



# Walking with the Spirit through the Book of Acts

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# Schedule

April 7	The Holy Spirit
April 14	Acts 1:1-9
April 21	Acts 1:10-26
April 28	Acts 2:1-13
May 5	Acts 2:14-47
May 12	BREAK (Mother's Day)
May 19	Acts 3:1-26
May 26	Acts 4:1-21
June 2	Acts 4:22-5:11
June 9	Acts 5:12-42
June 16	BREAK (Father's Day)
June 23	Acts 6:1-15
June 30	Acts 7:2-60; 8:1-4
July 7	Acts 8:5-25
July 14	Acts 8:26-9:31



# The Spirit's Movement Beyond Jerusalem

6. The Jerusalem church as a whole stood in support of God's work among non-Jews, submitting to the Spirit's intentions (however mysterious they seemed to be at this phase in the growth of the church). Spirit-led leadership can discern the true work of the Spirit.

After they had further proclaimed the word of the Lord and testified about Jesus, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages. (Acts 8:25)



# The Spirit's Movement Beyond Jerusalem

7. The Spirit uses Philip to reach a Gentile (a Godfearer) who is from a foreign land and happens to be reading a messianic passage (Isa 53), showing a further deliberate intention by the Spirit to reach the ends of the earth with the word of salvation and his power (Acts 8:26-40; cf. Acts 1:8).

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means “queen of the Ethiopians”). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet.

The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.” (Acts 8:26-29)

# The Spirit's Movement Beyond Jerusalem

Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading:

"He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,  
and as a lamb before its shearer is silent,  
so he did not open his mouth.

In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.

Who can speak of his descendants?

For his life was taken from the earth."

The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. (Acts 8:30-35)

# The Spirit's Movement Beyond Jerusalem



# The Spirit's Movement Beyond Jerusalem

a) Scripture reminds us that God is sovereign over all nations (including and specifically Africa)

“Are not you Israelites

the same to me as the Cushites?”

declares the LORD.

“Did I not bring Israel up from Egypt,  
the Philistines from Caphtor  
and the Arameans from Kir?” (Amos 9:7)



# The Spirit's Movement Beyond Jerusalem

- b) The Spirit controls all the precedents. He brings the right people together at the right moment, and can act deliberately (and articulately) to make events happen to meet his agenda.

The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.” (Acts 8:29)





# The Spirit's Movement Beyond Jerusalem

c) The Lord has never been ethnocentric. What matters to him is (and has always been) faithfulness and obedience.

Let no foreigner who is bound to the LORD say,

“The LORD will surely exclude me from his people.”

And let no eunuch complain,

“I am only a dry tree.”

For this is what the LORD says:

“To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths,  
who choose what pleases me  
and hold fast to my covenant—  
to them I will give within my temple and its  
walls

a memorial and a name

better than sons and daughters;

I will give them an everlasting name

that will endure forever.” (Isa 56:3-5)



# Hero #3: Saul, a Man in God's Plan

1. In his encounter with Saul, Jesus makes clear that opposition to the church and the disciples is the same as opposition to him. God, in this instance, selected the person who was, on face value, least likely to follow him. (Acts 9:1-4)

Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, **why do you persecute me?**" (Acts 9:1-4)



# Hero #3: Saul, a Man in God's Plan

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that **he considered me trustworthy**, appointing me to his service. Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because **I acted in ignorance and unbelief.** (1 Tim 1:12-13)



# Hero #3: Saul, a Man in God's Plan

2. Jesus exposes Saul's lack of knowledge as the root of his failure. Saul does not know that the Lord is Jesus. Jesus does not correct his understanding; there is no need. He simply directs him to the next stage in his mission. As with the Spirit, Jesus controls the precedents. He does what is necessary to get the result, according to his plan. (Acts 9:5-6)

“Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked. “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied.

“Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” (Acts 9:5-6)



# Hero #3: Saul, a Man in God's Plan

3. The event that occurred was not purely visionary; Jesus appeared to Paul in a tangible manifestation. Others heard a sound but did not see Jesus. Paul, afterward, was not able to see anything. (Acts 9:7-9)

The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything. (Acts 9:7-9)



# Hero #3: Saul, a Man in God's Plan

a) Blindness is used as a symbol for judgment (one of the curses in God's system of blessings and curses under the law).

The LORD will afflict you with madness, blindness and confusion of mind. At midday you will grope about like a blind person in the dark. You will be unsuccessful in everything you do; day after day you will be oppressed and robbed, with no one to rescue you.

(Deut 28:28-29)



# Hero #3: Saul, a Man in God's Plan

b) Blindness is a metaphor for spiritual confusion, lostness, and despair. God is, in these cases, the solution.

The LORD sets prisoners free, the LORD gives sight to the blind. (Ps 146:7b-8a)

I will lead the blind by ways they have not known,  
along unfamiliar paths I will guide them;

I will turn the darkness into light before them  
and make the rough places smooth. (Isa 42:16)

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (2 Cor 4:4)

# Hero #3: Saul, a Man in God's Plan

For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and **his grace to me was not without effect**. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. (1 Cor 15:9-10)





# Hero #3: Saul, a Man in God's Plan

4. God arranged the solution through other disciples who could then validate God's calling on Saul. That calling, from the outset, would involve suffering. This fits the pattern of heroes in God's plan, outlined by Stephen—people who are sold out for Jesus Christ and empowered by the Spirit. And also, who face suffering and uncertainty for the sake of Christ. Paul became one of them and is depicted as such throughout Acts. (Acts 9:10-19)

“Yes, Lord,” he answered.

The Lord told him, “Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.”

# Hero #3: Saul, a Man in God's Plan

“Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.”

But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”

Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength. (Acts 9:10-19)

# Hero #3: Saul, a Man in God's Plan

5. Luke does not explain what happened in Paul's understanding, only that his actions were diametrically flipped. He began to preach in synagogues that Jesus was the Son of God. His beliefs are reflected in radical obedience. He is immediately in tension with the culture of his time. (Acts 9:20-22)

At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?" Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah. (Acts 9:20-22)



# Hero #3: Saul, a Man in God's Plan

6. Like the other heroes of the Spirit, Paul is opposed by culture but is strategically (in practical real-life ways) protected from persecution. His ministry is validated by Barnabas, who discerns his heart and defends him on the basis of his words, fearlessness, and obedience. (Acts 9:23-30)

After many days had gone by, there was a conspiracy among the Jews to kill him, but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him. But his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall.



# Hero #3: Saul, a Man in God's Plan

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. 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. So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. He talked and debated with the Hellenistic Jews, but they tried to kill him. When the believers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus. (Acts 9:23-30)



# Hero #3: Saul, a Man in God's Plan

7. The end result of Paul's conversion is the growth of the church. The central guiding figure is still the Spirit. (Acts 9:31)

Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers. (Acts 9:31)

