Study 1: Acts 3:1–10

INTRODUCTION (11:00-11:40 a.m.)

GATHERING (10 min)

Allow your group to gather. People may have trouble finding their table, so there will most likely be a delayed start, but begin as close to 11:00 a.m. as possible. As you wait, make conversation around your table. Here are some fun "get to know you" questions if you need suggestions:

- Where is everyone coming in from? Any travel stories that made your trip to Urbana especially eventful?
- What have you all done during your break?
 Does your family have any holiday traditions?
- I know it's only been less than a day, but what's been a highlight for you so far at Urbana?

WELCOME (2 min)

Welcome! It looks like most of us, if not all of us are here, so we're going to get started. You made it! My name is ______ and I am so excited to be facilitating our time in Bible study these next three mornings! This is our small group for the conference and together we're going to have the opportunity to get to know one another better as we study Scripture together and have a good amount of time each day to consider its meaning for our lives and our communities.

ICEBREAKER (20 min, ~2 min/person)

Lead your group in an icebreaker:

Let's go around and share. What is your name? Where are you from? Netflix or Hulu? And what is your spiritual background?

GROUP NORMS (5 min)

Thank you all so much for sharing! We'll have more time to get to know each other throughout the week. Everyone turn to page 26 in your handbook. You'll see on that page a list of group norms that will help guide our small group. I want to share these for us so that we can host and care for each other well.

Group Norms

- 1. Use "I" statements (speak for yourself, not for everyone)
- 2. Avoid judgmental statements (no shame or blame)
- 3. Allow space for everyone to share if they choose
- 4. Practice active listening and give advice only if invited to do so
- 5. What we share here stays here (confidentiality)

These are really important group norms for us to establish so we can make this group as inclusive and hospitable for everyone as possible. I also want to name that I'm not the expert here. My hope is that I get to host this space well so that you all can bring all of who you are to the table. I believe that our experiences and the ways Jesus will speak to us through the passages are a gift to all of us. So please feel free to share your thoughts and experiences during this time and let's take risks together.

OVERVIEW (2 min)

During our times together, we'll come back to these group norms. These three Bible studies will be our chance to experience Acts as a small group. Tomorrow, we will also talk about the gospel message and have a chance to respond. The questions we'll be discussing during our studies, along with the gospel message tomorrow, can be found in your handbook beginning on page 31. Let me pray for us as we begin!

PRAYER (1 min)

Pray and ask God to help you as you study today's passage.

SCRIPTURE (11:40-12:10 p.m.)

Open to today's passage on page 27 in your handbook.

BACKGROUND (2 min)

Share some background for this passage:

Last night, Bishop Claude described the amazing account of the disciples waiting for and receiving the Holy Spirit in the Upper Room in Jerusalem. Fifty days after Passover, the Jewish community was in town for Pentecost, their traditional festival celebrating the giving of the law and the firstfruits of the harvest. In Acts 2, as the Spirit speaks the wonders of God in many different languages, an ethnically diverse group of Jews and Jewish converts listen and try to make sense of what is happening. Peter boldly preaches, and the early church community is born. Possessions are being sold, people are praying together, and miracles are beginning to happen in their community.

THE TEXT (3 min)

Read today's Bible study passage out loud. Then invite your group to re-read the passage quietly on their own:

ACTS 3:1–10 (NIV)

One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. ² Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. ³ When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. ⁴ Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" ⁵ So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

⁶ Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." ⁷ Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. ⁸ He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. ⁹ When all the people saw him walking and praising God, ¹⁰ they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

OBSERVATION (5 min)

Let's discuss a couple things that will help us see the text.

- 1. Notice the people and places in this passage. Let's name them, what you know about them, and where you see them in the text.
- 2. Choose one as a group: What do you feel in your body as you imagine yourself in this scene?
 - As the man being carried to the temple gate every day to beg.
 - As a member of the crowd passing by this man begging every day.
 - As one of the people bringing this man to the gate.

INTERPRETATION (20 min)

Now let's discuss a few questions that will help us discover and understand the text.

- In the process of this miracle, why do Peter and John look straight at the man and command the man to look at them (v. 4)? What impact do you think seeing and being seen may have had on Peter, John, and the man?
- 2. The man is begging for money, but Peter and John say they have none. So, what exactly are Peter and John offering to give to the man? List out all the ways their offer might have impacted the man, his community, themselves, and the crowds.
- 3. Peter and John had a daily practice of going to the temple at three in the afternoon to pray (which is the same time that Jesus breathed his last breath on the cross, recorded in Luke 23:44–46). How is the routine of daily prayer influential in this community of believers?

RESPOND (12:10–12:30 p.m.)

SUMMARY (2 min)

Summarize the passage:

It was just two chapters ago that we saw the disciples a little shocked and confused around Jesus' ascension and his command to go back to Jerusalem and wait for the promised Holy Spirit. But the disciples did go back, they waited, and the Pentecost we heard about yesterday has completely transformed them! The Holy Spirit has been activated in their lives, renewing the way they see and interact with people - like this man. The man is fully seen in his humanity and dignity, and with the power of the Holy Spirit, he is completely healed—walking, jumping, and praising God for all to see. The kingdom of God is breaking into the world and changing everything.

APPLICATION (2 min)

Select one application question from below, whichever seems most relevant to your group's discussion of the passage:

Let's take a moment to reflect on a question that will help us respond to the text in our lives. I will read the question, give us a couple minutes in silence, and then open up a time to share with each other.

- 1. In what ways do you identify with the man born unable to walk? How could you step out in faith right now and ask your group to pray for you?
- 2. Peter and John embody a "ministry of seeing" that dignifies and humanizes the man. Share ways in which your faith community excels in this ministry. In what ways do you struggle? Take time to celebrate, lament, and ask God to highlight who you might be missing or not seeing (since Peter and John probably saw this man before but only stopped today).
- 3. Think of your relationship with God at this moment. Are you like the man at the beginning of the passage Searching, wounded, and in need? Or are you more like the man at the end of the passage—walking, jumping, and praising God? Perhaps you identify with the community of people who placed this man at the temple gate each day. Share what has impacted your relationship with God lately and what you desire from God at this conference.

SHARING AND PRAYER (15 min)

Share a brief story from your own life to answer the application question and then lead the group to share and pray for one another. Stay all together or split into groups of 2–3 to allow more time for each person.

CLOSING (1 min)

Close your time and let the group know about the invitation to faith:

As we close, I want to give you a heads up that toward the end of our study tomorrow, we will be invited to take a next step of faith. Acts shows us how powerful it is to know Jesus and follow him as Lord, becoming part of his work and being empowered by his Spirit. We want to give everyone a chance to consider this and respond.

In addition, we will have the chance to commit to hosting an exploratory Bible study with skeptics and seekers we know, and we will all have an opportunity to decide to follow Jesus. If you are interested in glancing through what we will read together tomorrow, please feel free to check out page 33 in your handbook and the exploratory Bible studies and artwork you received when you checked in.

Consider getting lunch as a small group!



SCAN THIS CODE AND FILL OUT THE SHORT SURVEY BEFORE THE WCC SESSION.

Study 2: Acts 8:26–40 & Invitation to Faith

INTRODUCTION (11:00–11:35 a.m.)

GATHERING (10 min)

Allow your group to gather. Begin as close to 11 a.m. as possible, but as you wait, make conversation around your table. Here are some fun "get to know you" questions if you need suggestions:

- If you could choose to do anything for a day, what would it be?
- Have you ever had a nickname growing up?
 What was it and what effect did it have on you?
- If you could travel in time, when and where would you go?

WELCOME (1 min)

Welcome your group:

Good morning! Great to see you all again! I look forward to being together in Scripture, and I am eager to hear what God has to say to us. Remember, as I mentioned yesterday, that toward the end of our study, there will be a time to consider what next step of faith God is inviting each of us to take as we hear the gospel and have an opportunity to decide to follow Jesus. I will explain more when we get there, but you can read more on page 33 in your handbook.

ICEBREAKER (20min, ~2 min/person)

Lead your group in an icebreaker:

Let's go around and share. What have you been learning at the conference? Have you had any spiritual encounters?

I also want to acknowledge that this morning's session may have been heavy for you. Feel free to pass or share what God is bringing up from this morning's talks.



Urbana has already been a very full experience! In just two days, we have been exploring the exhibit hall, attending seminars, hearing testimonies and teachings, eating together, worshiping together, and possibly not sleeping enough. Now as we enter our second study, this is another chance to discover how the Bible can be relevant to our lives.

- If you were able to share a lot with the group yesterday, great! Today let's make space for each other, and if you haven't had a chance to share much. We'd love to hear from you in our study today.
- And don't forget about the group norms we talked about yesterday.
 (Ask for a volunteer to read your list of group norms aloud for everyone to remember).

PRAYER (1 min)

Pray and ask God to help you as you study today's passage.

SCRIPTURE (11:35-12:05 p.m.)

Open to today's passage on page 30 in your handbook.

BACKGROUND (2 min)

Share some background for this passage:

Last night, we heard Bishop Claude teach the story of Stephen. In Acts 6, Stephen and six other ethnic-minority believers are appointed for leadership to create an effective structure that will provide for the vulnerable people among them (the widows). Then Stephen is killed for his offensive speech against the religious leaders and his declaration that God is not limited simply to the physical location of the temple. Persecution breaks out against the church in Jerusalem and the disciples are scattered throughout neighboring areas, but they preach about Jesus wherever they go. One of the other leaders chosen alongside Stephen is Philip, who ends up in Samaria preaching about Jesus, baptizing, casting out impure spirits, and healing people, which brings great joy in the city!

In our study today, we will encounter a man who is called a "eunuch," which means that he had been castrated and unable to have sex (his testes or entire genitals removed). This allowed men to work closely with the queen without any chance of sexual contact or pregnancy. Jewish people opposed this practice of castration, and eunuchs were therefore excluded from the Jewish community (Deuteronomy 23:1).

THE TEXT (5 min)

Read today's Bible study passage out loud. Then invite your group to re-read the passage quietly on their own:

ACTS 8:26-40 (NIV)

²⁶ Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." ²⁷ 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, ²⁸ and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. ²⁹ The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it."

³⁰ Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked.

³¹ "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

 $^{\rm 32}$ 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.

³³ In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.

Who can speak of his descendants?

For his life was taken from the earth."

- ³⁴ The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" ³⁵ Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.
- ³⁶ As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?" ^{[37]* 38} And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.

 ³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰ Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

*Acts 8:37 Some manuscripts include here Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." The eunuch answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

OBSERVATION (5 min)

Let's discuss a couple things that will help us see the text.

- 1. What are the locations mentioned in this passage?
- 2. List out all the actions you see taking place. Who is doing what?

INTERPRETATION (18 min)

Now let's discuss a few questions that will help us discover and understand the text.

- Let's talk about Philip and the Ethiopian man. What do we know about these two people—their backgrounds, their spiritual journeys, etc.?
- 2. Ethiopia was not just the nation as we know it today but included all of Africa south of Egypt, so the man's travel to Jerusalem would have taken many days or even a few weeks. Obtaining a scroll of Isaiah would have been very expensive. Why do you think this man is going to such great lengths to seek the God of Israel?
- 3. Notice that v. 32–33 quote Isaiah 53:7–8. Why might the man have been interested in this specific section of the text? How do you imagine Philip used these verses to explain the good news about Jesus?
- 4. How do we see God at work transgressing social, cultural, and economic boundaries? How would you describe the impact that God makes in the life of this one man? How might this extend to the community the Ethiopian man is returning to?

INVITATION TO FAITH SCRIPT (12:05–12:30 p.m.)

Have people take turns reading through the next section, including the table at the end.

ACTS 8 AND A GOSPEL SUMMARY (3 min)

We want to be like both Philip and the Ethiopian, receiving the Word deep into our hearts and whole-heartedly following Jesus. We also want to open the Word with our family, friends, and communities. We will have a chance in a few minutes to invite our friends and communities to explore Jesus in the Gospel of Luke with us.

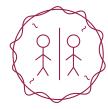
First, let's consider what it means to actually follow Jesus. We will have a chance to make that decision now, as we talk about these four steps.

1 Read this Gospel Summary



DESIGNED FOR GOOD

In Genesis, we see that God created the world to be a perfect place. We were created for right relationship with God, with each other, and with creation. Things were perfect!



DAMAGED BY EVIL

We long for these kinds of right relationships. But we thought we could run our lives better than God. Instead of placing God at the center, we put our own selfish desires at the center. Then everything fell apart. We damaged our relationship with God, with each other, and with all creation. Today we live in a broken, messed-up world. We have war, depression, anxiety, loneliness, abuse, suicide, drug addiction, shootings, etc. We deeply long for every relationship to be restored. Fortunately, God didn't leave us in this mess.



RESTORED FOR BETTER

Motivated by a deep love for us and creation, God relocated into our world in the person of Jesus. He took all our brokenness onto himself. By dying on the cross and rising again, Jesus broke the power of our broken world. If we're willing to let God take his place at the center of our lives again, and if we are willing to trust Jesus with our lives, we can be restored to a right relationship with God. But that's not the end of the story.



SENT TO HEAL

Once we choose to follow Jesus, he sends us into the world to bring his love and hope, power and justice wherever we go. We get to live and declare this good news as Jesus' witnesses, living lives full of God's love and courage.

This gospel presentation is adapted from James Choung's book, True Story: A Christianity Worth Believing In (IVP, 2008)

2 Consider Who Is at the Center

Now we have a decision to make. Will we live with ourselves at the center of the story, or will we let God become the center? In order to be sent to heal, we must acknowledge our wounds and turn to Jesus for the healing we need. This is an invitation to turn from our selfishness and trust Jesus with our lives. This is what the Bible means when it says, "Repent of your sins." If we are at the center of the story, our attempts to heal will be warped by our brokenness. What would it take for you to trust Jesus with your life and relationships?

PONDER YOUR RESPONSE (2 min)

Let's read the "I'm a Follower of Jesus" and the "I'm Considering Following Jesus" boxes in Step 3 out loud.

3 Reflect on Your Life

I'M A FOLLOWER OF JESUS

For those of us following Jesus, our challenge is to grow as a courageous witness by sharing God's love with others. Look at this Love and Courage diagram. Which category best describes your mood this week?

LOVE COURAGE

NICE

You are polite and empathetic, but you take few risks to talk about Jesus with others.

COURAGEOUS WITNESS

You connect people to Jesus, providing love and truth.

PASSIVE BYSTANDER

You are just getting through your day, unintentionally self-focused.

ARGUMENTATIVE

You boldly represent Jesus and truth, but you can be easily offended and judgmental.

COURAGE

Take a moment to pray, "Jesus, fill me with your love, healing, and courage. Please give me the joy of opening the story of Jesus (in Luke) with some of the seekers and skeptics in my life. Bring a few people to mind right now."

Write their names here (We will have a chance to invite them in a minute).

I'M CONSIDERING FOLLOWING JESUS

Trusting Jesus includes embracing, through the cross and resurrection, God's promise that we can be different people and receive a change of heart, both now and for eternity. It takes courage to make Jesus the center of your life and follow his leadership. Are you ready to do that?

It's important to interact with God about this, and like the Ethiopian man, we can ask God questions. Let's take a moment of silence. "Jesus, are you inviting me to follow you?" (30 seconds of silence).

GUIDED REFLECTION (4 min)

Let's take a few minutes to re-read the boxes on your own. If you consider yourself a follower of Jesus already, I would encourage you to read the first box. If you are considering following Jesus, I'd suggest the second box.

Pause to allow for re-reading.

LISTENING (1 min)

Let's take a moment to listen to Jesus about our next steps. You can use the prayer prompts that are bolded in the boxes.

Allow about 30 seconds for listening.

SHARING (10 min)

I would love to hear how you are responding today. Let's go around the table and each share something about your response.

Leader, please go first to open the sharing.

Thank you all so much for sharing!

4 Share With a Friend (5 min)

This is an important moment. We want to include friends and family at Urbana and back home in our growth. Whether you just decided to follow Jesus or you're still considering, in a minute, let's text someone so they can support you.

Others of us are considering being a courageous witness. We have fantastic exploratory Bible studies for both seekers and Christians in the Gospel of Luke. Let's take a minute to look them over and see which one stands out to you most.

Everyone take a moment to look at the Exploratory Studies provided at your table.

Let's take out our phones. Here are some suggestions of things you might text a friend. Choose one or feel free to put things in your own words:

- "Hearing the story of Jesus was helpful. I'm still trying to decide
 if he is trustworthy with my life."
- "Hey! I just decided to follow Jesus here at Urbana!"
- "I'm at this conference talking about faith and I'm curious, what is your spiritual background? Want to talk about it?"
- "I'm at a conference where I was given a four-week discussion series on Jesus and labels. It looks interesting to me. I want to do this back on campus ... would you be up for that?"

Take time to text.

Leader close in prayer (once everyone who would like to, has had a chance text).

Please Note: Any of us who make a decision to follow Jesus through the call to faith may additionally respond with a desire to be baptized. If so, please pause and consider waiting to be baptized until your family or the faith community you are a part of can be present with you.



SCAN THIS CODE AND FILL OUT THE SHORT SURVEY BEFORE THE WCC SESSION.

Study 3: Acts 9:36–43

INTRODUCTION (11:00-11:20 a.m.)

GATHERING (8 min)

Allow your group to gather. Begin as close to 11 a.m. as possible, but as you wait, make conversation around your table. Here are some fun "get to know you" questions if you need suggestions:

- What has been most meaningful or most difficult for you about Urbana?
- What has daily prayer been like for you here at Urbana?
 How has God met you and those around you?
- What is your hidden talent?
- If you could play any character in a movie or book, who would it be and why?

WELCOME (1 min)

Welcome to your group:

Yay! We're together again! Today is our last Bible study, and I'm eager to be in Scripture one more time with you all. We'll do an icebreaker next, but it will be a little shorter than before so that we can save extra time for later as we close.

ICEBREAKER (10 min)

Lead your group in an icebreaker:

- We have seen God do a lot already at the conference, and we want to celebrate with any of you who made a decision last night! Does anyone want to share about how God met them yesterday and led them towards a decision?
- Allow some silence for anyone who wants to respond and then move to the next question if time remains. Your group may decide to pray for those who shared.
- If time allows: Now let's go around and share. What are two words that describe what you are hoping for during this last day of Urbana?

PRAYER (1 min)

Pray and ask God to help you as you study today's passage.

SCRIPTURE (11:20-11:50 a.m.)

Open to today's passage on page 37 in your handbook.

BACKGROUND (7 min)

Invite your group to discuss the background for this passage:

- Today we will be studying a passage about grief, death and resurrection. I know this is a complicated topic. We've just been through a pandemic and many of us have experienced more death and loss in our communities than we could have imagined. As we begin this passage today, there is space and permission for all of us to honestly share our thoughts and tensions. So my first question before we read the passage, is an acknowledgment of the past:
- What have our experiences with death been during, but not limited to, the pandemic?
- Thank you for sharing and feel free to continue to process these things throughout the study and our discussion. Turning to last night, Bishop Claude spoke about Paul and Ananias. What from his exposition stood out to you?

THE TEXT (3 min)

Read today's Bible study passage out loud. Then invite your group to re-read the passage quietly on their own

ACTS 9:36-43 (NIV)

³⁶ In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor. ³⁷ About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. ³⁸ Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, "Please come at once!"

³⁹ Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them.

⁴⁰ Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. ⁴¹ He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called for the believers, especially the widows, and presented her to them alive. ⁴² This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord. ⁴³ Peter stayed in Joppa for some time with a tanner named Simon.

OBSERVATION (5 min)

Let's discuss a couple things that will help us see the text.

- Who are the characters in this passage?
 How are they connected to one another?
- 2. There are many instances in this text where one thing causes another. Where do you see this?
- 3. What has been this community's experience of Tabitha's death? Highlight what you see in the text.

INTERPRETATION (15 min)

Now let's discuss a few questions that will help us discover and understand the text.

- 1. Sending for Peter in a town about 10 miles away would have taken 7–8 hours of travel round trip. Why do you think the disciples went to such trouble to bring Peter?
- 2. Tabitha is referred to as a disciple in verse 36. In what ways do you see her extending the work of Jesus?
- 3. What might it have been like to be one of the widows mourning the death of Tabitha? What can we infer about what Tabitha meant to this community?

RESPOND (11:50–12:30 p.m.)

SUMMARY (12 min)

Invite your group to summarize the text together:

We're going to mix it up a little for this last study and instead of me summarizing, I want to give us as a small group the opportunity to collaborate with each other. What do we think the main message of the passage is? What is God saying to us, to Urbana, and to our generation through this passage we just studied? Let's share our thoughts out loud with the group.

As the group shares, listen and make notes of any key words and themes that are emerging. Before moving to application, share a brief summary of what you heard from the group.

APPLICATION (3 min)

Select one application question from below, whichever seems most relevant to your group's discussion of the passage:

Let's take a moment to reflect on a question that will help us respond to the text in our lives. I will read the question, give us a couple minutes in silence, and then open up a time to share with each other.

- 1. Who on campus does God want you to see and love the way God sees and loves the man who couldn't walk, the Ethiopian, and Tabitha?
- 2. Many of us have people like Tabitha in our communities/lives. Some may no longer be with us. How have you received God's love through them? How does this passage help you see and honor their lives? What of their character and commitment to God's mission do you aspire to?
- 3. How can your community here at Urbana or back home take steps toward bringing the resurrection life of Jesus into reality? Where do we see the need for new life around us? What action can we take?
- 4. Tabitha was a core part of God's mission just as Peter and the other disciples were. Tabitha's story highlights how God's kingdom expands when we learn how to rightly partner with one another. What are some places on campus that you are interested in partnering with?

SHARING AND PRAYER (15 min)

Share a brief story from your own life to answer the application question and then lead the group to share and pray for one another. Stay all together or split into groups of 2–3 to allow more time for each person.

CLOSING (10 min)

Close your time together as a community:

As we close, let's go around and share. How did God meet you specifically during our Bible study times together?

Close in prayer.

Take a group photo and tag it #Urbana22 on IG!



SCAN THIS CODE AND FILL OUT THE SHORT SURVEY BEFORE THE WCC SESSION.