

THE BOOK OF *Acts*

Acts 1:1-3

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|| Group Discussion Guide ||

INTRODUCTION TO ACTS

Who wrote it?	The author is Luke, who also wrote the gospel of Luke; the Bible points to evidence that Luke was a companion of Paul and was present for many of the events in the book; we also know from Colossians 4:14 that he was a physician.
To whom was it written?	The book is specifically addressed to Theophilus, just like Luke's gospel, but the initial intended audience would have been more broadly Greek-speaking gentiles and Jews.
When was it written?	Likely in A.D. 62, though some scholars date it to A.D. 70
In what style/genre was it written?	Acts is a narrative, a history of the early church. It contains summaries of events and conversations, as well as records of sermons preached by the apostles.

- 1** Luke and Acts are two parts of the same story—both were written by Luke to form a cohesive narrative. In Acts 1:1, what does Luke say is the content of his gospel account (“the first book”)? By implication what will be the content of the second book (Acts)?
- 2** Luke addresses this book to Theophilus, just as he did his gospel account. Read Luke 1:1-3—what reason does Luke give for writing? What kind of account does he say he wants to make? Theophilus would represent a Christian believer—how would having these written accounts minister to him and to other believers?
- 3** Luke indicates that his gospel account concluded with “the day when he [Jesus] was taken up.” Why would this event (the Ascension) be a natural place to bridge the two narratives (Luke and Acts)?
- 4** What commands (v.2) had Jesus given before his ascension? See Luke 24:48-49; Matthew 28:16-20. How might the mention of these commands at the beginning of Acts help the reader anticipate the content of Acts?
- 5** Jesus had given these commands through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God, the third person of the Trinity. What unique role does he play in the work of the Trinity? See John 14:16, 26 and 15:26; Luke 1:35; John 16:8.

- 6 In verse 2, Luke uses the term apostles. The Greek apóstolos means messenger or “one who has been sent out.” While this term might be applied broadly, often it is used to refer to a unique group of men. In verses 2-3, what specific experiences did these apostles share?
- 7 Are there apostles alive today? What tasks/qualities do believers today share with the apostles and which were unique to them?
- 8 In verse 3, Luke summarizes Jesus’ activities after the Resurrection—he showed himself and he spoke of the kingdom of heaven, thus giving the apostles “many proofs.” What was the purpose of these proofs? How was this 40-day period preparing them to obey the commands he had given them?
- 9 We often use the phrase “both already and not yet” when speaking of the kingdom of God. How is this particularly true when it is mentioned at the beginning of Acts? How had the promise of the fulfillment of God’s kingdom already happened at this point? In what way was it not yet fully complete?
- 10 The traditional title of this book is “The Acts of the Apostles,” dating from the second century. By the 18th and 19th centuries, some theologians argued that “The Acts of the Holy Spirit” would be a more appropriate title. John Stott writes in his commentary that both versions can be misleading. He offers “The Continuing Words and Deeds of Jesus by his Spirit through his Apostles” as the most accurate way to title the book.[1] Based on what Luke has written in Acts 1:1-3, what is the most biblical understanding of whose “acts” are in view?

[1] Stott, John R.W. *The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church & the World*. InterVarsity Press, 1990.