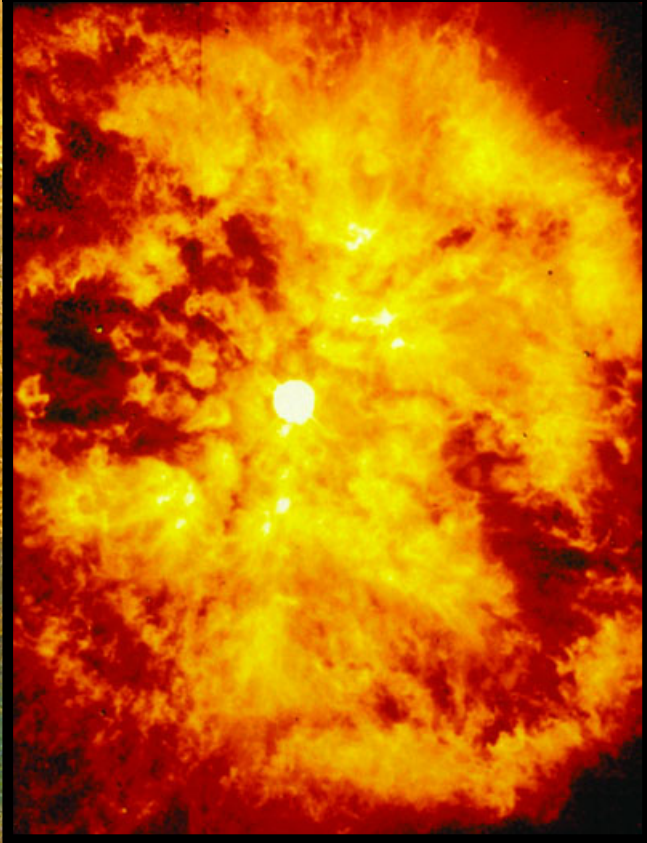


Mission Unstoppable

Acts



**10 INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDIES FOR
SMALL GROUPS & INDIVIDUALS**

Mission Unstoppable

Acts

by Bryson Smith



matthiasmedia

Mission Unstoppable

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How to make the most of these studies

1. What is an Interactive Bible Study?

These ‘interactive’ Bible studies are a bit like a guided tour of a famous city. The studies will take you through Acts, pointing out things along the way, filling in background details, and suggesting avenues for further exploration. But there is also time for you to do some sight-seeing of your own—to wander off, have a good look for yourself, and form your own conclusions.

In other words, we have designed these studies to fall half-way between a sermon and a set of unadorned Bible study questions. We want to provide stimulation and input and point you in the right direction, while leaving you to do a lot of the exploration and discovery yourself.

We hope that these studies will stimulate lots of ‘interaction’—interaction with the Bible, with the things we’ve written, with your own current thoughts and attitudes, with other people as you discuss them, and with God as you talk to him about it all.

2. The format

Each study contains sections of text to introduce, summarize, suggest and provoke. We’ve left plenty of room in the margins for you to jot comments and questions as you read.

Interspersed throughout the text are three types of ‘interaction’, each with its own symbol:



For starters

Questions to help you think about society and your own experience, in a way that tunes you in to the issues being raised by the Bible passage.



Investigate

Questions to help you investigate key parts of the Bible.



Think it through

Questions to help you think through the implications of your discoveries and write down your own thoughts and reactions.

When you come to one of these symbols, you'll know that it's time to do some work of your own.

3. Suggestions for Individual Study

- Before you begin, pray that God would open your eyes to what he is saying in Acts and give you the spiritual strength to do something about it. You may be spurred to pray again at the end of the study.
- Work through the study, following the directions as you go. Write in the spaces provided.
- Resist the temptation to skip over the *Think it through* sections. It is important to think about the sections of text (rather than just accepting them as true) and to ponder the implications for your life. Writing these things down is a very valuable way to get your thoughts working.
- Take what opportunities you can to talk to others about what you've learnt.

4. Suggestions for Group Study

- Much of the above applies to group study as well. The studies are suitable for structured Bible study or cell groups, as well as for more informal pairs and threesomes. Get together with a friend/s and work through them at your own pace; use them as the basis for regular Bible study with your spouse. You don't need the formal structure of a 'group' to gain maximum benefit.
- It is *vital* that group members work through the study themselves *before* the group meets. The group discussion can take place comfortably in an hour (depending on how side-tracked you get!), but only if all the members have done the work and are familiar with the material.
- Spend most of the group time discussing the 'interactive' sections—*For starters*, *Investigate* and *Think it through*. Reading all the text together will take too long and should be unnecessary if the group members have done their preparation. You may wish to underline and read aloud particular paragraphs or sections of text that you think are important.
- The role of the group leader is to direct the course of the discussion and to try to draw the threads together at the end. This will mean a little extra preparation—underlining important sections of text to emphasize, working out which questions are worth concentrating on, and being sure of the main thrust of the study. Leaders will also probably want to work out approximately how long they'd like to spend on each part.
- We haven't included an 'answer guide' to the questions in the studies. This is a deliberate move. We want to give you a guided tour of Acts, not a lecture. There is more than enough in the text we have written and the questions we have asked to point you in what we think is the right direction. The rest is up to you.

5. Bible translation

Previous studies in our Interactive Bible Study series have assumed that most readers would be using the New International Version of the Bible. However, since the release of the English Standard Version in 2001, many have switched to the ESV for study purposes. For this reason, we have decided to quote from and refer to the ESV text, which we recommend.

6. Before you begin

We recommend that before you start on Study 1, you take the time to read right through Acts in one sitting. This will give you a feel for the direction and purpose of the whole book and help you greatly in looking at each passage in its context.

1

Acts 1–2

The Acts of the Apostles Risen Christ

For starters

What do you already know about the Book of Acts?



On Saturday 2 September 2000, the Sydney 2000 Olympic Torch relay came through the town in which I live. The Olympic torch had originally been lit by the sun's rays at a special ceremony in Olympia, Greece. When the flame finally arrived in Australia it stayed for 100 days, being carried by 11,000 torchbearers through over 1,000 towns. The torch visited every State and Territory, and it journeyed within one hour's drive of 85% of the Australian population. Apart from the traditional runners, the torch travelled via train, plane, bicycle, stock horse, camel, tram, road train, row boat, Chinese dragon boat, canoe, ferry, solar powered vehicle,

surf boat and Royal Flying Doctor Service. And on a wet, overcast Saturday morning, the torch came through my town.

What was interesting was the massive excitement which the Olympic torch relay generated, especially amongst the torchbearers themselves. One of them told me, “It’s such a privilege to be involved in an event this big. I may never do anything else, but I’ll be able to tell my children that at least their mum carried the Olympic flame”. Another commented, “Going to work each day, doing the washing, watching the TV, it’s all so little. But to carry the Olympic flame even for a little while, it’s so much bigger than anything else I’ve done. I wanted to be part of the relay because I wanted to be part of something bigger than my life”.

Do you sometimes feel like that? The alarm goes off in the morning, you roll out of bed for another day and it’s the same old routine. Everything seems so mundane and small-scale. Do you sometimes feel that it would be nice to be caught up in something a bit more spectacular than what your life usually seems to be?

The Book of Acts is a wonderful book, because it helps us to see that when we are followers of Jesus we actually are caught up in something much bigger than ourselves. As Christians, we are caught up in a world-wide movement which makes the Olympic torch relay pale into insignificance. We are involved in the passing on of a message that has been transforming peoples’ lives in every single country on the face of this earth for thousands of years. And the key to seeing this is: Acts is a book all about Jesus Christ.



Investigate

Read Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-3

1. In what ways are the books of Luke and Acts similar? In what ways are they different?

2. What is the importance of the word 'began' in Acts 1:1?

Read Acts 1:4-8

3. It would seem that the apostles are going to have an important role in what Jesus will continue to do and teach. What does Jesus want the disciples to do and why?

4. What signs are there that Jesus' plans are different from what the disciples expected (vv. 6-8)?

5. The Apostles were people like Peter, James, John ... What do you know of their track record with Jesus up until then? How surprising is Jesus' mission for them?

Read Acts 1:9-26

6. What characteristics is it important for Judas' replacement to have? Why are they important?

7. Skim back over chapter 1, and list as many examples as you can of Jesus being the one in charge and controlling all the action.

Welcome to the sequel

Acts is the second volume of a two-volume work. The first volume is the Gospel of Luke. It's unfortunate that our English Bibles usually place John's Gospel between the two, as Luke and Acts belong together. They are two volumes that focus on the same person, Jesus Christ. Luke's Gospel is about what Jesus *began* to do and teach. Acts is about what he *continues* to do and teach.

It will be helpful to bear this in mind during this course of studies, for it will stop us misapplying the text. For example, in the Book of Acts, Luke describes many unusual and extraordinary events, and there is a danger of thinking that these events should also happen to us. We need to realize that Luke may be recording something simply because that's what happened then, and not necessarily because it's what should happen for us now. We take this for granted at certain points. For example, in Acts 1 we have just read of Jesus telling his disciples to wait in Jerusalem. Does that mean we are all to fly to Jerusalem and wait for a word from the Lord as well? Of course not—we realize that, in this respect, the

4. The “day of the Lord” is a reference to the final judgment when God will punish all sin. What is it necessary to do during these last days preceding the “day of the Lord” (v. 21)?

Read Acts 2:22-36

In these verses, Peter tells the crowd some crucial things about Jesus. Let’s tease out the main points of his speech.

5. According to verses 22-24 ,what did men do to Jesus? What did God do?

6. According to verse 27, what did the Old Testament predict about God’s coming King? In the light of the previous answer, what does this tell us about Jesus?

7. According to verse 33, where is Jesus now, and what has he done?

8. According to verse 34, what else did the Old Testament predict about God's coming King? What does this tell us about Jesus?

9. Peter has been drawing some parallels between Jesus, and the Christ predicted in the Old Testament. Verse 36 now comes as Peter's punchline. Try rewriting it in your own words.

Read Acts 2:37-41

10. How would you describe the crowd's reaction?

11. What does Peter say they should do, and why?

Apostles behaving strangely

On that first Pentecost feast after Jesus' resurrection, the Apostles are certainly doing some strange things: even speaking in different languages that they're not meant to know! However the key issue is not whether we should do what the Apostles did—the key issue is what we discover about the risen Christ. In fact, we discover something of enormous importance about Jesus.

The Apostle Peter explains that the Apostles are acting strangely so as to signal that “the last days” have arrived (v. 17). In other words, the clock is now running and God's judgement is coming. The “great and magnificent” day of the Lord is approaching (v. 20)—the day when God will judge and punish all sin. The good news is that in these last days people can escape God's judgement by calling on the name of the Lord (v. 21). The bad news for the people of Jerusalem, however, is that the Lord they're meant to be calling on is actually the man they killed a couple of months back (v. 36)!

Jesus has shown himself to be the Lord by rising from the dead. Peter says that God predicted it (vv. 25-31) and he himself has seen the risen Christ (v. 32). This Jesus whom they crucified is therefore both Lord and Christ. They need to call on him for help before it is too late!

This emphasizes the importance of Jesus' mission plan (1:8). No wonder it's important for the news of Jesus to be spread in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. Jesus' death and resurrection have ushered in the last days. Now is the time to call on Jesus for help, before it is too late. Now is the time to warn and plead with others, before it is too late.



Think it through

1. In what ways are we different from the Apostles? In what ways are we similar?

2. In what ways are we different from the crowd in Acts 2? In what ways are we similar?

3. Where do we fit into Jesus' mission plan of 1:8? What difference should this mission plan make to us?

4. Is there any one truth about the risen Christ that has especially struck you from this study? How should it shape the way you live?