

Questions for personal reflection and/or discussion

1. Take time this week to read through the first section of Acts (1:9 – 6:7). Try to get a sense of the early development of this new church. Be sure to read this section in light of Acts 1:8 (which should be seen as the “Table of Contents” for the entire book).
2. Take time this week to read through the second section of Acts (6:8 – 9:31). Make a list of significant developments in the expansion of the church, especially when seen in the light of Acts 1:8.
3. Luke (the author of Acts) has used repeated references (explicitly and implicitly) to the fact that numerical growth was occurring. He indicates that counting people was something that was done and the numbers indicate that something good is happening. Read through these references in the chapters of Acts that we have covered so far – 1:15, 2:41, 2:47, 4:4, 5:14, 6:7, 9:31. Why did Luke use these numbers? What should churches today do with numerical statistics? Do they matter? Should they matter? If they should, for what purpose(s)?
4. We are blessed to live in a country that provides freedom to be a follower of Jesus. The early church experienced persecution. Many Christians through history and many around the world today experience various forms of persecution. In what ways (if any) do you think the Church would benefit from persecution and in what ways would it suffer?
5. We saw toward the end of Acts 9 that Barnabas acted as a “gatekeeper” and an encourager to Paul. Congregations have “gatekeepers” – people who have influence that can be used positively or negatively. Congregations also need encouragers – people who will come alongside those who need help and be a blessing and a help to them. Has anyone served in your life in these ways? Do you have opportunity to serve in the life of another person in these ways?

Moving Forward (IV)

Pastor Alan Robinson, March 1, 2009

Introduction and Table of Contents: Acts 1:8

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Part 1: The spread of the gospel in Jerusalem, Acts 1:9 – 6:7

Closing summary to the section is in Acts 6:7 “So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in **Jerusalem** increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.”

Part 2: Expansion to Judea and Samaria, Acts 6:8 – 9:31

Closing summary is in Acts 9:31 “Then the church throughout **Judea**, Galilee and **Samaria** enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.”

Acts 8:1-4 (church Bible page 776)

(1)And Saul was there, giving approval to his death. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. (2)Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. (3)But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison. (4)Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.

Acts 9:26-31 (church Bible page 778)

(26)When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. (27)But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. (28)So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. (29)He talked and debated with the Grecian Jews, but they tried to kill him. (30)When the brothers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus. (31)Then the church throughout **Judea**, Galilee and **Samaria** enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.