

**The Village Church – Rancho Santa Fe**  
**Discovery # 23 – Adult Bible Study – 2025 & 2026**

**Discovering the Bible**

**Notes – The Mission**

**March 17 & 18**

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*Matthew 28:16-20, The Great Commission*

*Acts 8:26-40, Philip and the Ethiopian*

*Acts 9:1-31, Saul Is Converted*

*Acts 10:1-48, Peter and Cornelius*

*Acts 11:19-26, Christians in Antioch*

*Acts 12:1-19, Peter Freed from Prison*

*Acts 15:1-35, The Jerusalem Council*

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## INTRODUCTION

1. Luke uses geography as a literary and theological instrument. The center of his story is the city of Jerusalem.
2. The whole movement of the Gospel is *toward Jerusalem*.
3. The Lukan temptation account **reverses Matthew's order for the last two temptations**, so the climax is reached in Jerusalem (4:9).
4. The transfiguration at the end of the Galilean ministry explicitly prepares for the journey to Jerusalem and Jesus' death (9:31).
5. After Jesus' resurrection, all his appearances took place in the environs of Jerusalem, the last of them ended with his instruction, "*Stay in the city.*"
6. The movement of Acts is ***away from Jerusalem***. Jesus says in Acts 1:8, "*You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.*"
7. Each outward movement away from Jerusalem, in turn, circles back to Jerusalem before reaching out still further
8. The church was empowered for mission, but not everyone shared a common understanding of that mission.
9. Some, especially those who lived in Jerusalem, believed that the Christian message was only for Jews. Those outside the faith of Israel could become Christians only if they first became Jews.

10. After Paul received a vision from God, he led efforts to allow Gentiles to become Christians without first requiring them to convert to Judaism.

## SCRIPTURES

**Matthew 28:16-20**, The Great Commission is the resurrected Jesus' final command to his disciples on a Galilean mountain.

11. The commission is not based on the disciples' strength, but on Jesus' universal authority. The goal is not just evangelism (decisions) but making disciples—lifelong followers who learn to obey.

12. Acts 8:26-40, Philip and the Ethiopian describe the Spirit-led journey of Philip, who leaves a revival in Samaria to explain the scriptures to an Ethiopian eunuch on a desert road.

13. The eunuch is a Gentile, an African, and likely restricted from full temple worship under Deuteronomic law. His inclusion shows that God's grace breaks down racial, national, and religious boundaries

**Acts 9:1-31** details the dramatic conversion of Saul from a violent persecutor of "the Way" to a proclaimer of Jesus as the Son of God, following a blinding, personal encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus.

14. This pivotal chapter emphasizes God's grace, the transformation of enemies, and the expansion of the church.

**Acts 10:1-48**: Peter and Cornelius narrate the pivotal conversion of the devout Roman, gentile centurion Cornelius, in Caesarea. Through interconnected visions, God directs Peter to visit Cornelius, declaring Gentile believers clean.

15. The Acts 10 passage focuses as much on changing Peter's (and the Church's) prejudices as it does on converting Cornelius

**Acts 11:19-26** details the early church's expansion to Antioch following Stephen's persecution. This marks a central shift from a purely Jewish movement to one that includes Gentile believers.

16. Encouraged by Barnabas and Saul's teaching, this multicultural church in Antioch became a major center for missions.

17. Antioch replaces Jerusalem as the strategic base for Gentile missions.

18. The term Christian originated in Antioch to describe those following Christ, likely used by outsiders to identify this new group.

**Acts 12:1-19 depicts the** early church, persecuted by Herod Agrippa I, turning to fervent prayer as their "ultimate weapon".

19. Herod Agrippa I, to appease Jewish opposition, *executed James and arrested Peter during the Feast of Unleavened Bread*, highlighting the high-stakes political environment

20. Peter was freed from prison the night before his execution.

21. Peter's release is characterized by simple, quiet miracles rather than massive spectacles—chains falling off, gates opening, and soldiers remaining unconscious.

**Acts 15:1-35 describes the Jerusalem Council**, where leaders resolved that Gentile converts need not adopt Jewish customs (circumcision, Law of Moses) for salvation, affirming justification by grace through faith alone.

**The Council promoted inclusive fellowship, focusing on unity over rigid ritualism, allowing Gentile believers to join without becoming culturally Jewish.**

*\*The Jerusalem Council (c. 50 CE)* was convened to address a major theological conflict between Gentile-Christian converts and a Pharisaic group from Judea who argued that Gentile believers must be circumcised and follow the Law of Moses to be saved.

- The council, guided by the Holy Spirit, decreed that salvation is by faith alone
- That Gentiles did not need to follow the full Mosaic law, only to abstain from food offered to idols, blood, meat of strangled animals, and sexual immorality.

The Jerusalem Council was comprised of the Apostles and elders of the early Jerusalem church, with James acting as the leading voice.

Key participants included Peter, Paul, and Barnabas, who debated whether Gentile converts needed to follow Mosaic Law.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. According to Matthew 28:16-20 When the disciples saw the risen Jesus, they worshiped Him, but "some doubted". How does it comfort or challenge you to know that even those who saw Jesus in person experienced doubt?

2. The command "Go" can also be translated as "while you are going". Who are the people in your daily "sphere of influence"—work, neighborhood, or gym—that God is calling you to engage with this week?
3. In *Acts 9:1-31* God calls Saul his "chosen instrument" (verse 15). How does God use your own unique background and past—even the parts you aren't proud of—for His purposes today?
4. In light of Acts 10: 1-48, what preconceived prejudices or cultural boundaries is God challenging you to break down in your own life?
5. In what ways have you experienced or witnessed God showing no partiality, as He did between Jew and Gentile in chapter 9?
6. **According to Acts 10:1-48** In what ways did God challenge Peter's prejudices against Gentiles, and what prejudices might God be challenging in your own heart regarding social, racial, or cultural divides?
7. The main theme of this section is that God does not show favoritism. How does this truth impact the way you view and interact with people who are different from you?

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*Primary Source: Discovering the Bible: A New Generation, published by The Kerygma Program, Pittsburgh, PA. Boyd Lien, author.*