

Dr. Craig Keener, Acts, Lecture 6, Evangelism and Introduction to Acts

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This is Dr. Craig Keener in his teaching on the book of Acts. This is session 6, Evangelism and Introduction to Acts.

Toward the end of the last session, we began talking about evangelism, the theme of evangelism and Acts, and how it shows us different ways that this is done.

Different people had different gifts. God worked through people in different ways. There was a consistent gospel throughout the book of Acts, but it was contextualized for different groups of people and explained to them in ways that were relevant to their own settings.

And we began talking about how people got attention for the gospel. There were certain kinds of networks that were available within their culture, synagogues, public debate forums, and so on. And we need to be ready to look for those in our cultures as well.

Well, also they had relational networks. Believers shared the message as they traveled. The book of Acts proceeds more in a biographic way.

It focuses on Paul, focuses on Peter, and focuses on major figures. Nevertheless, believers were sharing the message as they traveled. We learn incidentally in a way, Acts chapter 8 and verse 4, Acts chapter 11 and verse 20, that all the believers were carrying the message with them.

And that's ideally what we want. You see that also in Ephesians 4, where it speaks of ministers of the word equipping the rest of the saints for the work of service so that all of us are called to ministry. If we have purely clergy-oriented churches where ministers, what we call ministers, are doing all the work of ministry and other people are not helping, other people are not involved, 95% of the work can't get done because we can work as hard as we can, but we need ultimately for the whole body of Christ to be equipped to share in the work.

But apart from synagogues, this was very organic. They were following up with individuals. It's relational very much.

Acts 20.20 speaks of Paul speaking not only publicly but also house to house. Households consisted of relatives, and clients. For example, Lydia's household may have included servants and workers.

All those things were included as part of one's household. Cornelius' relatives in Acts chapter 10 are said to have gathered. Also, in terms of households, there was something called patrons and clients.

This is especially true in Roman culture, but it's relevant in places like Corinth and Philippi. You would have somebody of somewhat higher social status who would invite peers, but also people of somewhat lower social status who would be peer kind of friends, but also clients who were socially dependent on this person. This person in return would receive honor from these social dependents.

Those were other kinds of relational networks. My point in bringing this up is not to say that we need to use the same networks as they had because our household structures may be different than that. We may have different kinds of relational networks.

But to look at what kind of relational networks we have today, sometimes you can have small groups that come together based on common interests. It's called target groups sometimes where maybe people who have lost a child, you can have comfort support groups for that. Not all the people who will come necessarily will be Christians when they come.

But as friends, you can share what the Lord has done for you and how the Lord helps you get through it. You may learn from them too. We're all human beings.

We're all broken human beings who all need the grace of God. But in that kind of context, sharing is organic because you're just sharing with other human beings. You also may have, besides target groups, just contacting friends and family.

That's a way for the message to grow. Now, I wouldn't want to stop there, but certainly, I wouldn't want to ignore those connections that we already have as we're sharing the wonderful discovery that we found in Christ. As other people come to Christ, they can also share in their networks.

We see that happening in the early church. We also see Paul's leather working in Acts chapter 18 and verse 3. Now, this was a kind of profession where you could actually talk with people while you were doing the work. But it also shows us that Paul became part of the culture.

He did accept support when it became available. Even later on in that same passage, Paul accepted support when Silas and Timothy brought some gifts from the church of Macedonia, especially Philippi. But Paul also was working within the culture.

He wasn't an outsider to it, just preaching at it. He became part of it. In fact, he was already a citizen of the Greco-Roman world and he became even better at being this citizen of the broader Greco-Roman world as time went on.

We also see variety. He reaches the women in Philippi through their mutual interest in monotheism. The jailer in Philippi, reaches through an earthquake and preaching.

Another area is through healings, what some have called power evangelism. Now, I talked earlier about signs and wonders and I'm not going to talk at length about them here, except as they relate to the book of Acts and some practical considerations. But the point is not that God always does everything that we ask him.

I mean, we all know that the original apostles from the first century, as much faith as they may have had, as empowered by the Spirit as they may have had, they've been dead for a long time. I don't know any of the really fired-up respectable Christians from the 19th century. Hudson Taylor is gone.

Adoniram Judson from the previous century is gone. I mean, nobody says that everybody always gets healed and then we live forever in these bodies. We're still waiting for when Jesus comes back to get resurrection bodies.

But the point is that God gives us samples of that future promise. In the Gospels, we read about the good news of the kingdom, that someday God is going to make everything right. He's going to restore everything.

He's going to wipe away every tear from our eyes. What he gives us in the present are samples of that. Healings are temporary.

If we die and we get raised from the dead, we're going to die again if the Lord tarries. If we're healed of something, well, that doesn't mean we're not going to get sick from something or die from something later on. In this world, people die.

It's part of the nature of this world and everyone recognizes that ultimately. But having said that, God does give us samples of that future glory. It's not just to the people who experience it, but it's to all of us who learn about it that we get to know that God is reassuring us of his promise.

He's not forgotten us in this world. His power is with us and someday he's going to make this world new. These are a foretaste of that.

Well, as I was reading the book of Acts as a fairly young Christian, it was actually I think during my freshman year of college, I noticed that the main method for getting attention for the gospel in the book of Acts was signs and wonders. Now, they got attention. Sometimes the attention was not always positive.

Sometimes they got persecuted, but people had to pay attention when there were signs and wonders. There were other methods of getting attention, public debate forums. Those of us who are trained academically now, you are getting trained academically now, or may have already been trained academically, but the more we learn, the more we're able to enter into discussions, and forums with other people and share our faith and dialogue with people.

But in terms of other ways of getting people's attention, again, the most common way in Acts, the day of Pentecost, what got people's attention was the tongues. Acts chapters 3 and 4, what got people's attention and drew the crowds, healing of the man who was paralyzed or unable to walk. Acts chapter 4 verses 29 and 30, they actually pray that God would give them boldness by stretching out his hand to heal and that signs and wonders would be done by the name of his holy servant Jesus.

In Acts chapter 14 and verse 3, God was confirming his message through signs and wonders. So, that's not surprising. When I was a young Christian, I noticed this.

And I also read a book published by University Press, a good evangelical book about sharing your faith, how to give away your faith. And in this book it said, you can pray for people. People usually appreciate it.

They like it if you pray for them if there's something wrong with them. So, you can just offer. They're usually not offended if nothing happens.

I mean, you can't make it happen, but if it does happen, it usually gets their attention. So, I was working at some apartment complexes, apartment complexes during the pandemic. And the summer pulling weeds and sanding walls and painting and doing just very rudimentary tasks there, sweeping.

When one of the people came by, I used to say they were elderly, but as I'm getting closer to that age myself, I don't like to use that expression. But anyway, they were much older than I was, mainly retired persons. There was this one woman who came by and she was complaining about something.

I asked if I could pray for her. She said, sure. I prayed for her, but nothing happened.

But another person came by, Mabel Cooper. And she said, oh, something's wrong with my knee. It's been really bad and the doctor can't do anything for my knee.

So, I prayed for her knee right there on the spot. And she came back a few days later and she said, Craig, you're great. My knee has been better ever since you prayed for it.

Now I need to get your work on my lungs because I've been coughing up blood and the doctor thinks I have lung cancer. I said, okay, I will come by on my lunch break and I will pray for you. But in the meanwhile, I'd been washing down the walls of her next-door neighbor who had just died of lung cancer, a chain smoker.

I showed her the rinse bucket, it looked like shellac. I said, you know, this is probably what your lungs look like by now. You really need to give up smoking.

She said, you know, my doctor says that too. In any case, I went by on her lunch break and I said, I'm going to pray for you. But whether God heals you or not, someday you're going to die and you need to be ready to meet him.

So, she prayed with me to accept Jesus as her Lord and Savior. And then I prayed for her to be healed. Her report to me was that after that she never coughed up blood and the doctor decided she didn't have lung cancer after all.

She lived on for many, many more years. That was just as a young Christian. I wasn't officially a minister or anything.

So, all of us can pray. Some people will be more gifted in this than others, but this is something we can do that can help people and it can also draw their attention to the gospel. Well, in the coming slides, we're going to look at Acts 1:8, where it talks about power and we can talk about signs leading to conversions in history.

And today I probably won't do that since I've done that already. But just looking at some examples in Acts. Acts 1:8, you will receive power when the Spirit comes.

What does Luke mean by power? In the gospel of Luke, not exclusively, but most often power is associated with casting out demons or healing. 436, 517, 619, 846, and 9-1. Again, in the book of Acts, Acts 3:12. It's not just the power or holiness that this man was healed.

It was by the name of Jesus, by his power. In chapter 6 and verse 8, Stephen was full of grace and power and therefore was doing wonders and signs. In chapter 10 and verse 38, Jesus anointed with the Spirit and power was healing all who were oppressed by the devil.

So, when we talk about power in Acts 1:8, I think we should think not only of power for witness in general but also that God will often confirm our witness by answering prayers and doing things that will really get people's attention. It's power from the Spirit and the Spirit was widely associated in Jewish circles with prophetic empowerment. We'll talk about that more later on.

Here's just a picture of my wife and me in front of Mabel Cooper's apartment where I prayed for her. I think at this point I'm going to skip ahead because I've already talked about the signs. I actually have a few different ones here, but I don't need to do them all.

So, drawing attention through signs. Paul possibly grew in this through his ministry. We read in Acts 13 where Sergius Paulus witnesses Eleazar of Cyprus struck blind.

That gets his attention. And Acts 14, says that signs and wonders were being done through the hands of the apostles, Barnabas and Paul. But when you get to Acts 19, it's on the kind of scale that you had back in the Jerusalem church.

I mean, he grew in this. And I know of cases where this has happened today too, where it started small or sometimes a person would be praying for people for a year or two and nothing would be happening, but they were sure that they were supposed to be doing it. And it can get very discouraging.

Normally, even if you don't pray for people, sometimes they get better, right? So, because God just built our bodies often to get better. That's God's gift too. But in any case, after a year or two, suddenly in one week, a whole lot of people started getting healed and it just started spreading from there.

I think as a way of letting us know, it's not us, it's God. And when God decided to turn it on, it was ready. So, we don't take the credit.

The credit belongs to the name of Jesus. He's the one who does the work through us. But Paul maybe grew in this during his ministry and Paul recognized that the attention was for the gospel, not for himself.

Another feature of evangelism in the gospel, sometimes God just arranges things. He just sets things up. We're not expecting it.

You have a parallel vision. Cornelius and Peter both have these visions. Peter wouldn't have been available to go to Cornelius before this, but God clearly sends him.

So, he goes and God is so eager to pour out the spirit. God doesn't even wait for Peter to finish his sermon but interrupts his sermon, and pours out the spirit on these Gentiles who are gathered. Another obvious case is when Philip is sent somewhere under very unusual circumstances, but he gets there and he finds an African official reading the Bible.

And the African official asks him, reading Isaiah chapter 53 about the suffering servant, about whom is this talking? Well, talk about a setup. I mean, Philip gets to

preach to him and God just set the situation up. I remember one time when I was a young pastor and we were going to have a church picnic.

We were just gathering together and I'm always happy to share the gospel, but that wasn't what I had in mind at that moment. We were just getting ready. There were only two of us there so far and we were just bringing some things together.

And a young lady walked up to me and said, is this a church picnic? I said, yeah. She said, can you tell me how to be saved? I said, yeah. She said, wait right there.

My brother wants to hear how to be saved too. That was a setup. I mean, the Lord set that up.

We didn't really have to do any work in that case. Other cases are more difficult, but we want to be obedient in every situation. How we live is also a matter of evangelism.

You know, at the end of Peter's sermon, 3000 people received Christ in Acts 2.41. But if you look at the literary structure of that last paragraph of Acts chapter two, it also concludes with effective evangelism in another way. It talks about the church after these 3000 people are converted, they're sharing worship, they're sharing meals, they're praying with one another. They're even so radical that they're sharing possessions.

And in verse 47, the Lord was giving them favor and adding to their number daily, those who are being saved. In other words, one way of evangelism was what happened with Peter. God set up a sign, a dramatic sign, and got a lot of people's attention.

Peter had the opportunity to preach. But in verse 47, people saw how the Christians were living and that's what drew them to faith. And they were continuing to be added to the church.

You see something similar to that elsewhere in the New Testament. I mean, for example, what Jesus says in John 13:34, and 35, says, love one another as I have loved you. He calls that a new commandment.

It wasn't new because it was love. Leviticus 19 verse 18 talked about loving one another as yourself, but it was new because it was a new standard. Love one another as I have loved you.

This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples. If you love one another as I have loved you, if we live in such a way that people can see the heart of Jesus, then they're being exposed to Jesus through that. And that will draw their attention.

That too is a sign. In John 17:23, he prays for the unity of his followers so that the world may know, Jesus says, that you, Father, have loved them just as you have loved me. Now, speaking of unity, people debate about the unity of churches.

We don't all have to belong to the same church. We don't even have to all believe exactly the same thing. We're brothers and sisters if we believe in Jesus as our Lord and Savior and we follow him.

But in the case of unity, unity is when we love one another. Unity is when we work together, we serve together for the gospel. Well, these are some various ways to get attention for the gospel.

Now, where to go? Well, on this we have to balance various factors. But the most important factor, of course, is where God leads. I mean, if God is leading you, then you better go there.

And it may be hard. It may take years to see fruit, or you might see it quickly. Actually, usually, God takes us through testing before he gives us too much fruit so we don't get puffed up in our heads.

But where God leads us, sometimes it may be just in a moment. We may have to go on a moment's notice. You see that in Acts chapter 8 and verse 29, where the Spirit says to Philip, go, join yourself to this chariot.

And he shares Christ with the African court official. Or in chapter 10 and verse 19, where the Spirit says to Peter, there's some men who have come to see you. You need to go with them.

I have sent them because of the vision that Cornelius had received. Well, sometimes the Spirit's guidance is negative. For example, in Acts chapter 16 and verse 7, it wasn't so hard when Paul was retracing the steps of where he'd evangelized with Barnabas, but he hadn't really been leading the mission before.

And now he goes out beyond these churches that they've already founded. And it seems like things are foundering. The Spirit says no when he wants to go into Bithynia.

The Spirit says no when he wants to go into Asia, Asia meaning the Roman province of Asia and Western Asia Minor. Now that no was a temporary no in Acts 16.6. Later on, he ends up, there's a mighty revival in Asia Minor, but he wasn't ready yet. He might've messed things up.

So, the Spirit said, no, he didn't go there. Then they get to Troas, which is a natural place to go. It's about a hundred thousand people.

It's a very strategic city, but he gets to Troas and he has a night vision. And the vision is somebody from Macedonia saying, come over to Macedonia and help us. He and the others, including Luke, get together and they interpret that.

They say, what does that mean? It must mean we're supposed to go to Macedonia. And it wasn't a vision of Jesus appearing. It wasn't anything more explicit than that.

And they get to Macedonia and they get beaten and suffer their way through Macedonia. Philippi is difficult. Thessalonica is difficult.

They even get chased out of Berea. They have to persevere based on the guidance that they had. But it was some guidance and some guidance is better than no guidance.

So, they went with what they had. Sometimes we may think God is leading us to a certain place for one reason. God may have a different reason in mind, but if we do our best to follow his leading, God is able to order our steps.

Our job is just to do our best. Sometimes it was a case of open doors. They left Macedonia for Achaia.

Actually, Paul was driven out of Macedonia and he had to go to Achaia. But there were open doors in Achaia and he got to minister there. It doesn't mention any revelation.

Paul may have had one, but basically what we do know is that Paul had to go to Achaia. He was sent there as a place to keep him safer. People were a bit more open-minded down there.

And sometimes God's will, God's leading, leads us into suffering. Acts chapter 21, there are prophetic warnings. This is what you're going to face if you go to Jerusalem.

And Paul's friends were saying, don't go because we know what the Spirit is saying. And Paul said I'm prepared to die if I need to. Paul knew God's will for him.

And so, you know, as great as it was that his brothers and sisters loved him and that they were hearing part of what God was saying, it was great for Paul to be forewarned, but Paul knew he was supposed to go. And finally, they desisted and said, the will of the Lord be done. Just because God is leading you into something doesn't mean you're not going to have a hard time with it.

It doesn't mean you're not going to suffer. In fact, usually, when we go into something breaking new ground, there is going to be hardship. You don't have to provoke it.

You don't have to say, please give me some or lead us not into testing. But if it comes, and it usually will, God uses that to teach us deeper dependence on him and he makes us stronger. And in places where Paul ministered, like in Thessalonica and Philippi, they saw what he went through.

And he was able to appeal to that and say, you know what it costs to follow Jesus. And they were able to persevere more strongly because of that. Because of his going to Jerusalem, he was able to preach the gospel in the temple.

He was able to preach the gospel in Rome while he went as a prisoner. He planned to go to Rome anyway, but as a prisoner, he actually got to preach to people he wouldn't have gotten to preach to otherwise, members of the Praetorian Guard, to even present the gospel before Nero's court. Probably Nero wasn't there the first time anyway, but to present the gospel before the royal court.

When we don't have any particular direction, however, the commission remains. Acts chapter one and verse eight. In Acts chapter 13 and verse two, they already knew that they were sent, but they hadn't gone yet because it wasn't time yet.

But now they were sent out. So, it doesn't always mean we're going to move somewhere. Some of the early Christians had to move because they were persecuted and God was using that to spread the gospel.

But sometimes it's where you are. You're just sharing it with people around you and you're just sharing it naturally because this is what matters to you. This is what you're passionate about.

But even when we don't have a particular direction or a particular commission, we have the general commission, the great commission. We can start with the connection that God provides. Well, where did the 12 start? They started in Jerusalem where they were at that point.

It's not where they were from, but it's where they were. Now they actually probably stayed there a bit too long, but the Lord did have his way of making sure that the gospel got out beyond Jerusalem. There were diaspora Jewish Christians, that is Jewish believers from outside Judea, outside of Jerusalem who had settled in Jerusalem.

Acts 11:20 says they were believers from Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch. They began sharing the gospel with people from their own people groups in Antioch. It might be what some people call friendship evangelism.

They were able to do relational evangelism with people with whom they had some common interests and some common factors. Eventually we're able to share it with Greeks as well. They began to transition that way, which was much more difficult for someone like Peter.

These people were already bicultural. They already had some cultural connections that went beyond the kind of cultural connections that Peter and the 12 had. Barnabas and Saul in Acts 13 leave for Cyprus.

Well, why Cyprus? One thing it was probably the closest place to sail to, but another thing was, guess where Barnabas was from? I mean, Barnabas had connections in Cyprus, so it made sense. Paul ministers in Cilicia. Acts doesn't explore that in detail, but Acts 9:30 does say he went to Cilicia as well as Syria and he'd already been in Syria.

And Galatians 1:21 says that he ministered in Syria and Cilicia. So, it's not surprising that he would have connections there. Some of those may not have worked out too well since he has to be careful there apparently later.

But in any case, in Acts 13, why did they go to Pisidian Antioch? There were more populated places on the coast. Pisidian Antioch had maybe 5,000 Roman citizens plus other residents. And some of the cities on the coast had like 100,000 people.

Why go to Pisidian Antioch? Well, in this case, Acts doesn't tell us this, but there may be a reason that archeology suggests. Of course, if you sail north from Paphos, you do come to the coastal area whereas if you go inland, you go to Pisidian Antioch. But there are other things in the coast of Lysia that were more populated.

Why go into Pisidian Antioch? We know from archeology that the Sergii Polliae, the family of which Sergius Paulus, the governor of Cyprus was a part, the Sergii Polliae had massive estates in that region, northeast of Pisidian Antioch and north of Acanium. And so probably they were going in part there because they had connections. They may have had a letter of introduction from Sergius Paulus.

Now, Paul went especially where he was distinctively equipped. Sometimes I've struggled because I loved ministering to people one-on-one on the street, but the Lord gave me academic gifts and there were places that I could go because of those gifts that some other people couldn't go. And so, I realized, okay, as much as I love doing the other things also, I need to go where I am distinctively equipped.

Paul went especially to urban areas. Antioch, where he's ministering at the beginning of Acts 13 and late in Acts chapter 11, Paul was distinctively equipped for that. Some places he's uniquely equipped for, but Paul was educated.

He was a Roman citizen. There were places where he could minister in a special way, like Rome, because he was a Roman citizen, where some other people wouldn't have gotten a hearing as easily. Or even in Corinth or Philippi that were Roman colonies, or even Pisidian Antioch was a Roman colony.

These were places where Paul had special inroads. Ephesus gave him a different kind of special inroads because of his education and his experience. Paul may have realized some of this when he was actually, after he was beaten in Philippi, the Philippian jailer may have said, you know, once he finds out they're Roman citizens, you know, that's actually respected here.

They actually take that seriously here. They actually take seriously the law that you're not allowed to beat Roman citizens here. Paul and Silas being Roman citizens then became a big issue in the other places they would go.

And one reason maybe Paul spends 18 months in Corinth. What I like to think, of course, the first thing is God's leading. But another issue I like to think about is where will the gospel not be preached if I don't do it? If I don't have any other specific guidance, if I have to make a choice between two things that are open to me, I want to do the one that won't get done if I don't do it.

Somebody else can go over here. Their ministry may be bigger. Praise God for their ministry.

But if we both go over here and we divide the ministry and this doesn't get done, that's not good. So, if it's important, then that's one of the factors to take into account. Another factor to take into account is centers for disseminating popular culture.

Antioch was multicultural. They had a multicultural leadership team there because it was multicultural. And word often spread from the cities and from these multicultural areas.

Paul is able to do that in Ephesus. It says that while he's in Ephesus in Acts chapter 19 verses 10:17 and 20, the word of the Lord spread from there to the entire province of Roman Asia, Ephesus being the most prominent city in Roman Asia. People were coming and going from Ephesus all the time.

If you reached people there, you would be reaching people from other people groups and from surrounding areas and it would spread faster. You can think in my country,

you can think of campuses where the turnover of a generation is like four years often. Some people take longer, but four years.

You can think of international students, some of whom will be able to take the good news back with them, just like the African court official was able to take it back with him. In your context, it may be different, but wherever you are, multicultural places, places where you can reach groups of people that may be reachable there, you may not need to travel 500 miles or 700 miles or try to travel a whole bunch of different places. God may have brought the people to you.

And Antioch was a place like that and Paul was ready to reach out to people there. Paul's goal within the empire was Rome. You may have heard the saying that all roads lead to Rome.

Well, that's because Rome built the roads, but it was true. People were coming and going. Paul, before he ever went to Rome, Romans 16 shows that he knew a whole lot of the people in Rome.

Why? Because people were coming and going from Rome all the time. If you reached the heart of the empire, you reached Rome, the message would be disseminated from there very well. Today, well, maybe the internet is an example of that.

It's good to have something that's congregationally oriented so you can disciple people, but the internet is a place where a lot of people congregate intellectually. Maybe someday the power grid will go down and that won't be true, but right now it's a place where we have a lot of opportunity. Just make sure you know what you're doing.

There are some Christians who say some things on the internet. How should I say this? I was an atheist before my conversion, and so I love atheists. I have some understanding of atheists, but some of the new atheists are just spouting nonsense on the internet.

They have not the slightest idea what they're talking about. They're picking up other things from the internet. Sometimes they're picking up things from intellectuals who are intellectuals in one area, but they have not the slightest knowledge of philosophy or the matters in which they're plentificating.

But sometimes there are Christians who do exactly the same thing, and it's an embarrassment. I know some atheists who are embarrassed about some of the new atheists on the internet, and I know some of us Christians who are embarrassed by some of the things some Christians do on the internet. Please be informed when you speak about things, but most of all, whatever you do, do it in love because we're called to love our neighbor no matter what.

In terms of reaching out, logistics. Well, we have a lot of material that we can learn about logistics and acts, although some of it is primarily for that culture, but it gives us models about being relevant to our own cultures. For example, they met in homes.

They didn't have public buildings available to them usually. They could meet in the temple in Jerusalem, but you're not going to meet in the temple of Aphrodite in Cyprus or the temple of Artemis in Ephesus or near Ephesus or the Parthenon, the temple of Athena in Athens. So, people were meeting, especially in homes.

That was a logistical issue. That's what was available for the first three centuries. That's mainly where the church met.

It wasn't that they were against meeting somewhere else. I mean, Paul spoke in synagogues and they would use larger homes when they had larger homes available. And in Jerusalem, they had the home meetings and they had the larger meeting.

But homes are economically viable. Homes are also easier if there's persecution. Homes are closer for people to get to if they need to walk in terms of reaching out to neighborhoods.

Of course, back then they didn't have cars, but they used what they had and what they had was effective. In fact, in the homes, they actually had ways that they could disciple people in a more intimate way. Team ministry was another factor.

In Acts chapter 13 and elsewhere, you see that you have team leadership in Acts chapter 13, the first two verses and Barnabas and Saul are sent out as a mission team and they take Mark with them. Later on, when Paul goes with Silas, he recruits Timothy to go with him, and then Luke joins with them. Later in Acts chapter 20, Paul has a whole lot of the people he's been mentoring, representatives from different cities coming with him to Jerusalem to carry the offering.

Although Luke doesn't mention the offering that much, just once. But in any case, team ministry. Now, I'm an introvert and I have often gone out on my own because, well, just like Paul in Athens, if there's nobody with you, that doesn't mean you shouldn't share the gospel.

But deliberately, it's usually better to go out with somebody. I have gotten beaten more often probably than necessary because of going out on my own in places that were sometimes dangerous. But another logistical issue we see in the church's growth is their leadership structure.

They had elders or overseers. Now, these leadership structures were borrowed from the larger culture. Ancient Israel had elders who would guide the affairs of the local village and elders would oversee synagogues.

The title overseer was used in some Greek leadership settings and also the Hebrew equivalent of it, *Mabachar*, is used, if I'm pronouncing it right, is used in the Dead Sea Scrolls for overseers of the Qumran community. Sometimes there's something already available in the culture. It doesn't have to be completely different.

If it works, you can adapt it, provided there's nothing wrong with it. And they took over some of the leadership structures within the culture. Paul wanted there to be leaders in the local congregations to give it stability.

So, in Acts 14:23, when they go back through these churches, they've just started these churches. It's not like these are elders who are experienced Christians, but they're the best they've got. And so, they put them in charge for the moment to help oversee things.

You have to work with what you have. So also, another logistical issue, the fourth one I'm mentioning, is they were willing to trust what God was doing. That's why they could delegate.

That's why the twelve were willing to delegate to the seven in Acts chapter six, following the example of Moses in Exodus 18 and Deuteronomy 34, delegating to the 70 elders or delegating to Joshua, laying hands on Joshua. And then the spirit came on him just like you have with the seven in Acts chapter six. Delegating means we trust what God is doing.

Now we know from elsewhere in the New Testament that sometimes it works out badly. You do your best to make sure that you delegate only to people who are very responsible. And they did that in Acts six, but sometimes people change or whatever, but we do the best we can.

Paul installed leaders again in Acts 14.23. Later on in the pastoral epistles, when it says, lay hands on one suddenly, lay hands on no one too quickly. Well, this is an emphasis. This is where they've had believers for at least 10 years.

So, they have more to work with. But sometimes you have to work with what you've got and just help as best as you can with that. Nurture it however you can, but Paul keeps getting chased out of cities.

So, he's doing what he can. Trusting what God is doing. Also, you see it in Acts chapter eight, the spirit's empowerment.

Well, what is the empowerment of the spirit about in the book of Acts? Acts chapter one in verse eight, the spirit will come on you and you will be witnesses. The spirit's empowerment was for the sake of witness. And that comes on all believers.

In Acts chapter two, he says at the end of his sermon in 2:39, this promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off. But you come to Acts chapter eight. Now, Jewish people expected that the restoration of Israel, that God would pour out his spirit on his people.

They did not expect the spirit to be poured out on the Samaritans. But when the Samaritans received the message about Jesus, the Jerusalemites were like, well, we need to check into this. Philip was more bicultural.

He had gone ahead and he'd had to leave Jerusalem anyway. And Peter and John went there and they saw this was a God. And they laid hands on the Samaritans so the Samaritans might receive the spirit.

Well, what's the point of that? Remember what the spirit is given to us for. Of course, God gives us the spirit for more than one reason. But in Acts, the main focus is we're empowered by the spirit to be witnesses.

The Samaritans were not just objects of mission anymore. The Samaritans became partners in mission. And sometimes in the past, we've had missionaries who go into places, they'll start churches and then they'll run churches for a hundred years.

But that wasn't the model we have in the book of Acts. It's great to go into a place and start churches. But once you have believers coming to any level of maturity, then they become partners.

Now you may have partners who are more experienced and hopefully people look up to the partners who are more experienced. Obviously, people looked to the Jerusalem church for leadership in many respects. But we also need to recognize that God gives the spirit to all of his people.

We all become brothers and sisters. And yeah, people mess up, but we need to be ready to trust the spirit's work in our brothers and sisters and to listen to people who have different cultural perspectives. They may be the ideal ones to reach their own culture.

But of course, we do want to listen to those who have special experiences. That's what we can learn from one another. Logistics further, the fifth point, people with economic resources.

Now, if you were in my course on Matthew, you heard me say a lot of what Jesus said about possessions. And Luke is even stronger on that, about sharing possessions with the poor. We'll talk more about that in Acts chapter two.

But that doesn't mean we blow off people who have economic resources. We're all given different gifts to bring and people with economic resources have a gift to bring. You see that in Luke chapter eight in verse three, there were women traveling with the disciples, traveling with Jesus and the disciples who were ministering to him out of their own resources.

These were fairly well-to-do women and they were helping to provide for the mission. Nobody was getting rich off it. Nobody was living wealthily, but they had food to eat.

Acts chapter 18, verse seven, when a gift is received from the church of Macedonia, Paul is grateful to have that and he's able to devote himself more fully in terms of his time to the ministry of the word. We also have people with teaching resources. We see that with Crispus, who was a ruler of the synagogue in 1808.

He's noteworthy to be mentioned. He becomes a believer. Well, he's already got some background.

He already knows some things that can be helpful. Now that doesn't mean he's as mature in the Lord, maybe as somebody else, but most of the people in Corinth were new believers at this point. All of them except Paul and probably Aquila and Priscilla.

But Apollos, he's a fairly new believer. He has to have things explained to him, some things he doesn't understand, but he is so equipped in the Torah that once he understands it, he's able to speak eloquently within his circles of influence and within circles that would listen to the kind of arguments that he was able to give. So there are people with teaching resources, people with backgrounds that equip them in special ways.

Whether your background is as a fisher, a fisherman, you might become a fisher of people. If your background is a shepherd, you might become a shepherd of people, as in the case of Moses and David or the disciples who were fishermen. God will, not always, some things we just have to leave behind us, but God will often take things from our background in ways that we wouldn't imagine and use them for good.

Then there are some terrible things in our background that just, you know, we need to be comforted, but we may find that other people can be comforted through the comfort that we receive from the Lord with those things. So people with certain kinds of resources, let's not ignore the resources that are in the body of Christ. People have gifts and skills.

When I was a pastor, there was somebody in the congregation who was a drama major. And so, we made use of her skills in the congregation. There was somebody who was a guitar major whose skills we could use.

And there were a number of different skills already there and others who wanted to cultivate skills. Another point that's valuable, it's important to report back to your home base or your supporters. I mean, it's one thing if you are the home base and you're ministering to the people around you, but if somebody goes out into a cross-cultural situation, whether it's in another country or just another kind of situation within the same country, reaching out to other groups of people or relocating to a less evangelized part of the country, it's important to report back to the home base, people who are providing support, whether it's financial support or prayer support.

Because of my current situation, I don't need financial support. I haven't needed it. I'm not in need for financial support.

The Lord provided it in different ways in the past, but only twice did I think I tried to raise money for a purpose and I don't have the gift of fundraising. It didn't work out very well in either case. But prayer support I need.

I recruit people to pray for me. And I have a close team of prayer supporters, about 20 people. That's just the number of the people I have or close who do that.

It could be a different number, but to them, I send prayer updates regularly. Well, in any case, another logistical issue, legal apologetic or publicity apologetic. Sometimes people really misrepresent Christians and they really misrepresent Jesus and they misrepresent what the gospel is about.

Well, what is Acts 24 through 26 about? Paul has been falsely accused and you've got this whole long section of apologetic. That suggests to us that apologetics is an important thing to do. And if we follow Luke's example, then we will also be concerned.

I mean, you can't refute every rumor. You can't satisfy everybody's skepticism. Paul talks about, how he was the object of slander.

Some people respected him. Some people disrespected him. He had to live with both.

But legal apologetic, publicity apologetic, insofar as possible, expose people to the truth. If they're false accusations in the early church, they said Christians were guilty of incest and cannibalism because this is probably, especially in the second century, they said Christians say, I love you, brother. I love you, sister.

Ah, incest. Or Christians say they eat the body and blood of the Lord. Ah, cannibalism.

Well, it was helpful that God raised up apologists to say, no, you're completely misunderstanding this. And these rumors have completely twisted the truth. Well, you're not going to convince everybody, but it is important to make people aware of the truth so that at least some people can be convinced.

Well, another issue with logistics, don't be naive. Problems will come. You see that in the book of Acts, persecution, internal division, and so on.

So, all the other logistics, it's great, but sooner or later you're going to face problems. And pardon my cartoons. It's just something I use sometimes when I teach.

So, with that, we are getting ready to move into Acts chapter one. I want to give some introductory background on Acts chapter one because I want to trace the theme of Acts one and two together. And that will be the next section.

But let me first give some introductory background on Acts chapter one. It's common to have recapitulation. When you have a two-volume work or a multi-volume work, a later volume could recapitulate the end of the previous volume.

And that's what you have with Luke 24. Much of that is recapitulated in a summary, briefer way, at the beginning of Acts chapter one. And it repeats some of the points there in greater detail, the points that Luke particularly wants to emphasize.

Remember, historians had the freedom to rearrange things. They had the freedom to paraphrase. The difference in wording was, well, sometimes it was an accidental oversight, but usually, it's not an accidental oversight, certainly not in something as well designed as Luke-Acts is.

Things are worded in a slightly different way in Acts chapter one, but it communicates the same essential message. Acts chapter one in verse one, is dedicated to Theophilus. That's actually clearer back in Luke chapter one, verse three, the first volume.

But in the second volume, he's dedicating it possibly to a sponsor. Theophilus could be his sponsor, he is supporting the distribution of the book. Or sometimes it would simply be dedicated to a prominent person whose attention you wanted to get.

So, the person would circulate the work and maybe sponsor some copies being made or something like that. But in this case, clearly, Theophilus is somebody that Luke

knows. And he knows that Theophilus is also a believer, but he's most excellent Theophilus.

He apparently has a very high social status, which was a very important thing in the eyes of the Roman world. And Christians were supposed to be able to surmount caste and class differences, but they could still appreciate when somebody is of a less reached, but higher social class that we get more people's attention and be able to circulate things. In Acts chapter one, verses two and three, there are sample evidences.

It talks about Jesus presenting evidence of his resurrection. Some of the sample evidences are listed in chapter 24 of Luke where he presents himself to the disciples alive, wants them to touch him, eats food before them, and so on. That's why in verse four of Acts one, it says they ate together.

Why is that important? Because in many Jewish traditions, an angel couldn't genuinely eat human food. So, this is emphasizing his physicality, the physicality of the resurrection. Some background on the prayer meeting in Acts chapter one verses 12 through 14.

Well, this is about one week to 10 days between the resurrection and Pentecost. Pentecost was, I'm sorry, no, not between the resurrection and Pentecost, between Jesus' ascension and Pentecost. It was about 50 days after the resurrection.

So, for one week to 10 days they're praying together and waiting for whatever God is going to do. They didn't know how long it would take. In verse 12, it talks about Mount Olivet or the Mount of Olives, which appears in the gospels as well.

That's the place where Jesus ascends. But according to Zechariah 14.4, that was also the place of the Messiah's expected coming. So, when it says, you'll see him come again the way you have seen him go.

Well, even in terms of location, that may be true. It's about half a mile east of the temple and several hundred feet above it. It's close to a Sabbath day's journey, as is mentioned here.

A Sabbath day's journey was about 2000 cubits, a cubit being roughly the length between one's elbow and one's longest finger. Although that varies from person to person, but an approximate standard. Chapter 1 and verse 13 speaks of the upper room.

Well, in terms of an upper room that could hold very many people, that could only be in the upper city, the wealthier part of Jerusalem. Most of the city was downwind

of the sewers, the lower city of Jerusalem. But the wealthy people had more spacious accommodations.

Now, many upper rooms were somewhat like attics, but there are some texts, some Jewish texts that report all the sages gathering together in an upper room. So, there were some homes that could have very spacious upper rooms. The 12, why does it speak of the 12? The 12 was the number of the tribes of Israel.

The Dead Sea Scrolls show us that a Jewish renewal movement could use that when it was thinking of the restoration of the 12 tribes. They would have 12 leaders who would be leaders in Israel when God would restore his people. For the 12 here, the names are not always the same as in some other lists.

The variations are not major, but we do have some variations and sometimes more than one name, even in the same list for the person. Well, it was very common for people to have several identifying names, either or both of which could be used for the person. And if you had a very common name like Simon, then you would almost have to use another name with it, Simon Peter, Simon the Zealot, or Canaanian if you want to use the Aramaic language for zealot.

Same with Judas, Judas Iscariot, although he's not here obviously, and another Judas or two different Jameses among the disciples. I mean, those were all very common names, just like Mary was the most common woman's name in Judea and Galilee. It's interesting how the most common names in these passages are actually really the most common names from the place and the period that they describe, not the common names from elsewhere in the empire.

Acts 1.14. In the broader culture, usually, there's a downplaying of women's roles, but here the equal participation of women is noteworthy. The language of prayer, sometimes it was used for a prayer house outside Judea, but Luke usually used synagogue for that. This just means that they were praying together.

And in verses 15 through 26, and I'll just deal with this background very briefly, but replacing an apostate apostle, they had 120. Now in the Dead Sea Scrolls, they had a group of leaders that included 12 special officials. They were to show that they were the true remnant of Israel.

120 isn't exactly 12, but it sounds like it's related to that. There were Jewish traditions of uncertain date that there were 120 elders who first passed on the law in the time of Ezra. So they're already, well, we don't know if it was already, but at an uncertain date, there was a tradition of leaders, 120 leaders in Israel.

Also, the Dead Sea Scrolls require one priest for every 10 men. So, if you've got 120, well, it would make sense if you've got 12 apostles. But Luke's point in mentioning

the 120 may simply be that the upper room was very packed, at least when you had everybody together.

And we don't know if everybody was there at once in any case. But in verse 20, Peter uses a common Jewish interpretive technique that Jewish rabbis later called *kol vomer*, how much more? He uses that to deal with the Psalms of the righteous suffer. If this was true of a righteous suffer in general, how much more must it be true of Jesus? Psalm 69, verse 25, and Psalm 109, verse 8, both talk about prominent accusers of the righteous suffer.

And then in verses 23 through 26, we have the casting of lots. Lots were often used for special duties. You have that in the Greek world and the Roman world for even many political offices or assignments where governors would go.

You have it in the Old Testament for special duties in 1 Chronicles 24 and 25 and so on. You have it in the Dead Sea Scrolls. You have it in the rabbis.

You have it mentioned in Josephus, where actually they drew lots to see who was going to be killed first. Josephus somehow survived to the end. He was the one holding the lots.

But in any case, it was also used as a form of divination in Greek circles. But it's used once before in Luke-Acts. It's used early here in Acts.

It's used early in the Gospel of Luke. In the Gospel of Luke, it's used for the choosing of a priest to go in and offer the incense. And there it's Zechariah.

Well, clearly God was in charge of that lot. And I think we can assume therefore that we can trust that God is in charge of this lot as well. Well, notice that some people have double names.

In the case of Joseph Barsabbas, it's a triple name when they're trying to choose among these two that they said, well, these meet all the qualifications. Let's choose lots to see which one the Lord wants to fill this office. So double names, triple names were actually quite common.

And especially when particular names like Joseph were so common that they required some qualification. But in the next session, we're going to look at Acts chapters one and two and trace a theme that runs through that. And that's the theme of power for witness.

This is Dr. Craig Keener in his teaching on the book of Acts. This is session 6, Evangelism and Introduction to Acts.