synoptic gospels, it's great to also read John to get the fuller picture of Christ.

Next, we move into Acts, called the Acts of the Apostles, even though really, Peter's the only apostle that is directly focused on here. But I think it's important to note that Jesus's ministry doesn't end with the gospels. And then we start Acts which is the continuation of Jesus's ministry. This is exactly what his plan was. His plan was to prepare the disciples so that his ministry would continue forever. And what we see here is this is the early church starting very small and grows to what is now the largest religion in the entire world. And it all starts right here in the book of Acts. The date of the authorship varies and is thought to be later in the first century, but there's no question that Luke wrote it. It transitions well from the gospels to the letters, because what you're going to see in Acts is an expansion of the ministry to the Gentiles. So, you see the ministry that started and when Jesus says “go forth to all nations” and then you see this happening in Acts. Acts is the story of Jesus's message serving as the basis of the church. The first half is a lot about Peter in Jerusalem, the incubator period of the church. The second half is largely Paul, who we'll talk about a little bit more and his journeys as he then takes that message throughout the known world throughout the Mediterranean area. At that point it is more of a historical document. Maybe not quite the way we expect it to be like reporting every date but it's also a theological instruction. It talks about how the church was built and there are a lot of great sermons and speeches from Peter in there. It's broken down in the following ways: first is the preparation. Leading up to the beginning of the church. Next is the witness of the disciples in Jerusalem. Next is the expansion of the mission beyond Jerusalem. Then you have Paul's mission. And at the end Paul is imprisoned and he's on trial.

So, the notable events, unfortunately once again, we can't really do a very thorough review of Acts because there's a lot, but there's a few, we obviously need to talk about. The Ascension of Christ and the guarantee that he would send the spirit is that the very beginning of the book in chapter two. This is the coming of the Holy Spirit. This is Pentecost, the seventh Sunday after

Easter. They were worshipping together and the Holy Spirit came down like tongues of lightning on everyone and they could understand each other's language. That is what is known as Pentecost. We see Peter's sermon and many people coming to follow Jesus at that point. Then you also have the fellowship of the believers in the second chapter. They are all living together and sharing and worshipping together and it's a great communal aspect of the early church. Next is the arrest, the speech, and the stoning of Stephen, a great famous speech. It's also interesting because at the stoning of Steven, we find a person named Saul there who is witnessing and leading the stoning. We see Philip and the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch in chapter eight, and then in nine, we see the conversion of Saul. So, this is the bad guy, right? This is the bad guy, and he's on the road to Damascus. So, if you've ever heard the expression, a road to Damascus experience, it is somebody who has had a massive experience with Christ which converts them. And that's what happens to him on that journey. And at that point, Saul becomes Paul and we will see throughout the rest of the book and through the, letters becomes maybe the most important theologian of all time. In chapter 10, we see the conversion of Cornelius and the message starting to extend to the Gentiles. In chapter 12, we see that James is killed and Peter's in prison. And then chapter 13 begins Paul's missionary journey, he made four of them. We'll look at that a little bit more next week. Chapter 15 is the Jerusalem council, because one of the things that was still happening in the early church was they were still disagreeing on how to do things. Everybody wasn't in lock step. There was a question whether Gentiles needed to be circumcised, whether they had to follow certain rules, whether they had to "become Jewish" before they could follow Christ. And so, this was a very important meeting with Paul and the Apostles when they sort of determine what's going to be required of them. And then toward the end you have the rest of his journeys and you have Paul's arrest and imprisonment. So that is a quick overview of Acts and Acts covers a great deal of time. And it covers the greatest geographical expansion in the New Testament. We see how broad the church gets. That gets us through the history and then next week we will be looking at the letters. So thank you very much.

End Script\*\*\*\*

**Key Scriptures to review prior:**

Genesis 1:1-3

John 1:1-5, 11-12, 14

John 2:1-11

John 3:16-18

John 4:46-54

John 5:1-15

John 6:5-14, 16-24, 35

John 8:12

John 9:5, 1-7

John 10:7, 11

John 11: 1-45  
John 14:6  
John 15:1  
John 20:30-31

## ***Class Timeline:***

	Estimated time
1. Introductions	10 min
2. Teaching Video	Pastor Shawn Allen, 14 min
3. Discussion Questions	30 min
4. Takeaways	5 min
5. Prayer	1 min
6. Invitation for next week	1 min

### **1.Introduce the content and video for this class (*say in your own words*):**

John was the Gospel writer that was closest to Christ. He (along with Peter and James) were in the inner circle. With his Gospel, he focuses on the divine nature of Christ. It is a much more spiritual Gospel, and in conjunction with the Synoptic Gospels it presents the fully-realized nature of Christ.

Acts presents the continuation of Christ's message as it rapidly expands both geographically and ethnically. This is the history of the early Church We see the joys and pains. Paul's ministry to the Gentiles serves a source of immense growth; but also conflict within the Church. Acts continues to be an example of the importance of discipleship and how conflict can be resolved within the church.

### **2.Play the teaching video.**

### **3.Discussion questions (see pages 54 & 55 of the participants guide)**

1. What differences do you see in the content of John and the Synoptic Gospels?
2. What does it mean to receive Christ and believe in his name (John 1:12)
3. What can the early disputes in the church teach us about how to handle differences today?
4. How do you see the presence of the Holy Spirit working in your life?

#### 4. Closing / takeaways in your own words:

1. Understanding the divinity of Christ is paramount to fully realizing his nature. John's gospel explains the "why" of Christ's sacrifice. It is where we understand the true importance of faithfully submitting to Christ's lordship
2. Each person can make a difference with their discipleship. Whether a person is speaking to huge crowds (Peter), expanding the message of Christ to those who don't know it (Paul to the Gentiles), or in a one-on-one encounter (Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch)

#### 5. Close in prayer Use the PRAY model as we teach them to pray:

P = praise – praise God for who He is and what he has done. Use attributes to describe Him.

R = Repent – helps us confess any sins and change the way we think or feel

A = Ask – petition your request for this group to our Father in Heaven including their understanding of the Bible

Y = Yield – Submit to God's will and let go of our will.

<b>PRAISE</b>	Matthew 6:9	"Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.'"
<b>REPENT</b>	Matthew 6:12	"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."
<b>ASK</b>	Matthew 6:11&13	"Give us this day our daily bread."  "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]"
<b>YIELD</b>	Matthew 6:10	"Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven."

#### 6. Invite them back next week to learn about . . . . .

Week 6 of Connect to the Bible is about the Epistles (letters)! Come back next week to learn about some cool letters Paul wrote to the early church!