

THE
GOSPEL
PROJECT[®]

The Church United

Daily Discipleship Guide

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God's Word to You



A Summary of the Bible

In the beginning, the all-powerful, personal God created the universe. This God created human beings in His image to live joyfully in His presence, in humble submission to His gracious authority. But all of us have rebelled against God and, in consequence, must suffer the punishment of our rebellion: physical death and the wrath of God.

Thankfully, God initiated a rescue plan, which began with His choosing the nation of Israel to display His glory in a fallen world. The Bible describes how God acted mightily on Israel's behalf, rescuing His people from slavery and then giving them His holy law. But God's people—like all of us—failed to rightly reflect the glory of God.

Then, in the fullness of time, in the Person of Jesus Christ, God Himself came to renew the world and to restore His people. Jesus perfectly obeyed the law given to Israel. Though innocent, He suffered the consequences of human rebellion by His death on a cross. But three days later, God raised Him from the dead.

Now the church of Jesus Christ has been commissioned by God to take the news of Christ's work to the world. Empowered by God's Spirit, the church calls all people everywhere to repent of sin and to trust in Christ alone for our forgiveness. Repentance and faith restores our relationship with God and results in a life of ongoing transformation.

The Bible promises that Jesus Christ will return to this earth as the conquering King. Only those who live in repentant faith in Christ will escape God's judgment and live joyfully in God's presence for all eternity. God's message is the same to all of us: repent and believe, before it is too late. Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe with your heart that God raised Him from the dead, and you will be saved.

Suggested for
the week of

Unit 31: Living Like Jesus (Acts; Hebrews)

| | | | |
|----------|-----------|-------------------------|---|
| March 7 | 11 | <i>Session 1</i> | The Church Is Sent to All People (<i>Acts 10–11</i>) |
| March 14 | 20 | <i>Session 2</i> | The Church Is Sent to Encourage New Believers (<i>Acts 11</i>) |
| March 21 | 29 | <i>Session 3</i> | The Church Is Sent to Proclaim Jesus (<i>Hebrews 1–10</i>) |
| March 28 | 38 | <i>Session 4</i> | The Church Is Sent to Demonstrate Faith (<i>Hebrews 11–12</i>) |
| April 4 | 47 | <i>Easter</i> | From Despair to Joy (<i>John 20</i>) |

Unit 32: The Sent Church (Acts; Epistles)

| | | | |
|----------|-----------|-------------------------|--|
| April 11 | 57 | <i>Session 1</i> | The Church Is Sent to Trust God (<i>Acts 12</i>) |
| April 18 | 66 | <i>Session 2</i> | The Church Is Sent to the World (<i>Acts 13–14</i>) |
| April 25 | 75 | <i>Session 3</i> | The Church Is United in the Gospel (<i>1 Corinthians 1</i>) |
| May 2 | 84 | <i>Session 4</i> | The Church Is United Under Godly Leaders (<i>2 Timothy 1–2</i>) |

Unit 33: Don't Forget (Acts; Epistles)

| | | | |
|--------|------------|-------------------------|--|
| May 9 | 94 | <i>Session 1</i> | The Church Is United in the Essentials (<i>Acts 15</i>) |
| May 16 | 103 | <i>Session 2</i> | The Church Is United in Love (<i>Acts 17</i>) |
| May 23 | 112 | <i>Session 3</i> | The Church Is United in Faith (<i>Galatians 3</i>) |
| May 30 | 121 | <i>Session 4</i> | The Church Is United in Hope (<i>1 Thessalonians 4–5</i>) |

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Brian Dembowczyk

Managing Editor—*The Gospel Project*
AUTHOR OF *Gospel-Centered Kids Ministry*
AND *Cornerstones: 200 Questions and
Answers to Learn Truth*

The Messiah had come, but not in the way that most had expected. The prevailing thought of the Jewish people was that the Messiah would be a political or

military leader to deliver Israel from her enemies. The people's first mistake was one of purpose; the second was one of scope. Jesus, the Messiah, had come to deliver the Israelites from the bondage of sin, not Rome, and He had come to do so not just for them but for people of every tongue, tribe, and nation. Jesus is the Savior of the world, not of a single nation.

In this volume of *The Gospel Project*, we will delve into a critical juncture for the early church as it moved from being a people of almost entirely Jewish believers to being a people of Jewish and Gentile believers, united in Christ Jesus. We will see God's heart for all people as He leads the church's leaders to understand the mission of carrying the name of Jesus into all the world and welcoming *all* who trust in Him. We will also see that fulfilling this mission would not come without adversity. Along the way, we will be reminded of our role in continuing the mission that started long ago. Salvation has come to us, but it has not come *just for us*. We too have been called to proclaim the name of Jesus to the world. It is our duty. It is our privilege. It is our joy.

About the Writers



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THE GOSPEL PROJECT

A Journey Through the Storyline of Scripture

Fall 2018

In the Beginning

Creation and the Fall (Genesis; Job)
God Establishes a Covenant People (Genesis)
God Grows His Covenant People (Genesis)



Winter 2018-19

Out of Egypt

God Redeems His People (Genesis; Exodus)
God Provides for His People (Exodus)
God Receives Worship from His People (Ex.; Lev.)



Spring 2019

Into the Promised Land

God Guides His People (Num.; Deut.)
God Gives His People a Home (Joshua)
God Delivers His People (Judges; Ruth)



Summer 2019

A Kingdom Provided

God Provides a King (1 Samuel)
God Provides a Godly King (1-2 Sam.; Psalms)
God Provides a Wise King (1 Kings; Eccl.)



Fall 2019

A Nation Divided

God Speaks to His People (1-2 Kings)
God Judges the Sin of His People (2 Kings; Prophets)
God Shows Mercy to His People (2 Chron.; Prophets)



Winter 2019-20

A People Restored

God Sustains His People (Daniel)
God Restores His People (Ezra; Prophets)
God Prepares His People (Neh.; Esth.; Mal.)



Spring 2020

Jesus the Messiah

Jesus Comes into the World (Luke)
Jesus Begins His Ministry (Gospels)
Jesus Among the People (Gospels)



Summer 2020

Jesus the Servant

Jesus the Healer (Gospels)
Jesus the Teacher (Gospels)
Jesus the Miracle-Worker (Gospels)



Fall 2020

Jesus the Savior

Jesus and the Kingdom (Gospels)
Jesus the Savior (Gospels)
Jesus the Risen King (Gospels)



Winter 2020-21

The Mission Begins

The Holy Spirit Comes (Acts; Epistles)
Fundamentals of the Faith (Acts; Epistles)
New Life in Christ (Acts; Epistles)



Spring 2021

The Church United

Living Like Jesus (Acts; Hebrews)
The Sent Church (Acts; Epistles)
Don't Forget (Acts; Epistles)

Summer 2021

All Things New

Paul in Prison (Acts; Epistles)
Facing Adversity (Acts; Epistles)
Jesus Will Come Again (Revelation)

Unit 31

Living Like Jesus

Acts; Hebrews

Memory Verses

“All these were approved through their faith, but they did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, so that they would not be made perfect without us.”


—HEBREWS 10:39-40

The Church Is Sent to All People

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: Salvation through Jesus has come to the whole world.

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: Acts 10:1–11:18

Most Christians are familiar with someone who is known for his or her stubborn, pronounced unbelief in God. Maybe it's a family member, perhaps the one no one talks about out loud. Or maybe it's someone from work or school. They're constantly berating Christians and maligning the faith. Whether it's an arrogant atheist or a godless thief, a misogynistic hip-hop artist or a radical Muslim, or even a rebellious child or an abusive spouse, there are people we're tempted to think could never believe the gospel.

 Why might believers think some people are too far gone to ever become a Christian?

Group Time

Point 1: God opposes the idea that the gospel is only for some (Acts 11:1-10).

¹ The apostles and the brothers and sisters who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. ² When Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, ³ saying, “You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.”

⁴ Peter began to explain to them step by step, ⁵ “I was in the town of Joppa praying, and I saw, in a trance, an object that resembled a large sheet coming down, being lowered by its four corners from heaven, and it came to me. ⁶ When I looked closely and considered it, I saw the four-footed animals of the earth, the wild beasts, the reptiles, and the birds of the sky. ⁷ I also heard a voice telling me, ‘Get up, Peter; kill and eat.’ ⁸ ‘No, Lord!’ I said. ‘For nothing impure or ritually unclean has ever entered my mouth.’ ⁹ But a voice answered from heaven a second time, ‘What God has made clean, you must not call impure.’ ¹⁰ Now this happened three times, and everything was drawn up again into heaven.

When Jesus called His disciples to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, they naturally assumed they were spreading the message of the gospel to the Jews scattered throughout the world (Acts 1:6-8). But when news came of Peter having eaten with Gentiles, the circumcision party accused him of violating the Law of Moses (ex. Lev. 20:24-26). Their ethnic and religious pride led them to discriminate against the Gentiles.




What types of people or social groups might we be tempted to rule out as coming to Christ in faith?

Peter himself needed to be convinced that the God who saves shows no partiality. So, God had given him a vision of unclean foods coming down from heaven on a sheet (Acts 10:9-16). Through this vision, the Lord was not only declaring all foods clean (Mark 7:18-19) but also declaring all peoples clean. This vision prepared Peter to enter Cornelius’s home and preach the gospel.


Point 2: God prepares the way for the gospel to be shared (Acts 11:11-14).

¹¹ At that very moment, three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea arrived at the house where we were. ¹² The Spirit told me to accompany them with no doubts at all. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we went into the man's house. ¹³ He reported to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, 'Send to Joppa, and call for Simon, who is also named Peter. ¹⁴ He will speak a message to you by which you and all your household will be saved.'

The Spirit prepared Peter with a vision about foods declared unclean under the old (Mosaic) covenant so he would go with the visiting Gentiles, whom he would have considered unclean as well. The three iterations of the vision (v. 10) corresponded with the three Gentiles sent to search him out. And furthermore, the Spirit told Peter directly to go with the men from Caesarea "with no doubts at all." The Holy Spirit prepares and leads believers today as well.

 What are some ways God prepares believers to share the gospel?

Not only does the Lord prepare us to share the gospel, He also prepares unbelievers to hear the gospel. Just as the Lord prepared Peter to share the gospel with Cornelius and his household by a vision, so also the Lord prepared Cornelius to hear the gospel with a vision (Acts 10:1-8). The Lord does not always send unbelievers to us directly in this manner, but God is always sending us out in the power of the Spirit and convicting sinners by the same Spirit as we present the gospel message. The God you see operating in the Book of Acts is the same God operating today. He is still in the business of saving people.

 What are some ways God might prepare unbelievers to hear the gospel?

Voices from Church History

"Divine things are invisible to natural eyes. There is no suitableness. He that must reveal these and take away the veil must create new light within as well as a light without. Now, God, and only God, that created light out of darkness, can create light in the soul. 'Let there be light.' He only can create a spiritual eye, to see the things that to nature are [invisible]."¹

—Richard Sibbes (1577-1635)

Point 3: God confirms that salvation is available to all (Acts 11:15-18).

¹⁵ “As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came down on them, just as on us at the beginning. ¹⁶ I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ ¹⁷ If, then, God gave them the same gift that he also gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, how could I possibly hinder God?”

¹⁸ When they heard this they became silent. And they glorified God, saying, “So then, God has given repentance resulting in life even to the Gentiles.”

Who is baptized with the Holy Spirit? All who believe in Jesus. In Acts 2:14-21, Peter declared that the new-covenant promises were being fulfilled because the Spirit had been poured out on all God’s people. What was shocking to the Jews in Acts 10–11, however, was that when the Spirit fell on Cornelius and his household, God confirmed that the promise of salvation and restoration was not just for believing Jews but also for believing Gentiles. God does the work of salvation, and no one can stand in His way.

Election is the gracious purpose of _____, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies _____.

It is consistent with the free agency of man and comprehends all the _____ in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God’s sovereign goodness and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes _____.

God has given believers a sign confirming our salvation—the baptism of the Holy Spirit. When we believe in Jesus, we are changed forever by the Spirit’s presence in us. This baptism superseded John’s water baptism, but it does not dismiss the significance of Christian baptism in water, which is a sign by which an individual proclaims and the church affirms an individual’s profession of faith. After witnessing the Spirit come upon Cornelius’s household, Peter commanded that they should be baptized in Jesus’ name (Acts 10:44-48).



What are some signs of the Holy Spirit’s presence in the life of a professing believer?

Daily Study

Day 1: Read Acts 10:1-33

Have you ever heard a testimony about a missionary or an unbeliever who received a vision that led to the gospel being heard and believed? That's what took place in Acts 10. The Lord prepared both Cornelius and Peter with visions: Cornelius to hear the gospel and Peter to share the gospel.

While it's true that God is still doing this today, let's not forget that what happened in Acts 10 is a unique event in the history of salvation. God wanted to bring salvation to the Gentiles, but the Jews needed to witness that salvation come to the Gentiles, lest there be a divided church.

Rather than focus on the uniqueness of Cornelius's and Peter's experiences, think about how God prepares us to share the gospel today. As you think of ways God may be preparing you to share the gospel, think also about the ways God prepared you to hear the gospel in the first place. Then spend some time giving thanks to God for saving you.



What are some ways God prepared you to hear the gospel before you became a Christian?

Voices from the Church

"Jesus is the cornerstone by which all things are restored and genuine relationships are built (Ephesians 2:19-22). Racial reconciliation, harmony, and diversity aren't out of the reach of God!"³

—Trillia Newbell

Day 2: Read Acts 10:34-48

The apostle Paul stated that salvation is to the Jew first and then to the Gentile (Rom. 1:16; cf. Acts 13:46). The salvation of the world came through a Jewish Messiah and initially to the Jewish people. In this instance, God made the inclusion of the Gentiles clear by giving them the same experience of the Spirit that the believing Jews experienced at Pentecost in Jerusalem, minus the rushing wind and the tongues of flame (see Acts 2:1-21).

Unless you have a Jewish heritage, this means that as a Christian, you are sharing in God's promises to the Israelite people. In other words, in the language of Acts 1:8, you are the end of the earth to whom the gospel has gone. Thankfully, the Savior who was Jewish did not come to save only Jews. He came to save people from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation.



How does recognizing that salvation came from and through the Jewish people make you grateful for God's mercy toward the nations?

Day 3: Read Acts 11:1-10

After reading Acts 11, you may wonder why Luke would retell the same account of Peter at Cornelius's house from the previous chapter.

Peter recounted his vision, and later the Gentiles' conversion and the coming of the Holy Spirit upon them, to the Jews in Jerusalem because they did not expect God to save the Gentiles as they were. In fact, the point Luke highlighted was that the circumcision party objected to Peter even eating with Gentiles. God had prepared Peter for Gentile inclusion into the new covenant people of God; the Jews in Jerusalem had to be prepared as well, so they needed to see how God accomplished this feat in Peter's heart.

The key to understanding Luke's repetition here is not in what is the same but in what is different. A new audience got to experience the firsthand account of Peter sharing the good news of the gospel with the Gentiles and them believing in Jesus and receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This pivotal moment in salvation history needed more than one telling for the church to grasp God's will in this matter.



How does seeing the extent to which God went to prepare the Jewish Christians to receive Gentile Christians as part of the covenant people affect the way you see present-day outsiders to the church?

Day 4: Read Acts 11:11-14

Peter recounted to the Jews in Jerusalem how the Spirit prepared both him and Cornelius to bring them together so that salvation would come to the Gentiles. Did you notice that Peter also took with him six other brothers (v. 12)? These seven believers became eyewitnesses of God's salvation coming to the Gentiles, and then they became witnesses testifying of the amazing grace of God.

Don't miss the point of verse 14, however. If Cornelius and his household were to be saved, they needed to hear the good news of salvation, they needed to hear the gospel of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. Both Jesus and the apostles taught that salvation came exclusively through faith in Christ: "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12; cf. John 14:6; Rom. 10:9-15).



How does knowing that the gospel must be shared affect the way you perceive your current practice of evangelism?

Day 5: Read Acts 11:15-18

In verses 15-17, Luke added details that were previously unknown. Peter recounted that what he and the other Jews experienced in Jerusalem at Pentecost was almost the same experience for the Gentiles (see Acts 2). In verse 16, Peter noted the words of Jesus from Acts 1:5 and concluded that because these Gentiles had received the same gift, he could not stand in God's way and exclude them from the privileges of membership among the people of God. One part of these privileges included water baptism, not under the authority of John the Baptist but in the name of Jesus Christ Himself (see 10:47-48; 11:17).

Regardless of your gender, ethnicity, location, or history, upon believing in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This Third Person of the Trinity dwells in believers and gives them assurance of salvation. He convicts them of sin so they will repent and be renewed in their relationship with God and His forgiveness. He also guides and empowers believers so they obey God's commands and fulfill the Great Commission. Truly the Spirit is among the greatest gifts we could ever receive.



How have you witnessed the baptism of the Holy Spirit in your own life as a believer in Jesus Christ?

