

Dr. Craig Keener, Acts, Session 6 Evangelism and Introduction Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Keener, Acts, Session 6, Evangelism and Introduction, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Craig Keener **examines evangelism in the Book of Acts**, exploring diverse methods employed by early Christians. He **highlights the importance of relational networks**, such as families and social groups, alongside public means like synagogues and debates. Keener **discusses the role of signs and wonders in attracting attention** to the gospel, balancing this with the significance of lifestyle evangelism and God's providential orchestration of events. Finally, he **analyzes logistical aspects** of early church outreach, including leadership structures, resource utilization, and the importance of reporting back to supporting communities.

2. 17 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Keener, Acts, Session 6 – 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
n06.mp3

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. Craig Keener's lecture on Acts:

Briefing Document: Dr. Craig Keener on Evangelism in Acts

Source: Excerpts from "Keener_Acts_EN_Lecture06.pdf" (Lecture 6: Evangelism and Introduction to Acts)

Overall Theme: This lecture focuses on the diverse and organic approaches to evangelism presented in the Book of Acts, emphasizing the role of the Holy Spirit, relational networks, signs and wonders, and the importance of contextualization and cultural engagement. It also explores the leadership, logistics, and challenges faced by the early church.

Key Concepts & Ideas:

1. Contextualized Gospel:

- The gospel message in Acts remained consistent, but its presentation was adapted to different audiences. "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."
- This highlights the importance of understanding the cultural context when sharing the Gospel.

1. Diverse Evangelistic Methods:

- **Relational Networks:** Evangelism was not limited to formal settings. Believers shared their faith as they traveled and in their homes. "Believers shared the message as they traveled...all the believers were carrying the message with them."
- **Organic Approach:** Beyond structured gatherings, evangelism happened naturally through daily life and relationships. "But apart from synagogues, this was very organic. They were following up with individuals. It's relational very much."
- **Household Evangelism:** The concept of "household" included relatives, servants, and clients. "Households consisted of relatives, and clients. For example, Lydia's household may have included servants and workers."

- **Target Groups:** Reaching out through groups based on common interests or shared experiences. "Sometimes you can have small groups that come together based on common interests. It's called target groups sometimes."
- **Engaging in Culture:** Paul worked as a leather maker, demonstrating engagement with the culture. "Paul also was working within the culture. He wasn't an outsider to it, just preaching at it. He became part of it."

1. The Role of the Holy Spirit:

- **Power for Witness:** The Holy Spirit empowers believers for witness, going beyond simply general inspiration to include the enabling to demonstrate the power of God through signs and wonders. "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."
- **Prophetic Empowerment:** The Spirit's power was linked to prophetic empowerment. "It's power from the Spirit and the Spirit was widely associated in Jewish circles with prophetic empowerment."
- **Direction and Guidance:** The Holy Spirit provides specific direction for ministry (examples of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, Peter and Cornelius) and sometimes even places "no-go" boundaries. "The Spirit says no when he wants to go into Bithynia." "Sometimes the Spirit's guidance is negative."

1. Signs and Wonders:

- **Attention-Grabbing:** Signs and wonders (healing, speaking in tongues) drew attention to the Gospel message and confirmed its truth. "The main method for getting attention for the gospel in the book of Acts was signs and wonders... people had to pay attention when there were signs and wonders."
- **Foretaste of the Kingdom:** Healings are seen as temporary samples of God's future restoration and promise. "God gives us samples of that future promise. ...Healings are temporary."
- **Divine Initiative:** The examples from Acts show God's initiative, not simply human power. "It's not us, it's God. And when God decided to turn it on, it was ready."
- **Testimony, not just the event:** "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."

1. **God's Arrangement:**

- God orchestrates situations to present opportunities for evangelism. "Sometimes God just arranges things. He just sets things up. We're not expecting it."
- Examples of divine setups: Cornelius's vision, Philip and the Ethiopian, the young lady at the picnic.

1. **The Witness of a Loving Community:**

- The way Christians lived—in fellowship, sharing, and love—was itself a form of evangelism. "People saw how the Christians were living and that's what drew them to faith."
- Living by the new commandment to love one another as Jesus loved. "Love one another as I have loved you. ...This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples."
- Unity among believers as a powerful witness. "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."

1. **Leadership and Logistics**

- **Direction from God:** Following God's leading is the most crucial factor in determining where to minister. "The most important factor, of course, is where God leads."
- **Team Ministry:** The importance of collaborative ministry, not just individual efforts. "Team ministry was another factor."
- **Local Leadership:** Establishing local leaders (elders/overseers) to provide stability. "Paul wanted there to be leaders in the local congregations to give it stability."
- **Delegation:** The willingness to delegate responsibilities to others and trust in God's work through them. "Delegating means we trust what God is doing."
- **Utilizing Resources:** Valuing and utilizing all gifts within the body of Christ, including economic and teaching resources. "People with economic resources...have a gift to bring."

- **Reporting back:** Reporting back to home bases or supporters is a good practice when doing ministry beyond your immediate circle. "It's important to report back to the home base, people who are providing support, whether it's financial support or prayer support."
- **Logistical considerations:** Meeting in homes due to cultural norms and persecution, and using what was available for effective ministry. "They met in homes. They didn't have public buildings available to them usually...Homes are economically viable."
- **Apologetics:** Defending the faith and addressing misrepresentations of Christianity. "Legal apologetic, publicity apologetic...expose people to the truth."
- **Realistic Expectations:** Understanding that challenges and problems will inevitably arise. "Don't be naive. Problems will come. You see that in the book of Acts, persecution, internal division, and so on."

1. **Geographic Strategy:**

- Starting locally (Jerusalem), then expanding to surrounding areas, leveraging existing connections. "They started in Jerusalem where they were at that point."
- Utilizing diaspora networks and reaching out to people with similar backgrounds. "They began sharing the gospel with people from their own people groups in Antioch."
- Targeting urban centers, places of cultural influence, and areas where the message might spread more widely. "Antioch was multicultural. They had a multicultural leadership team there because it was multicultural."
- Strategic targeting of multicultural centers such as Ephesus and utilizing the spread of ideas through these hubs. "If you reached people there, you would be reaching people from other people groups and from surrounding areas and it would spread faster."

1. **Importance of Power for Witness:**

- The Spirit's empowerment was for the sake of witness, and comes on all believers. "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."

- The Samaritans, once the objects of mission, became partners in mission when the Spirit was poured out on them. "The Samaritans were not just objects of mission anymore. The Samaritans became partners in mission."

1. **Introductory Background on Acts 1:**

- Acts 1 recapitulates Luke 24 and is dedicated to Theophilus.
- It emphasizes the physicality of the resurrection, and notes the 1 week - 10 day period between the ascension of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit.
- The disciples are gathered in an upper room on the Mount of Olives, a site which had eschatological significance.
- The 12 was the number of the tribes of Israel and the 120 showed that they were the true remnant of Israel.
- There is mention of women's equal participation in the prayer meeting.
- They cast lots to replace the apostate apostle, in line with Jewish practices.

Concluding Remarks:

Dr. Keener emphasizes that evangelism in Acts was a dynamic and multifaceted endeavor. It involved not only preaching and teaching but also living out the Christian faith in a way that drew others to Christ. He stresses the importance of following the Spirit's leading, being culturally relevant, and trusting that God works in diverse ways. He concludes the session by laying the groundwork for discussion of the theme of 'power for witness' in Acts 1 and 2.

This document should provide a comprehensive overview of the main points from Dr. Keener's lecture, along with supporting quotes.

4. Acts Study Guide: Session 6, Evangelism and Introduction

Acts Lecture 6: Evangelism and Introduction to Acts - Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each, based on the provided source material.

1. How did believers in the early church share the gospel, according to the text?
2. What are some relational networks mentioned in the text that were used for sharing the gospel?
3. How did Paul integrate into the culture in the areas he evangelized?
4. What role did signs and wonders play in evangelism, according to the text?
5. What point does the text make regarding the temporality of healings?
6. Give an example from the text about God arranging evangelistic opportunities.
7. According to the text, how does the way Christians live contribute to evangelism?
8. What kind of guidance did Paul and his companions receive when starting their mission work?
9. What factors does the text mention about where to go on a mission?
10. What were some of the logistical considerations for the early church's evangelism?

Quiz - Answer Key

1. Believers in the early church shared the gospel through relational networks as they traveled, and also through organic follow-ups with individuals. They shared the message in homes with relatives, clients, and others within their social networks. The text indicates that all the believers were carrying the message with them.
2. Relational networks included synagogues, public debate forums, households, and also patrons and clients where those with higher social status would gather peers and dependents. Also small groups that gathered around common interests, like support groups, were networks for sharing the gospel.

3. Paul integrated into the culture by becoming part of it through his work as a leatherworker and not being an outsider just preaching at it. He also embraced his identity as a citizen of the Greco-Roman world and used it to his advantage, as well.
4. Signs and wonders, such as healings and speaking in tongues, drew people's attention to the gospel, though at times this also led to persecution. They served as a means by which God confirmed his message and provided a foretaste of the future kingdom.
5. The text states that healings are temporary and are samples of a future promise, not an eternal state. It makes the point that even with healings, people will still eventually experience sickness and death, until the final resurrection.
6. The text gives the examples of Cornelius' and Peter's parallel visions that resulted in Peter going to the Gentiles, and of Philip encountering an Ethiopian court official who was already reading the Bible. Also, a woman approached the author at a church picnic and asked how to be saved.
7. The text mentions that the way Christians live, specifically through the love and unity they share, serves as an avenue for evangelism. It indicates that the way Christians treat each other demonstrates the heart of Jesus and draws people to the faith.
8. Paul and his companions received guidance from the Holy Spirit, sometimes through visions or prophetic messages. At times, they were directed to go to specific places, and at other times, the Spirit would prevent them from going to a particular place.
9. When considering where to go on a mission, the text emphasizes that the most important factor is following God's leading, even if it leads to hardship. The text also suggests targeting urban areas, centers of popular culture, or locations where a unique contribution is needed.
10. Logistical considerations for the early church included meeting in homes, forming team ministries, and establishing leadership structures such as elders or overseers, often utilizing existing cultural models. They also relied on those with economic resources, teaching resources, and varied gifts and skills.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Answer these questions in a well-organized, multi-paragraph essay.

1. Analyze the various methods of evangelism presented in the text from Dr. Keener's lecture on Acts and discuss which appear most effective and why?
2. Discuss the role of the Holy Spirit in the evangelism of the early church as described in the text. How did it empower believers and guide their mission?
3. Examine the relationship between miracles, healings, and evangelism in the book of Acts. How were these signs used, and what were their intended purposes?
4. How does the text reconcile the idea of God's specific guidance for ministry with the more general call to evangelism? Use examples from the text to support your claims.
5. Based on this lecture, what practical advice would you give to someone seeking to effectively share the gospel today, considering both the strategies and challenges of the early church?

Glossary of Key Terms

Apologetic: A reasoned defense of Christian beliefs, often aimed at addressing doubts or misrepresentations.

Diaspora: The dispersion of the Jewish people beyond their traditional homeland.

Evangelism: The act of sharing the Christian gospel or good news, often with the intention of converting others.

Greco-Roman world: The region and culture of the Mediterranean world influenced by both Greek and Roman civilization during the time of the New Testament.

Kol vomer: A Jewish interpretive technique that is an *a fortiori* argument, essentially meaning “how much more?” It is often used to move from a lesser point to a greater point.

Patrons and Clients: A social system in the ancient world in which those with higher status (patrons) would support or protect those of lower status (clients) who would then provide honor and services to their patrons.

Power Evangelism: A method of evangelism that emphasizes supernatural power and signs, such as healing or casting out demons.

Recapitulation: The act of summarizing or repeating key points, especially at the start of a subsequent volume or section of writing.

Signs and Wonders: Miraculous events that are often interpreted as evidence of divine power or a supernatural intervention.

Synagogue: A Jewish house of worship and assembly, often used as a space for communal study, prayer, and instruction.

5. FAQs on Keener, Acts, Session 6, Evangelism and Introduction, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Evangelism and the Book of Acts

- **How did the early Christians in the Book of Acts share the gospel, and how can we apply their methods today?**
- The early Christians shared the gospel through diverse methods, both public and private. They utilized existing cultural networks like synagogues and public forums for debates. Crucially, they leveraged relational networks, sharing with friends, family, and household members, including clients and patrons. This often took place organically as believers traveled and through personal interactions. They also formed groups based on shared interests as opportunities for outreach. We can apply these methods today by seeking out similar networks within our culture, creating support groups, and being intentional in sharing our faith within our existing relationships, recognizing that households and relational networks may look different today than in the ancient world.
- **What role did signs and wonders play in the evangelism of the early church, and how does this relate to today's context?**
- Signs and wonders, including healings and dramatic events like the tongues at Pentecost, frequently drew attention to the gospel in the Book of Acts. These were seen as samples or foretastes of God's future restoration of all things. It's important to recognize that these signs and wonders were not guaranteed to all believers or to always occur, but that when they did occur they were meant to draw attention to the power of God and the message of the gospel. Today, we can learn from this by being open to God working powerfully in our lives and in the lives of those we minister to, recognizing that spiritual gifts are varied and that we should not take credit for these instances, but rather point to Jesus.

- **What does the book of Acts reveal about the importance of community and its role in evangelism?**
- The Book of Acts highlights the crucial role of community in evangelism. The early believers shared their lives, possessions, meals, and worship. This loving community served as a witness to others, drawing them to faith. This is demonstrated most clearly in Acts 2:47 where the actions and lifestyles of the Christians served to draw people to faith. We can emulate this today by living out our faith in authentic community and striving to reflect the love of Jesus in our interactions with others. We are not required to be part of one specific church, but to live together in unity of purpose for the gospel.
- **How did God guide the early church's mission, and how can we discern God's leading today?**
- God guided the early church's mission through various means, including visions, direct promptings by the Spirit, and both open and closed doors. Sometimes the Spirit's guidance was specific, and at other times, it was not. The examples of Philip and the Ethiopian official and Paul being diverted from Asia show this. Discerning God's will involves obedience to the general commission to share the gospel and being attentive to the opportunities, directions, and obstacles God presents us with, even when those lead into difficult circumstances. It's important to recognize that even when we think God may have a specific purpose for us going to a place, God may have a different purpose in mind for us.
- **How did the early church navigate geographical strategy, and what can we learn from their approach?**
- The early church was strategic in its geographical outreach, often starting in Jerusalem and then spreading outwards to places with existing connections (Barnabas in Cyprus), urban areas with influence, and cultural crossroads like Antioch, Ephesus and Rome. They targeted places where people gathered and where the gospel could spread most effectively. We can learn from this by considering our own contexts and resources, reaching out to those in our communities, and seeking opportunities to serve in places that God may have already prepared for us, considering the most effective way to spread the Gospel. This includes using our unique skills and gifts for this purpose.

- **What logistical considerations did the early church face, and how did they respond to them?**

The early church faced several logistical challenges, such as meeting in homes due to the lack of public buildings, which then promoted more intimate discipleship, and organizing team ministries. They also navigated leadership structures by adapting existing models of elders or overseers. They prioritized working together, and were not naive about the problems that would come up (persecution, division, etc.) They were willing to delegate responsibilities and trust that God was working even in times of persecution and challenge. This included being wise in how they presented themselves to the broader community through legal and publicity apologetics. This provides a model of how the church can adapt and stay faithful to its purpose.

- **What role did the Holy Spirit play in the evangelism of the early church, and how does this relate to our understanding of empowerment today?**
- The Holy Spirit was absolutely central to the evangelism of the early church, empowering believers to be witnesses, to perform signs and wonders, and to expand the reach of the gospel, even among those that would be considered outside the immediate circle. The Holy Spirit does not just empower leaders, but all those who believe in Jesus. Today, we should seek the Spirit's guidance in all we do, recognize the gifts that the Spirit provides us with, be open to cultural differences and how different people may be better equipped to reach their own cultures. The Holy Spirit's empowering purpose is also for witness, not simply individual edification.
- **What are some key takeaways from the Book of Acts about the importance of being aware of the cultural context in which evangelism takes place?**
- The book of Acts emphasizes the importance of contextualizing the gospel message for different groups and cultural settings, as evidenced by Paul's flexibility and adaptability in sharing the message in different places. The early church took advantage of existing cultural networks like synagogues and public forums but was also intentional in reaching individuals in relational settings. They recognized the importance of reaching people where they were, with consideration for the specific social and cultural backgrounds of people. It can be seen that by becoming part of their surrounding culture, they were more effective in sharing the gospel. We should similarly be culturally sensitive and be prepared to explain the gospel in ways that are relevant and understandable to those in our own contexts.