



IMPACTS

TRACKING THE SPIRIT'S STEPS THROUGH THE BOOK OF ACTS

SESSION TWO – ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE PAUL'S GOSPEL AMONG JEWS AND GENTILES

Open – The Polyglot Paul

I love walking around or taking a subway in NYC and just listening. On my last trip, I heard people speaking eight different languages in the first five minutes of Times Square. It was music to my ears, but I couldn't understand all the lyrics, because I don't know each tongue. (Alas, the languages I know best are dead ancient ones like Isaiah's Hebrew, Plato's Greek and Caesar's Latin.) But as I sat in Bryant Park later, I grew green with envy as I heard one person talk to four different groups in four different languages. This guy was a "polyglot", a person who can speak and listen in many languages.

pol·y·glot
'pälē ,glät/

adjective: **polyglot**

1. knowing or using several languages.
"a polyglot career woman"
- (of a book) having the text translated into several languages.
"polyglot and bilingual technical dictionaries"

noun

noun: **polyglot**; plural noun: **polyglots**

1. a person who knows and is able to use several languages.

The Apostle Paul was an accomplished polyglot – not only because he could speak Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and (probably) Latin, but, in a wider sense, because he understood people from different cultures, religions, and tribes. For him, adjusting to audiences very different from one another was a conscious practice.

Last time, we noticed Paul’s relentless drive to move the good news about Jesus out as far as he possibly could – a drive that put him in Rome by the end of Acts. In this session, we will look at two speeches Paul made to two very different groups – the Greek philosophers of Athens (Acts 17) and the Jewish leaders of Jerusalem (Acts 21–22) – in order to understand and appreciate the artistry of the one who “became all things to all people so that he might by all means win some.” (1 Corinthians 9.22) Without that artistry, he may never have gotten to Rome.

Part One – Paul among Gentiles

By Paul’s own account, God called him to take the good news of Jesus to non-Jews. In fact, Paul’s identity as missionary to the Gentiles appears 75 times in the New Testament. We saw one of them last week, in the Acts 9 conversion story, where God told Ananias that he was sending Paul to the Gentiles, and Paul himself reiterates it many, many times.

Isn’t God doing strange HR work here? Paul is VERY Jewish! We saw last session that Paul describes himself as, “*circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee.*” (Philippians 3) Isn’t sending Paul to Gentile audiences like hiring Steven Spielberg to coach tennis players, or Serena Williams to drive a bus, or Bill Gates to play Hamlet? Paul knew Moses’ Law like the back of his hand, he excelled all rabbinic students of his generation, he lived and breathed Jewish religion. It is one of the great ironies of the Bible that when it came time to assign territories, God said, “Forget all your training. You get the Gentiles!”

Paul’s words on Mars Hill in Athens help us understand what God might have had in mind.

Paul’s Speech to the Athenians

Newcastle does coal. Vegas does gambling. Detroit does cars. New York does money. Nashville does music. And ancient Athens did philosophy. Athens was the philosophical capital of the ancient world. Socrates roamed the streets as a “gadfly” prodding people out of their complacency with words like, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” Plato, a student of Socrates, channeled his teacher into a remarkable system of questions and theories. (In fact, the American thinker, Alfred North Whitehead, famously claimed, “The history of philosophy is Plato and footnotes.”) Plato’s student, Aristotle, challenged his mentor with an earthier, more pragmatic approach that appealed, ultimately, to his student, Alexander the Great. You get the picture: the Greeks introduced philosophy to the West, and the Athenians led the way.

This philosophical heritage enters our IMPActs story through the mention of two leading philosophical schools of Paul’s day: the Stoics and the Epicureans.

- Stoicism was the most popular philosophy of Paul’s time. Founded by Zeno of Citium (southern Cyprus) in the 4th century B.C., this worldview suited Roman intellectual culture perfectly. Stoics believed that the good life is spent, not arranging circumstances to insure our comfort, but practicing an inner life that makes circumstances unable to phase

us. As one author summarizes it, Stoicism recognizes that “we don’t control and cannot rely on external events, only ourselves and our responses.” And, since the world is unpredictable, our best recourse is to steel ourselves against its assaults. We met a Stoic philosopher last week in Rome, when we read Seneca’s *Moral Epistle #1* on time management.

- The Epicureans did not have nearly as many followers as the Stoics. Also founded in the 4th century, by the Greek thinker Epicurus, this school of thought identified pleasure as the greatest good and taught his students to pursue it as their chief end. This pursuit took two main forms. Their most notorious route sought physical pleasure of the most sensuous kind, and so they’ve been called hedonists. (*hedone* is the Greek word for pleasure.) These sought sensory pleasures like good food (have you ever been called an “epicure”?), sexual fulfillment, etc. Another brand of Epicureanism sought a deeper tranquility and pleasure of the soul. Like the Jews and the Christians, Epicureans contested the standard definition of the gods, and so were sometimes accused of atheism.

These two groups found their way to Paul during his stay in Athens. As Luke puts it, “some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers debated with him...”



If Athens was philosophically exceptional, it was religiously normal. As a first-century Greco-Roman city, Athens hosted a wide array of religions. Polytheism ruled the day across the Empire (Jews, Christians, and Epicureans were almost the only monotheists around.), so cities featured shrines or temples to a wide array of gods, including local and tribal deities who joined the usual Greco-Roman pantheon. Poseidon controlled the seas, Demeter, the crops, Asclepius health, Athena, wisdom, etc. Everyday worshippers paid their homage through sacrifices of grain or meat, which a priest would lay on the alter to please the god and buy some divine benefit.

As he approached his work in Athens, Paul considered both the philosophical and religious identity of Athens – the philosophical through his general learning, the religious through a walk downtown. Here’s Luke’s account of Paul’s brief stay in Athens.

While Paul was waiting for his colleagues in Athens, he was deeply distressed to see that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷So he argued (dialegeto) in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and also in the marketplace[Ⓜ] every day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸Also some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers debated with him. Some said, “What does this babbling man want to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign divinities.” (This was because he was telling the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.) ¹⁹So they took him and brought him to the Areopagus (Mars Hill) and asked him, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? ²⁰It sounds rather strange to us, so we would like to know what it means.” ²¹Now all the Athenians and the foreigners living there would spend their time in nothing but telling or hearing something new.

²²*Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said,*

“Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. ²³For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, ²⁵nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. ²⁶From one ancestor[Ⓜ] he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, ²⁷so that they would search for God[Ⓜ]and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. ²⁸For ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said,

‘For we too are his offspring.’

²⁹Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. ³⁰While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.

³²*When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some scoffed; but others said, “We will hear you again about this.” ³³At that point Paul left them. ³⁴But some of them joined him and became believers, including Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.*

Paul's Strategy among Gentiles

Rev. Will Willimon, the long-time Chaplain to Duke University, was called upon to preach at the Baccalaureate ceremony for graduating seniors one Spring. This was in the early 2000s, after the Blair Witch Project had become a surprise winner at the box office and the Harry Potter books were expanding into the publishing marvel they became. Rev. Willimon began his sermon with something like this, "Your generation loves weird, spiritual things. I know other people criticize you for that, for not going to church, for not believing the way your parents do. People hit you for your spiritual curiosity and non-conformity, but I like it. I think God can work with that." (the "quotation" is paraphrased here from memory) Maybe Will Willimon knew the Apostle Paul.

Affirmation

Paul could have shouted at the Athenians, you see. In all ages, cranky prophets roam city streets, carrying signs and shouting that the end is near, that their neighbors are all under God's judgment, that the future looks bleak. That could have been Paul. After all, Luke tells us that the apostle was "deeply distressed to see that the city was full of idols." Paul was a faithful Jew who would have habitually recited the *shema* of Deuteronomy 6: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is One." Idolatry became the biggest no no for Israel's Kings throughout the monarchy. The prophets railed against it. Paul could naturally have shouted at an idolatrous people, clinging to their worthless idols. He could have been Jonah cursing Ninevah, because the Hebrew Bible (our Old Testament), which he knew well, had plenty of Jonahs and Isaiahs and Jeremiahs to supply that script. In his day, Jewish preachers often railed against the blind idolatries of the Roman world. And, as we saw in session one, Paul harshly harangued the Jewish leaders he gathered in his house-arrest apartment in Rome, even using Isaiah's words to do it. (Acts 28.25-28)

He could have shouted, but instead Paul opened a conversation. (Greek: *dialegeto* from whose root we get our English word dialogue.) "You Athenians seem very religious....That's a good thing. In fact, I'd like to talk with you about the One your shrine calls 'the Unknown God'..." He continues this theme later in his speech, when he quotes their own Greek poets:

"For 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we too are his offspring.'"

Do you see what Paul is doing here? He's finding the one thing in Athenian religious culture that he can build on. Paul fills his first engagement among the Athenians with affirmation, wherever he can offer it.

Invitation

Of course, Paul is a Jewish Christian monotheist. He cannot say "yes" to all of Greek religiosity, which he finds impoverished. Having found a point of connection, he proceeds to deconstruct

the polytheism that his audience assumes. He challenges his Athenian Gentiles to move their concept of God, from needy deities who can be confined to shrines material like gold, silver, or stone, to a transcendent God whose character it is to give and create. This God,

- “does not dwell in shrines, made with human hands,
- nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he gives to all morals life and breath and all things...
- we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals.”

This generous, Creator God made all people with the desire to seek God and find God. Paul hopes to hit a chord of that desire with his Athenian audience.

Do a quick inventory of the way you picture God. What might Paul affirm in you?

How might he invite you to grow your view of God?

Urgency

In this philosophical capital of the world, Paul isn't just hoping to change the Athenians' minds. He hopes to change their lives. But he knows their timeline has limits. As we saw last time, the Stoic Seneca and Paul both think delay is a terrible waste of time. Seneca puts it this way: “Lay hold of to-day's task, and you will not need to depend so much upon tomorrow's. *While we are postponing, life speeds by.*” (*Moral Epistle 1.2*) Paul says something like this by introducing a deadline into God's timetable.

“While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

For these Athenians, a turnaround is required – Paul calls it repentance. They need to turn from a life lived believing in and serving needy, confined gods and devote their lives to the generous, Creator God. He wants what he commends the Thessalonians for doing: “you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.” (1 Thessalonians 1.9-10) That's a big change for these Athenians, but the time for making that change is now. As Paul puts it in one of his letters, “Now is the accepted time. Now is the day of salvation.” (2 Corinthians 6.7)

What crucial decision or action are you postponing?

Results

I've actually preached from atop Mars Hill. A few years ago, I led a group of American Christians through Greece to trace Paul's steps there. We dipped our feet in the stream where Lydia was (probably) baptized. We strolled by the shops where merchants would have sold the "meat sacrificed to idols" on which Paul holds forth in 1 Corinthians. And we climbed to the Areopagus, Mars Hill, where Paul spoke to the Athenians in our story. This is an immortal spot in history, up on that slick rock above the marketplace in Athens, and the 33 of us could all feel the power of the space. So, I prepped my folks with the details I've shared with you here, and then, with some trepidation, I recited Paul's speech to the Athenians.

Guess what happened. People gathered. First a couple curious souls leaned in around the edges, then full tour groups from all over the world started to press in to hear. Maybe to them it was a time to watch a wacked American pastor make a fool of himself. But it was a brilliant moment for me and for our group, and it helped us imagine Paul up there, maybe looking the fool, a provincial bumpkin lecturing at Harvard. (Paul was bald, too!)

Undoubtedly that happened to Paul, too, because the Athenians loved novelties. As Luke puts it, "all the Athenians and the foreigners living there would spend their time in nothing but telling or hearing something new". We can picture them peeking in, just like our neighboring tour groups had. But what were the returns? Well, in that ancient moment, the Athenian results were mixed.

- Many rejected the concept of resurrection out of hand. Plato had famously punned, "SOMA SEMA" – the body is a tomb – so many Greeks found bodily resurrection repulsive.
- Some decided to hear more, still unsure but willing to give Paul some more time.
- And a small few actually did what Paul challenged them to do. Luke names Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris.

I wonder how Paul felt afterward. Disappointed? Exhilarated? He had played Carnegie Hall. Did he feel like he missed notes? Some commentators have downgraded Paul's performance because he was tone deaf about Greek views of resurrection. Others emphasize the fruits of his labor in the legacy of Athenian Christianity through Dionysius and Damaris. For my part, I give the apostle huge credit for courage: he taught philosophy in Athens!

Part Two – Paul Among Jews

A telemarketer is an annoyance. A business partner who suddenly adopts a completely different vision than yours is a threat.

To the Greeks of Athens, Paul's message was a novelty. He was a telemarketer. Some bought his message. Many did not. But there was no scuffle. To the Jews of Jerusalem, Paul's message and his person were a threat. That means that if his Mars Hill speech seemed like an invitation, Paul's speech before the Jewish leaders had to take the form of a defense. In fact, he begins by calling his words an "APOLOGIA", an apology, a defense. Watch how he begins:

"Brothers and fathers, listen to the defense that I now make before you."

We should notice that this speech begins a chain of episodes in Acts in which Paul is on trial in some way. In this case, a Roman Tribune has rescued him from the mob, and he has what is supposed to be a safe platform to speak. (The crowd will end up hunting him down again at the end.)

To understate, this is a challenging task!

So how does Paul proceed?

Speaks Their Language

First, he literally speaks their language. As you know, the common language of the Roman Empire at this time is Greek. People trade and do business and participate in the general marketplace of cultures using Greek. On the other hand, the Jewish people who live under Roman rule in Jerusalem speak to one another in Hebrew. Paul does, too. So...

When they heard him addressing them in Hebrew, they became even more quiet. (Acts 22.2)

In this case, Paul literally speaks the language of his audience, and it makes them stand up and pay attention.

Paul consciously varied his "language" – the way he communicated – to fit his audience. He was a cultural and linguistic polyglot.

That shouldn't be strange to us. In order to persuade another person, you and I unconsciously modify our language to fit our audience. Whether we are wooing a lover, lobbying to watch one movie instead of another, selling a product, or (as a child) asking for a sleepover with a friend, we consider what the other person values, then we craft our presentation to appeal on a personal level.

While this translation process may sound chameleon-esque and shallow, it need not be. When Abraham Lincoln spoke the Gettysburg Address, when Martin Luther King Jr. spoke the "I Have a Dream" speech, and when Afghani Nobel-winner Malala Yousafzai made here Address on

Education to the United Nations in 2013, each took seriously the audience she or he addressed and tailored a message meant to persuade. The best persuaders do this very, very well.

The Apostle Paul is the consummate persuader. Think about it. The Roman Empire was extremely complex – ethnically, linguistically, culturally, religiously, and in many other ways. Any business leaders, political activists, or educators would look at that circumstance and count complexity as a primary challenge to their work. And yet this one Christian missionary planted churches across significant regional, tribal, and language differences through Turkey, Macedonia, and Greece. The man knew how to “hear” an audience and speak to them in terms that made sense.

There are other ways to speak people’s language. In our culture, different English-speaking tribes actually speak different languages, in a way. The so-called “educated elite” versus the “common people”, the left vs the right, business vs

Finding common ground with someone requires Lawyers know this. When they craft their opening statement in the courtroom, they assess what “language” will appeal to the specific dozen jurors in the room. A friend of mine made his living as a litigator introducing difficult concepts in court in the language of the people, and he never lost a case.

Paul made a study of the groups he served. He took great pride in going the extra mile to understand them and address them in ways they could understand. He shares this philosophy in one of his letters.

Though I am free from all, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win more of them. ²⁰To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. ²¹To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. ²²To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. ²³I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings. (1 Corinthians 9.19-23 ESV)

The Polyglot Paul knew how to speak to the Athenians. Let’s see how he does speaking to the people closer to home.

Tells His Own Story

To the Athenians, Paul preached. To the Jews of Jerusalem, he just tells them what has happened to him – in his case, what God has done in his life. The good old fashioned word for this is testimony. Paul hopes to disarm the hostile crowd by simply starting with what they have in common. “I am a Jew.” Then he gets a bit more specific.

“I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, educated strictly according to our ancestral law, being zealous for God, just as all of you are today. ⁴I persecuted this Way up to the point of death by binding both men and women and putting them in prison, ⁵as the high priest and the whole council of elders can testify about me. (Acts 22.3-5)

Paul essentially tells the suspicious crowd, “There’s never been anyone more on your team than I (at least) was – and (still) am.”

So here’s what Paul “has seen and heard”: a Jesus from above stopping him in his tracks on Damascus Road – blinding him and throwing him to the ground. He’s undone! And then, after this alarming interruption, a faithful Jewish Christian man comes along to help him understand how what has happened to me.

“A certain Ananias, who was a devout man according to the law and well spoken of by all the Jews living there, ¹³came to me; and standing beside me, he said, ‘Brother Saul, regain your sight!’ In that very hour I regained my sight and saw him. ¹⁴Then he said, ‘The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear his own voice; ¹⁵for you will be his witness to all the world of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶And now why do you delay? Get up, be baptized, and have your sins washed away, calling on his name.’

If this sounds familiar, it’s because Paul here recounts action that Luke gave us way back in chapter 9 and we read together last session. As we read Acts backward through Acts, we get Paul’s version of his story first. Here we learn more about Ananias than his name. We also hear what this faithful Jewish Christian Ananias told Paul to do.

You and I should notice something strange. Paul has just shouted to a hostile Jewish crowd in Jerusalem that Jesus of Nazareth is alive and has been speaking to him – even that this Jesus has the power to forgive sins. He has claimed an incredible lot. He has called Jesus “The Righteous One” and related God’s invitation (through Ananias) to go all in with that Jesus through baptism. Paul has done all of this and the audience hasn’t even made a peep. That’s astonishing! He’s in the city where Jesus was crucified and his apostles were persecuted for talking about Jesus – even stoned to death by another Jewish mob, in the case of Stephen. But this straight talk about Jesus hasn’t yet incited the Jerusalem crowd.

What happen next changes all that.

“After I had returned to Jerusalem and while I was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance ¹⁸and saw Jesus saying to me, ‘Hurry and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me.’ ¹⁹And I said, ‘Lord, they themselves know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. ²⁰And while the blood of your witness Stephen was shed, I myself was standing by, approving and

keeping the coats of those who killed him.’²¹ Then he said to me, ‘Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’”

It is only after this last flourish that Paul’s audience loses it. Luke tells us “Up to this point they listened to him, but then they shouted, ‘Away with such a fellow from the earth! For he should not be allowed to live.’ From quiet and respectful to murderous in one paragraph.

So, what turned the tide?

Maybe it’s Paul’s portrayal of his audience. He says, “God told me you would reject me. God said run away to the Gentiles. So I did.” At this point, for the first time in the whole story, his audience become the villains. They are the ones who won’t listen. They are the ones who stoned Stephen. They’re suddenly the bad guys. Last session, we puzzled over why God would send Paul, a Hebrew of Hebrews, a top-notch Pharisee, a Moses guy through and through – to work among Gentiles. Here he gives one answer to God’s motivation: to protect Paul, God sends him “far away to the Gentiles.” That’s new.

Or maybe it’s the sheer notion that Gentiles will be in on God’s covenant with Abraham. Some Jews were ambivalent about this widening of the category “chosen people”, and standard Jewish culture pictured Gentiles as religiously bankrupt and sexually promiscuous. Imagine hearing that your whole life and then having this suspicious Paul creature say, “God told me to THEM!”

It’s not altogether clear. What we do know is that Paul could have soft-pedaled all this. Safety was at hand if he had just brought his flight in for a landing before that last paragraph. The fact that he didn’t do that tells us something about him: Paul will not compromise his message for popularity.

Close – Our Polyglot Gospel-ing

The polyglot character of Paul made its way through Christian history. Consider all the cultures, tribes, and languages the Christian message has reached. At times, we’ve been tin-eared, like the British missionaries to Africa who seemed to think that they needed to make English folk out of the Africans in order for them to be rightly Christian. But for every example of cultural daftness, there are five examples of cultural sensitivity, in which Christian message spreaders have worked hard to understand a people group before deciding how best to share Jesus’ good news with them.

In our time and place, we live in a very complex culture, full of different “languages”. We have the astonishing good news that the generous, creative God of the universe has moved heaven to earth in Jesus, just to reach for us. And yet a growing number of people in our land agree with British critic Christopher Hitchens that “God Is Not Great” and “Religion Poisons Everything”. How will we find the right language to communicate the good news in our time? It couldn’t hurt to channel our ancient brother, the Polyglot Apostle Paul

IMPActs

Retracing the Spirit's Power Through Acts and Luke

"We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time."

T.S. Eliot, Little Gidding

Sept 19 **Acts Unending – Paul's Ministry in Rome (Acts 28)**

The magisterial 52 chapters we call Luke-Acts culminate by describing the ministry of Paul in Rome as "unfettered". In this session, we read this open-ended closing as a signal that this author and his Author intend for us to see this story of Jesus and the earliest churches as a launching pad rather than an end point. Question: Are we the 57th chapter of Acts?

Sept 26 **All Things to All People – Paul's Gospel among Jews and Gentiles (Acts 17 and 21)**

Early Christianity grew up in a complex ethnic and cultural world that required good communicators to speak the language of many peoples. In this session we'll see that Acts is a book about a multilingual church who find ways to communicate good news to a wide variety of people and communities. Question: What 'languages' do we need to learn?

Oct 3 **Talking It Out – How the Early Church Made Its Decisions (Acts 15)**

The early Christians faced huge decisions as they moved into the world – issues that went to the very identity of Jesus' movement. The Book of Acts gives us a window to how they discerned their way forward. They developed an instinct to come toward one another and hash things out together. Question: How should our Christian conversations go?

Oct 10 **Pushed Out of the Nest – What Sent the Church into the World (Acts 8–15)**

Just before Jesus left the company of his disciples, he sent them "to Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth." (Acts 1.8) But seven chapters and many moons into the story, they were still snug in Jerusalem, with no sign that they knew the rest of the world exists. In this session we'll ask why that was...and how it changed. Question: What will get us out of our nest?

Oct 17 Standing Up – Risky Faith in the Face of Danger (Acts 4—7)

After Jesus, their inspiration, leader, protector, and friend had been cruelly executed, the previously cowardly disciples became suddenly brave apostles. In this session, we'll watch that newfound courage at work and drill down to find its source – for them and for us. Question: Why would we need to be bold in our day?

Oct 24 “Jesus Continued” – The Striking Resemblance of the Jesus People to Jesus (Acts 3, 4, 7, and 9)

As far as we know, Peter, John, James, Matthew, Bartholomew, and the lot never wore “WWJD” tee shirts, but in Acts they look a lot like “J”. In this session, we'll take a look at that likeness as it plays out in the daily life of the earliest church. Question: How can we become more like Jesus?

Oct 31 Halloween Hiatus

Nov 7 The Dividends of Difference – Early Christian Variety in the Hands of God (Acts 2)

The brilliant, multi-colored, multi-cultured, and multi-lingual raw material of the first church had gathered in Jerusalem for a feast. God chose this moment to move newly into the world. In this session we'll ask what this means about God and the church. Question: What are the dividends of our differences?

Nov 14 Explosion – The Purpose and Power of Pentecost (Acts 1 and 2)

At the beginning of Acts, bewildered apostles spilled out from a crowded, smelly upper room on to the streets of Jerusalem. What happened next changed the world. In this session, we'll watch God use unqualified, aimless men and women to light up their city and then their Empire with the news that God had come to the earth in Jesus of Nazareth. Question: What is the purpose and where is the power in our lives?

