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LIVING
HIGH SCHOOL OUTREACH



Living it Bible Experience Application Guide

Acts & Thessalonians

North
American
Division
Pathfinder
Ministries

2013 Edition

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Introduction

King David didn't have a Bible and he never sat on a hillside reading a devotional book. He probably couldn't even read—and yet he knew God as well as anyone who ever walked the face of planet earth. In fact most people you read about in the Bible were illiterate so they memorized large portions of the Bible as they listened to it being recited by their parents and read by the priests and scribes in the local synagogues and the Sanctuary. It was by listening and memorizing it for himself that David learned to love the Bible. Throughout Psalms David talks about how much he loves the Sanctuary and God's law—he even says he meditated on it day and night.

The most important passage of scripture in ancient Jewish culture is the Shema:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and
with all your soul and with all your strength.

These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts.

Impress them on your children.

Talk about them when you sit at home
and when you walk along the road,
when you lie down and when you get up.

When you sit down and immerse yourself in scripture—spending long periods of time in just a few verses—you are following in the footsteps of the ancient Israelites and Jesus Himself. Reflecting on Scripture and memorizing it's lessons locks it in your mind where no one can take it from you.

This Living it Application Guide is to help you in this journey of understanding scripture and especially with Living it. The chapter guides are not comprehensive—they do not cover every detail of each chapter—that would take a few hundred pages. Each chapter guide chooses a few key points to help you start thinking differently about Scripture—to remember it and internalize it. The guides for the chapters are structured as follows:

1. Warm Up: Questions for individual reflection/small group discussion. These questions will attempt to help the participants relate aspects of their own lives to the lives of the Bible characters. This will involve personal sharing.
2. Engaging the Passage: This will include some discussion of the passage and one or more of the following:
 - a. Entering the passage as a participant or bystander to help imagine the scene.
 - b. Relevant historical/background information.
 - c. Reflection/discussion questions that go deeper into the passage
3. Applying the Passage to Your Life
 - a. Thought provoking application questions
 - b. Calls for commitment to action
4. Time of Prayer: May include any or all of the following:
Adoration/confession/requests/praises/silent prayer/conversational prayer

Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

— JOHN 17:17 (NKJV)

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophets' own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

— 2 PETER 1:20-21 (NIV)

It is not safe for us to turn from the Holy Scriptures with only a casual reading of their sacred pages... Rein the mind up to the high task that has been set before it, and study with determined interest, that you may understand divine truth. Those who do this will be surprised to find what the mind can attain. The mind must be restrained and not allowed to wander. It should be trained to dwell upon the Scriptures and upon noble, elevating themes. Portions of Scripture, even whole chapters, may be committed to memory to be repeated when Satan comes in with his temptations.

— ELLEN G. WHITE

IN *MIND, CHARACTER, AND PERSONALITY*,
VOL. 1. PAGE 95

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

— PSALMS 119:105 (NKJV)

5. Outreach Ideas: Some chapter guides will include ideas for getting outside of yourself or your group and reaching the world around you—that's how you Live it!

The recommended companions for this series are: Andrews Study Bible, Authentic: Committed for Life, by Scott R. Ward, <http://livingiths.org/resources/pathfinders>

May Jesus Christ Himself bless you richly as you embark on this journey to making God's Word a Living and vital part of who you are.

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Chapter Guide Outline:

1. Warm-up

Questions for individual reflection/small group discussion. These questions will attempt to help participants relate aspects of their own lives to the lives of Bible characters. This will involve personal sharing.

2. Engaging the Chapter

This will include some discussion of the chapter and one or more of the following:

- a. Entering the verses as a participant or bystander to help imagine the scene
- b. Relevant historical/background information
- c. Reflection/discussion questions that go deeper into the chapter

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life

- a. Thought provoking application questions
- b. Calls for commitment to action

4. Time of Prayer

May include any or all of the following: Adoration/confession/requests/praises/silent prayer/conversational prayer.

5. Outreach Ideas

Some chapter guides include ideas for getting outside of your group and reaching the world around you—that's how you live it!

Recommended Companions for this Series

Andrews Study Bible, <http://bible.andrews.edu>

Authentic: Committed for Life by Scott R. Ward, www.adventistbookcenter.com

Living It High School Outreach Resources for Pathfinders, <http://livingiths.org/resources/pathfinders>

Part I: The Church is Born *(Acts 1-5)*

Application Guide: Acts 1

1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. Think of a time when someone you were close to moved away or passed away. How did it make you feel?

- b. How do you think you would feel if the person you are closest to now moved away? How would you stay in touch?

2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Background: It is a historical fact that Luke and Theophilus were real people who lived back in the first century. They were friends with each other, and with Jesus too. Luke and others (see 1 John 1:1-3) were eyewitnesses who attested to the undeniable fact that Jesus was a great teacher, performed many miracles, was crucified, raised from the dead and ascended back to heaven.

Picture it: Imagine you were a disciple—one of Jesus' friends. What would it have been like to walk and talk together, and watch Him teach and heal people?

Think of three things you think you would have done with Jesus on a typical day.

What would it have felt like to watch your friend Jesus float up into the sky and back to heaven?

Do you think you would have missed your friend, Jesus, when He went back to heaven? Why?

Both at the end of the Gospel of Luke and here in Acts 1, Luke wrote that God's people are not to try and witness without the help of the Holy Spirit. What he's saying is that it's not about you and what you can do—it's all about God and what He wants to do in and through you!

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

- a. Have a discussion with or write an email to someone with whom you've shared a spiritual experience—just like Luke did when he wrote to Theophilus. Try to relive some of your best experiences in church, Sabbath School, Pathfinders or summer camp.
- b. Discuss with someone or sit alone outside at night and think about Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus (John 3). Think about how it feels when the wind blows across your face and through your hair. Think about how the Holy Spirit is with you just like that—everywhere you go, in everything you do. Where have you recognized the Holy Spirit working in your life? Where would you like to see Him more? Discuss this with your group or write about it in a journal.

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

- a. Thank Jesus for creating you and wanting to have a relationship with you.
- b. Tell Him something about your day.
- c. Ask Jesus to help someone you know to realize He wants to be his or her friend, too.

Application Guide: Acts 2

1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. Is it hard for you to pay attention when someone is talking about God or the Bible? Why do you think that is?

- b. What is the most startling thing that has ever happened to you when you were sitting at church, Sabbath School or some other type of spiritual gathering?

2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Picture it: Imagine that all the friends you hang out with every week now are interested in getting to know Jesus better. Now imagine that you are all living in Bible times and were there in Acts 1 when Jesus ascended back to heaven. Now imagine that a few days later, in Acts 2, you are sitting around talking about Jesus, about how much you love Him and miss Him, when all of a sudden it sounds like a tornado is hitting the room where you're all sitting. How do you think you would feel? Scared, at peace or amazed?

What would you do if flames started coming down from the sky, through the ceiling and landing on you right now? Do you think you would respond differently than the disciples did in Acts 2? Why?

Discuss what it would have felt like to have the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit in you and you suddenly were not afraid to tell people about Jesus, and you also had the ability to speak new languages and heal people. Who would you talk to about Jesus? Who would you heal first and why?

How do you feel about the prophecy in Acts 2:17-21 that says God's Spirit will be poured out on young people in the last days, and they will prophesy and see visions?

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

- a. What spiritual risks do you run when you spend that majority of your time with people that are not interested in spiritual things.

- b. What determines whether you are a good influence on unspiritual people or if unspiritual people influence you to do things that lead you further from God?

- c. What can you do to bring more spiritual influences into your life?

- d. What can you do to minimize the unspiritual influences in your life?

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

- a. Pray for God to draw you closer to Him.
- b. Thank God for the spiritual people in your life.
- c. Ask God for wisdom in handling your relationships with people who don't make God a priority in their lives.

5. Outreach Idea

Think of three people you know that you would like to see get closer to Jesus. Commit to praying morning, noon and night for the Holy Spirit to fall upon these individuals and draw them closer to Jesus. Ask Jesus to send the Holy Spirit into your life as well.

Application Guide: Acts 3

1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. Have you ever made fun of someone for being poor or uneducated?

- b. Has anyone ever made fun of you because you are poor or uneducated? How did it make you feel? (a) Superior? (b) Insignificant or worthless? Why?

2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Background: It is a historical fact that Jesus was poor. The Bible states that He often slept outside in a park and owned nothing except the clothes he was wearing. The disciples all left their jobs to follow Jesus. They lived on the offerings that people gave them. After more than three years of following Jesus, Peter and John were still poor—they couldn't even give spare change to a beggar.

Picture it: Imagine what it would have been like to be a doctor in Jesus' day like Luke (the author of the book of Acts). While doctors may not have been as well paid back then as they are today, Luke must have had more money than most people—at least among the disciples. What do you think made Luke walk away from his medical practice and go with Paul on missionary journeys? How do you think he felt about hanging out with penniless people, like Peter and John, who were uneducated fishermen?

Discuss the role that money plays in society. Do you think anything has changed since Jesus' day?

Paul always took up offerings for widows and orphans wherever he went. Why do you think he made that a priority?

Do Christians do this today? Why or why not?

How do you think this change has affected the church?

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

a. How should you treat people who are less fortunate than yourself?

b. How can you be nice to poor/uneducated people without being made fun of by your friends?

c. When you think about your future career, how important is the income level to you?

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

a. Pray for Jesus to help you learn to love and be kind to all people.

b. Pray for Jesus to help you keep money and material things in proper balance in your life.

c. Pray for those who may be starving around the world.

d. Ask God to impress you with what you can do to help those who are poor/suffering.

5. Outreach Idea

a. Try to reach out and become better friends with someone who is less fortunate than you and your family.

b. Do some research on homelessness, then go and volunteer at a homeless shelter. Be sure to have at least one good conversation with a homeless person—ask them to share their life story.

Application Guide: Acts 3-4

☐ 1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. Think/talk about your favorite Bible story where God used His supernatural powers. What makes this power so interesting to you?

- b. Can you imagine what it would be like to have God's supernatural powers work through you? Which power would you most like to use?

☐ 2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Picture it: Imagine you are either Peter or John. Try to put yourself in their place in this story. Imagine walking up to the temple and having the cripple ask you for money. Remember, there was no welfare system at that time. Poor people survived only by the generosity of others. Would you be embarrassed that you are so poor that you can't give him any money?

How would it make you feel to know that the power of the Holy Spirit is in you?

How do you think it would feel to be impressed by God to heal someone?

What do you think it would feel like to have the healing power of God surge through you and into the crippled legs of the beggar?

After miraculously healing a beggar and preaching so powerfully that 5,000 people are converted, do you think it would be confusing to have the leaders of the church get mad at you and come to arrest you?

Would you be tempted to think that you had done something wrong?

Would you be confident that it was really God's power that worked through you, or would you wonder if it was possible that it was an influence of evil?

How do you know if a supernatural power is good or evil?

If you had to testify about your relationship with Jesus in front of angry church leaders, do you think the Holy Spirit could speak powerfully through you, even if you were a shy person?

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

a. Even the people who didn't like the Apostles noticed that they had power because they "had been with Jesus." What can you do to "be with Jesus" today?

b. What can you do to remind yourself to spend more consistent time with Jesus?

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

a. Pray for the power to do what you know is right.

b. Pray for your friends and family to have the strength to do what is good.

c. Pray for God to remind you to spend more time with Him.

5. Outreach Idea

a. Seek out three people you consider to be spiritual and ask them for tips on how to connect with Jesus.

b. Ask these people to pray for your connection with Jesus to grow stronger.

Application Guide: Acts 5

1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. What is the biggest lie you personally know of someone telling? Did they ever get caught? How do you think they felt about the experience?

- b. Have you ever seen a miracle personally? Have your parents or grandparents told you about any miracles they have seen? Do you believe miracles really do happen?

2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Background: In the early church, people were very generous with what they had. Everyone shared what they had with whomever was in need. Yet in the midst of this loving, giving period in church history, people were still tempted to lie.

Do you think it is easier to tell the truth today, or is it easier to lie? Why?

Do you think you would have been more generous back in Acts 5 than you are today? Why?

Picture it: Imagine you were alive during the time of the early church described in Acts 5. Imagine being in the crowds where the apostles were performing miracles and preaching. Imagine that your brother was healed when Peter's shadow passed over him. Do you think you would want to become a member of this church? Why?

Even though there were incredible miracles happening everywhere as the Holy Spirit was being poured out and thousands of people were becoming Christians, there were still many people who chose not to believe in what they saw happening all around them. How do you think people tried to rationalize away all the miracles? Why do you think some people are so resistant to the influence of the Holy Spirit?

Do you think our day is really that much different than the days of Acts 5? Do you think it is harder to believe in Jesus today or back then? Why?

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

a. Take some time to search the Internet for modern day miracle stories. What can you do to put yourself in a position where you might have a better chance to see modern-day miracles?

b. Try to be more aware of the miracles that may be happening around you. What can you do to be more in tune with God's working in your world?

c. Ask God to help you be a part of a miracle in someone else's life. Think of a prayer request someone you know has been praying about that God could use you to help answer (i.e., if someone is praying that they won't be so depressed, what can you do to cheer them up?)

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

a. Talk to God about your relationship with Him. Tell Him what happened in your life today. Tell Him about your desire to know Him better.

b. Tell God about someone you know that is in need physically or spiritually. Ask Him to impress upon you what you can do to help.

5. Outreach Idea

Ask your pastor what he or she knows about short-term mission trips and mission organizations. What would it take for you to be able to go on one of these trips?

Part II: The Church is Persecuted and Grows *(Acts 6-9)*

Application Guide: Acts 6

☐ 1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. What talents do you think you have? How could you use them for Jesus?

- b. Has anyone ever misunderstood something you've done with good intentions? Does it hurt when people say unkind things about you that are untrue? Give an example?

☐ 2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Background: Sharing the Gospel is more than just about telling people about Jesus and the Bible. We mentioned in the Application Guide for Acts 3 that Paul always took up collections for the poor when he traveled. Church leaders in Acts were always helping to feed hungry people because there was no public welfare system in those times. Here in Acts 6, however, the work of helping widows and poor people get food was starting to take up so much of the Apostles' time that they needed help so they could spend more time preaching and teaching. This is why the Apostles appointed deacons—to help with people's physical needs.

How much time do you think your church/pathfinder club spends in each activity listed here?

- a. Teaching people about Bible doctrines.

- b. Helping people understand how to have a relationship with Jesus.

- c. Helping poor people find food, clothes and jobs.

Do you think all these activities should have equal time allotment, or is one more important?

It appears in Acts 6 that committing to spend more time helping the poor also helped Stephen to become a better witness. Why do you think that is? Verse 9 says that Stephen eventually started performing miracles with God's power. Why do you think all these amazing talents that God gave Stephen (ability to help the poor, preach, perform miracles, etc.) made the religious leaders so angry? Do you think the leaders in your church would get angry if you started performing miracles?

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

a. Think about all the things you do well and enjoy doing. Which of these things could somehow be used to help other people?

b. Talk with an adult or two that knows you well. Ask them what talents they think God has given you. Ask them to help you find ways to use these talents for Jesus.

c. Set a goal for how much time you would like to spend in each of these activities each month: Bible Study, building up your relationship with Jesus, helping others.

d. Share this list with someone who can help you accomplish your goal.

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

a. Ask God to bring to mind the talents He wants you to use for Him.

b. Ask God to help you think of someone who could help you learn to use your talents for Him.

c. Ask Jesus to help you see the needs around you that you could help with.

5. Outreach Idea

Set a date to get started with the ideas you've thought about in your prayer time!

Application Guide: Acts 7

☐ 1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

- a. Do you like studying history? Why do you think history is taught in school?

- b. Share a funny or sad story from your personal family history. What does this story tell others about who you are?

☐ 2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Background: The last verse of Chapter 6 is very important for understanding the rest of the chapter. Acts 6:15 says, “And all who sat in the counsel, looking steadfastly at him [Stephen], saw his face as the face of an angel.”

Angels’ faces shine because they spend so much time with God—in His presence. After Moses spent 40 days with God on Mount Sinai, his face shone so brightly that the people asked him to wear a veil to cover it so they wouldn’t be blinded. Stephen was so filled with the Holy Spirit that he could perform amazing miracles and preach incredible sermons. That’s why his face was shining—because God’s Spirit was living in him. When God’s Spirit lives in you, it will shine out of your life as well!

Even though Stephen was performing amazing miracles that no human could perform and the religious leaders saw the Holy Spirit shining out of Stephen’s face, they still arrested him. The Bible says they seized Him because he was trying to change the customs passed down from Moses by teaching that Jesus was the Son of God who came to fulfill the Old Testament law.

Do you think you understand everything about God perfectly?

How do you know if a new idea about God is true or not?

How do you know if old understandings of God are true, or if they are just traditions?

Why do you think some people have such a hard time changing their understanding of God when He gives new light?

After being arrested, Stephen preached one of the most amazing sermons in the Bible. He spoke about the history of God's people and how the church leaders had always rejected God's prophets and, in many cases, killed them. Then He told them that when they killed Jesus, they had killed the Messiah. This made the leaders so angry that they rushed at Stephen, took him outside and stoned him to death. But even while he was being hit in the face and body with rocks hurled from all directions, Stephen's face was still shining. He saw a vision of Jesus and peacefully fell asleep as he died.

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

a. The Bible is a history book that tells about many different people's experiences with God. Write out or tell someone about your history with God. Start with your earliest memories of God at home/Sabbath school/church and how they affected you. Write/talk about your baptism (if you have been baptized) and other commitments you have made to God.

b. Think of one event in your history with God that you wish you could change. Why would you change it?

c. Studying our history helps us to plan better for the future. Think of three things you would like to change about your future relationship with God.

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

- a. Ask for God to help you implement the changes you have just decided to make in your life.
- b. Choose three people you know and pray that they can draw closer to God as well.
- c. Ask God to help you never become a person who *looks* religious but would actually be fighting *against* God—like the Jewish leaders who killed Jesus and Stephen.

Application Guide: Acts 8

☐ 1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. When an activity you are involved in starts to get difficult, do you tend to dig in and work harder or lose enthusiasm and give up? Give an example.

- b. What do you think about television evangelists/ministries that are always asking for money? How much do you think ministries should depend on money and how much should they depend on the Holy Spirit? What's a good balance?

☐ 2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Picture it: Imagine you are living a simple life in Jerusalem back in the days of the early church. You have a nice little home on a quiet street and your family has a small business making tents in a shop behind your home. The family business has been passed down for generations and your grandfather still works there part-time with your father and two uncles. You help out sometimes, too. You have lots of family living nearby and you spend a lot of time together playing with your cousins. Like everyone else you know, you never really go on vacations or go to school; you are happy just working in the family business and spending time with close friends and extended family. You feel very fulfilled with your life. There is always enough to eat, you love God and you go to the temple every day to worship.

Over the last 2-3 years you have been hearing stories of a man named Jesus who may be the long-hoped-for Messiah. You have gone to hear Jesus preach and even saw Him heal a blind person. Then you started hearing people say that the priests and rulers of the synagogue found out that Jesus was a fraud, like so many other so-called messiahs of the day, and that people should stay away from Him and His dangerous teachings. Before you knew it, Jesus had been crucified with two other criminals and now those who followed Him were being hunted down, put in jail and sometimes killed by the temple guards. At the same time you are hearing stories about Stephen and Philip, and that they are performing miracles just like Jesus did. People are being healed of diseases, and a demon-possessed person that used to live on your street came home demon-free and normal—praising Jesus for the miracle just last week.

Your dad and one uncle think that your family should just follow what the priests say because they are experts in these things—they've known them their whole lives and they trust them. But you're grandfather and another of your uncles really believes that this Jesus is the true Messiah sent by God. Next thing you know there are soldiers knocking at your door looking for "Christians."

Would you tell the temple soldiers, who are friends with your dad, about your grandfather and uncle that believes in Jesus? How would you know what to believe and who to trust? Something in your heart tells you that Jesus really is the Messiah, but you don't want to disappoint your church leaders, either. What would you do? Would you believe and get baptized or report to the soldiers about the Christians in your family, knowing they will be punished?

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. Write a 1-2 page journal response to the question above. Try to imagine the scene and think what it would be like to really live through this situation back then, or if it happened to you today.
- b. Discuss the question above in a small group. Try to imagine the scene and think what it would be like to really live through this situation back then, or if it happened to you today.

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

- a. Spend some time praying by yourself or in a small group, asking Jesus to help you and your family to really live out what you believe is true about Jesus and the Gospel.

Application Guide: Acts 9

1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. Think of a time when you had to admit you were wrong about something important. Was it a hard thing to do? Why?

- b. After admitting you are wrong about something important, how hard is it to change your actions that were based on your former thinking?

2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Background: Saul was passionate about standing up for his beliefs in God and the Law of Moses. He was faithful to the religious leaders and their teachings. He was as loyal as loyal could be—the kind of guy you would dream of having on your team. He took being serious about your religion to a whole new level. Then Saul “saw the light.”

Picture it: Imagine you are on your way home from school and are suddenly knocked down and blinded by a bright light. A loud voice starts speaking to you. Would you be terrified or excited to encounter something supernatural?

Imagine you are the leader of an extremely successful cause against the teachings of a dead philosopher. Imagine you have a large following that adores you for standing up for what’s perceived to be right and true. Then imagine that the very person your cause stands against appears to you, very much alive, and starts talking to you. Would you be freaked out? How would it feel to realize that you were dead wrong about everything you believe in?

How do you think Saul developed such a strong passion for such a bad thing?

Why do you think Saul was so terribly mistaken about what God wanted him to do?

Obviously Saul had seen and/or heard of the miracles that Jesus and the Apostles had performed. Do you think Saul thought he had greater powers than the Apostles and could outdo them?

Do you think Saul thought the Apostles were performing miracles with the power of the Devil?

Why do you think God “chose” Saul to spread the Gospel to the Gentiles when he was such a bad person? Do you think that means God forced Saul to change his ways against his will? Do you think that all people who do bad things have a bad heart?

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. Do you think you should simply take your pastor’s/parent’s word that the Bible is true, or should you explore it and try it for yourself? Why.
- b. Think of ways you can verify that the things you’ve been taught to believe in. List 3 in your journal or discuss them with friends.
- c. Do you think it’s okay to sometimes have doubts about the Bible and its teachings? Discuss this question with an adult you trust.

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

- a. Spend a few minutes thinking about all the times you have seen miracles. Thank Jesus for those miracles and ask Him to show Himself to you in more ways.
- b. Spend some time talking to Jesus about what it really means to be a Christian.

Part III: Peter and Reaching Out to Gentiles *(Acts 10-12)*

Application Guide: Acts 10

1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. What is the most interesting vision you have ever heard of someone receiving?

- b. If God were to give you a vision, on what subject do you think it would be?

- c. Why do you think racial tensions exist? What can you do understand people who are not like you?

2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Background: You have probably noticed that in these application guides there is a lot of talk about the Holy Spirit and the things He does, like giving people power to speak new languages, perform many kinds of miracles, preach incredible sermons, have a giving spirit, be in you and shine out of your face, and simply help you to experience the supernatural in many ways. All this is in these application guides because it is one of the main themes in the book of Acts! And now here, in Acts 10, both Cornelius and Peter are given visions by the Holy Spirit. Now that's up close and personal—it's in your mind!

How would you know if a dream (at night) or a vision (like a dream, but in daytime while you're awake) is just a regular dream/daydream or if it's from God?

More background: The topic of Peter’s vision seemed to be about clean and unclean meats, but it was really about ceasing to treat people like they are unclean. The ancient Jews were some of the most extreme racists in history. Even people who were half Jewish, like the Samaritans, were considered to be worthless dogs! So here, Peter is being told in a vision from God to stop being so prejudiced. Does it seem weird that a man of God—a church leader—could be a racist?

Now we have seen that Saul had a good heart, but he misunderstood God’s true mission by persecuting Christians instead of promoting Christ’s teachings. Peter had a good heart, but he misunderstood God’s mission as well. But the Holy Spirit spoke to them both to help them get their minds in tune with their hearts, and then they became leaders in God’s unstoppable cause to take the Gospel to the entire world.

Have you ever seen someone act like a racist but claim to be Christian? How should you respond to that?

Do you think you are racist in any ways? Why?

How should you treat someone who likes different kinds of music, clothes, food, etc., than you?

How do you think churches should respond to different styles of music, clothes or food (at potluck) in church?

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. In a journal or with a close friend, confess ways that you have been prejudiced in your life and in your dealings with others. Ask God to impress you with ideas for how you can be more loving to people who are different than you.
- b. Read Psalm 51 and ask God to create a new heart in you. Think of three new things you want in your heart and pray for these things morning, noon and night for the next week.

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

- a. Pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in your life.
- b. Ask God to help you to be more aware of the miracles He is performing around you.
- c. Ask God to perform a miracle of healing in your life for an issue that has been troubling you in your heart/mind/body.

Application Guide: Acts 11

1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. Have you ever set a new trend or been the first one to try something that none of your friends had ever tried? How did it turn out?

- b. Have you ever gotten in trouble for doing something good? How did you explain yourself?

2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Picture it: Imagine that you live in a place where everyone looks like you do—only one race of people for miles around. Everyone looks like they could be your brother, sister, aunt, uncle or cousin. Then, someone with different hair and skin color shows up. You decide to stand up and boldly make friends with this new person because of what you learned in Acts 10, and you get in trouble for it. When you go to explain your actions, like Peter did, what would you say? How would you explain that this is what Jesus did for us when He left heaven to come to earth as our Savior?

Now imagine the opposite is true: You are going to a new country to work on a special project, and suddenly you are the one who looks different and isn't familiar with the local customs. How would you feel? Isolated and alone? Awkward? How would you want people in this new country to treat you?

Now imagine that you are going to this new country as a missionary. Would it feel different? Why?

Do you think we should act like missionaries in our own country? Why?

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

Choose one or both:

- a. Think of someone you know at school/church/work that is not well accepted due to his or her race or culture. Think of two ways you can reach out, showing kindness and acceptance to this person this week.
- b. Think of someone at school/church/work that you can witness to. Make plans to share one of your favorite Christian books with them and ask them if they have any prayer requests you can pray for.

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

- a. Pray for Jesus to help you better understand Peter's dream. Ask Jesus to show you the areas in your life where you need to be more accepting and loving.
- b. Ask Jesus to bring to mind the ways that you can be a cross-cultural missionary, just like Jesus was when He left heaven and came to earth.

5. Outreach Idea

Talk to your Sabbath School and/or Pathfinder leaders about conducting a type of Sabbath afternoon or Sunday outreach project. Find an area in your town where there are people that are different from you that could use help with either spiritual or physical needs. Check into refugee housing projects, homeless shelters and such, and ask about shut-ins from your church. Find a need, then be the hands and feet of Jesus to meet it.

Application Guide: Acts 12

1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. Have you ever been targeted by a bully at school? How did it feel to have to watch your back all the time, wondering what the bully would try next?

- b. How do you think it would feel to be a soldier at war? Do you think you could ever rest knowing that there are people sneaking around trying to kill you, even while trying to sleep at night?

2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Background: In this chapter the persecution of Christians is going from the Jewish religious leaders, who had limited ability to put people to death, to the local government that could execute people at will. So, Christians are now being “officially” targeted for extermination because Herod had found that by killing James he made the religious leaders happy—so he thought he’d try killing a few more to make even more friends.

Do you think it would be easier or harder to be a Christian if you knew it could mean you would be arrested and killed for your faith?

Throughout history, the Christian church has always grown during times it has been targeted for persecution. Why do you think people take their faith more seriously when they are being persecuted?

Do you know of anyone who is being persecuted for his or her faith today?

When persecution came, Peter still stood for his faith. Do you think he was scared when he was in jail, chained up between two soldiers?

Why do you suppose he thought it was a dream when the angel came to rescue him?

How do you think you would feel in Peter's place? What do you think it would be like to be woken up from your sleep on a cold stone floor, with chains on your wrists, to mysteriously watch the chains fall off as you then seemingly float past your captors, who appear to be in a Holy Spirit-induced sleep? Do you think there is anything the Holy Spirit cannot do?

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

Choose one or both:

- a. Think of a miracle that you need in your life right now. Not for material wants or for someone of the opposite sex to like you, but for real "needs" in your life. Do you think the Holy Spirit has the power to handle your situation? Think through everything we have studied so far in the book of Acts. How can you engage the Holy Spirit and successfully make your requests known to God?
- b. The Apostles knew what to ask for in prayer because they knew what God wanted them to have before they asked. They knew what God wanted for them because they knew what was in harmony with the teachings of the Bible. How can you bring your life more in harmony with the things God tells us He wants for us in the Bible?

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

- a. Think of a specific situation in your life that needs God's help. Then ask God for two miracles: First, ask for the miracle of peace in your heart, knowing that He will handle the situation for you. Then, ask God to intercede and deal with the situation the way He sees fit. Pray this prayer faithfully at least three times per day until you feel God has answered your prayer.
- b. Think of a specific situation in someone else's life that needs God's help, then do the same as above in part "a."

Part IV: Paul's First Missionary Journey *(Acts 13-14)*

Application Guide: Acts 13

1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. When you were little, did you ever pretend you were on a “mission” of some kind? Why do you think it was fun to pretend you were on a mission?

- b. Has anyone ever “sent” you on a mission (it could be anything from going to the store to calling your siblings for lunch)? How did it feel to be selected for the mission? Are some missions more exciting than others?

2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Background: The end of Acts 11 and here in the beginning of Acts 13 there is mention made of many prophets in the area around Jerusalem. In the Old Testament it seems more typical to have only one prophet at a time in any given area. Why do you think there are several prophets in one area at this time?

What do you think it means when it says, “they were sent out by the Holy Spirit” in verse 4? What powers did the Holy Spirit give them?

How would you feel if you met a sorcerer?

If a sorcerer stood up against you, trying to stop you with his evil powers would you have the confidence to call him “the son of the Devil” (vs. 10) to his face, put a curse on him, making him unable to speak, like Paul did?

What was the secret to Paul's confidence and power? Would you like to have that same power in your life?

Do you think the Devil and demons are as active in our day as they were in Jesus' day and during the time of the Apostles? Why or why not? What evidence do you see to support your view?

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. Do you think playing with a Ouija board, or playing games like Dungeons and Dragons or Magic the Gathering are okay? Why or why not?

- b. Make a list of your top ten favorite activities. List each activity on a scale of 1 to 10—one being bad for you spiritually and 10 being good for you spiritually (answers may vary greatly, depending on the person). What could you do to improve your average?

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

- a. Ask Jesus to help you identify things in your life that are holding you back spiritually. Ask Him to help you give those things up.
- b. Ask Jesus to give you a passion for spiritual activities. Ask Him to show you which spiritual activities you would be good at and enjoy.

5. Research Idea

Do some research to find out more about supernatural activity that missionaries are encountering around the world today. Are some parts of the world experiencing more demonic activity than others? Why do you think that is?

Application Guide: Acts 14

☐ 1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. Do you like being complimented? What's the best compliment you've ever received? Is it easy for you to become overconfident when you are complimented? Why or why not?

- b. Has anyone ever thrown something at you, intending to hurt you? How did it feel to know someone disliked you so much? How did you respond to that incident?

☐ 2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Paul and Barnabas became such good preachers that the people in Lystra thought Paul and Barnabas had actually become gods themselves. With God using people so powerfully to preach and heal, do you think it would be easy to eventually forget that it is God working through them and to start thinking they are performing these miracles in their own power?

Do you know anyone who is so good at something that they have become arrogant? How do you think Paul and Barnabas safeguarded themselves against this?

The people of Lystra are one day praising Paul and Barnabas as gods and then the next day trying to kill them. The crowds did this to Jesus as well. Why do you think people in crowds change their minds so easily and so radically? Have you ever been influenced by people around you to do something wrong that seemed okay at the time? What can you do to safeguard yourself against this kind of peer pressure?

Instead of being discouraged by all the conflict in their ministry, Paul and Barnabas kept going to strengthen the other Christians in the area who were being persecuted as well. What do you think makes the difference between persecution strengthening a person or discouraging them?

Why was it important for the Apostles/missionaries to go in twos instead of alone?

Can you think of a spiritual companion that you can team up with for encouragement?

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. Make a list of all your closest friends. Put them in order of best influence to worst influence, spiritually. Do you think there are any friends on your list that you should spend less time with? Why? Are there any friends on your list that you should be spending more time with? Why?

- b. Try to think of a spiritual person that you know that you would like to become friends with. Think of three things you can do to become better friends with this person.

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

- a. Pray for God to bring a person into your life that can be a spiritual companion to you. Ask God to open your eyes to who that may be.
- b. Pray for the friends on your list that you feel have a negative spiritual influence in your life. Ask God to send the Holy Spirit into their lives to draw them closer to Him.

5. Research Idea

Plan a spiritual event with your Sabbath School or Pathfinder leader that you can invite your friends to. Plan spiritual activities that you think may help your friends be more interested in having a relationship with Jesus. Plan to share your testimony about how studying the lives of the Apostles in Acts has helped you grow spiritually.

Part V: Gentile Christians Affirmed *(Acts 15)*

Application Guide: Acts 15

1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. Have you ever fought with your siblings or your parents? What is one of the most memorable fights you can think of?

- b. Have you ever helped to settle a fight between people? What was the fight about and how did you help resolve the situation?

2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Background: This passage is all about circumcision—do you even know what that is? Yikes! Not sure exactly why God chose that as a sign for His people, but He did—it’s talked about all throughout the Bible. Some people think God chose this sign for health reasons, but there is no concrete evidence.

It is important to note that circumcision was an old tradition from the Law of Moses, and the Jewish leaders were having a hard time giving up this old tradition when people who were not from the Jewish culture wanted to become Christians. Then the fight became about doing what you’ve always done versus listening for God’s new way forward when the situation changes.

How do you know what things about church should remain the same and which should change?

Have you ever heard people argue about whether or not to ordain women pastors? Have you ever heard people argue about whether you should kneel, sit or stand when you pray? Did you know that some churches have split over what color carpet to put in the sanctuary? Why do you think people argue so fervently over these things?

How much time do you think should be spent sorting out doctrinal issues like these versus helping the poor or witnessing to people who don't know Jesus?

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. Start a journal to try and sort out the things that cause conflict in your life. Keep track of every conflict you encounter for one week (for some people, one day may be enough!). At the end of the week, go over your list and try to determine which things are the most controversial for you. Try to determine if you get into conflict over little annoying things or over really big issues.
- b. Spend time thinking about each conflict and try to determine if the conflict did anything to help resolve the issue that was disputed. Would you be better off letting go of certain things? Are you truly accomplishing anything by arguing over the big things?

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

- a. Pray for Jesus to give you wisdom in dealing with the difficult issues that face you.
- b. Pray for Jesus to give you peace when you are upset and tend to say/do things you regret.
- c. Ask Jesus to keep you busy serving Him so you won't be distracted with less important things that tend to be controversial and upsetting.

Part VI: Paul's Second Missionary Journey *(Acts 16-18)*

Application Guide: Acts 16

1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. Have you ever been on a road trip? Which was your favorite and why?

- b. Are you a homebody or a traveler? What do you like about being home or about traveling?

2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Picture it: This passage is all about circumcision—do you even know what that is? Yikes! Not sure exactly why God chose it? Imagine there is no Disneyland. Imagine there are no water parks or roller coasters. Imagine a world with no movie theaters or rock stars to go see in concert. Imagine no planes, trains or automobiles. Imagine walking to school every day without an iPod or cell phone.

The Apostles didn't have to imagine this—it was their world! Most people back then didn't travel across the country, or even a few miles looking for fun times—it was just too difficult. Traveling was very slow and dusty. Everywhere people went it, was like going for a really long walk on a dirt trail. If you don't like backpacking or camping, you probably wouldn't have liked living back then.

So why do you think Paul and Silas spent so much time traveling? What do you think motivated them to walk from country to country, not always knowing where they were going, where they would stay or what they would eat? Why do you think they were willing to set out on journeys they knew could take them years to complete? Can you imagine your parents quitting their jobs, gathering your family together and heading out on a two-year trip, only taking the things you could carry with you on your backs? Today, jobless wanderers that walk around with all their belongings in a backpack are not always highly thought of!

The fact is that the Apostles were told by the Holy Spirit to take on huge tasks in order to help other people learn about Jesus. The Holy Spirit not only gave the Apostles the ability to perform miracles, He also sent them on long, tiring missions. Acts 16 says that the Holy Spirit prevented them from going to certain places, then gave them dreams that told them to go other places.

Has the Holy Spirit ever impressed you to go somewhere or not to go somewhere? How do you think you would feel if He did? Do you think you would enjoy traveling more if you knew you were on a mission from God?

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

- a. Think about all your favorite things to do. On what kind of mission do you think you would enjoy God sending you?
- b. What talents do you think God has given you? How do you think God would like you to use your talents for Him? Plan out a mission you could go on with some friends, right here in the town where you live.

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

- a. Pray and ask Jesus to give you a mission. Ask Him to start you off with something simple like praying for someone, giving someone a Christian book or a Bible, or going to help someone with a job they can't do for themselves.
- b. Ask your parents if God has ever sent them on a mission. Ask them what it was like. Ask them to pray that God will give *you* a mission.

Application Guide: Acts 17

1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. Think of a conflict you were involved in—particularly one in which you gave in and let someone else win. Why did you choose to give in?

- b. Think of a conflict you were involved in—particularly one in which you fought hard until you won. Why didn't you give up?

2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Background: This passage is all about circumcision—do you even know what that is? Yikes! Not sure exactly why God chose tPaul and his companions have been traveling around for some time now. The Holy Spirit is now allowing them to preach, teach and perform miracles of various kinds. Everywhere they go, they are making converts before leaving or being run out of town. In Philippi they were thrown in jail for casting a demon out of a fortune-telling slave girl. In Thessalonica they were run off for preaching about Jesus, and then some of the Thessalonians went as far as running them out of nearby Berea as well.

After so much running away from angry people, Paul found himself in Athens. In Athens there was a god for everyone. There were temples everywhere, and they were tolerant of whatever god you wanted to worship. They would even listen to you talk about your god.

What is it like where you live? Do people get upset if you don't believe exactly like they do or are they tolerant of all other views? Which type of people do you think would be easier to live with? How did Jesus treat people with views different than his?

Paul seemed to know some things about Greek culture—he even quoted a Greek poet while in Athens. Some religious leaders think Christians should engage secular culture (movies, music, tv, concerts, secular events, etc.) so that they know what other people are watching and thinking about, and then they can find ways to reach them like Paul did. Do you agree with this philosophy? Do you think this idea can be taken too far?

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

Choose one or both:

- a. How do you know when to stand your ground and when to run away? How could you learn to stand stronger for your convictions and beliefs? What do you think you will do when the world falls apart and trials increase just before Jesus' return? What are some ways you can strengthen your relationship with Jesus so He can help you stand strong?

- b. Make a list of the top five ways you currently engage secular culture. How are these ways positive and helpful?

- c. Do you think any of these things are hurting your relationship with Jesus? Do you think there are there any that you should give up? Are some of them helping your relationship? How/why?

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

- a. Spend some time in prayer, asking Jesus to help you identify potential areas of spiritual conflict in your life.
- b. Ask Jesus for wisdom, to know when to stand strong in your faith and when it's better to avoid conflict.
- c. Ask Jesus to help you know what secular activities to weed out of your life.

Application Guide: Acts 18

1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. Share the story of a time when someone insulted you. How did it make you feel? How did you respond to the insult?

- b. Share the story of a time when you insulted someone else. Why did you insult them? How did the person you insulted respond to you? What would you do differently now?

2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Background: As was his custom, Paul went to the synagogue to preach when he arrived in Corinth. When the Jews rejected him he told them, “Your blood is upon your own heads—I am innocent. From now on I will go preach to the Gentiles” (vs. 6).

How do you think Paul got to be so strong and take the rejection so well? Elijah ran and hid when he found out Jezebel hated him and wanted to kill him after his victory at Mt Carmel. What do you think the difference is?

Do you think we all have times when we are strong and times when we cower or run away? What can help you to stand strong more often?

In this chapter the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision and said, “Don’t be afraid! Speak out! Don’t be silent! For I am with you, and no one will attack and harm you, for many people in this city belong to me” (vs. 10). How do you think this vision made Paul feel? Do you think he felt relieved to know that he wouldn’t be beaten and thrown in prison in that city? Why do you think Jesus wanted to reassure Paul of this? Do you think Paul had possibly been getting discouraged and was thinking about going home?

Now it seems that Paul has found his niche—preaching to the Gentiles. And yet, now that this is his new focus, the leader of the synagogue gives his heart to Jesus. Somehow Paul focused on his new task without ignoring his initial mission.

Is there a way that you could be more focused in what you do to witness to or help others?

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

Choose one or both:

- a. Make a list of all the spiritual activities you are engaged in. Is it too much or not enough? Try to focus on one or two outreach projects and work toward excelling at them over the next few weeks.
- b. Think of an area in your life where you feel weak. Think of two things that could make you stronger in this area. Find a way to give yourself a reminder three times per day to be stronger in this area. Structure the two things you believe will help you to fit into this plan.

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

- a. Pray for someone you know that is involved in ministry. Pray for one specific aspect of their ministry that you would like to see God bless. Pray for Jesus to show you how you could be more supportive of this ministry.
- b. Ask for God to give you more energy and passion for ministry. Ask Him to help you focus in on one or two particular areas of ministry.

5. Outreach Idea

Write a letter of thanks and encouragement for everyone in your church that ministers to you. This could include your pastor, Sabbath school leader, deacons, custodian, greeters, elders, etc.

Part VII: Paul's Third Missionary Journey *(Acts 19-21)*

Application Guide: Acts 19

1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

- a. There are places in America where witchcraft is openly practiced. There are still medicine men/women, mediums or shamans that communicate with spirits. What would you say if you were invited to go to one of these places on a mission trip? Why?

2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Picture it: Imagine you are walking down the street one day, going to the pharmacy to pick up a prescription for your grandmother who is ill, and one of your friends comes running up holding a handkerchief. Your friend tells you that this handkerchief can heal people because it had been touched by an evangelist who has just come to town. Your friend claims to have seen other people healed when they touched it. Would you:

- a. Forget about your grandmother's prescription and run home with the handkerchief
b. Get both the prescription and the handkerchief to take home
c. Tell your friend s/he is crazy and in need of counseling
d. Laugh at your friend's overactive imagination

Why do you think you would respond in the way you chose?

According to the next part of this story, if a person doesn't fully believe in and understand God's power, they cannot successfully use it. Acts 19:13-16 talks about some people that tried to use the name of Jesus to cast out demons and, rather than causing the demons to flee, were beat up by the demons and stripped naked!

Why do you think these people were unsuccessful in using God's miracle-working power?

Do you think being used by God to perform miracles is more dependent on a correct understanding of the detailed, step-by-step process of “how” to do it, or more dependent on the kind of relationship a person has with Jesus? Why?

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

- a. The Bible says that just before Jesus’ second coming, demonic activity will be greater than it is now and the power of the Holy Spirit will also be even greater than it was during the time of the Apostles as recorded in Acts. Do you think it is necessary to prepare in advance for this time of intense spiritual activity or can you just wait until it starts happening? What can you do specifically to prepare yourself for this time?
- b. Make a list/plan of how you would like to prepare, including starting dates/times and resources/people you will need to help you be successful.

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

- a. Pray for Jesus to open your eyes to the spiritual activity around you. Ask Him to help you stop taking His miracle-working power for granted and to recognize things in your life that aren’t actually “good luck,” but actually blessings or miracles from God.
- b. Ask Jesus to help you to be used by Him as a part of a miracle in the life of someone else. Ask Jesus to help you maintain a heart that is sensitive to His leading.

5. Outreach Idea

Take a prayer walk with some friends around your church, school or neighborhood. Pray for God to give you the opportunity to touch someone’s life in a special way as you engage in this activity.

Application Guide: Acts 20

☐ 1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. Have you ever fallen asleep in church? What happened and why?

- b. What do you think makes some sermons interesting and some sermons boring?

- c. Think of two or three ideas that can make church more interesting to you and your friends.

☐ 2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Paul says here that he had “one message for Jews and Greeks alike—the necessity of repenting from sin and turning to God, and of having faith in our Lord Jesus...” (vs. 21). Then he says, “My life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God” (vs. 24).

These simple statements seem to be the heart of Paul’s ministry. In fact, many of the doctrines that are taught in churches today are from letters that Paul wrote to groups of people as he was helping them learn to apply these simple teachings to their lives.

To apply these teachings to our lives, we first need to realize that God’s laws and His ways are good for us and can make us happy. Then we must realize that there are things we need to change in our lives because they are hurting us in some way, and that God gives grace to help us grow and change. This is how we repent from sin and turn to God—we must realize God’s ways are better and then work with Him to change our ways to match His ways.

Try to think of three examples of things that people think are fun at first but actually end up hurting them and taking them down a wrong road.

Now what does it mean to “have faith in our Lord Jesus” (vs. 21)? Discuss, or think through what you believe this means before reading on.

Faith in Jesus means knowing and trusting Him—and in order to know and trust Him, you must have a relationship with Him. A relationship with Jesus means spending time with Him, talking to Him (praying in various ways), listening to Him (reading your Bible, listening for the Holy Spirit), and doing things together (reaching out to help others).

Make a list of ten things that can help you develop a relationship with Jesus (Hint: they are very similar to activities that can help you develop relationships with other people).

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

Choose one or both:

- a. Think of three things in your life that help you feel closer to Jesus. Do you enjoy these things or do you just do them out of a feeling of obligation?
- b. Think of three things in your life that you know do not draw you closer to Jesus. Do you think they are somehow neutral, or do they take you away from Jesus?
- c. Think about how you can make your relationship with Jesus more personal—similar to your relationship with your best friend.

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

- a. Ask Jesus to bring to your mind some things of which you need to report. Ask Him to help you break any habits that keep you doing these things.
- b. Ask Jesus to bring to your mind several positive things you can do that would help you draw closer to Him. Ask Him to give you the power and strength to do what you know is best.
- c. Try talking to Jesus throughout your day just like you talk to a friend.

Application Guide: Acts 21

1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. Has God ever impressed you to say something to someone? What did you feel impressed to say?

- b. Has anyone ever said something to you that seemed to be a message from God? How did that feel? Do you think that person is a prophet?

2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Picture it: Imagine you are alive in the time of the Apostles. Imagine you are watching as the prophet Agabus arrived from Judea, went up to Paul and took his belt. What do you think would go through mind as you watch him tie up his own feet and hands with Paul's belt and then say, "The Holy Spirit declares, 'So shall the owner of this belt be bound by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem and turned over to the Gentiles'" (vs. 11).

What would you think if you saw someone do something like this today, at your home church? Do you think God communicates with us differently today? Why?

What forms of communication do you think God could use to reach you in the most effective way?

Why do you think Paul was so eager to go to Jerusalem, knowing he would face arrest and persecution? How would you feel about going on a mission trip, knowing that it would result in you and your friends getting mocked and beaten?

Paul had been beaten many times by Gentiles. Do you think it felt different for him to be beaten by fellow Jews? Would you rather be beaten by strangers, or by people from your own community?

If you had just been saved in the middle of a beating and been arrested because of mistaken identity, would the first thing on your mind be to stand up and witness to the people that had been beating and arresting you?

How do you think Paul maintained such a focus on the mission God had given him?

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

- a. Think about it: Is it fair to compare your commitment to Jesus to Paul's?
- b. What would it look like for you today to be as committed as Paul? Would God want a different kind of sacrifice from you?
- c. How do you think God would like you to show your faith in Him today.

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

- a. Ask Jesus to fill your thoughts and mind with Him. Ask Him to help you learn what it means to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).
- b. Ask Jesus to help your thoughts of Him to drive out the temptations that distract you.
- c. Ask Jesus to help your thoughts of Him to remind you to be kind and loving to others.

5. Outreach Idea

Ask Jesus to impress you with a desire to compliment and pray for a different person on each day this week.

Part VIII: Paul's Final Journey *(Acts 22-28)*

Application Guide: Acts 22

1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Try telling someone about your relationship with Jesus, starting with your earliest memories of Him up to how you feel about Him today.

2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Background: Paul is once again speaking to a crowd. This time, rather than telling the history of the Jewish people, their relationship with God and how it lead up to Jesus, Paul is sharing his personal testimony about his experience meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus.

How is a testimony different than a sermon?

Why does Paul introduce his testimony as his “defense” (vs. 1)? Why do you think he defended himself with his testimony rather than with theology?

Why do you think Paul spoke in their language (Aramaic) instead of continuing on in Greek?

When Paul was in Athens he quoted a Greek poet, now in Jerusalem he talks about the well-know Jewish leaders he studied under. Why do you think he did that?

Why do you think Paul told the people that he used to persecute Christians?

It seems like Paul was trying to tell the people that he used to be just like them—that he was passionate about the Jewish law and ceremonies until he had his vision from Jesus.

When Paul was trying to witness to the Jews in Jerusalem, why do you think he told them that Jesus had prophesied that they wouldn't accept what he was saying at that very moment?

Why do you think Paul went to Jerusalem knowing he would be rejected and imprisoned, and that his testimony wouldn't seem to do any good at the moment?

Do you think his testimony planted seeds that would bear fruit in the future?

Why do you think the Jews got so angry when Paul said God sent him to the Gentiles?

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

Choose one or both:

- a. Write out your testimony. Include every memory you have that has laid an important part of your spiritual foundation. Then think about what the next step in your spiritual journey may be.
- b. Read a good biography of a spiritual hero. Make a “bucket list” of spiritual activities you'd like to engage in before you die, or before Jesus comes.

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

- a. Ask Jesus to bring to your mind the most important steps in your spiritual journey that you may have forgotten or overlooked.
- b. Pray for someone you know to stop taking for granted the miracles in their life. Pray that you and your friends can see God's work on earth more clearly.

5. Outreach Idea

Ask someone you know to share with you their testimony about what Jesus means to them, and then share your testimony.

Application Guide: Acts 23

1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. Have you ever gotten in trouble for being disrespectful to your parents? What happened?

- b. Have you ever gotten in trouble for being disrespectful to your teacher, or someone else in authority? What happened?

- c. Have you ever been commended for being nice or respectful to someone in authority? What did you do?

2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Background: The fifth commandment says to honor your father and mother, that your days may be long in the land God has given you. It doesn't say to honor your parents if they deserve it or if they are good to you—it just says to honor, no matter what. How is this similar to the part of Acts 23 in which Paul apologizes for being disrespectful to the high priest?

Have you ever intentionally created chaos by turning people against each other, like Paul did in verses 6-10? Have you ever done this to your parents in trying to get what you want? What is the difference between what Paul did here and what you or your friends may have done to your parents? Was what Paul did here right or wrong?

How does this relate to controversies you may see happening in your church?

What kind of modern-day conflicts have you heard of church members and leaders getting into?

Why do you think that people committed to the church still get into fights? If we truly love God, shouldn't we all be able to get along?

At the end of this fight, the Lord said, "Be encouraged, Paul. Just as you have been a witness to me here in Jerusalem, you must preach the Good News in Rome as well" (vs. 11). As we have looked at the last few chapters, it seems evident that this was God's will for Paul. Can you think of a modern-day situation where the only way to witness to certain leaders is to be arrested and appear before them? How would you feel about God asking you to do this?

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

Choose one or both:

- a. Think through your relationship with God. Is there something you think He wants you to do or someone he wants you to witness to that you are resisting? Are you being like the prophet Jonah and running away? What can you do to be more submissive to God's call on your life?
- b. Think through your life and try to identify times when God has tried to reach you with a message to do something. Journal about three instances where you felt successfully used by God. What prepared you for those times? What can you do to prepare yourself to be used by God again? Be specific.

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

- a. Pray for God to help you minimize controversy in your life. Ask Him to help you become a peacemaker. Try to think of a specific situation to pray for, also asking God how you can intervene and be of help.
- b. Pray for others that you know that have combative personality types. Ask God to give them peace and soften their hearts. When you are around these people, remember to pray for them to be calm and Spirit-led.

Application Guide: Acts 24

☐ 1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. Think of someone with whom you always seem to lose arguments. Why do you think you have a hard time persuading this person to agree with your point of view? Give an example?

- b. Think of someone you are usually able to convince to do what you want. What do you think gives you influence over this person?

☐ 2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Paul is once again defending himself, as well as witnessing to a leading ruler. Write out your own detailed defense for your faith as if you are standing before a judge that is not a Christian. Use the following outline or one of your own:

- a. Give an overview of the Gospel—who Jesus is and what He stands for.
- b. Site historical evidence that He really existed (optional).
- c. Share your own testimony of how Jesus has impacted your life.
- d. For those to whom you are speaking, make an appeal to accept Jesus and follow Him

Find someone to play the part of the non-Christian judge and present your case in front of several others. How did it feel to actually defend your faith out loud?

 **3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)**

- a. Pray for God to give you confidence in your relationship with Him. Pray for Him to help you be able to reason through *why* you believe and share it with others you may meet. Ask God to help you be honest and personal as you do this. Ask God to bring someone into your life that you can witness to in this way.

- b. Think through your life and try to identify times when God has tried to reach you with a message to do something. Journal about three instances where you felt successfully used by God. What prepared you for those times? What can you do to prepare yourself to be used by God again? Be specific.

Application Guide: Acts 25

1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. Has anyone ever held you down against your will—even for just two or three minutes? How did it make you feel?

- b. Have you ever been accidentally trapped someplace? What happened?

- c. What's the worst story you've ever heard about people being trapped somewhere? How would you feel in their situation?

2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Background: If you've grown up an Adventist, you've heard people talk about what will happen just before Jesus returns to take us to heaven. We have a huge emphasis on end-time events because we want Him to come back soon! We have been told that many will be arrested for their faith in Jesus, just like Paul was in Acts 25. What do you think of the way Paul handled his situation—being falsely accused, hauled around from place to place, locked up, then allowed visitors, then being brought out in front of the king? All this went on for several years! How do you think you would feel in this type of situation? What kind of prison do you think Paul was in?

Do an Internet search for “Nelson Mandela” and read about how he was imprisoned for years in South Africa for peacefully standing up for what he believed was right. Google “Christians imprisoned for their faith” and read through some of the websites listed there. Try to count how many places have persecuted Christians over the last 2,000 years. Can you find out approximately how many countries still imprison people for claiming Christianity? Are you surprised at your findings, or did you expect it? Why?

Why do you think people try to persecute those that believe differently than they do, rather than just ignoring them? How do you treat people that believe differently than you do?

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

Choose one or both:

- a. Write down in detail the things that are most important to you—especially regarding your faith. Ask someone you know to do the same, then sit down and compare notes. How do you feel about your similarities? How do you feel about your differences?
- b. Contact someone with whom you've had a recent disagreement and try to work things out. Make a list of steps you think it would take to bring the situation to a peaceful resolution (Example: Apologize for having gotten upset, ask the other person to tell their side of the story while you listen without interrupting, then tell your side). Do an online search on conflict resolution if you feel you need help in this area.

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

- a. Pray for world peace, peace and safety in your country, state and the city where you live. Pray for peace at your church, school and especially in your own home and in the homes of your friends and even in the homes of those who you know don't like you. Then pray for Jesus to bring peace into your heart every day.

5. Outreach Idea

Prepare a five-minute mission story to share with your church. Use the information from the stories you found when you did research on Christians imprisoned for their faith. Maybe two or three from your group could all share at the same time, aiming to bring more awareness of the plight of Christians around the world.

Application Guide: Acts 26

1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. Does repeating something over and over bore you or help you to know it better? Why?

- b. What is your favorite thing to do over and over again (listen to a particular song, watch a particular movie, recite your favorite scripture, etc.)? Why?

2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Paul is once again sharing his testimony. How do you think this repeated sharing is affecting him? Do you think he is getting tired of sharing it, or do you think repeating it so frequently helps him to be constantly reminded that God is with him and watching over him? Why?

Think back to your defense and testimony that you wrote out for chapter 24. Did everything you wrote come to mind right away or did it take time to remember some things? When those things you had forgotten happened to you, did you ever think you'd forget them?

Back in Bible times very few people could read, so they depended on the oral tradition. Stories of the Bible were recited over and over until they were memorized. If a person stopped reciting them, they would slowly forget details and soon the stories would be lost. It is important for us to constantly think of the ways God has led us in our lives so that we don't forget, either. Sharing your testimony frequently helps you to remember. It is also important to keep engaging your life with Jesus so there is always something new to add to your testimony. If your testimony stops growing, you will soon get bored with it. The key is to stay active in your relationship with Jesus and keep the relationship alive!

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

- a. Make a list of the activities you and your friends have engaged in that have given you pieces of your testimony (i.e. helping with community service, going on a mission trip, offering to help an elderly neighbor, etc.) Plan out how you can engage in some of these activities again. Make a list of the people you'd like to invite to participate with you.
- b. Choose a passage of Scripture to memorize that is at least five verses long. Start out with a classic passage such as Psalm 23 or the Lord's Prayer. Recite the passage several times per day until you know it by heart. Experiment and determine how often you will need to recite it to keep from forgetting it.

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

- a. Pray for God to impress you with ideas for activities you can engage in to reach out to your friends and community. Get together with several friends who want to help you and pray together for God's leading.
- b. Pray through the passage of Scripture you have chosen to memorize. Ask God to help you to understand what it means, and also to help you find new insights every day so it can become a guiding force in your life.

5. Outreach Idea

Now that you have gone over your testimony several times, find two more places where you can share it (if you haven't already, try sharing at a nursing home or children's division Sabbath school).

Application Guide: Acts 27

1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. Do you like storms or do they frighten you? What's the worst storm you've ever been in?

- b. Have you ever thought of becoming a "storm chaser?" Why/why not?

2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Background: What's the deal with Paul? He isn't afraid of being rejected, beaten or executed. He doesn't seem to mind being arrested or losing his freedom. Now he seems completely okay with being shipwrecked and is confident no one will die in the catastrophe as they float around in the raging sea that has smashed their ship to pieces. Why do you think this is? Do you think Paul's attitude is due to his self-confidence, or his faith in God? Do you know of anyone with confidence/faith like this today?

In the past, Paul has testified that Jesus had spoken to him several times. Now, in verse 10, he says, "I believe" there is trouble ahead. Then, in verse 23, he stated that an angel of the God to whom he belonged told him not to be afraid because he would stand before Caesar. How many different ways do you think there are for God to speak to people? Which way would you most like God to speak to you?

Do you think God caused the storm that destroyed the ship? Why/why not?

Some people thought that Hurricane Katrina, which destroyed most of New Orleans a few years ago, was God punishing the people that lived there for being immoral. Do you think God causes natural disasters to punish bad people? Why/why not?

The Bible says that the end of the world and Jesus' second coming will be preceded by great natural disasters. Do you think these will be caused by God or Satan?

Think through the best and worst times of your life. How do you think God was involved in each of these times?

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

Choose one or both:

- a. Find a copy of the classic poem, "Footsteps." Can you identify any times in your life when God carried you? Can you think of any times when you wished He had?
- b. How do you think a relationship with Jesus helps you through life? Do you think that giving your life to Jesus and spending time with Him should mean that he would protect you from all trouble? How do you relate to James 1:2-18?

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

- a. Do an online search for "natural disasters around the world" and choose specific situations to pray for.
- b. Pray for those who are enduring personal tragedy in your town. Look through your local newspaper and find some specific people to pray for.

5. Outreach Idea

Listen closely for prayer requests at your church this Sabbath or ask your pastor who in your congregation could use prayer. Get some friends together and think of ways you can help answer some of these prayers.

Application Guide: Acts 28

1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. How do you feel when you go someplace new and people are friendly and accepting of you? Give an example of a time this has happened to you and how it made you feel.

- b. How do you feel when you go someplace new and people are *not* friendly and accepting? Give an example of a time this has happened to you and how it made you feel.

2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Picture it: Imagine you are with Paul on this journey. You are also a prisoner being taken to Rome to face trial—and possible death—even though you’ve done nothing wrong. How would you feel to be in chains and tossed around in this huge storm? Do you think you would be scared when the ship starts to break apart?

Fortunately, the guards have removed your chains so you can swim to shore. How do you think you would feel swimming in a raging sea? Do you think you would feel like it’s a miracle that you made it to shore, or just good luck? After surviving the storm and making it to shore, how would you feel if the snake bites you instead of Paul? Would you be tempted to feel like someone is out to get you and become depressed, or would you be carefree like Paul?

On top of all the other supernatural activity surrounding Paul, he now goes around this island as a prisoner, healing every person who has a physical ailment. How do you think one person can have such a positive attitude and an amazing life?

Compare Paul with Superman. How are they similar? How are they different?

When you look over Paul's whole life, do you think you would like to trade places with him if you could or keep the life you have today? Why/why not?

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

- a. Analyze your attitude towards life. Are you a confident optimist like Paul, or are you more pessimistic in nature?
- b. What do you think you can do to be more like Paul in your approach to life?
- c. Write out an action plan for living life more like Paul. Start with your devotional life, then move on to training for ministry and getting involved in lots of different activities.

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

- a. Pray and ask Jesus to help you live your life well. God doesn't need everyone to be a Paul, but He definitely needs you to be on His side and use the talents He has given you for His cause. Ask Him to guide and direct you into the plan He has for your life.
- b. Ask Jesus to help you discover the talents He has given you, and to make you bold in standing up for Him.
- c. Ask Jesus to bring people into your life that can help you in your spiritual journey with Him.

5. Outreach Idea

Tell someone you know about the things you've learned in this journey through Acts. Ask this person to join you in going through the study guides as you try to further learn and apply the principles Paul teaches here.

Part IX: Paul's First Letter to the Church at Thessalonica *(1 Thessalonians)*

Application Guide: 1 Thessalonians 1

1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. Have you ever made a new friend when you were on vacation or when you've gone to summer camp or camp meeting? What did you do to stay in touch with your new friend(s) after you went back home?

- b. Do you have any aunts, uncles, cousins or grandparents that don't live near you? How do you stay in touch with them and keep them an active part of your life?

2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Background: Acts 17 records the story of Paul and his companions going to Thessalonica. They were warmly received and taught in the local synagogue, explaining to the people that the prophecies of the Scriptures pointed to Jesus as the Messiah. After three Sabbaths there were many new believers, both Jewish and Greek. But there were also some jealous Jews who started a riot and had Paul and his friends driven from town. 1 Thessalonians is the first letter that Paul wrote to the new believers in Thessalonica, probably just a few short weeks after their conversion to Christianity.

Paul spends chapter 1 encouraging the new believers. Why do you think he starts out encouraging them rather than telling them what they could do better? How do you feel when someone encourages you?

Some of Paul's first words of encouragement were to assure the new believers that they belonged to God and that He had chosen them to be His people. How do you think this made the people of Thessalonica feel? How does it make you feel to know that God has chosen you as well?

Paul also tells the Thessalonians that he thanks God for their “faithful work and loving deeds” (vs. 3). Why do you think he told them that? Do you think that people who claim to believe in Jesus will always do loving things? Why?

Paul says that his witness to them was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. What evidence do you see for that claim?

Paul also states that even though believing brought “severe suffering” (vs. 6) upon them, they were willing to endure it. Paul goes on to say that when they suffered for believing in Jesus they were imitating both him and Jesus. Do you think people who believe in Jesus will always suffer in some way? Why?

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

- a. Think through your interactions with others over the past two days. Do you have the tendency to talk about positive things (good qualities in other people, etc.) or negative things (bad qualities in other people, gossip, etc.)? Do you tend to encourage people or discourage people? Why do you think that is?
- b. Do you enjoy being around people who are very complimentary and encouraging? Think of how you can become a person who is a great encourager. Put reminders in your phone, or someplace that will help you remember to say kind things to those you meet.

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

- a. Pray for God to help you develop an even more positive spirit than you have now. Pray for Him to help you see the bright side of every situation.
- b. Pray for someone else you know to become more positive and encouraging as well. Try to be an encourager to this person as you pray for them to be encouraging to others.

5. Outreach Idea

Think of three people you can encourage this week and do so.

Application Guide: 1 Thessalonians 2

1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. Have you ever encountered someone who had just had an accident or was hurt in some way? Did you do anything to help them? What did you do?

- b. How do you think you would respond if someone came and knocked on the door of your house, and they were covered with blood from an accident? Do you think you would be cool under pressure and be able to help them or would you freak out?

2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Background: Paul starts this chapter by reminding the people how badly he and Silas had been treated at Philippi (see if you can recite from memory the details of his experience there). Why do you think Paul brings this up when he is writing to the Thessalonians? Do you think it is possible that the Thessalonian believers had helped to care for Paul's and Silas' wounds that may not have been completely healed from their beating in Philippi?

What would you think if an evangelist showed up at your church to preach, and he was covered with sores from a recent beating? Would you easily believe that he was innocent and trustworthy, or would you be skeptical? What do you think made the Thessalonians listen to someone who had just been run out of another town?

Why do you think Paul reminds the people that he and Silas had come to preach to them even though they had suffered so much so recently? Do you think Paul is getting arrogant here, trying to brag about how tough he is? Do you think he had been feeling tempted to quit preaching and go home? Would you have kept going, preaching for free to crowds in which half of the people hated you? How would you deal with the rejection?

Why do you think Paul tells the Thessalonians that God gave Silas and him the courage to keep going? Do think that people being willing to endure such suffering is a sign that there really is a God? Why else would people do this?

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

- a. Think about it: What motivates your behavior? Do you do things for rewards of some kind (money, popularity, fun, etc.) or do Biblical principals guide your behavior?
- b. Write a one-page essay in your journal about how you can implement Biblical principals in your decision-making processes rather than just going with what seems good at the time.

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

- a. Pray for God to give you more compassion for those who are suffering. Pray for God to impress you with what you can do for unfortunate people around the world.

5. Outreach Idea

- a. Choose a developing nation that has many suffering people and pray for their situation every day.
- b. Find a local homeless shelter or women's shelter and look into volunteering there. Try to learn as much as you can about people who deal with suffering on a daily basis.

Application Guide: 1 Thessalonians 3

☐ 1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. How does it make you feel to know that there will always be trouble in life, and that you will almost never have a perfect day? Is that discouraging? Why/why not?

- b. How does it make you feel to know that there will never be another problem or difficulty when we get to heaven? Does that sound boring? Why/why not?

☐ 2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Paul tells the Thessalonians that he and Silas knew they (the Thessalonians) were destined for “troubles” (vs. 3) when they became Christians. Do you think Paul should have just left those people alone so they could have had more peaceful lives?

Would you rather try to have fun doing whatever you want or follow Jesus and open up the possibility for trouble? Why?

What is the benefit of having Jesus in your life?

How long does “worldly” fun really last?

Do you think it’s possible to follow Jesus and still have fun?

What do you think of Paul’s statement, “That is why, when I could bear it no longer, I sent Timothy to find out whether your faith was still strong” (vs. 1-2). According to Acts, Paul was only in Thessalonica for close to three weeks. Why do you think he felt so close to the people after such a short time?

What does this tell you about Paul’s style of evangelism? Do you think people became Christians because of Paul’s teachings about Jesus or because he cared so much about them—or both? Why?

How do people evangelize at your church? Do they just hire an evangelist to come preach for a few weeks while the church members watch and do nothing, or do church members get involved, go out and make friends with people and show them that they care about them? Which way do you think is more biblical?

What would you say to a church member who thinks he or she is too busy to get involved in evangelism?

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

- a. Have you ever gotten involved in formal evangelism? Why or why not?
- b. Have you ever been involved in informal evangelism? Why or why not?
- c. Do you think being involved in evangelism is an option for Christians, or is it required?
- d. Make a plan for how you think you could most effectively witness to people in a way that is natural for you.

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

- a. Pray for God to help you recognize opportunities to witness to others.
- b. Pray for the Holy Spirit to give you the words to say when the opportunity arises.
- c. Pray for Jesus to bring to your mind a person to whom He wants you to be a witness.

5. Outreach Idea

When you have a personal relationship with Jesus and a devotional time every day, you are automatically prepared to be a witness. All you have to do is share with people what you experienced in your devotion that morning and what Jesus means to you. Your testimony is the most powerful and effective witness you have!

Application Guide: 1 Thessalonians 4

1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. What do you think it means to “live a quiet life, minding your own business” (vs. 11)?

- b. Has there ever been a time that someone got involved in your “business” unnecessarily? How did that make you feel?

- c. Do you think there is ever an appropriate time to get involved in someone else’s business?

2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Background: In the book of Acts, Paul regularly turned the Pharisees and Sadducees against each other by bringing up the topic of resurrection from the dead. The Pharisees, of whom Paul himself used to be, believed in the resurrection of the dead, but the Sadducees did not. Here in chapter 4, Paul makes a strong statement about this belief. Paul says that he wanted to discuss this topic with the new believers in Thessalonica because he didn’t want them to grieve like people that “have no hope” (vs. 13).

How important is hope in a person’s life here on earth?

What are some things that you hope for?

How do you think you would feel about the death of a loved one if you were an atheist? Why?

How do you feel about the death of a loved one as a believer in Jesus and the resurrection?

Picture it: Imagine you were born into a home that didn't know about God—all you thought about were the things you could hold onto. You spend your life trying to make lots of money, aspiring to have as much fun as you can by buying things and engaging in “fun” activities. Then imagine that you find out that you have cancer and have six months to live. How would you feel? What would you do? What would you say to your family and friends when they find out and are deeply saddened?

How does it feel to know that your loved ones who have died will not go to heaven before you, but that they are waiting to go together with you?

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

- a. Think about someone you love that has died and you know will be in heaven one day. Do you think they would be sad if you weren't there? Why?
- b. Have you accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior? Do you believe you will go to heaven when Jesus comes back if you were to die right now?
- c. What do you think you need to do to be ready for Jesus to come? Is this something you are willing to take chances on or do you want to be absolutely sure.

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

- a. Spend time in prayer, searching your heart for what you really believe about Jesus and your commitment to Him.
- b. Think about whether or not your actions are consistent with your beliefs. Does the way you act and treat others prove you are a Christian?
- c. Ask Jesus to show you how to be more committed to Him, keeping in mind that we all make mistakes and are forgiven whenever we ask.
- d. Spend time thanking Jesus for loving you, forgiving you and doing everything He can to help you love and accept Him.

Application Guide: 1 Thessalonians 5

1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. Have you ever snuck up on someone and scared him or her? Was it funny or mean? Why?

- b. What is the worst you have ever been scared by someone? What happened?

2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Background: At the end of chapter 4, Paul talked about the fact that when people die they remain in the grave “asleep” until Jesus comes back. He also said that when Jesus comes back, His followers who have died will be raised up and everyone who has chosen Jesus will float up into the air to meet Him, just like when Jesus rose up to heaven in Acts 1.

So in the context of Jesus’ second coming, what do you think Paul means when he says, “be on your guard, not asleep like the others. Stay alert and be clearheaded” (vs. 6)?

Does being on your guard mean you have to be paranoid about every conspiracy theory or “sign” that people think they see? Why or why not?

As Paul continues discussing this, he gives part of the answer. He says, “Let us who live in the light be clearheaded, protected by the armor of faith and love, and wearing as our helmet the confidence of our salvation” (vs. 8). What do you think it means to “live in the light”? What does living in the light have to do with your relationship with Jesus? What can you do to make Jesus the “light” of your world?

How does Jesus, as the light of your world, relate to having “the armor of faith and love”? How does faith and love protect you like armor? What does it protect you from?

How do you wear “the confidence of your salvation” as your helmet? Can you really be confident that you will be saved when Jesus returns or do you have to constantly wonder about it, depending on how good or bad you’ve been at the time?

Why do you think Paul told the Thessalonians that “God chose to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to pour out his anger on us” (vs. 9)?

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

- a. For many people, the biggest struggle in maintaining a relationship with Jesus is just in remembering to do it. Think of two ways to remind yourself every day that Jesus loves you and wants to spend time with you.
- b. Think about what it means to be ready for Jesus to come. How can you strengthen your relationship with Jesus so that you will be ready, wanting to live with Him forever?
- c. Try to think of several ways that Jesus has been “the light” in your world. Try to remember specific instances and journal about them.

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

- a. Pray for Jesus to show you His love in very personal ways each day so that His love for you becomes more than just a cliché.
- b. Pray for Jesus to draw you close and give you the Holy Spirit as you pursue your relationship with Him.

5. Outreach Idea

Tell someone you know about the times Jesus has been “the light” in your world.

Part X: Paul's Second Letter to the Church at Thessalonica *(2 Thessalonians)*

Application Guide: 2 Thessalonians 1

1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. Has anyone ever protected you from being hurt by a bully? What happened?

- b. What is the best compliment you ever received? How did it make you feel?

- c. What is the most restful experience you've ever had? How often would you like to do something like that again?

2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Paul always starts his letters by encouraging the people to whom he is writing. Here he tells the Thessalonians that he is proud of them. Why do you think this is important?

In one sentence Paul says that the Thessalonians' "faith is flourishing" and their "love for one another is growing" (vs. 3). Are these two things related to each other? Does faith build love, does love build faith, or do they help each other to grow?

What do you think Paul means when he says, “God will use this persecution to... make you worthy of His kingdom” (vs. 5)? Do you think it is the amount of persecution endured that makes a person “worthy,” or the fact that a person loves Jesus so much that they would be willing to suffer anything for Him that makes them “worthy?” Do you think that God allows persecution in our lives to make us realize how much we need Him? Do you think there is another answer to this interesting statement?

How do you feel about the fact that God, in His justice, will “pay back” (vs. 6) those who have persecuted His people and bring flaming fire and judgment down on those persecutors, punishing them with eternal destruction? Do you think this is harsh and mean? Do you think God should be more patient with people, or is there a point when enough is enough?

Is telling people about the final destruction of the wicked a good way to motivate them to love Jesus more, or is there a better way? Does Paul start his letters to people by telling them they will be punished for what they have done wrong, or does he tell them how much he loves them, listing what they have done well?

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

- a. Think through your life over the past few months and remind yourself of every good thing you have done. See if you can detect a connection to your actions and how your relationship with Jesus was going. Do you think you tend to be a better person when you’ve been having positive experiences with God? Why/why not?
- b. How do you tend to be more motivated to spend time with Jesus—by positive encouragement, striving to let Him fill your life with love and peace, or by the fear of end-time events and the possibility that the end may be coming soon? How do you think you can best find a healthy balance of these things in your life?

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

- a. Earnestly pray for Jesus to become very real to you and to help you see the connection between your time spent with Him and how you handle everyday life. Pray for Him to show you the rewards of life with Him and the peace it can bring in the midst of hard times.
- b. Thank Jesus for loving you, dying for you and being the one that makes you “worthy.” Ask Him to remind you daily that you are saved by His grace—not by your own works. Ask Him to pour out His love on you and draw you close to Him.

Application Guide: 2 Thessalonians 2

1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. Has anyone ever told you a lie that you believed? What was it about? How did it make you feel when you found out you had been deceived?

- b. Have you ever received a message from someone and completely misunderstood what the person meant? How did you discover the true meaning of the message? How did you correct the mistake?

2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

Why do you think Paul says not to be “easily shaken or alarmed by those who say the day of the Lord has already begun” (vs. 2)? Shouldn’t we be watching and waiting? Couldn’t the end come at any time? Paul says not to believe them, even if they have had what they believe to be a vision. Paul explains that certain events must happen first. What are those events?

Do you believe the “man of lawlessness” has already come, or is here now? Do you think we can know ahead of time who this man is, or is it someone we won’t recognize until he comes? Does this seem scary to you? Are you ever afraid you might be fooled?

How does it make you feel to know that Jesus will kill the “man of lawlessness”? When Paul says Jesus will “kill him with the breath of his mouth” and “destroy him by the splendor of His coming” (vs. 9), do you think that is literal or figurative language? Why do you think Paul uses the words “kill” and “destroy”? Is there a difference?

Paul says that people who are on their way to destruction will be fooled by the “man of lawlessness” because they refuse to love and accept the truth. Another characteristic of those who will be destroyed is that they would rather “enjoy evil” than “believe the truth” (vs. 10). What kind of people do you think enjoy evil? Can you give some examples of evil? How do you think you learn to believe and love the truth?

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

- a. Are you able to easily accept and love the “truth,” or do you struggle with wanting to do things your own way? Why do you think that is? How do you think you can develop a greater desire for truth?
- b. Do you find yourself more encouraged by this passage or more discouraged? Why do you think that is?

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

- a. Pray for Jesus to help you recognize truth when you see it. Ask Him to give you the Holy Spirit to help you discern truth from error.
- b. Pray and ask Jesus to give you the wisdom and strength to accept and live out truth when he reveals it to you. Ask Him for power from the Holy Spirit.

5. Research Project

Search online for stories about the end of the world, as well as possible conspiracies that may be involved. Also research the “man of lawlessness” and see what you find. Do you think the information you found is more truth or deception?

Application Guide: 2 Thessalonians 3

1. Warm-up (5-10 min)

Choose one:

- a. Have you ever prayed for someone? What did you pray for? Why did you do it? What effect do you think your prayer had?

- b. Do you think prayer is more about getting God to do something for you, or about sharing your life with Him? Why?

2. Engaging the Chapter (15-20 min)

In both of Paul's letters to the Thessalonians, he tells them that he is praying for them. Why do you think he is now asking *them* to pray for *him*? How many people praying for someone is enough? Is more always better?

What do you think Paul means when he says, "may the Lord lead your hearts into a full understanding and expression of the love of God" (vs. 5)? How does the Lord "lead your heart"?

Do you think this means that your heart is more important than your head in spiritual matters?

How are "understanding" and "expression" related?

How does Jesus give you "patient endurance"? Is patient endurance different than patience in general? How?

Why does Paul talk to the Thessalonians about not being lazy? What does that have to do with preaching the Gospel? Do you think an unmotivated person can still love Jesus and be saved? Why or why not?

Why do you think Paul worked so hard, even when he had every right to receive food and shelter from the people to whom he was witnessing? Do you think pastors today should have another full-time job besides being a pastor, like Paul did? How do you think Paul had the ability to do so much? Do you think it makes a difference that he was not married? Why or why not?

Why do you think Paul had to tell the Thessalonians to “never get tired of doing good” (vs. 13)?

Do you think they were already getting worn out? How hard do you think God expects us to work? Do you ever get tired of “doing good”?

3. Applying the Chapter to Your Life (5-10 min)

- a. Think about the impact these study guides have had on your life. Do you feel like you better understand Acts and the Thessalonian epistles? Why or why not? Following the example you have seen here, do you think you can now use this method of study and application on other books of the Bible? Why or why not? With which other book of the Bible would you like to try this?
- b. Do you think these study guides have helped you to be a better person, or have they just increased your knowledge? Why/why not? What do you think it would take to make the Bible come alive in your life?

4. Prayer Time (3-5 min)

- a. Pray for God to give you a greater love of Scripture. Pray for God to impress you with which book of the Bible he would like you to study next.
- b. Pray for God to bring someone into your life with whom you can share the things you’ve learned.
- c. Pray for the Holy Spirit to be in your life and guide you as never before!

5. Project Idea

Form a small group and go back through these application guides. You’ll learn more and live better every time you try—with God’s help!

Topical Index of Teachings

Acts

- Chapter 1:** Jesus was a real person and a friend. The Holy Spirit is like the wind.
- Chapter 2:** The miraculous power of the Holy Spirit. Choosing spiritual friends.
- Chapter 3:** How to treat poor people. How much money is enough?
- Chapter 4:** Having the power to heal. Why the church rejected this power.
- Chapter 5:** Lying. Why people saw miracles and still didn't believe.
- Chapter 6:** Talents. Helping the poor is part of the Gospel.
- Chapter 7:** History. The Holy Spirit shining out of you. Accepting new teachings.
- Chapter 8:** How do you know what is really true?
- Chapter 9:** Encountering the supernatural. Admitting you're wrong.
- Chapter 10:** Visions, racism, prejudice (music styles, clothes, etc.).
- Chapter 11:** Cross-cultural acceptance.
- Chapter 12:** "Official" persecution.
- Chapter 13:** Paul overpowers a sorcerer with the Holy Spirit.
- Chapter 14:** Being worshipped, dealing with pride. Following the fickle crowd.
- Chapter 15:** Circumcision and fighting with others over trivial issues.
- Chapter 16:** Long, tiring missions for God.
- Chapter 17:** Getting run out of town. Relating to different people.
- Chapter 18:** Handling rejection. Visions. Mission to the Gentiles.
- Chapter 19:** Healing handkerchief. Beaten up by demons.
- Chapter 20:** One message. God's ways are good for us. Being close to Jesus.
- Chapter 21:** A strange prophecy. Commitment. Going to face persecution.
- Chapter 22:** Paul's testimony.
- Chapter 23:** Being respectful. Creating chaos. Being a witness.
- Chapter 24:** Defending/sharing your faith.
- Chapter 25:** End times. Being falsely accused. Getting locked up.
- Chapter 26:** Repeating your testimony. Memorizing the Bible.
- Chapter 27:** Shipwrecked and unafraid. Does God cause trouble?
- Chapter 28:** Surviving seas and snakes. Healing people. Superman comparison.

1 Thessalonians

Chapter 1: Staying in touch. Encouraging people. Filled with the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 2: Getting hurt. Believing what people say. Assessing motives.

Chapter 3: Trouble will come. Loving people. Witnessing.

Chapter 4: Minding your own business. What happens when you die.

Chapter 5: Watching for Jesus coming back. Living in the light.

2 Thessalonians

Chapter 1: Being proud of people. Persecution. Justice.

Chapter 2: Lies/misunderstandings. End times. “Man of lawlessness.”

Chapter 3: Praying for people. Jesus leading your heart. Laziness.

