

Dr. Craig Keener, Acts, Session 5 Miracles and Evangelism Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Keener, Acts, Session 5, Miracles and Evangelism, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Craig Keener's lecture on the book of Acts focuses on miracles and evangelism. **He presents numerous firsthand accounts** of miraculous healings and resurrections from various parts of the world, primarily from Africa and Asia, to support his claims. **Keener then directly addresses** philosophical arguments against the possibility of miracles, particularly those of David Hume and Rudolf Bultmann, arguing that their skepticism is based on limited perspectives and flawed reasoning. **He concludes by exploring** the importance of prayer and effective evangelism strategies within the context of the book of Acts, highlighting the importance of discipleship and contextualization. Finally, he examines the literary unity of Luke and Acts through structural parallels.

2. 17 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Keener, Acts, Session 5 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Gospels – Acts → Acts).



**Keener_Acts_Session
n05.mp3**

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided lecture transcript by Dr. Craig Keener on Acts, specifically focusing on Miracles and Evangelism:

Briefing Document: Dr. Craig Keener on Acts, Lecture 5 - Miracles and Evangelism

Introduction:

This briefing document summarizes the key themes and arguments presented by Dr. Craig Keener in his lecture on "Miracles and Evangelism" within the Book of Acts. Keener utilizes a wide array of sources, including personal testimonies, historical accounts, and scholarly arguments to build his case. The lecture tackles the reality of miracles, the importance of evangelism, and the literary structure of Luke-Acts, intertwining them to illustrate how God works through signs and wonders to spread the Gospel.

I. Miracles and Divine Intervention:

- **Contemporary Eyewitness Accounts:** Keener emphasizes the importance of firsthand accounts, drawing from his personal experiences and interactions with individuals from diverse global locations. He provides numerous examples of alleged miraculous healings and resurrections, primarily from within evangelical circles in Congo, Papua New Guinea, China, and Indonesia, among others.
- **Quote:** *"One of the accounts was an account of a girl named Olive, who was six years old. And she had been pronounced dead in the hospital...And Pastor Andre said, no, let me pray. I just feel like the Lord wants me to pray...Well, a little while later during the prayer meeting, the pastor, the parents, and Olive walked into the prayer meeting, shocking the assistant pastor."* This demonstrates the immediacy and impact of reported miracles.
- **Quote:** *"Another example, and this is an example, in a sense, even closer within the family... they said, well, we tried all these other things. So, we're trying to see if the Christian God can do anything...He took her aside. He prayed for about half an hour, and then he presented her back to them alive."* This highlights the role of faith in the process.
- **Quote:** *"And some of the village people were saying to the members of the team, well, you want us to believe in your God, but our God is so powerful. Why would we need your God?...So, one of the Christians...said, well, this year it's going to*

rain on that day. And the people laughed at him." This illustrates how the power of God was demonstrated in a way to cause people to believe in him.

- **Nature Miracles:** Keener also covers accounts of nature miracles including the miraculous provision of water in Papua New Guinea and the manipulation of rainfall in China. He contends that such miracles cannot be dismissed as psychosomatic, since there is no mental or emotional connection that explains these events.
- **The Purpose of Miracles:** Keener argues that miracles are not merely random acts of power, but they serve as attention-getters. He emphasizes that God cares about people's needs and sometimes meets them miraculously to draw them to the gospel message, particularly in unreached regions. Miracles are not a panacea for health concerns, but a way that God demonstrates his love.
- **Quote:** *"God may answer prayer anywhere and sometimes does dramatic things elsewhere...But these dramatic kinds of signs are meant to get somebody's attention. If they're willing to believe, it's meant to get their attention so that they can hear the message so that they can believe."*
- **Statistical Evidence:** The lecture cites a Pew Forum survey indicating that hundreds of millions of people worldwide claim to have witnessed divine healings. This highlights the widespread nature of these claims, even beyond Pentecostal and Charismatic circles.
- **Quote:** *"And somewhere around 39% of the other Christians in these countries claim to have witnessed divine healings...we're probably talking about hundreds of millions of people who claim to have witnessed divine healings."*
- **Conversion and Miracles:** Keener notes a correlation between miracles and conversions, both in contemporary settings and throughout history, using examples from China, Korea, and India. He cites a source saying that, in China around the year 2000, up to 50% of conversions were due to faith healing experiences.

II. Challenging Skepticism:

- **David Hume's Argument:** Keener directly addresses David Hume's philosophical challenge to miracles, arguing that Hume's position is based on the presupposition of a non-theistic worldview, rather than a logical argument.

- **Quote:** *"Much of Hume's argument about miracles violating natural law depends on the definition of natural law...Hume simply presupposes this without admitting that that's a presupposition. He's just stating his opinion, not giving an argument. It's a circular kind of argument."*
- **Ethnocentrism and Bias:** Keener highlights the cultural biases inherent in arguments against miracles, including Hume's ethnocentrism, antisemitism, and defense of slavery. He suggests that Hume's dismissal of miracles stems from his narrow worldview, which was ignorant of the experiences of many different people. He also criticizes Bultmann's view that modern people cannot believe in miracles as being an elitist and Western viewpoint.
- **Quote:** *"Part of Hume's argument against accepting witnesses... is that only ignorant and barbarous nations affirm miracles...If somebody said that today, we would call that person an ethnocentric cultural bigot."*
- **Countering Circular Arguments:** Keener points out the circular nature of Hume's argument which is based on the presumption that uniform human experience excludes miracles. He argues that the very existence of numerous counterclaims requires that these experiences be taken into account, rather than being dismissed because they don't fit a pre-conceived paradigm.
- **Historical and Academic Challenges:** Keener notes that modern philosophical scholarship has challenged Hume's position, suggesting that his argument is not as strong as it once seemed. He mentions academic works published by Oxford that question Hume's assumptions.

III. Evangelism and Church Planting:

- **Prayer and the Holy Spirit:** Keener stresses the importance of prayer in the process of evangelism and church planting, noting how the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is often preceded by prayer in Luke-Acts.
- **Paul's Character and Methods:** The lecture highlights Paul's character as a servant, his commitment to the Gospel, and his willingness to endure hardship for the sake of ministry. He also emphasizes Paul's contextualization of the gospel, adapting his message for different audiences.
- **Quote:** *"Paul is the same whether he's on a ship and in Malta as he is when he's preaching to massive numbers of people in Ephesus. He's a servant, he's serving people."*

- **Content of the Gospel:** Keener emphasizes that the central message of the Gospel remains consistent throughout Acts, focusing on the death and resurrection of Jesus and the concept of one true God.
- **Strategic Evangelism:** Keener discusses strategic approaches to evangelism, including utilizing relational networks, using culturally relevant communication forums (synagogues, public debates, lectures), and the importance of raising up local leaders to ensure the long-term growth of the church.
- **Multiplication of Disciples:** Keener explains the importance of not just adding converts but multiplying disciples. He explains that the growth of the church is more effective if new believers are also discipled to win others to Christ.
- **Quote:** *"That's why in the book of Acts, we see that part of their agenda was to establish disciples who could carry on the mission, not just converts. That's why in Acts 14:22...they go back there and they establish elders, establish leaders. And they warn them in Acts 14.22, through much tribulation, we must enter the kingdom of God."*

IV. Literary Unity of Luke-Acts:

- **Parallelism and Themes:** Keener emphasizes the intricate literary structure of Luke-Acts, highlighting numerous parallels between the life of Jesus in Luke's Gospel and the ministry of the apostles in Acts. Examples include shared themes like the Holy Spirit, inaugural mission speeches, miraculous healings, opposition from Jewish leaders, and the raising of the dead. Keener also notes numerous parallels between Peter and Paul as leaders.
- **Literary Sophistication:** Keener suggests that the numerous parallelisms in Luke-Acts reveal a high level of sophistication on the part of the author, Luke.

Conclusion:

Dr. Keener's lecture makes a case for the reality of miracles by citing multiple sources from around the world. He challenges modern skepticism, particularly the position of David Hume, by exposing its logical weaknesses and cultural biases. He also emphasizes the practical implications of the Book of Acts for effective evangelism and church planting, urging listeners to consider the strategic approach and importance of discipleship. Finally, the literary unity of Luke-Acts indicates a cohesive theological narrative about God's work of salvation being done in the world.

4. Acts Study Guide: Session 5, Miracles and Evangelism

Acts, Lecture 5: Miracles and Evangelism - Study Guide

Quiz

1. In the story of Olive, what were the circumstances surrounding her death and subsequent healing? Olive was pronounced dead in a hospital and her parents, after seeking a second opinion, took her to the church. Pastor Andre prayed for her and, during the church's prayer meeting, she walked in, alive and well.
2. How did Jeanne Mabiala describe the birth of the child Milgrace? Jeanne Mabiala, a midwife, delivered a stillborn child whose umbilical cord was wrapped around her neck. She and two other women prayed for the child, who then came back to life.
3. Describe the circumstances of the miracle witnessed by Papa Albert Bissouessoui. Papa Bissouessoui found villagers gathered around a dead girl who had been taken to traditional healers. After the healers failed, the villagers brought the dead child to Papa Bissouessoui who prayed for her, and she was revived.
4. According to the lecture, what is the purpose of miracles in the context of evangelism? Miracles are not a panacea for health issues, but rather a means to get people's attention and open their minds to the gospel, particularly in unreached areas.
5. What was David Hume's argument against the possibility of miracles? Hume argued that miracles are violations of natural law and that natural law cannot be violated, leading him to conclude that miracles do not occur.
6. What is circular reasoning and how does it relate to Hume's argument regarding miracles? Circular reasoning is where the conclusion is already assumed in the premise. Hume's argument assumes that because miracles don't happen in his experience, they cannot happen anywhere, dismissing all eyewitness accounts to the contrary.
7. How did Rudolf Bultmann's views on miracles reflect a particular cultural perspective? Bultmann argued that modern people cannot believe in miracles because they live in a world of technology, excluding traditional believers and others outside of his Western, academic context.

8. According to surveys cited in the lecture, how widespread are claims of divine healing in both Pentecostal/Charismatic and other Christian denominations? Surveys indicate that hundreds of millions of people claim to have witnessed divine healings, including an estimated 200 million within Pentecostal and Charismatic churches across ten countries. Additionally, around 39% of other Christians in those same countries also reported having witnessed divine healings.
9. In the book of Acts, what role does prayer play in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and evangelism? The book of Acts shows prayer as a crucial precursor to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, frequently preceding or accompanying evangelistic efforts.
10. How does Paul adapt his approach to evangelism depending on his audience? Paul contextualizes the gospel message, quoting scriptures in synagogues, discussing God's provision to farmers, and engaging philosophical discourse with city leaders and academics.

Quiz - Answer Key

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Essay Questions

1. Compare and contrast the miraculous events in the lecture with the understanding of miracles presented by David Hume. How does the lecture critique Hume's philosophical position?
2. Discuss the role of cultural context in both the occurrence and reception of miracles, using examples from the lecture and drawing on the perspectives of Bultmann, Gonzalez, and Jenkins.

3. Analyze the significance of eyewitness accounts in the lecture's argument for the credibility of miracles. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this approach?
4. Explore the lecture's perspective on the relationship between evangelism and miracles in the book of Acts. How are these two concepts intertwined, and what are the implications for contemporary Christian mission?
5. Evaluate the various strategies for evangelism presented in the lecture, especially Paul's methods. What lessons can be learned about contextualization, long-term discipleship, and relational ministry?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Miracle:** An event that cannot be explained by natural or scientific laws and is often attributed to divine intervention.
- **Evangelism:** The act of sharing the Christian gospel with the intention of converting others to the Christian faith.
- **Natural Law:** A system of rules derived from the natural world. Hume believed miracles were violations of natural law.
- **Circular Reasoning:** A logical fallacy in which the conclusion of an argument is used as one of the premises; also known as begging the question.
- **Ethnocentrism:** The belief that one's own culture or ethnic group is superior to others.
- **Deism:** The belief that God created the universe but does not intervene in its affairs.
- **Pentecostalism/Charismatic:** A Protestant Christian movement that emphasizes the gifts of the Holy Spirit such as speaking in tongues and divine healing.
- **Contextualization:** The process of adapting a message or practice to fit a particular cultural context, while preserving its core meaning.
- **Sanhedrin:** The Jewish supreme council or court in ancient times.

5. FAQs on Keener, Acts, Session 5, Miracles and Evangelism, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ: Miracles, Evangelism, and the Book of Acts

1. **What types of miracle accounts are highlighted in the lecture, and what is the significance of these accounts?** The lecture highlights several miracle accounts, primarily focused on healings and resurrections, occurring primarily in the developing world. These include: the raising of a girl named Olive from the dead in Cameroon; a stillborn child, Milgrace, being brought to life in Congo; the resurrection of a young girl in Congo by Papa Albert Bissouessoui; the healing of Antoinette Malombe's daughter, Therese, after a snake bite in Congo, and a baby being raised from the dead through prayer in Congo. There are accounts from other nations, as well, such as the miraculous provision of water from a dried-up well in Papua New Guinea, and the rain that came when Christians prayed in China. These accounts are significant as they serve to demonstrate God's power and love, often occurring during evangelism and in previously unreached areas, while also challenging common presuppositions that miracles do not happen. They are not presented as a panacea for all illnesses or problems, but as signs that draw people to the message of God's love and the gospel.
2. **What is David Hume's argument against miracles, and why is it considered flawed?** David Hume argued that miracles are violations of natural law, and since natural law cannot be violated, miracles do not happen. This argument is flawed because it presupposes a non-theistic or deistic starting point, assuming that God cannot or does not intervene in the natural world. Hume's argument is circular, as it defines miracles out of existence based on the assumption that uniform human experience excludes them, while dismissing contrary evidence. Moreover, his definition of natural law as something that cannot be violated is prescriptive rather than descriptive, which is contrary to modern physics which typically treats natural law as descriptive. Hume's own biases and prejudices against the cultures that typically report miracles also undermine his stance.
3. **How does the lecture address claims that modern people cannot believe in miracles?** The lecture challenges the assertion that modern people cannot believe in miracles, a viewpoint particularly associated with Rudolf Bultmann. It highlights that millions of people around the world, particularly in the Global South, continue to witness and claim to experience divine healings and other miraculous occurrences. The lecture uses survey data, particularly from the Pew

Forum, showing that hundreds of millions of people, including many outside Pentecostal and Charismatic traditions, claim to have witnessed such events. This refutes the idea that disbelief in miracles is universal among "modern" people, and demonstrates that it is a culturally specific issue rooted in Western philosophical biases. The lecture also notes that this is a primarily Western issue and that people in Asia, and many other areas in the world, do not have a hard time believing in the supernatural.

4. **How does the lecture connect miracles to evangelism?** The lecture argues that miracles often accompany evangelism, particularly in regions where the gospel is being newly introduced. Miracles serve to get people's attention and demonstrate the power of God, drawing them to hear the gospel message. The lecture specifically connects miracles and evangelism to the book of Acts and what occurred in the early church. The lecture emphasizes that miracles are not the primary means of evangelism, but they are a part of it, especially during groundbreaking periods where new ground is being broken. It is noted that signs, like healings, tend to be more prevalent during the initial stages of evangelism when people are first exposed to the gospel.
5. **What are some of the literary parallels and themes emphasized in the book of Luke and Acts?** The lecture highlights several literary parallels between Luke and Acts, emphasizing Luke's sophisticated narrative skills. These parallels include: angelic visitations to Zechariah and Mary; the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Jesus and the Church; similar inaugural mission speeches of Jesus, Peter, and Paul; healing powers through contact with Jesus' garment, Peter's shadow, and Paul's clothes; opposition from Jewish leaders; the raising of the dead; the presence of God-fearing centurions; and the journeys of Jesus to Jerusalem and Paul to Rome. These parallels reveal the design of Luke-Acts as a cohesive literary work which emphasizes the continuation of God's mission from the Gospels into the early church. The way people responded to Jesus and Paul and how those accounts have some striking similarities.
6. **What is the significance of prayer in the book of Acts, according to the lecture?** Prayer is presented as a crucial theme in the book of Acts. The lecture highlights that prayer frequently precedes the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the occurrence of miracles. Instances cited include the Spirit coming upon Jesus when he was praying, the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost after prayer, the filling of believers with the Spirit after praying for boldness, and Paul and Cornelius being filled with the Spirit following prayer. Prayer is also connected to

miraculous healings and signs and wonders in Acts. This emphasis shows that prayer is a foundation for God's power being manifested in the world, especially in the context of evangelism and church planting.

7. **What principles of evangelism and church planting are highlighted in the lecture based on the Book of Acts?** The lecture emphasizes several principles for effective evangelism and church planting based on the book of Acts. These principles include: the importance of making disciples, not just converts; establishing local leadership within the churches that are planted; following up with sound teaching and warnings against false doctrine; and the need to engage with the local culture, using existing relational networks to spread the gospel; that is, contextualizing the message to make it more relevant to the culture they are engaging with. It was also noted that, though Paul was an intellectual, his ministry was often accompanied by signs and wonders and that one does not need to be particularly educated for their ministry to be used by God. Also it was noted that when missionaries or pastors remain in a community for long periods of time, that stability creates an environment more likely for growth. There was an emphasis on a longer-term multiplication approach rather than a short-term addition approach.
8. **How does the lecture address the idea that miracles are solely confined to ancient times?** The lecture directly refutes the idea that miracles were only for ancient times. It emphasizes that similar accounts of miracles—particularly healings and resurrections—are widespread in the modern world, especially in the Global South. The lecture supports this assertion with numerous examples, including the ones mentioned above in Cameroon and Congo, as well as survey data that confirms the widespread belief and experience of divine intervention. By presenting these contemporary examples, it challenges the notion that miracles have ceased, arguing that the same God who worked in the first century continues to work in the world today, often in conjunction with the spread of the gospel.