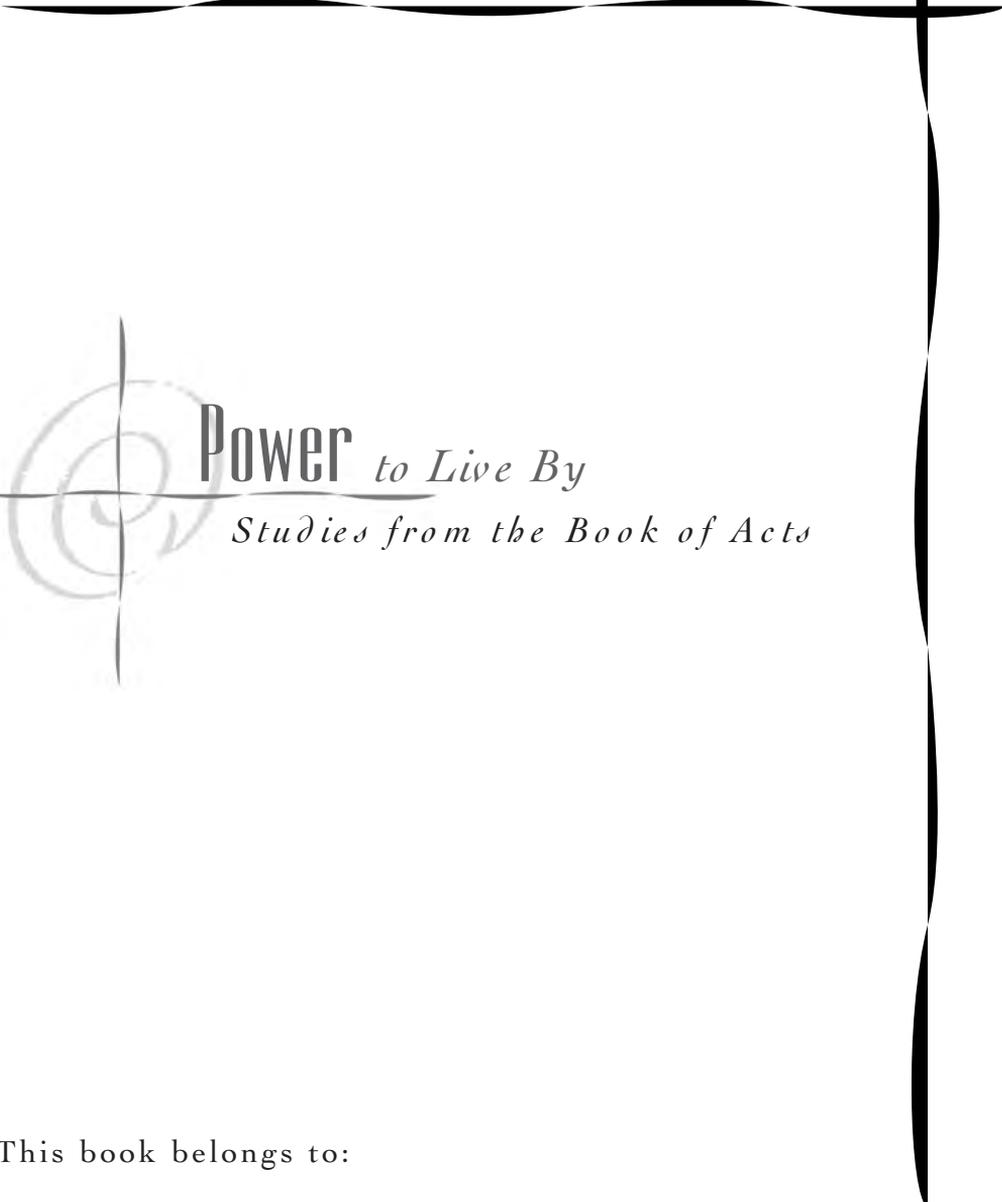


# Creative Living Bible Study



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# Power *to Live By*

## *Studies from the Book of Acts*

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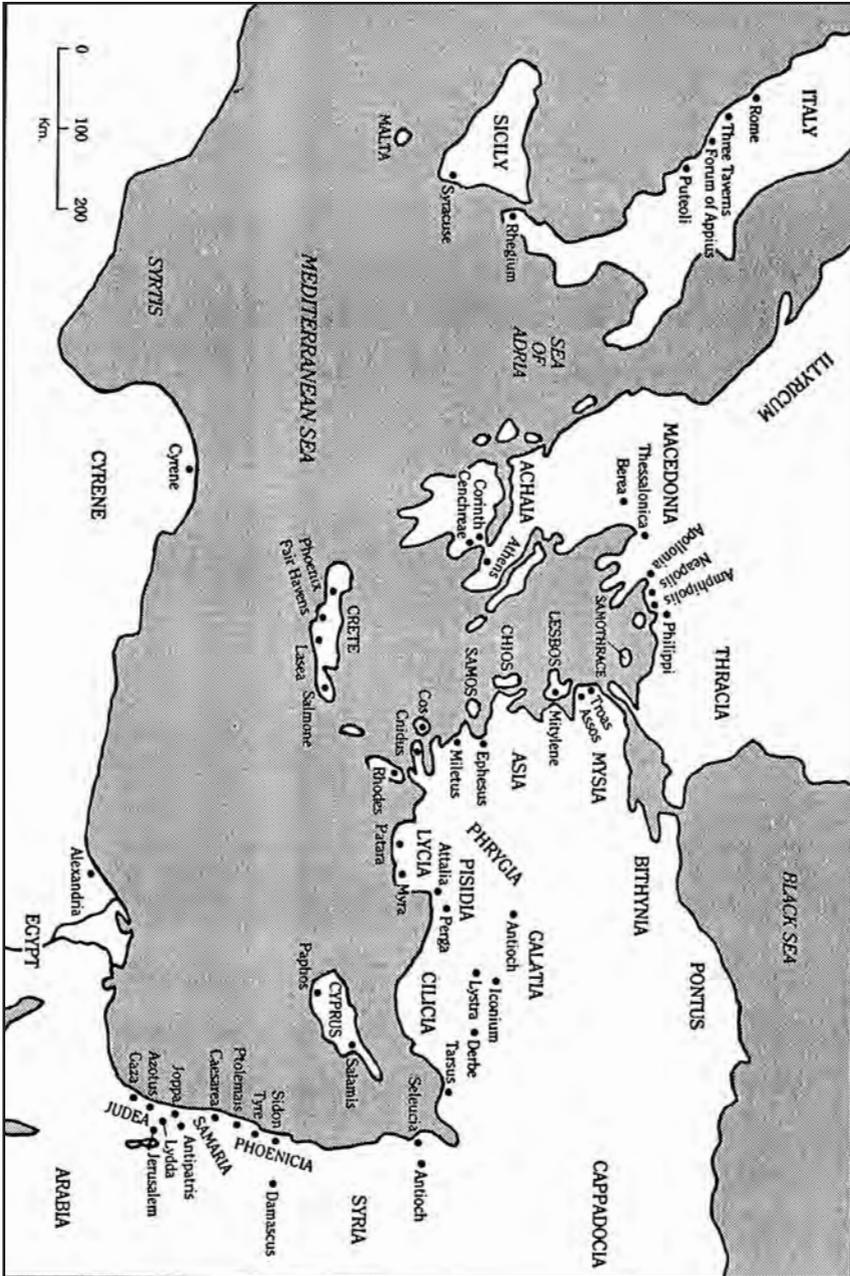
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# Map of the Roman Empire





# Power to Live By

## *Studies from the Book of Acts*

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## *Before you begin . . .*

The Book of Acts is action-packed and fun to read in one or two sittings. In this book, that meticulous gatherer of details Dr. Luke records what has become the most reliable source of information about the beginnings of the Christian church. While his treatise is not an exhaustive historical account of the early church, he gives us enough information to see that the spreading of Christianity throughout the Roman world was nothing short of miraculous.

What people in the early church experienced was not unlike what we face today as we seek to know Christ and practice godly living. They yearned for others to know the living Lord, were rejected and sometimes persecuted for their faith, and faced daily problems that sought to overwhelm their trust in God.

In our study of the divinely inspired work of Dr. Luke, we will concentrate on finding *power to live by*. We will seek to answer the daily questions about commitment to Christ and the living out of that commitment in today's world. We will seek to learn from the early believers about how to experience supernatural power in the battles of life and faith.

It is my prayer that this study will help you discover or rediscover the incredible power that God makes available to us through the indwelling of His Spirit. But more importantly, may knowing that Power accomplish its purpose: to bring you and, through you, others to know God's boundless love and care through Jesus Christ.

Diana Schick  
Author  
Creative Living Bible Studies

# ***PART I***

## ***JERUSALEM AND SAMARIA***

### **LESSON 1**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Book of Acts is fast-moving and definitely one of the most exciting books in the Bible. It is the second book in a two-part series written by a physician and missionary named Luke. The first of the series, the book of Luke, records the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Acts then gives an historical account of the early church as it spread across the Roman Empire in the first century A.D.

Luke traveled with the apostle Paul and probably wrote Luke and Acts during Paul's imprisonment in Rome between 63 and 70 A.D. Luke's writings are addressed to a Roman aristocrat named Theophilus, who most likely helped pay for publication costs. The Lucan series encouraged the faith of believers in Christ while it displaced ill-founded reports about Christianity to the unbelieving world.

Luke did not attempt to give an exhaustive historical account of the early church in the book of Acts. However, his careful compilations form the chief source book regarding first century Christianity and provide firm historical foundations for the Christian faith.

# THE RISEN LORD

## Acts 1

Acts begins with the forty days during which Jesus appeared to His disciples<sup>1</sup> after His resurrection. During this time, Jesus explained Messianic prophecies<sup>2</sup> about Himself found throughout the Old Testament Scriptures. That Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah<sup>3</sup> of Israel was such good news--it would have to be proclaimed! However, Jesus instructed the believers to wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit<sup>4</sup> came upon them to empower them as witnesses to the truth about the resurrected Christ.

After this, Jesus ascended into heaven before their eyes, and angels appeared to declare that the Lord would return in the same way He left! The disciples were filled with awe and joy as they returned to Jerusalem to pray and wait for the coming of the promised Holy Spirit.<sup>5</sup>

## Read Acts 1:1-11.

1. What did Luke write about in his first book to Theophilus (1:1-2)?
2. How long did Jesus appear to the disciples after His resurrection, and what did He do during this time (1:3; Luke 24:44-45)?
3. During a meal together, what command did Jesus give the disciples (1:4-5)?

**References:** Notes 4 and 5 on the *Holy Spirit*, pp. 8,9.

4. What was Jesus' answer to the disciples' question regarding the kingdom (1:6-7)?

5. Onto what did Jesus encourage the disciples to turn their focus? What did He promise regarding the Holy Spirit (1:8)?

**Reference:** Note 4, *Holy Spirit*, p. 8.

6. What events took place after Jesus made this promise (1:9-11; see also Luke 24:50-53)?

### **Read Acts 1:12-26.**

7. a. Who joined the apostles as they gathered in the upstairs room (1:14)?

**Note:** *the women* (1:14) possibly refers to the wives of the apostles and some of the women who had traveled with Jesus and ministered to Jesus and His disciples out of gratitude (Matthew 27:55, Luke 8:2-3).

b. What occupied the disciples' time (1:14a)?

8. a. Peter showed how prophecy pointed to the death and replacement of Judas as an apostle (Psalm 69:25; 109:8). What requirements did Peter propose for the new apostle (1:21-22)?

**Reference:** Note 1, *Apostles, disciples*, and Note 3, *Messiah*, p. 8. See also *Major Prophecies Concerning Jesus*, p. 10.

b. How did the disciples seek God's leading in choosing another apostle (1:23-26)?

**Note:** The casting of lots was used in Old Testament times to determine God's will. With the indwelling of believers by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, casting lots for guidance was never needed again.

## **BUILDING ON THE BASICS**

### **When the Task is Too Big**

Imagine, if you can, what the disciples experienced as they walked with Jesus during His earthly ministry. They witnessed crippled people straightening their backs and blind men suddenly receiving sight. They saw the sores on ten lepers healed simultaneously and watched as Jesus fed five thousand people from five loaves and two fish. A man named Lazarus walked out of his grave at the command of Jesus, and the only son of a widow sat up in his coffin. Jesus walked on the water of the Sea of Galilee before their very eyes and calmed a ferocious storm with the words, "Quiet, be still!" The list of miracles could go on, but in recent days, they had witnessed the most incredible of all. For forty days they had walked and talked with Jesus after His *resurrection from the dead*. During that time, He had opened the Scriptures to explain prophecies written hundreds of years before that were fulfilled through His life. There was no doubt in their minds: He was the Messiah, Savior and King of creation.

If you had been one of those disciples, you might have thought that everyone would want to know the wonderful truth about the Christ. But Jesus knew that while many *would* want to know, countless others would not, and persecution would come. For this reason, the 120 disciples were instructed to wait until they were given God's power to accomplish the humanly impossible task of spreading the truth about Jesus Christ. The

triumphant spread of Christianity throughout the world in the face of bitter persecution would be nothing short of supernatural.

We all face tasks that overwhelm us from time to time, and many of us seem to have difficult challenges before us most of the time. Words and phrases such as, "It's over my head," "unattainable," "out of the question," "too much..." bombard our minds evoking negative emotions which drain our energy and hasten defeat.

One of the main themes of the book of Acts is that God can give us supernatural power to face the seemingly impossible challenges of life. It is appropriate to begin our study on *Power to Live By* with some observations about facing the impossible task.

1. a. What kind of impossibilities can overwhelm our lives?

b. What types of emotions do these challenges elicit?

c. What are the results of these negative emotions?

2. a. What did Jesus promise the early believers as they prepared to undergo the humanly impossible task before them?

Matthew 28:20b

Acts 1:8

b. What do these truths suggest about difficult tasks we face today?

3. Hebrews 11:33-34 speaks of godly people gone before us who accomplished humanly impossible feats of courage and strength through faith in God. What truths do you observe in these verses?

4. What do the following verses say about strength?

Psalm 46:1

Isaiah 40:31

Isaiah 41:10

Ephesians 3:16, 20

5. What is important to know about seemingly impossible tasks?

Luke 1:37

II Corinthians 12:9-10

Philippians 4:13

6. a. We cannot expect God to enable us to do something that is not in our best interests. What do the following verses say about God's character that encourage us to seek His best for our lives?

Psalm 36:5-9

b. What was the Psalmist's continual prayer?

Psalm 25:4-5

c. What do the following verses encourage us to do as we seek God's strength for the impossible task?

Proverbs 3:5-6

Psalm 119:105

## Summary

7. a. What tasks in your life today seem humanly impossible?

b. What truths in this lesson stand out to you as you contemplate your situation?

## LESSON 1 NOTES

**1** *Apostles and disciples.* A *disciple* is a pupil of a certain teacher. New Testament *disciples* were those who followed Jesus and were committed to his teachings. From such disciples, Jesus chose twelve men to be his *apostles*, meaning "ones sent with a special commission." The apostle named Judas Iscariot committed suicide after betraying Jesus, and Matthias was appointed to take his place (Acts 1:12-26). Paul was also called to be an apostle after his conversion. The apostles took seriously their commission to lay the foundations of the Church. The majority died as martyrs.

**2** *Major Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in Jesus Christ*, see p. 10. *Prophecy* is given by God through prophets in both Old and New Testaments who preach, exhort, explain or, as in this case, foretell.

**3** *Messiah* (Hebrew/Greek), *Christ* (Greek/English), *Son of David*. The meaning of the word Messiah or Christ is "anointed one." The term Messiah or Christ refers to the anointed one promised by God to deliver Israel from their enemies and establish them as *the* world power. Old Testament prophecy described the Messiah as a King and Savior who would come from the line of David. (1 Chronicles 17:11-15). Those Jewish people who did not recognize Jesus overlooked prophecy that their Messiah would be a suffering servant who must suffer and die for the sins of the world (Isaiah 53; John 1:29). For other Messianic prophecies, see chart, p. 10.

**4** *Holy Spirit.* God has made Himself known in the Bible as a Trinity, three divine persons with the same essence as God. The Holy Spirit, known as the

Third Person of the Trinity, indwells every person who personally receives Christ (John 1:12, John 14:16,17). When we ask God (Luke 11:13) to "fill" us with His Spirit (Ephesians 5:18b), He responds by supernaturally instructing and empowering us to live the Christian life (Ephesians 3:16-20; Ezekiel 36:26,27). Sometimes the Bible refers to this as "Christ in us", as in Colossians 1:27b. Luke mentions the Holy Spirit 57 times in the book of Acts; this is why Acts is sometimes referred to as the *Acts of the Holy Spirit*.

**Reference:** Note 6, *Trinity*.

**5** *Holy Spirit's coming*. The Holy Spirit did not come initially at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit is eternal God, omniscient and omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-10), the Holy Spirit appears from the beginning of Scripture (Genesis 1:2). In the Old Testament, as in the New, He came upon individuals to empower them to accomplish certain God-given tasks (ex: David, I Samuel 16:13; Peter, Acts 4:8). Before His death and resurrection, Jesus promised the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26) would one day indwell His disciples as Comforter, Counselor and Advocate. At Pentecost, God would fulfill this promise (Acts 2), thus beginning a new phase in God's revelation to man.

**6** *Trinity* (God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit). While "Trinity" as a word is not in the Bible, Christian doctrine historically has used this term to describe God as He has revealed Himself. The Bible explains that God is one God in three equal persons: Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Certain passages in the Old Testament hint of a plurality in God (Genesis 1:26-27, 3:22, 11:7; Isaiah 6:8). The Old Testament also speaks of someone coming from God who is God (i.e. Christ, Isaiah 7:14, 9:6). The New Testament clearly portrays Jesus Christ as God (John 1:1; Philippians 2:6; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:8) and the Holy Spirit as God (Luke 1:35; Acts 5:3-4; Matthew 28:19; II Corinthians 13:14). All three persons of the Trinity share the divine characteristics of holiness, power, goodness, omniscience, omnipotence, etc. While they all may be involved in an activity such as teaching, for instance, each is associated with certain specific works. The Father is associated with the work of creating, the Son with the work of redeeming, and the Holy Spirit with the work of sanctifying believers. In many New Testament passages, mention of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit occurs in the same sentence (Jude 20-21; Ephesians 4:4-6, I John 4:2; I Peter 1:2; Titus 3:4-6; II Thessalonians 2:13; Galatians 4:4-6; Romans 5:5-6; John 15:26).

***Major Prophecies Concerning Jesus and Their Fulfillment***  
***Arranged Chronologically***

| <b>Description of Prophecy</b>            | <b>Prophecy</b> | <b>Fulfillment</b> |
|---|-----------------|--------------------|
| Would be the "Offspring of a Woman"       | Gen 3:15        | Gal 4:4            |
| Promised Offspring of Abraham             | Gen 18:18       | Acts 3:25          |
| Promised Offspring of Isaac               | Gen 17:19       | Mt 1:2             |
| Promised Offspring of Jacob               | Num 24:17       | Lk 3:34            |
| Will descend from the tribe of Judah      | Gen 49:10       | Lk 3:33            |
| The Heir to the throne of David           | Isa 9:7         | Mt 1:1             |
| Place of birth                            | Mic 5:2         | Mt 2:1             |
| Time of birth                             | Dan 9:25        | Lk 2:1-2           |
| Born of a virgin                          | Isa 7:14        | Mt 1:18            |
| Slaughter of Infants                      | Jer 31:15       | Mt 2:16            |
| Escape into Egypt                         | Hos 11:1        | Mt 2:14            |
| Ministry in Galilee                       | Isa 9:1-2       | Mt 4:12-16         |
| As a Prophet                              | Dt. 18:15       | Jn 6:14            |
| His rejection by Jews                     | Isa 53:3        | Jn 1:11            |
| Some of his characteristics               | Is 11:2         | Lk 2:52            |
| His triumphal entry                       | Zec 9:9         | Jn 12:13-14        |
| Betrayed by a friend                      | Ps 41:9         | Mk 14:10           |
| Sold for thirty pieces of silver          | Zec 11:12       | Mt 26:15           |
| Money to be returned for a potter's field | Zec 11:13       | Mt 27:6-7          |
| False witnesses accuse him                | Ps 27:12        | Mt 26:60-61        |
| Silent when accused                       | Is 53:7         | Mt 26:62-63        |
| Struck and spit on                        | Is 50:6         | Mk 14:65           |
| Hated without cause                       | Ps 69:4         | Jn 15:23-25        |
| Suffered vicariously                      | Isa 53:4-5      | Mt 8:16-17         |
| Crucified with sinners                    | Isa 53:12       | Mt 27:38           |
| Hands and feet pierced                    | Ps 22:16        | Jn 20:27           |
| Mocked and insulted                       | Ps 22:6-8       | Mt 27:39-40        |
| Given gall and vinegar                    | Ps 69:21        | Jn 19:29           |
| Hears prophetic words repeated in mockery | Ps 22:8         | Mt 27:43           |
| Prays for His enemies                     | Ps 109:4        | Lk 23:34           |
| His side to be pierced                    | Zec 12:10       | Jn 19:34           |
| Soldiers cast lots for his clothes        | Ps 22:18        | Mk 15:24           |
| To be buried with the rich                | Isa 53:9        | Mt 27:57-60        |
| His resurrection                          | Ps 16:10        | Mt 28:9            |
| His Ascension                             | Ps 68:18        | Lk 24:50-51        |