

Acts 1:1-14 | Jesus Teaches and Ascends

InterVarsity Bible Study Guide (60 minutes)

WELCOME (7 minutes)

Icebreaker: How did you hear about this Bible study and what is your spiritual background?

We are studying the Bible together because we want to grow in our love for Jesus through Scripture and because we want to grow in our witness to Jesus through Scripture.

Let's pray and ask God to help us as we study today's passage together...

GROUP NORMS (3 minutes)

Each time we meet, let's be careful to work well together as a group. We are coming from many different backgrounds, so the purpose of these group norms is to help everyone feel welcome so they can fully participate:

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)

As your leader, I will help us remember our group norms. Also, as members of this group, feel free to speak up if you notice we are straying from these norms.

INTRODUCE the Scripture Text (3 minutes)

The book of Acts is essentially volume two of the Gospel of Luke as both are written by the same physician, Luke! Acts is all about what Jesus continues to do and teach through the apostles, who have been transformed by the Holy Spirit.

SEE the Scripture Text (10 minutes)

Let's read the passage and talk about what we see.

- Who are the characters? How are they connected?
- What is happening? When? Where?
- Which words are being repeated?
- Is the author comparing or contrasting anything?
- Would you like to point out anything else you notice?

Acts 1:1-14 NIV

In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach ² until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. ³ After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. ⁴ On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵ For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

⁶ Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

⁷ He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

⁹ After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

¹⁰ They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹ “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

¹² Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day’s walk from the city. ¹³ When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. ¹⁴ They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

DISCOVER the Scripture Text (25 minutes)

Let’s discuss a few questions that will help us discover and understand the text.

1. Looking at verse 6, what is underneath the disciples’ question? What do they seem to assume is going to happen?
2. When Jesus answers the disciples in verses 7-8, how does he clarify what is important and central to his kingdom?
3. Imagine what it would be like to be the disciples experiencing Jesus’ ascension. What thoughts and emotions might have been going through their minds?
4. How do you think the disciples felt as they returned to Jerusalem? After all that had happened, do you think it was a place of safety or danger for the disciples?
5. If we could communicate the core message of this text in just one sentence, what would it be? What do we sense God is communicating through this passage?

RESPOND to the Scripture Text (10 minutes)

After appearing to his disciples and many others for 40 days, Jesus ascends into heaven, but not before giving explicit instructions for his disciples to remain in Jerusalem and wait for the promised Holy Spirit. Jerusalem wasn’t exactly a safe place for the disciples since they were a minority sect and it definitely wasn’t their home. Jerusalem represented a place of failure (Peter’s denial and Judas’ betrayal), yet it was the place Jesus commanded them to start a new chapter in their lives. The transitions and turning points they had experienced were opportunities to trust God’s commands, even when they were costly and didn’t make sense.

Jesus gives fresh starts in places of failure.

Let's discern together how we can respond to what God is saying. We will answer one option from below, whichever seems most relevant to our group's discussion of the text.

- A. Just as Jerusalem was an uncomfortable place for the disciples to wait on the Holy Spirit, where are the uncomfortable places God is asking you to inhabit right now?
- B. What instructions have you heard clearly from God that you are tempted to not trust or obey because they are difficult and uncomfortable, perhaps even costly?
- C. How can this passage and its truths reorient us in light of the challenging things we are experiencing in and around us?

CLOSE (2 minutes)

Let's pray and thank God for our time in Scripture together...

Tips for leading the group discussion:

- *Participate but keep your comments short to make space for others.*
- *Silence is okay. Encourage further discussion by saying "What else?" instead of commenting on every response.*