

## Acts Chapter 1: 1-11

Introduction to Book of Acts:

- Written by Luke. Part II of a letter to Theophilus (Greek)
- Luke was a doctor, therefore pays attention to detail
- He is a companion of Paul. Traveled with him. So much of Acts is eyewitness
- The story of a community that is breaking out. YCF on the MOVE!

Refresher on Manuscripts. Why we use them. Their benefit. Suggestions for how to use them. 'Tips'

Read Acts 1: 1-11. Some personal study  
What are some things you observed. Questions.

v. 1-2: ... All that Jesus Began to do and teach

- What is the stated purpose of the author's first letter?
- What does the word 'Began' imply? (Jesus has more to come)
  - The whole Gospel of Luke is just the beginning of Jesus' work...
- **Talk about something that God has begun in you (maybe last year, this summer, church or youth group experience, family, an experience you had)**
- Why is it encouraging to think about 'Beginnings' when it comes to God's work (the best is yet to come)

v. 3-5: ... by many convincing proofs...you shall be baptized with HS

- Why is verse 3 important? (established a risen savior. *many* is key - 500 people saw Jesus after the resurrection)
- What was Jesus' plan? Why give lots of proof (assurance, prep for change)
- How do Faith and Proof work together?
- **What was a convincing Proof for you in your personal faith journey?**
  - *Keeping the Faith will be hard at times this year. My Friend Dave's wise words: 'When you feel like you are in the Dark, remember what you learned in the Light' -- knowing what we were convinced of in the past, and being reminded of it can help us hold on when we feel in the dark*
- What does Jesus do toward the end of his post-resurrection time in v. 4?
- What does he command them (remain in Jer. & wait)
- How do you imagine the disciples are feeling right now? (anxious, on fire, wanting to know what will happen next, maybe a bit scared)
- So Jesus gathers them and tells them to wait - he knows that they will have an urge to scatter, either out of fear, or excitement. As Jesus prepares to depart and impart upon them the Holy Spirit, it is essential that they stick together.

**Why is togetherness important at Yale? How might it be possible for Christians to scatter, instead? In what ways do Yale students resist unity/togetherness/community?**

v. 6-8 . . . Jerusalem, Samaria, Ends of the earth . . .

- Why do you think the disciples ask him this question in verse 6? (ready to ride the wave ... want to be in on the next great thing ...overthrow Romans. (power) Also, they are anxious of the future and want to know what is coming next)
- Is it reasonable? What did they really want?
- How do people feel when they don't know what is coming next?
- What is Jesus' Response?

- Why does he keep them in suspense? - what seems more important to Him?  
(Most important thing is what is coming. Rel. with God & HS)
- Jesus promises them a different kind of Power than they were thinking - the HS....How is his plan different than the Disciples Plan? (they will be witnesses not conquerors)
- How is Jesus' Charge attractive? How is it scary?
- Look at the 3 dimensions of Jesus' charge in more depth. (Jer., Samaria, ends) - what patterns or principles can you draw out of this charge?  
(start at home, ministry expands, shoot big, etc.)
- What do you know about the Jew's relationship with Samaritans?
- How do you think they would feel about this charge, to go into Samaria, and later into the land of Gentiles?
- **How could this same mission be a charge to YCF (& you) today?**
- **Samaria was a place Jews tended to avoid. Where are places at Yale (or in your life) that you would rather avoid?**

Jesus gave this community a big challenge, but he left them well equipped with his Holy Spirit, the very presence of God among them. Then he left, leaving the work of becoming a witnessing community to them, and 2000 years later to us. The promise is that he WILL RETURN! And we still don't know when....but in the meantime, we have the awesome privilege of being the continuation of all that Jesus BEGAN to do when he was on earth!

Acts 2: 1-36

Explanation of how we do bible studies in YCF  
About 10 minutes to read

Intro, exploratory Questions:

- What do you notice?
- What Questions did you find?
- How do you think disciples felt -- what was going on for them?
- What did you make of Peter?

2 sections - here: Experience & Explanation. We will talk about both, but mostly focus on the first section, vs. 1-13.

**When have you experienced God's power or presence in your life? or if that is hard to think of, describe a time when you have experienced something bizarre, unexplainable, mysterious.**

Vs. 1-4 (Read)

- When does this all this happen?
- Who knows that the day of Pentacost is? (7 weeks after the Feast of First fruits)  
(one of 4 important Jewish Feasts....attracts lots of pilgrims).
- Where were the disciples? What were they doing and why (waiting....just as Jesus commanded...brief review of last week). They are being good boys
- What happens next...someone paint the scene.
- What would it have been like?

Let's pause and talk about this first section.

**What about this section feels a bit uncomfortable?**

(Talk about how God's power/mystery, etc. can be hard for us today, being a very rational, tangible, scientific society, etc.)

Why would God's spirit manifest itself in different tongues like this?  
(communication, values multi-ethnicity...other reasons)

Vs. 5-13 (Read)

What happens next...set up the scene

Describe the people listening...what were they like (devout, multiethnic)

Devout or "spiritually interested"

**Who are spiritually interested people that you know -- where are you likely to find the devout at Yale?**

So how do the people respond? (amazed...wondering what it means...some skeptical and look for alternative explanation)

What principals to we learn about the Holy Spirit in our first encounter with it -  
in other words, what is close to God's heart on the day he births His church

(- communicating about his deeds of power...outward focus

- reaching people and valuing their national heritage: He didn't HAVE to speak in native tongues...most were probably bilingual and would have likely known the disciples tongue (Aramaic)

Truly Experiencing God may often feel out of control

**- Is this attractive or scary to you? Why or why not?**

Some thought they were filled with Wine - **What are skeptical alternative explanations that you have heard about your Christian activities. What are some you think of yourself?**

**What do you think it means to have faith in the face of skepticism?**

V. 14-35 Let's look a bit at Peter's response

What does Peter do?

Who does it with him? (the 11...standing by each other....this is important)

How can we stand up with each other?

Lots in his Response that we won't necessarily get to....but what are things you noticed about HOW Peter responds?

- Use of scripture (O.T.) - knows it well.
- Bold - speaking right to them
- Refers to God's plan and Power a lot (especially vs. 22-24)
- Identifies with audience ("Fellow Israelites in v. 29)

Explain Peter's Logic.

- O.T. talked about Coming of Lord...accompanied by Spirit filling and signs (this is something that all listeners knew and expected...common ground)
- We are not drunk....but filled by the spirit.
- Messianic Era has come
- Therefore Messiah has come

Further Corroborates with use of David...

- God had a definite plan with this Jesus who YOU crucified
- Messiah is not bound by Death (Also refers to David)
- We saw Jesus alive. He is Messiah, & YOU are not just innocent

Peter EXPLAINS what he EXPERIENCED in terms the listeners understood.  
he "interprets God's on their own turf"

**Application: Where do you see yourself in this passage? Who do you identify with? Disciples, Skeptics, Peter?**

**What would it take for you to be more like Peter (boldness to explain, more experience, etc.) - Be Specific...let's share about the challenges we encounter at Yale regarding the public explanation of our Spiritual lives..**

Acts 2:37-47

2. Read Passage

3. Review ñ What are the people responding to and why? (Last Week)

4. What is Peter's Answer to them? Why Repent & Be Baptized. Why both? What is purpose of baptism?

**- Have you ever been public in your faith? What was it like?**

5. Exhortation - ñSave yourselves from this corrupt generationñ

**- What is corrupt about our generation?**

**- What are some arguments that we might use with our friends?**

6. Community:

- Imagine 3000 new believers....What would it be like? What would you do if in charge? What would a typical week look like?

- What was the crowd like in V. 42 - what did they do? (4 things: teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, prayer)

- Talk about these components. Why is this a good prescription for this growing community. How might it be a good prescription for us today?

- What two characteristics of this community do you see in v. 44? (together & sharing)

- How is this Radical?

- Why is it Valuable/Important?

- Why is it Attractive?

**- How could it be practical today?**

7. What happens in Vs. 47? (Together...Temple (i.e. preaching)...goodwill) What does Goodwill of people mean? Why were people being added? -- (Witnessing Community)

- is this possible at Yale? Can you believe it?

**8. What should a true Witnessing Community look like at Yale?**

Acts 3:1-16

Introduction:

- Think back and describe a time when you went out on a limb for something and you weren't sure it was going to work. A time when you remember making a choice where the outcome was quite unsure.

Read Acts 3:1-16

What is the natural inclination of Peter and John? What is their habit on a given day? (Pray - its not explicit, but you get the sense that this is an ordinary day, and they were doing what they usually do in the afternoon).

Relate a habit of prayer to what happens on this particular day - how might their lifestyle have influenced their bold action? (able to see need better, more confidence, boldness, passion, fire, etc.)

#### Let's look at the Crippled man...

- What do you think life was like for him?
- What did he need?
- **Where do you see people in need around you today?**
- **Specifically at Yale, what are needs you can think of on campus?**
  - **What tends to cripple Yalies?**
  - **How Good are you at seeing Needs?**

#### How do Peter & John Respond?

1. Look Straight at him/ "Look at us" - Why was this first step important?  
(focus oneself on needs of others, gets man's attention, raise expectation for man, treat as important, etc. )
  - It Committed Pete & John to really do something...not just casual awareness of needs
  - **In what ways do we tend to look past people's needs?**  
**What factors keep us from focusing attention on others?**  
(Time, Schedule, self, fear, etc. Lots of possible responses. Discuss)
2. "Silver and Gold I have not, but..." What are Peter and John saying?
  - Felt Needs vs. Real Needs
    - What was man's felt need?
    - What was his Real need? What is the difference between these
    - Why is it important to discern both of them for others? (real need is the persistent one, but need to know felt in order to connect)
  - "In the Name of Jesus" - What does this mean?
  - What do Peter and John do next after talking to the man? Why is this important?  
(they take his hand... actually DO something...lay it on the line, out on a limb)
  - God had to come through. They set themselves up to look like fools if it didn't work VERY Risky and bold of them. Peter and John don't water it down, protect selves, have a back-up plan, have an alternative explanation, etc. "I'm not sure God will heal you, but..."
  - So is this possible today? What principals do we get here?

#### Boldness

- **What does it take to have this kind of boldness in our lives?**
  - In touch with God (praying)
  - Confidence in God's promises ("You will do greater things than these")
  - Willingness to lay it on the line. Risk.
  - Sureness of God's power/ability, etc.
- **What usually holds us back from experiencing a bold Christian life?**  
(fear of disappointment, lack of confidence in self, etc.)

#### The Crowds

- vs. 9-11: What is the effect of a healed person on others? (awe)
- How does Peter continue the momentum in vs. 11-13?  
(Why are you surprised...shows his total confidence of his position and God's)  
(Turns into a sermon - takes advantage of the moment - has a mission in mind)

- v. 15: 'You killed the author of Life' -
  - Why is this a critical part of the message?
  - **How can we say a similar thing in our message today?**
- v. 16: Peter names the Agent of the Healing. He explains and Interprets what God is doing. Healing/Evangelism connection. We need to explain an interpret what God is doing and what response is required (in rest of CH 3, Pete calls for repentance, etc.)

### Discussion

Are there ways that you feel 'Crippled' personally, and need God to lift you up?  
 What do you need in order to live like Peter and John, boldness in helping people with their real needs

### Acts 6:1-15

1. What is the nature of the trouble brewing in this Christian Community ñ what is happening in verse 1?

-Who are the Hellenists? What is happening to their widows?

Why does this conflict occur ñ what's the context? (growth, ministry-focus., basically good things making racial issues be overlooked)

How serious is this issue?

What would it feel like to be a Hellenist?

- A Hellenist widow?
- A Hellenist man?
- **When have you experienced something unfair or unjust in your life?** Was Race, family, or ethnic heritage a factor? (note: encourage dialogue if possible around the race issue. Be sensitive, though ñ talking about racism experiences can be a delicate matter).

What would it feel like to be a Hebrew?

- why were the Hebrews in a position of Power or Privilege in this community?
- Are there ways you have overlooked or are prone to overlooking people of another race or culture? What about people in need?
- **What factors contribute to this overlooking needy people?** (focus on growth, your needs are met ñ position of privilege, other things seem more important ñ it is not right for us to neglect the word.)

How do the Hellenists address the problem? What might have happened if they didn't bring up their issues or questions? **What can we learn from this model** (important to put sensitive issues out on the table up front, not wait for something to explode)?

**Let's talk about how to deal with Criticism in a Christian Community.  
 Healthy ways and unhealthy ways.**

2. How do the Disciples Respond?

- Call together the whole community. Why was this important? (deal with race/injustice issues in public. Prevent division. Way to deal with criticism)
- Clarified their purpose 'not right for us to...' Why did they say this? (vision, understanding important things, knowing when to say no)
- They don't stop there, though ñ go on to appoint leaders. What would have happened if they simply said 'it's not our problem, don't worry about it, etc)?
- What are the criteria for the
- *SMALL GROUP LEADERS ONLY: Let's talk about Delegating, how to raise up*

*leaders. Who are people you already see with leadership potential? (Full of Spirit and Wisdom, good standing, etc.) How can you begin to think strategically of cultivating this?*

3. What do you notice about the people who are selected? (All of them are Greek names). What does this mean? Why is it a significant way to handle the race conflict? (Discuss awhile—the implication that comes out of this passage is that the Disciples have the wisdom to find a way to empower those without power, to give a voice to the voiceless. Best way to solve the conflict.)
4. The delegation of new authority, by appointing leaders and giving away power, ends up not only solving the current crisis, but doing much much more. What do you begin to see about Steven in the second half of this passage? (full of wisdom. Bold. Begins leading beyond his appointed task. Can't be stifled).
5. Application:
  - Who are people that could be overlooked in our community?
  - How you can meaningfully interact with someone from another culture or ethnicity this semester.
  - SGL ONLY: Where is the Power in YCF? What does it look like to delegate and give it away?

ACTS 8:4-25

### Phillip

What happens in verse 4? (Scattered) Why? (review context from last week).

What did the disciples do when they were scattered?

What does verse 4 tell us about their strategy for World evangelization? (Consumed with the gospel, place doesn't matter... in fact there appears to be no overt strategy - just to be enamored with the Gospel that they can't help but share even after persecution and scattering).

**How might this effect our own consideration of career, calling, where you go after Yale?** (A key principle is that we are to be consumed with sharing Gospel, and not that consumed with where we are going in life).

Who was Phillip (1 of the 7 appointees). Why is this significant? (ministry moved way beyond administrative task to one of power-- mainly because of his character)

Where does Phillip go? What is significant about going to Samaria?

What does he do? What accompanies the message (power/miracles)

When does the power come (after faithfulness to the message). Why does it come? (to authenticate ministry in new setting).

**What would it look like to model Phillip at Yale? Where is Samaria?**

### Simon

Who is Simon? What did he do? (not just miracles, but taught as well).

What was his passion in life? (Importance, Status, respect, etc.)

Do you secretly long to have verse 10 be said of you? Can you relate to Simon?

Where does Simon's power come from? (interesting question...not sure of the answer)

So what interrupts Simon's World? (Phillip comes to town - another takes ctr. stage)

**How do you deal with your world being interrupted? Perhaps having your pursuit of importance challenged?**

How does Simon respond? (Interesting - at first he believes & Follows). What are his motivations? (Mixed, perhaps. Some genuine, some trying to tap into Phillip's power) (Leaders Only: Tag-a-long effect is a GOOD sign).

What happens in verse 14? (Peter & John sent. Holy Spirit.) - (We're not going to debate the theological

implications of vs. 14-17...they are bit controversial. Does it, for example, mean that when you first believe you may need a second baptism an anointing or filling of the holy spirit? Some churches teach this and use this passage as an example. Other church traditions teach that the very fact that Phillip was unable to impart the Holy Spirit is an indication that the baptism of the Spirit was a specific imparting of the original apostles at key break-out times in the church's growth, i.e., when a new set of believers came into the fold, i.e., the Samaritans, and then the Gentiles. Clearly not everyone was prayed for, and future conversions didn't always require the Apostle's presence to impart the Holy Spirit).

What does Simon observe in vs. 17? (Something apparently much greater than the other miracles that Phillip had been performing....)

What does he do?

What does Simon want? What motivates him?

( Simon wanted not so much the experience of God, the gifts to use for the furtherance of the gospel in this community, but he wanted the ability to give them out, i.e., the power/status that was evident in the apostles. - not even like he wanted to do miracles, etc., but wanted to control power)

( Maybe to be above Phillip...he perceived that Phillip couldn't lay hands for the Holy Spirit to come).  
(Hint: vs. 23 'Gall of Bitterness' - Jealousy is a big factor)

- What's wrong with offering them \$\$?

- Religion serving the purpose of pride or ambition (status, importance)
- Implication that the Rich can obtain further privilege and power
- trying to control God's power, not only stupid (can't happen), but cheapens it
- Holy Spirit is freely given to all

What are Peter & John's response? (Chance for repentance)

How does Simon respond? (Repents)

**How do you respond when given the chance to repent?**

Random Bonus question .... Why doesn't Simon drop dead like Ananias?

Application:

**How might you be tempted to use your own resources to gain power or status? (In life? In YCF? At Yale? -various contexts for discussion) What (or whom) are you jealous or bitter?**

## **Acts: 8: 26-38**

Opening Question: What does a spiritually hungry student look like at Yale? Especially one who is not a part of a fellowship.

### **Read Acts 8**

1. Reminder of the Context. What has just been happening in first part of Ch. 8?
2. What does the Angel Tell Phillip?
  - What do you think is going through Phillip's head? How would it feel? (What is he leaving, what is he going to?)
  - What does the Angel LEAVE out in his command?
  - Notice the kind of travel Phillip is called to....describe a 'wilderness road'
  - Phillip simply obeys. Without knowing the future.
  - **How would you describe the road you are currently on spiritually - a desert (wilderness) experience? Top of the Mountain (Revival)?**
  - **How important is knowing the outcome/future to you before you do something to follow God?**
3. Who does Phillip encounter? Describe this person.

- What is the spiritual condition of the Eunuch? (came to worship)
- What was his physical condition (rich, foreigner?)
- What is he doing? (Reading) (Note: not common habit to read silently, so he was likely reading out loud)

4. What happens next? How do you think the spirit led? Does God's Spirit lead the same way today?
- What is Phillip's strategy for responding to the prompting of God (Go, Observe, question/invite).
  - So, how do Phillip and God partner in this conversion? In other words, where does God's direction leave off, and Phillip's creativity/boldness come in? (Notice God doesn't tell him what to do other than to go to the chariot).
5. What does Phillip do in response to the Eunuch's question? (Begin with the context and explain the Good News of Jesus?)

**How can we model this strategy with our friends?**

**We need Discernment to see the "Chariots" God bring to us. What else do we need? (proximity - risk taking to listen & respond). Can this model happen today? Share examples, real or hypothetical.**

6. Why is this encounter so significant?
- A. First Full Gentile conversion
  - B. Ethiopia is considered the "end of the earth" at this time
  - C. Nubia - strong kingdom of Africans. Known for Black Skin
  - D. Eunuch in key position - treasurer to royal family

**How do we discern spiritually hungry people like this Eunuch?**

**What factors can mask them to us (Phillip may have ignored a rich, foreign chariot - not his culture, not comfortable)**

7. By The Way - long term result was a Christian Kingdom for 700 years in Nubia (Ethiopia/Sudan). Pre-Muslim roots for Africa.

**The Phillip Pattern: Willingness to leave comfortable place, even place of God's move....listen to the prompting of God. Antennas are up, radar is on, looking and praying in anticipation.....follow the prompting.....respond in context to the situation (the ? he asked was key - it was bold, risky, and if unsaid, they would have likely never really spoken). .....follow up and explain the Gospel.**

**Think of some possible roads you could travel down this weekend where you might encounter a spiritual chariot situation. Pray and Ask God to give you an opportunity. Pray or share with each other to conclude.**

Acts 10: 1-48

Opening Question: Would you eat a live cockroach for \$20,000 ? Would you eat a bowl of cockroaches for 20k? If you were forced at gunpoint to eat either a rat or a half-a-dozen cockroaches, which would it be?

Read the passage - disclaimer: this is a long passage, and we are certainly not going to talk about all parts, so read it a little more "broadly" than normal. Look for broad strokes, themes, principles.

Particularly, indicate on the manuscript things God is doing to further this master "plan" of His.

- v. 1-8: Cornelius.

What is Cornelius' relationship with God like up to this point?  
Was he lacking anything?

Why do you think God chooses Cornelius for this very special task of bridging the Jew/Gentile gap in regards to the church?

**Do you think it's possible for people today to fear God, give generously, pray constantly and still not be saved (be a Christian)?**

What was the purpose of the Angel's visit? Why not explain the gospel directly to him? Why send him to Peter? (What else is on God's Agenda)

Let's talk about the racial/cultural dynamics a bit:

What is the relationship between Jews and Gentiles like? Why?

Did God originally intend this gulf? To what extent?

(confusion of doctrine of election and doctrine of favoritism).

Why did many Jews embrace favoritism/elitism?

**Where do we see the same thing in our own experiences today?**

**Where do we see racial gulfs - what are the consequences that come from them?**

v. 9-29: Peter's Vision.

Why do you think God chooses this form of communication?

Why does Peter respond the way he does in v. 14?

(Understand - this vision would have been disgusting to a good Jew - *mixing* unclean and clean animals. Unclean not

unlike thinking of eating a bowl of cockroaches, or rats)

What is the significance of v. 15? What about all of God's other old testament commands about these animals? Is He

fickle? (I think the image was meant to be symbolic...., but food chosen for powerful effect....evident in Peter's response..."pondering the image")

What is Peter's response to the vision? (puzzled)

What does God do next? (bring 3 guys...timing is, well, 'God')

What is the connection to these two events? (God is interpreting the meaning of the vision in profound way - to mean people)

Peter then invites them to his lodging. You wouldn't do this with a gentile, so it is evidence that Peter has GOTTEN the connection.

(His response in v. 28 also shows that Peter got it).

What happens next?

What does Peter tell Cornelius in the first encounter.

(v. 28 - not to call any ONE unclean...not any THING...doesn't negate the Law, or imply moral relativism).

Let's look at the Transformation of Peter a bit more:

Get inside Peter's head a bit - what must this experience have been like?

(boxes being broken, stretching, scary, exhilarating...maybe

remembering things Jesus did & said that didn't make sense at the time).

How significant do you think it was that God used Peter like this? In what ways?

What did Peter have to a change to respond to God?

**We don't have the privilege of a direct message from God, usually.**

**What kinds of similar transformative experiences do you think He desires for us today (particularly in dealing with racial barriers, cultural, non-christian, career/ministry, etc.)**

V. 34-48 - In Cornelius' house....

How does Peter begin his speech? why is this significant?

(He relates his personal experience....didn't have to do this. He could have

just given the talk out of it....chooses vulnerability. Form of repentance)

What happened in the middle of his speech (Holy Spirit came)?

What do you conclude based on Peter and peer's response? (This is one step further than expectation. Didn't know they would get the same power... Peter, I think, was actually surprised).

What happens in the very end? (v. 48) - (they stay. Evidence of full acceptance)

**Application Discussion: God chose to use Peter to transform him when he certainly didn't have to from Cornelius' perspective. 2 implications: Call to missions, call to racial reconciliation**

**Is there something God may be laying on your heart regarding either of these? (either Immediately, or longer term)**