

Questions for personal reflection and/or discussion

1. This week's message was taken from the section of Acts that records the first Gentile conversion. Take time this week to reflect on the three different movements of expansion that we have considered so far in this series. Summary details for each expansion are included on the front of this sermon note outline. Pay particular attention to the way in which each expansion is seen as a fulfillment of the promise found in Acts 1:8. Also reflect on how Luke uses a short summary phrase at the end of each section and how these summaries always include references to growth, expansion, and moving forward.
2. Why do you think so many of the stories between Acts chapter 6 and Acts chapter 9 do NOT include any reference to prayer for God's direction or to God giving specific directions or instructions? What are the implications of this for us today?
3. Even though many of the stories do not have reference to God's direction and leading, Acts 10 is very clear that God was directing Peter and the other people involved. Why do you think that Luke is careful to make this clear to us? Why do you think that Peter is the person God uses in reaching the first Gentile convert?
4. Even Peter (who appears to be so "in touch" with God in some aspects of his life and ministry) struggled to accept what God was saying to him. What are the areas of your life in which you struggle to accept what God says and to respond in ways that he desires? How do you plan to overcome your struggles and reluctance?
5. Luke records for us (Acts 11:26) the first reference to the word "Christians." Other terms that Luke has used for the collective group of believers includes "believers" (used in many places, e.g. Acts 4:32), "disciples" (e.g. Acts 6:1), "the church" (e.g. Acts 8:1), "those belonging to the Way" (Acts 9:2), and "the brothers" (Acts 11:1). Discuss the meanings, implications, and strengths and weaknesses of each of these words or phrases.

Moving Forward (5)

Pastor Alan Robinson, March 8, 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**."

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

Closing summary 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."

Expansion 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."

Expansion Part 3: Expansion to the Gentiles, Acts 9:32 – 12:24

Closing summary is in Acts 12:24, "But the word of God continued to increase and spread."

Acts 11:12-26 (church Bible page 780)

(12) The Spirit told me to have no hesitation about going with them. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered the man's house.

(13) He told us how he had seen an angel appear in his house and say, 'Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. (14) He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved.'

(15) "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. (16) Then I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'

(17) So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God?"

(18) When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life."

(19) Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. (20) Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. (21) The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

(22) News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. (23) When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. (24) He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. (25) Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, (26) and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.