

# Equip: Resources on the Book of Acts

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We love a good story. Streaming services hook us in with a series, and we wait for the next episode. I look at Acts as a “Season Two” of Luke’s Gospel. As the Gospels—Luke’s and the other three—cover the three decades of Jesus’ incarnate ministry, Acts reports on the first three decades of the church.

Acts is a continuation of the good news story of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ through his followers and his church as they are filled by the Holy Spirit and sent on the mission defined by Acts 1:8.

Acts 1:8 is a *de facto* outline for the book of Acts as the witness begins in Jerusalem on Pentecost and moves through Judea and Samaria, Paul’s arrival in Rome—an “end of the earth”—and the unloosed proclamation of the gospel.

Acts vitally explains the mission and motivation of the church from inception to the present. We often say, “It’s a small world,” but Luke’s narrative of the church in Acts teaches us God has a big reach.

Preaching through Acts was an inspiring, humbling joy. Here is a selection of some of the resources I found useful in preparation and recommended to my congregants who wanted further study. While I found several books and commentaries helpful, this limited selection of resources is a starter from which to prepare good studies and sermons.

# ***Acts for Everyone, Part 1 & 2* by N.T. Wright**

Wright had me from the introduction: “The Book of Acts ... is full of the energy and excitement of the early Christians as they found God doing new things all over the place and learned to take the good news of Jesus around the world.”

Simple truth works as we communicate the simple good news.

Wright’s translation and application of the text makes this a resource for preaching and/or teaching through Acts and makes for a companion book one can recommend for members of a study group who want to dig deeper into the text.

The greatest value of *Acts for Everyone* is the way it connects Acts as a continuation of Luke’s Gospel in the life and work of the apostles and the church. Wright’s storytelling is based in his United Kingdom context, but if you can convert metric units, you’ve got this.

The application of each message is globally relevant. I found his ability to reveal the wind of God moving in each story and each person great and small inspiring as I prepared to preach through the episodes of Acts from Peter’s Pentecost to Paul’s prison.

If you’ve ever attended or watched a lecture by N.T. Wright, you’ll hear his relatable voice and scholarly insight as you read.

## ***The Bible Speaks Today Series: The***

# ***Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church and the World by John Stott***

This staple of the shelf gives the ingredients for study through Acts.

Stott emphasizes the attachment of Acts to Luke's Gospel in form and flow. His outline of each passage and exposition frames preparation and delivery. Copious annotations and references provide links to other resources.

This is more than a resource, however. It is an inspirational work. As an evangelist, Stott's gift of writing and delivery focus on the call to salvation preached by the filling of the Holy Spirit and what it cost the lives of the obedient.

Stott places the narrative of Acts within its first-century context, while connecting it to contemporary issues facing the church today.

Acts is more than an episodic narrative. It includes direct and practical guidance for the formulation of the church and how it should be governed, and Stott draws out the birth of roles for elders, deacons and pastors.

The various examples of salvation experience in Acts are expounded, revealing that even in different contexts there are distinct shared moments in the salvation of a believer.

Even more emphasis is placed on the mission imperative of the gospel and the church. Stott clarifies the context of each church plant and how it is part of the greater mission to reach the world with the good news.

## ***IVP New Testament Commentary: Acts***

## by William J. Larkin

Preaching Acts requires study of the historical context in which each encounter occurs. Larkin defines the environment in which the church was birthed. It can be hard for the Western church of the 21st century to grasp how antagonistic a world surrounded the early church.

The theme of this resource flows around the establishment of churches through the mission of the apostles. Larkin couches the significance of each unique location clearly. It is a help to me as I teach and preach Acts to explain how the Holy Spirit leads us to make the message plain without diluting truth and power unto salvation.

Larkin's outline is a helpful study and teaching tool, especially if you're wanting some help to segment your study on Acts. His annotated footnotes provide solid language study with some guidance to other resources in the bibliography.

The historical study of Larkin's work reveals modern culture is replicating more of the attitudes exemplified in the first century. The church needs to revisit the message of Acts as we seek the Holy Spirit to fill our proclamation and mission wherever we are placed.

## ***Acts: A Handbook on the Greek Text* by Martin Culy and Mikeal Parsons**

A final recommendation is Culy and Parsons' helpful reference on the Greek. Even though plenty of online tools abound, this work expands on simple parsing to deeper context. If you want to keep your language tools sharp, add this to your study stack for Acts.

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of [Baylor University](#). The views expressed in this resource article are those of the author.