**Sermon Based Community Group Leader Guide**

**Acts 2**

**\* Read Acts 2. Open in Prayer.**

**\* Sermon Overview**

In this sermon, Pastor Aaron will emphasize that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior. Since this is true, Peter calls for a response to this Jesus. Will we respond in repentance and faith or in unbelief. Pastor Aaron’s desire for this sermon is to clearly articulate the gospel and call for response. In doing this, he will model for us what Peter did in his day and what we are called to do in our day: to be Spirit-empowered witnesses of the gospel of Jesus Christ, sharing this good news where we live, work, and play.

Note: Please know that this section may change to reflect what the pastor emphasizes on Sunday morning, if the discussion guide is revised.

**\* Prompt Questions**

1. Was there anything that stood out to you in the pastor’s sermon? Are there any clarifying questions that you may have regarding the sermon?

2. How have you been seeking to apply the sermon in your own life this week? Or, what is one way that you can apply the sermon to your life this week?

3. What was the take away from the sermon for you? If you had to sum up the main idea of the sermon in one sentence, what would it be? What main themes do you see in the text and did you hear in the sermon?

4. How have you seen God at work this week in your life and in the lives of those around you? How has God been working in you this week through His Word, through prayer, through the body of Christ, and through service/evangelism? What were the highlights and lowlights of your week? How can we be praying for you specifically?

**\* Observation/Interpretation Questions[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Note: Please do not feel compelled to get through every one of these questions. I have given them in hopes that they will drive us back to the text so that we may diligently search the Scriptures as the Bereans did (Acts 17:10-15). These questions will give us a grasp of what the text says/means so that we can apply the text to our lives. I would encourage you to spend the majority of your time on application questions so that we can become “doers of the Word and not hearers only” (James 1:22).

**1. What is the context of Acts 2?**

*Luke wrote Luke and Acts (written around A.D. 62) to Theophilus in order to give him an accurate account of the life, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus and to tell how Jesus continues to work through Spirit-empowered witnesses to carry the gospel to the end of the earth without hindrance and with boldness. Acts 1:8 serves as the theme verse of the book and as the outline for the book, for chapters 1-7 focus on Jerusalem, chapters 8-12 focus on Judea and Samaria, and chapters 13-28 focus on the end of the earth. The risen Lord sends His Spirit to empower followers of the Way to be witnesses who proclaim the kingdom of God to the end of the earth.*

*In Acts 2, the Spirit is poured out, leading to the birth of the church. In verses 1-13, the promise of the Father (see Acts 1:4-5, 8) is poured out and the crowd responds as they hear the mighty works of God proclaimed in their own languages. In verses 14-36, Peter declares the significance of the outpouring of the Spirit and proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ. In verses 37-41, Peter calls those who have been cut to the heart to repent and be baptized, knowing that by faith in the name of Christ they will receive forgiveness of sins and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In verses 42-47, Luke describes for us the church in community.*

**2. How are we to understand the signs of the Pentecost in Acts 2:1-4?**

*Pentecost occurs during the festival of weeks, which is a time of thanksgiving for the wheat harvest in early June that occurs fifty days after the Passover. On this day, the 120 disciples were gathered together when the outpouring of the Holy Spirit suddenly occurs. Luke uses sensory descriptions to paint the scene for us: sound like a mighty rushing wind, tongues as of fir resting on each one (fulfillment of Numbers 11:29), and speaking in tongues/languages of the Diaspora Jews who have come back to Jerusalem to celebrate the Festival of Weeks. The Diaspora Jews who hear the mighty works of God proclaimed in their own language respond in two ways: (1) questioning the significance of this event and (2) mocking the disciples at this event. The question, “What does this mean?” (in v. 12), sets up the crowd for Peter’s sermon in verses 14-41.*

*For the Festival of Weeks, see Exodus 23:16; Leviticus 23:15-21; Deuteronomy 16:9-12. For fire as a symbol of God’s presence/glory, see Exodus 3:2-4; 19:18; 24:17; Luke 3:16.*

*Of the peoples listed in Acts 2:8-11, I. Howard Marshall writes, “It must suffice to observe that the list is clearly meant to be an indication that people from all over the known world were present, and perhaps that they would return to their own countries as witnesses to what was happening. All of them as worshippers of Yahweh could tell that the Christians were celebrating the mighty works of God.”*

*Derek Thomas writes, “Thus, Pentecost was a staging post on a much grander vista of biblical history. It signaled that something had been done (the atoning work of the Messiah) and that something had not yet been fully accomplished (the gathering of the people of God into the visible church of Jesu Christ). The coming of the Holy Spirit was a result of the former and for the enabling of the latter.”*

*For idea of where the Diaspora Jews came from, see the map below that comes from the ESV Study Bible.*



**3. How are we to understand Peter’s use of Joel 2:28-32 in Acts 2:14-21?**

*Peter answers the question, “What does this mean?”, in verses 14-21. First, he responds to the accusation of drunkenness by pointing out the absurdity of this charge since it is 9 in the morning. After responding to this charge, he cites Joel 2:28-32 to demonstrate that this event is in fulfillment of Scripture. According to God’s plan of redemption, He would pour out His Spirit on all His children, and when His Spirit comes it will lead to His children prophesying, which could be interpreted as speaking in tongues of the mighty works of God. In short, Peter sees this event as the fulfillment of God’s promise to His children. The outpouring of the Spirit only comes after the life, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension/exaltation of Christ takes place, which is what the last phrase of Joel 2:32 (“everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”) allows Peter to fill out in the remainder of his sermon.*

*For more background, see Numbers 11:29; 1 Corinthians 12:13.*

*R. C. Sproul writes, “The Holy Spirit is sent to empower the church to bear witness to Christ, to apply the work of Christ on the cross in terms of its redemptive significance to all who believe. The Father sends, the Son accomplishes, and the Spirit applies the work of Christ. On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit was poured out without measure, and the focus was on Christ.”*

**4. What is Peter’s main point about Jesus in verses 22-36?**

*The main point of Peter’s sermon in these verses is found in verse 36: “Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” What Peter desires for the crowd to know is that the life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus is important because He is our Lord and Savior/Messiah/Christ. To show this, Peter once again cites two scriptural passages (Psalm 16:8-11 and Psalm 110:1). Peter’s argument regarding Psalm 16:8-11 is that the Psalm cannot point to David because he is dead, but it most certainly points to Jesus because death could not hold him. Peter’s argument regarding Psalm 110:1 is that Jesus is the ascended Lord to whom David’s Lord spoke, “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.” In short, Jesus is revealed to be God by His works/miracles, sent by the Father to redeem, shown to be the new David in his resurrection, and worthy of our worship as the exalted Lord.*

*For more background on Jesus as the greater David, see Psalms 89:3, 35-37; 132:11-12; 2 Samuel 7:12-16. For more passages alluding to or citing Psalm 110:1, see 1 Corinthians 15:25; Hebrews 1:13; 10:13; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20, 22; Colossians 3:1.*

*John Polhill writes, “Acts 2:22-36 is the heart of Peter’s sermon. It begins with an introductory summary of God’s action in the ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ (vv. 22-24). A scriptural proof from Psalm 16:8-11 then shows that Christ is indeed the expected Messiah, as his resurrection proves (vv. 25-31). A further scriptural proof from Psalm 110:1 depicts how the risen Christ is now both Messiah and Lord exalted to the right hand of the Father (vv. 32-36).”*

*R. C. Sproul writes, “Peter is saying that it is a matter of objective reality. God, who created heaven and earth, has made Christ the Lord of the universe. He rules; He does not wait for us to invite Him. He rules us whether or not we want Him to rule. We can be hostile to His reign; we can be renegades in His dominion; we may fight against His just empowerment as King of kings and Lord of lords, but all that does not reduce Him to impotency. Our attempts to supplant Him as Lord are impotent because God has decreed His lordship.”*

**5. What does Peter command those who have been cut to the heart to do in response in Acts 2:37-41?**

*After hearing this scripture-filled, Christ-centered sermon, the crowds are cut to the heart by the Spirit of God, and they ask Peter, “What shall we do?” Peter calls the crowds to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. In their repentance from sin and faith in Christ, they will find forgiveness of sins and reception of the indwelling Spirit to help them walk in holiness. The baptism is an outward picture of this inward change from death to life by the power of the gospel. In his call to the crowds, Peter notes that this gospel is for the hearers, their children, those who are far off, specifically for “everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself (verse 39),” which points us to the gospel going to the nations. Peter closes the sermon by urging the hearers to save themselves by repenting of their sin and trusting in Christ to save. By the gracious work of the Spirit, 3,000 souls were brought to faith in Christ on that day.*

*Derek Thomas writes, “There are three words in the Greek New Testament rendered ‘repent.’ One is the word translated ‘repent’ in Acts 26:20 and has in view the need to turn around, or turn back. It is a volitional idea suggesting the need to abandon old lifestyles. Another word is the one employed in 2 Corinthians 7:8 and translated ‘regret.’ It brings to the surface the emotional upheaval that occurs as a result of sin. Sin brings unease into our lives. The third and last word for ‘repent’ is employed here in Acts 2:38. The word stresses the change of mind that is necessary. A radical reappraisal has taken place of our standing before God, and we have come to understand that something is wrong and out of accord.”*

*John Polhill writes, “Perhaps more significant, however, is that the usual connection of the forgiveness of sins in Luke-Acts is with repentance and not with baptism at all (see Luke 24:47; Acts 3:19; 5:31). In fact, in no other passage of Acts is baptism presented as bringing about the forgiveness of sins. If not linked with repentance, forgiveness is connected with faith (see Acts 10:43; 13:38ff; 26:18). The dominant idea in Acts 2:38 thus seems to be repentance, with the other elements following. Repentance leads to baptism, the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of the Spirit. The essential response Peter called from the Jewish crowd is the complete turnabout that comprises true repentance, to turn away from the rejection of the Messiah and to call upon his name, receive baptism into his community, and share the gift of the Spirit they had just witnessed so powerfully at work in the Christians at Pentecost.”*

**6. What does a church in community do in Acts 2:42-47?**

*In Acts 2:42-47, we see the fruit of Pentecost: the birth of the church. These verses describe how the new redeemed community of God lives as Spirit-empowered witnesses of Christ. Pastor Scott points out four commitments that are made in these verses by a church in community: (1) growth in God’s Word and prayer, (2) relationships with one another so that you know others and are known by others, (3) love displayed by the meeting of needs, and (4) mission realized as the church finds favor with their community and the Lord adds to His body through saving sinners.*

**\* Application Questions**

Note: Please do not feel compelled to use every question, for you will have time for 3 to 5 questions. I’ve tried to offer enough for you to pick the ones you think will best fit your group, as you know what your ladies or men are going through at this time and may need to hear. Also, please note that these questions might be adjusted to reflect what the pastor calls us to do in application of the sermon.

1. Here are some good questions to reflect on in every passage (these are from Danny Akin):

A. What does this passage teach me about God?

B. What does this passage teach me about man?

C. What does this passage teach me about Christ?

D. What does this passage want me to know?

E. What does this passage call me to do?

2. Here are some good questions to reflect on and act on this week (these were passed along to me by Pastor Aaron and Dr. Jones):

A. What do you take as the main theme from this sermon?

B. What have you learned today about Jesus’ character that has affected you daily?

C. Do you have any clarifying questions concerning the sermon?

D. What did the Holy Spirit convict you of because of His Word today?

E. Will you ask forgiveness and what will you change?

F. Will you be willing this week to pass on to someone else what you’re learning about Jesus? How will you be intentional this week to do so?

3. In his book, Asking the Right Questions, Matthew Harmon gives the following instructions/questions for understanding and applying the Bible:

A. Understanding the Bible

1. What do we learn about God?

a. Look for God’s character (who he is, what he is like).

b. Look for God’s conduct (what he is doing).

c. Look for God’s concerns (what things, events, people, he is concerned about).

2. What do we learn about people?

a. Look for aspects of what it means to be created in God’s image.

b. Look for the fallen condition.

c. Look for how God’s people should live.

3. What do we learn about relating to God?

a. Look for things to praise and thank God for.

b. Look for sin to confess and repent.

c. Look for promises and truths to believe.

4. What do we learn about relating to others?

a. Look for how we should interact with and treat others.

b. Look for ways to pursue reconciliation with others.

c. Look for specific ways to love, serve, and care for others.

B. Applying the Bible

1. What does God want me to think/understand?

2. What does God want me to believe?

3. What does God want me to desire?

4. What does God want me to do?

4. What is Pentecost? Why is Pentecost important for the Christian life?

5. In Peter’s sermon, he emphasizes how God has been faithful to His promises, for he cites how Pentecost has fulfilled Joel 2:28-32 and how Psalms 16:8-11; 110:1 point toward the Messiah. How have you seen the faithfulness of God at work in your lives this week? In your time in the Word this week, what promises of God have you been meditating upon? Why is it important that God keep His promises?

6. In Peter’s sermon, he emphasizes the role of Jews in crucifying Jesus. What does this teach us about the sinfulness of man? In our own lives, where do we see the evidence of sin, which leads to our need for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ?

7. In Peter’s sermon, he emphasizes the person and work of Jesus. What does Peter proclaim about Jesus? As we share the gospel with others, how ought we to present the gospel? Do you have a tool you use to share the gospel (if not, check out this video: https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=NNEmlE33AqY)? Are you currently building a relationship with an unbeliever right now with the intent to lead them to Jesus, to share the gospel with them? Take time to pray for unbelieving friends/family right now.

8. What response do you call for from unbelievers? What does repentance mean? After one has repented of their sins and placed their faith/trust in Jesus, what are they to do next?

9. In Acts 2:42-47, Luke describes for us the church in community. Pastor Scott emphasizes that there are four commitments of community groups to be found in these verses: growth (Bible study and prayer), relationship (knowing others and being known by others), love (meeting of needs), and mission/multiply (disciples making disciples). In your community group, how are you doing with each of these commitments? How can you as a community group grow in each of these commitments over the next month, 6 months, and 1 year?

10. In Acts 2, how do you see the Holy Spirit empowering believers to be witnesses? How can the life of the church and your community group bear witness to the gospel (see John 13:34-35)? Pray for God to use you as a witness this week—opening doors of opportunity to share the gospel and invest in believers and to speak boldly when the Spirit opens the doors of opportunity.

**\* Sermon Take Away**

For an unbeliever, the take away is to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ; for the believer, the take away is to live and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

**\* Bible Reading Plan**

1. Monday—1 Corinthians 1; 1 Samuel 19

2. Tuesday—1 Corinthians 2; 1 Samuel 20

3. Wednesday—1 Corinthians 3; 1 Samuel 21-22

4. Thursday—1 Corinthians 4; 1 Samuel 23

5. Friday—1 Corinthians 5; 1 Samuel 24

6. Saturday—1 Corinthians 6; 1 Samuel 25

7. Sunday—1 Corinthians 7; 1 Samuel 26

**\* Unhindered: A Study of Acts (Part 1)**

1. September 24th –Acts 3:1-4:31

2. October 1st –Acts 4:32-5:11

3. October 8th –Acts 5:12-42

4. October 15th –Acts 6:1-7

5. October 22nd –Acts 6:8-8:3

6. October 29th –Acts 8:4-40

7. November 5th –Acts 9:1-31

8. November 12th –Acts 9:32-11:18

9. November 19th—Acts Acts 11:19-30

**\* Advent 2017 (Passages are Likely to Change)**

1. November 26th—Luke 1:1-25

2. December 3rd—Luke 1:26-38

3. December 10th—Luke 1:39-56

4. December 17th—Luke 1:57-80

5. December 24th—Luke 2:1-21

**\* Unhindered: A Study of Acts (Part 2)**

1. January 7th—Acts 12 (Herod’s Persecution and Death/No government can stop God’s church)

2. January 14th—Acts 13-14

3. January 21st—Acts 15:1-35

4. January 28th—Acts 15:36-16:5

5. February 4th—Acts 16:6-40

6. February 11th—Acts 17:1-15

7. February 18th—Acts 17:16-34

8. February 25th—Acts 18:1-23

9. March 4th—Acts 18:24-28

10. March 11th—Acts 19:1-41

11. March 18th—Acts 20:1-16

12. March 25th—Acts 20:17-30

--. April 1st (Easter Sunday)

13. April 8th—Acts 21:1-26

14. April 15th—Acts 21:27-22:29

15. April 22nd—Acts 22:30-23:35

16. April 29th—Acts 24:1-27

17.May 6th—Acts 25:1-12

18. May 13th (Mother’s Day)—Acts 25:13-26:32

19. May 20th—Acts 27:1-44

20. May 27th (Memorial Day Weekend)—Acts 28:1-31

1. For this discussion guide, I used the following resources: Darrell Bock, *Acts;* I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*; F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*; John B. Polhill, *Acts*; Derek Thomas, *Acts*; R. Kent Hughes, *Acts*; R. C. Sproul, *Acts*; John Stott, *The Spirit, the Church, and the World: The Message of Acts*; *ESV Study Bible*; *NIV Zondervan Study Bible.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-1)