

Key:

Purple – Introduction, Conclusion, Main Points, and Sermon Thread

Blue – Explanation/Exposition

Red – Application

Green – Illustration

Brown – Quotation

Yellow – Sermon Notes

While Waiting

Acts 1:12–26

Go ahead and take your Bibles and turn with me to the book of Acts. Last week in Acts 1:1–11, we saw Jesus promise something wonderful to his disciples. He told them “Go wait in Jerusalem and await the promised Holy Spirit.” Implicitly he was telling them, “Don’t drift back to Galilee and resume your fishing industry. Don’t dawdle here at the Mount of Olives. Don’t start the Great Commission yet. Get back to Jerusalem and wait.”

Now the passage we are going to study today, Acts 1:12–26, is all about the interim period between Jesus’s promise of the Holy Spirit and its fulfillment. Jesus promised 40 days after his resurrection, just before he ascended into heaven, that the Holy Spirit would come. The Holy Spirit came in power at Pentecost, which was 50 days after Jesus’s death or 47 days after Jesus’s resurrection. So today’s passage covers that approximately week-long period between Jesus’s ascent into heaven and the Holy Spirit’s descent at Pentecost. It’s a time of waiting.

And the question you might ask is “What did they do for that week while waiting for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit?” “Did they sit around playing the first century equivalent of Monopoly? Did they work on their golf games? Do they catch up on sleep? Did they reminisce about Jesus’s actions and teachings before his resurrection?” Well Luke doesn’t tell us everything they did. But he did tell us some stuff. And he could very easily have skipped this recounting of the disciples’ activities between Jesus’s ascent and the Holy Spirit’s descent. But he doesn’t. Why?

Here’s what I want to emphasize. Luke, writing by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, takes time in this chapter to recount what the disciples do while waiting for the Holy Spirit to come. And I think he details this because their actions while waiting are commendable. **And there are some things for us to learn here by observing what they do.**¹

So, three things that the disciples do while waiting for the Holy Spirit. Here’s the first.

While waiting for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit...

1) The disciples **gathered** and **prayed** (1:12–14)²

Look with me at verse 12.

¹² Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet,³ which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away.

¹ Sproul, *Acts*, 37: “From the outset of the book of Acts we are provided a glimpse of the life of the early church in its pristine purity—obedient, unified, praying, searching the Scriptures, and submissive to apostolic authority. That should be in front of us all the time as we seek to build the church today.”

² Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 90: “Prayer was a hallmark of the church in its early days (cf. 1:24; 2:42; 3:1; 4:24; 6:6). The time before Pentecost was a time for waiting, a time spent in prayer undoubtedly for the promised Spirit and for the power to witness. There is no effective witness without the Spirit, and the way to spiritual empowerment is to wait in prayer.”

³ Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, PNTC, 116: “Mention of the hill called the Mount of Olives as the place of the ascension should not be taken to contradict Luke 24:50, which speaks more generally of Jesus leading them out ‘to the vicinity of Bethany’ (*heōs pros Bēthanian*). Bethany was on the eastern slope of the mountain, and according to John 11:18 was about fifteen stadia from Jerusalem (about two miles or three kilometers). The summit of the Mount of Olives was a Sabbath’s day’s walk from the city, which was calculated in Rabbinic sources to be 2,000 cubits (0.7 miles or 1,120 meters). It is likely that Jesus would have led them into open country, rather than close to the village of Bethany, to witness his ascension.”

A Sabbath day's journey is approximately 2,000 cubits, or three-quarters of a mile by our reckoning.⁴ Jesus ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives.⁵ And as we saw last week he'll return from there as well in power.⁶

Jesus told them from the Mount of Olives, **"Go to Jerusalem."** And to their credit, the disciples obey. **Verse 12** tells us that they "returned to Jerusalem..."

Let me just say this about the disciples. They are not always presented in the Gospels or in **Acts** as the cleverest of men. They are at times dull. They are often lost. Jesus gets exasperated repeatedly with them. But they are never defiant. For all their shortcomings, they love Jesus, and they obey Jesus implicitly. Jesus says, **"Go to Jerusalem,"** and they go.⁷

Look at **verse 13**.

¹³ And when they had entered, they went up to **the** upper room⁸ where they were staying,

This is almost certainly the same upper room where they had Passover with Jesus the night before his death.⁹ Now they are returning there forty days later.¹⁰ And now Luke lists the people there.

There was...

Peter and John and James and Andrew,¹¹ Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus¹² and Simon the Zealot¹³ and Judas the son of James.¹⁴

These are the twelve apostles that Jesus hand-picked during his ministry in Galilee. But there's one glaring omission. Who's missing from this list? Judas Iscariot, right? For obvious reasons.

There was one devious, defiant member of Jesus's entourage. And it wasn't just Judas's death that left him off this list. It was his treachery and apostasy. All of Jesus's apostles eventually died. Only one of them

⁴ Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC, 73: "The apostles' return from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem was a Sabbath day's walk (v. 12), which, according to the Mishnah, was a little less than three-fourths of a mile. Since this happened forty days after Easter, it was a Thursday, not a Sabbath day."

⁵ MacArthur, *Acts 1–11*, MNTC, 28: "The mount called Olivet is the Mount of Olives, which rises to overlook Jerusalem from across the Kidron Valley to the east... More a hill than a mountain, it rises some 400 feet above the floor of the Kidron Valley. That makes it only about 2000 feet higher than Jerusalem itself."

⁶ Vickers, "Acts" in *John–Acts*, ESVEC, 342: "That hill is a frequent setting for Jesus and his disciples, most famously so for the 'Olivet Discourse,' where Jesus taught the disciples about both the destruction of the temple and his second coming (Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21)."

⁷ Sproul, *Acts*, 32: "The first thing that characterized the church in the early days was obedience. Who, having witnessed Christ, wouldn't be eager to go out and spread the news everywhere? They were biting at the bit, eager to go; nevertheless, they stayed where they were told to stay. They waited, and they waited obediently."

⁸ Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, Chapter 2, Kindle Edition: "I personally believe this was the same Upper Room in which our Lord ate the last supper with the disciples. The Greek text says, 'the' upper room (not just any upper room). If this is correct, it is beautifully fitting that the Holy Spirit was given in the very same room in which Jesus promised him: 'And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever — the Spirit of truth. . . . I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.' (John 14:16-18)"

⁹ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 89 disagrees: "It is tempting to see this as the room where the last supper was held, but this is far from certain. Luke used different words for the two rooms (*katalyma*, Luke 22:11; *hyperōon*, Acts 1:13). There is even less basis for connecting it with the house of John Mark's mother, Mary (Acts 12:12)." But as I. Howard Marshall, "Acts," in *CNTUOT* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 539 notes, "Luke is fond of literary variation, often using similar rather than identical wording to express the same thoughts."

¹⁰ Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC, 73n6: "Among the suggestions are: where the Last Supper was held (Luke 22:11–12), where Jesus met the disciples after the resurrection (John 20:19), where they were on the day of Pentecost (2:1), and where Mary the mother of Mark lived (cf. 12:12)." Could this have been the same upper room for all of these events?

¹¹ Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC, 73: "Luke's list of who had gathered in this upper room (v. 13b) includes the eleven apostles—the same list as given in Luke 6:14–16, but without Judas. The order, however, has been changed; this list begins with the three prominent apostles who alone appear later in Acts—Peter, John, and James."

¹² The statement "son of Alphaeus" is known as a disambiguator. Luke is differentiating this James from the other, more famous, James (the son of Zebedee).

¹³ The statement "the Zealot" is another disambiguator. Luke is differentiating this Simon from Simon Peter.

¹⁴ For this list of names as a key aspect of Luke's historicity, see the following video by Wes Huff on "Onomastic Congruence - How Names Show the Bible's Accuracy," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5XVNzqFuMbQ&t=7s>

apostatized. And that was Judas.¹⁵ We'll talk more about Judas later. But for now, just note that the twelve have become eleven.

And let me say this. These apostles deserted Jesus after his arrest.¹⁶ They were all disillusioned by Jesus's death at the hands of the Jewish leaders and the Romans. But now they are backing Jesus's ministry. They are obediently staying in Jerusalem, the very place where Jesus was killed a few weeks before! Why is that? Why would they risk their lives now to serve Jesus? Here's why. Because they saw Jesus risen from the dead. He showed them his scars. And they believe. They saw Jesus's resurrected body, and they believe.

Let me just point out two facts about this list of eleven before we continue. First of all, despite the importance of those original twelve, none of these men are mentioned again in the NT other than Peter, James, and John. What do you know about Simon the Zealot, Pastor Tony? I know he was a Zealot. That's about it. Most of Jesus's followers over the last 2,000 years are lost to history and lost to obscurity.

One hundred years from now, nobody will remember anyone in this room. Are you okay with that? Most of you don't even know the names of your Great, Great Grandparents. And your great, great grandchildren won't know anything about you. That's okay. It's not about us, it's about God. It's not about our legacy; it's about God's legacy. It's not about the "twelve," it's about the one triune God. And even if everyone else forgets about you, God will remember you.

Secondly, if church history is correct, and there's some debate about it, all of these eleven disciples including the one that they add in this passage as the twelfth were martyred for their faith. They die believing in Jesus. That should tell you something about their character. That should tell you something about their faith and their commitment to Christ. That should tell you something about the reality of Jesus's resurrection. People died believing and preaching that Jesus was raised from the dead. Why would they do that? Answer—they saw him!

So the eleven were there in the upper room, but they weren't alone. And they weren't idle either. Look at verse 14.

¹⁴ *All these with one accord*

Literally "one accord" is "with one mind."¹⁷ With unity!¹⁸ Psalm 133:1 says, "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!"¹⁹ What were they doing with unity? Well, they...

were devoting themselves to prayer,²⁰ together with the women²¹ and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

Can I just state something obvious here? Notice they weren't praying to Mary, the mother of Jesus. Is everyone clear on that? Mary is a disciple, she's not co-redemptrix. **"She was there with the rest of the disciples as part of the gathered church, praying for and to her own Son."**²²

¹⁵ Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, PNTC, 120: "Matthias was not chosen because Judas had died, but because he had become an apostate."

¹⁶ Only John stood by and watch Jesus crucified (see John 19:26–27).

¹⁷ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 77: "The group had both piety and unity." Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 51: "The Greek word is *homothymadon*, which means 'unanimously,' 'at the same time,' and 'to be of the same mind.' The term is used ten times in the New Testament: nine times in the book of Acts (1:14; 2:46; 4:24; 5:12; 7:57; 8:6; 12:20; 15:25; 18:12; 19:29) and one time in Romans 15:6."

¹⁸ Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC, 74: "The thought of unanimity in community life is a key theme in Acts."

¹⁹ Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, Chapter 2, Kindle Edition: "They all joined together ['with one accord,' KJV] constantly in prayer." This is amazing! Eleven disciples — strong-willed men, the kind who argued over who was going to get the best seat in the kingdom and who refused to wash one another's feet; Jesus' brothers who had been so perverse as to reject his messiahship; his mother and a whole houseful of women — rich, poor, chaste, unchaste — 'all' of them were of one mind — literally, 'of one heart and mind.' How? They were all looking up to Christ at the same time for the same thing."

²⁰ Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, PNTC, 117–8: "Luke's description of the activity of the apostles and those with them at this stage (they all joined together constantly in prayer) is quite emphatic in Greek (*houtoi pantes esan proskarterountes homothymadon te proseuchē*)... Luke 24:53 also makes the point that after the ascension they 'stayed continually at the temple, praising God'. It is striking that at almost every important turning point in the narrative of God's redemptive action in Acts we find a mention of prayer (e.g., 1:24; 8:14–17; 9:11–12; 10:4, 9, 30; 13:2–3)."

²¹ Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, PNTC, 117: "Doubtless the women were those who had gone up to Jerusalem from Galilee with Jesus. They supported him out of their personal incomes and were the first witnesses of his resurrection (cf. Lk. 8:2–3; 23:55–24:10)."

²² Sproul, *Acts*, 34.

By the way, this is the last time that Mary, the mother of Jesus shows up in the NT.²³ And what is she doing? She's obeying Jesus, while waiting for the Holy Spirit. She's just another one of Jesus's disciples. Jesus's mother was also his disciple!

And by the way, they weren't praying to Peter either! They weren't praying to "the saints." And they weren't asking Peter to intercede for them before the Father. Everyone clear on that?

Let me just say this as calmly and rationally as I can. **"No human being, no human is worthy of worship or veneration or receiving our prayers other than God! Nobody!"**²⁴

I was in Croatia once and I saw this shrine to Mary that people were bowing down to and burning incense to, and I thought to myself, "Where am I, India? What is this?" And I know that same kind of stuff happens in the U.S. too. I'm not naïve. And the thought that came to my mind in that moment when I was in Croatia... well I had two thoughts. One thought was this, "Mary the mother of Jesus would be appalled if she was here watching this right now. She would be horrified." And the second thought that I had was this, "Would they arrest me here in Croatia if I took a baseball bat to this shrine?" Better not risk it.

Let's be clear, Mary worshiped Jesus. The mother of Jesus worshipped her Son. Peter worshiped Jesus. We worship Jesus. Mary and Peter gathered together in the upper room with all the saints to pray and entreat God together. **While waiting for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit... The disciples gathered together and prayed. And we should too. On this side of the Holy's Spirit's outpouring we still gather and pray.**

Notice that they gathered together in one accord. They gathered. They got together. **No lone-ranger Christianity. No monks out in the desert fighting off demons in isolation. No rugged individualism that dismisses the value of relationships.** They got together, men and women both, and "with one accord" ... everyone see that in **verse 14**?... with unity they sought God together in prayer.

Listen church, there is power in corporate prayer. There's a time for personal prayer and there's a time for corporate prayer. And neither should be neglected in the Christian life. There's power when God's people gather for prayer.

Do you rob yourself of the benefit of that time together? Do you miss out on a time to entreat God with fellow saints? If so do like the disciples do in Acts 1. Men and women, with one accord, gathered and devoting themselves to prayer.

And what were they praying for? We don't know. But I doubt they were gathered to pray for their great Aunt Betsy's cold. Or for their little dog, Fufu who has a tummy ache. My guess is they were praying for the Holy Spirit to come and give them the strength to preach the gospel. My guess is that they were praying, "God help us to live and die well, just like Jesus did."

Let me just make two more points from **verse 14**. This is a pretty densely packed verse of Scripture. Notice at the end of **verse 14** that the women, including Mary, were in the trenches with the men. This is something that shows up a lot in the book of **Luke**.²⁵ Women were essential and strategic in Christ's ministry. When the men tucked tail and ran after Jesus's arrest, the women stood by Jesus. They helped bury Jesus. They came to anoint Jesus.

And now that Jesus is resurrected from the dead, this ain't no boys club. These women are praying and seeking God. Pretty soon they will be laboring just as much as the men to get the message out to the world that Jesus is the Savior of the world.

²³ RUDOLF GWALTHER: "Here is the last place that the Scriptures make any more mention of her. What happened to her after this, the Holy Spirit wanted to have buried in oblivion, lest it be an occasion for superstition, which he knew would arise from the worship of her. Certainly it is surprising that God kept the actions of Mary in silence, while he wanted the actions and teaching of the apostles to be written with such careful diligence. But by this we are admonished that we should not be overtaken by the superstitious worship of human beings, but rather the teaching of the apostles." Quoted in Chung-Kim and Hains, *Acts: New Testament*, RCS, 15.

²⁴ Fernando, *Acts*. NIVAC, 74 gives a helpful caution though: "The undue veneration of her by some should not hinder us from appreciating the important role she played in the history of salvation."

²⁵ Vickers, "Acts" in *John-Acts*, ESVEC, 342: "The prominent place of women in Jesus' ministry is a theme in Luke's Gospel, for they are present at vital times, most particularly at the cross and at the tomb (Luke 23:49, 55-56; 24:2-11)."

Now that doesn't nullify gender roles and headship for families and churches. Don't err on the other side. Don't fall into the other ditch beside the road. But Luke highlights the role of women in the early church and the sweet fellowship and one accord that the women shared with the men as they waited for the Spirit.

Secondly notice that Mary and Jesus's brothers were part of the gathering. Yes, Jesus had brothers. Technically they were his half-brothers. They shared Mary as their mother. One of his brothers was named Jude. He wrote the second to last book of the NT, the book of **Jude**. One of his brothers was named James. And James would later lead the church in Jerusalem and write the NT book of **James**.

Please don't buy that ridiculous notion that Mary was stuck in a state of perpetual virginity the rest of her life.²⁶ People created that theory in a time when sex was viewed as a kind of necessary evil. That's a false notion. Mary and Joseph had children after Jesus. Jesus had brothers and sisters according to the Bible (see **Matt 13:55–56**).

And what's interesting is that **John 7:5** tells us that his brothers didn't believe in him before his death. **Mark 3:21** says that Jesus's family tried to seize him once because they thought he was out of his mind.

So that prompts the question, why do they believe in him now as part of this band of disciples? The simple answer to that is that they saw Jesus's resurrected body. According to Paul, Jesus appeared to his half-brother James after his resurrection (**1 Cor 15:7**). That'll change your theology! And now they are part of the 120 in the upper room waiting on the Holy Spirit.

I read once that Thomas Jefferson, a deist not a Christian, was so opposed to the doctrine of Christ's resurrection that he actually excised it from his own Bible. It didn't sit well with his anti-supernatural enlightenment thinking. Instead he wrote the following in *The Jefferson Bible*, "There they laid Jesus. And rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher, and departed. *Finis.*"²⁷ The end. No resurrection.

Here's the problem with that. Here's the question that I would ask Thomas Jefferson if he were in the room right now. Why did Jesus's disciples believe after they initially ran away from Jesus? Why did Jesus's family believe, when at first they didn't? Why were they all willing to risk their lives by obeying Jesus and staying in Jerusalem? They aren't from Jerusalem. They're Galileans. Why not go back to Galilee?

What happened? What changed? I'll tell you what changed. They saw Jesus alive! They saw Jesus in a new resurrection body. And that changed everything. And afterwards, they became witnesses of what they saw.

Go ahead and write this down as a second point. What do Jesus disciples do while they wait for the Holy Spirit? First of all they gathered and prayed. Secondly...

2) The disciples **interpreted** and **applied** Scripture (1:15–22)

Look at verse 15.

¹⁵ *In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said,*

Peter's going to emerge in the pages to follow as the outspoken leader of this group. Peter actually gives eleven speeches/sermons in the first fifteen chapters of **Acts**.²⁸ Peter's got a lot to say! Jesus wasn't kidding

²⁶ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 89n47: "Some early church fathers, under the strong influence of a celibate ideology, suggested that they were of a different relationship to Jesus. Epiphanius maintained that they were Joseph's children by a previous marriage, thus protecting the "perpetual virginity" of Mary. Jerome argued that they were Jesus' cousins, the children of Mary's sister, thus protecting the virginity of Joseph as well." Chung-Kim and Hains, *Acts: New Testament*, RCS, 15n4: "In order to preserve the doctrine of Mary's perpetual virginity, commentators understood the brothers of Jesus to mean his cousins, not other children born of Mary. Few, if any, of the reformers challenged Mary's status as ever-virgin. Not only did Bullinger, Calvin, Luther and Zwingli hold to this, but even Hubmaier."

²⁷ As noted by Stephen Nichols and his book *Jesus Made in America: A Cultural History from the Puritans to "The Passion of the Christ"* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2009), 46. See also Thomas S. Kidd's TGC article, "The 'Jefferson Bible' and a Founder's Skepticism," 05-06-22: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/evangelical-history/jefferson-bible-founders-deism/>. For a fuller perspective on Jefferson's life and theology, see Thomas S. Kidd, *Thomas Jefferson: A Biography of Spirit and Flesh* (Yale University Press, 2022).

²⁸ See the chart in Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 93.

when he told him, “You are Peter [Πέτρος—“the Rock”] and on this rock [πέτρα] I will build my church” (Matt 16:18). Peter had a strategic role in building the church. And that begins even as early as Acts 1.²⁹

Here’s a word of encouragement for you. Has anyone here ever let the Lord down before? Has anyone here ever done something really stupid that you regret? Yeah, me too! Maybe that’s why we get along so well because we’ve all made mistakes before!³⁰

But get this. Peter, approximately forty days before this event, publicly denied Jesus. **He folded like a deck of cards.**³¹ And now he standing before the disciples leading them. Jesus restored him after his resurrection. Isn’t that encouraging? **We serve a gracious, merciful God... a God of second chances. Because love is patient, love is kind. And love doesn’t keep a record of what’s behind.**³²

So Peter stands up before the 120 men and women praying in the upper room and says,

¹⁶ “Brothers,³³ the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke³⁴ beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas

Notice if you will that Peter’s statement affirms the dual authorship of Scripture. He says, “The Holy Spirit spoke ... by the mouth of David.” There’s inspiration. There’s dual authorship of Scripture.³⁵ Peter believes like we do about Scripture!

¹⁶ “Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke ... by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. ¹⁷ For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.”

Now the Scriptures that Peter’s talking about are mentioned later. They are passages from the Psalms that prophesied about the Messiah. Peter quotes them a little later: **Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8.**³⁶

But before Luke gives us the continuation of Peter’s statement, he gives us an aside about Judas.³⁷ Judas was “numbered among” the disciples, but not any longer. The ESV, NASB, and the NIV all indicate that by the parentheses in **verses 18–19**. I think that’s the right way to render this.

Luke writes in **verse 18**,

¹⁸ (Now this man [Judas] acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong³⁸ he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out.

²⁹ Jesus alluded to this even in Luke 22:32: “I have prayed for you [Peter] that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”

³⁰ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 92–3: “For Peter the recollection of Judas’s gruesome end must have been a grim reminder of his own denial of his Lord as he now sought to lead the assembly to fill the abandoned post.”

³¹ MacArthur, *Acts 1–11*, MNTC, 28: “By this time the apostles must have gained a measure of courage from their encounters with the risen Lord. Immediately following the crucifixion, they remained in seclusion behind locked doors (John 20:19). Now however, they ‘were continually in the temple, praising God’ (Luke 24:53), returning to the upper room for occasional meetings.”

³² These are lyrics from the song “Love is Kind” by John Lucas: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lzk6AbMiCgU>

³³ Literally Peter says, “Men, Brothers [*andres adelphoi*]...” This is not unusual for mixed company. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, PNTC, 122n82: “The combination *andres adelphoi* is common in Acts (cf. 2:29, 37; 7:2; 13:15, 26, 38; 15:7, 13; 22:1; 23:1, 6; 28:17). Bruce 1990, 108, says that ‘men’ (*andres*) is a classical Greek idiom: ‘the word is otiose, and does not necessarily exclude women.’ Note the obvious inclusion of a woman among ‘the men’ (*andres*) in 17:34. D. A. Carson, *The Inclusive-Language Debate: A Plea for Realism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 124–25, observes that the term is also likely to refer to males and females in Mt. 14:35; Jas. 1:20; 3:2.”

CHRYSTOM: “‘Men, brothers,’ says Peter. If even the Lord called them brothers, all the more should Peter when they were all present. What dignity of church, what angelic condition! There was no distinction then, neither male nor female. I wish the churches were like that now.” Quoted in Martin and Smith, eds., *Acts*, ACCS, 16.

³⁴ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 97: “The reference to the ‘speaking’ of Scripture should be understood in the context of Scripture being read aloud in the synagogues (and in the Christian communities), so that the assembled people of God ‘hear’ the words of God.”

³⁵ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 53: “Here, he showed the dual authorship of God’s Word by stating, *which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David*. There is a divine author and a human author. The divine Author was the Holy Spirit, but the human author was David. David wrote exactly what the Holy Spirit wanted him to write.”

³⁶ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 56: “The Scriptures are Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8. In the original context, both passages are imprecatory prayers. The result of an imprecatory prayer upon the wicked is that they are judged, and a portion is taken away from them.”

³⁷ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 92n58: “In current scholarship these are referred to as ‘narrative asides.’”

³⁸ Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, PNTC, 124: “There is also a possibility that the Greek expression *prēnēs genomenos* in v. 18 means ‘swelling up’ instead of ‘falling headlong’, in which case we can imagine his corpse becoming bloated in the heat and bursting open while still hanging.”

Matthew actually writes that the chief priests bought a field with Judas's money (see **Matt 26:14–16; 27:3–10**). Luke surely knew this. But since the money was rightfully Judas's—he earned it by betraying Jesus! right?—in reality, the field was actually acquired by him. And it ironically became the place of his death.

Matthew tells us that Judas hanged himself (see **Matt 27:5**). Luke tells us that he fell headlong and burst open in the middle. These accounts are complementary not contradictory. One of two things happened here. Either he hanged himself over a cliff and the rope broke, plunging him to his death on the jagged rocks below.³⁹ Or he died from the hanging, and after his body decayed and swelled up, it fell to the ground and burst open.⁴⁰ Either way, Judas's ignominious deed led to his ignominious death.

And here's a little piece of poetic justice for you. The Greek word for “gushed out” at the end of **verse 18** is the word ἐκχέω.⁴¹ That word is used of the Holy Spirit three times in **Acts 2**.⁴² So the eleven disciples who were faithful to Jesus have the Holy Spirit gushed out upon them. The one disciple who was unfaithful bursts open in the middle and has all his bowels gushed out.⁴³

There's a great picture for you. Faith in Jesus means the gushing out of the Holy Spirit upon you. Forsaking Jesus means Akeldama.⁴⁴

¹⁹ And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama [that's an Aramaic word], that is, Field of Blood.)

By the way, there's probably a double entendre here with “Field of Blood.” It was bought with blood money. But it was also filled with Judas's blood. **It's like the city of Chicago. Is it “The Windy City” because it's windy there? Or because the politicians are known for blowing a lot of hot air? Six in one hand; half a dozen in the other!**

Now don't move past **verse 19** too fast. Let me point out something to you, “all the inhabitants of Jerusalem” knew about this.⁴⁵ Did you see that? Judas had become, probably along with Jesus at this point, a source of derision. I can hear the people of Jerusalem now, “**You represent that Jesus guy? Didn't one of his own people betray him and then kill himself afterwards. What a joke!**”

“**You represent that Jesus character? You're probably just like that guy Judas. Akeldama. That's what awaits you.**” Can you hear that? Can you hear the shame and the disrepute that the disciples would have to endure? I'd be tempted to quit. Judas's betrayal wasn't just a betrayal of Jesus. It was a betrayal of the other eleven disciples. The circle was broken. One of their own brought shame and disgrace upon the movement.

Hang on to that thought. We'll come back to that a little later when we talk application.

Now that Luke has filled us in on the details, he returns to Peter's message. So here's what Peter says. Look at **verse 20**.

³⁹ MacArthur, *Acts 1–11*, MNTC, 33.

⁴⁰ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 53–54 suggests the following variation of this second possibility: “‘A specific point of rabbinic law clarifies Luke's statement. By Jewish reckoning of time, a day begins at sundown. Therefore, the Sabbath begins at sundown Friday and ends at sundown Saturday. Once the sun has set on Saturday, the Sabbath law no longer applies. The same reckoning of time applies to any other event or day. For example, the first night of Passover always comes before the first day of Passover. Jewish families eat their Seder on the first night of Passover, as Yeshua did with His apostles. Then at nine o'clock in the morning on the first day of Passover, only the priesthood ate a special Passover sacrifice called the chagigah. If, between the first night and the first day of Passover, a dead body was found within the walls of Jerusalem, the city was reckoned as ceremonially unclean. As long as the body was within the walls, the priests could not proceed with the special sacrifice of the first day. If the corpse was thrown over the wall facing the Valley of Hinnom, the city would be reckoned as cleansed. The priesthood could then proceed with the morning Passover sacrifice. When Judas hanged himself, he defiled the city. As long as his body was within the walls, the priests could not proceed with the chagigah sacrifice, so they took it and threw it over the wall facing the Valley of Hinnom. In that fall, Judas' guts gushed out. Therefore, no contradiction exists; Matthew recorded how Judas died, while Luke described what happened to his body after it was found.’”

⁴¹ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 84–85.

⁴² See Acts 2:17, 18, 33. See also Acts 10:45.

⁴³ Marshall, “Acts,” in *CNTUOT*, 529: “The same motif occurs in the description of the death of Amasa (2 Sam. 20:10).”

⁴⁴ MARTIN LUTHER: “When Judas had hanged himself, his insides spilled out.” This is an example and figure of how those who betray Christ perish.” Quoted in Chung-Kim and Hains, *Acts: New Testament*, RCS, 15.

⁴⁵ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 98: “This had happened only a few weeks earlier, and despite the explanation that Peter provides, the disciples still might have been in shock that one of their friends had betrayed Jesus and then committed suicide.”

²⁰ “For it is written in the Book of Psalms, “ ‘May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it’;⁴⁶ and “ ‘Let another take his office.’⁴⁷ ²¹ So⁴⁸ one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out⁴⁹ among us, ²² beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us⁵⁰—one of these men must become with us a witness⁵¹ to his resurrection.”⁵²

Now what’s Peter doing here? What’s he doing? He’s *interpreting* and *applying* Scripture!⁵³ He’s essentially doing the same thing we are doing right now. **That should blow your mind! He is using his Bible, the OT, to teach and understand and apply what God has instructed.**

So, just by way of review. The Holy Spirit is coming. Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit. And what do they do while they wait? They pray. That’s good! They study the Bible. That’s good! They search the Scriptures for truth! That’s fantastic. And they aren’t just looking for information. They don’t just read it for facts. They want to apply what the Scriptures say.

They don’t just read it for information. They don’t just read it for meditation. They don’t just read it for cogitation. They read it for application. **The disciples interpreted and applied Scripture!**

⁴⁶ David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 125: “Verses from the same psalm are variously used in John 2:17; Romans 11:9–10; 15:3. So Peter’s quotation from Psalm 69:25 (LXX 68:26) is part of this exegetical tradition. Things said of David or of righteous sufferers more generally in the psalms were interpreted as having their ultimate fulfillment in the life of Jesus as Son of David and Servant-Messiah.” Marshall, “Acts,” in *CNTUOT*, 530: “Psalm 69 is an “individual lament” in which the psalmist describes his plight of deep suffering, prays to God for deliverance, and calls upon God to exercise his wrath against the sufferer’s foes. It was interpreted by early Christians as typifying Jesus in his suffering and death (John 2:17; 15:25; Rom. 15:3) and also as applying to those who rejected him (Rom. 11:9–10) (see Lindars 1961: 99–108); once this interpretation had been made, it was possible for the giving of wine (*oxos*) to Jesus on the cross to be seen as foreshadowed in Ps. 69:21. So the psalm could naturally be applied here in 1:20 to Judas.”

⁴⁷ Marshall, “Acts,” in *CNTUOT*, 530: “This citation is from another individual lament in which the psalmist describes one of his foes in considerable detail and expresses a string of curses against him.”

⁴⁸ Fernando, *Acts*. NIVAC, 76: “Peter felt that it was ‘necessary’ to find a replacement for Judas (v. 21). The same verb ‘it is necessary’ (*dei*) is used here as in verse 16, which presented the necessity of Judas’s betrayal (though in v. 16, the verb is in the imperfect tense, ‘it was necessary’).”

⁴⁹ Marshall, “Acts,” in *CNTUOT*, 531: “‘Went in and went out’ (cf. 9:28) is a septuagintalism for being active, often used of people in leadership roles (cf. Num. 27:17; Deut. 31:2; Josh. 24:11; 1 Sam. 18:16; 29:6; 2 Kings 19:27; Ps. 121:8 [120:8 LXX].”

⁵⁰ Sproul, *Acts*, 36, 38: “If we look carefully at this we can see three basic criteria for apostleship before Pentecost. First, a candidate had to have been a member of Jesus’ band of disciples from the beginning, from the days of His baptism at the Jordan by John the Baptist. He had to have been with Jesus for the three years of Jesus’ public ministry in order to qualify for selection to the rank of Apostle. Second, he had to have been an eyewitness of the resurrection. These criteria are why none today can be Apostles. None living today was numbered among those who followed after Jesus in the first century, and none was an eyewitness of the resurrection... I could say I have a call to be an Apostle today, but there is no one left to confirm me. By the end of the first century, the sub-apostolic fathers clearly understood the difference between their authority in the church and the authority of the original Apostles. After the last Apostle died, there were still teachers, ministers, preachers, and evangelists, but there were no more Apostles.”

⁵¹ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 87: “A figure of speech called a zeugma is present. It refers to a list that covers the A to Z of something to express the entirety of it. The replacement will have a complete experience of Jesus’s ministry and teaching, from the A (baptism of John) to the Z (ascension).”

⁵² David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 125–6: “This method of using the OT is not so culturally bound that it is invalid for Christians today. If the apostolic principles of interpretation are carefully noted, and proper regard is paid to OT texts in their original context before a Christian application is attempted, the inspired preachers and authors of the NT will not lead us astray by their example.”

⁵³ Sproul, *Acts*, 36: “Peter shows us what else the disciples were doing in those first ten days of waiting: they came together to focus their attention on the teaching of the Scriptures. That is how the early church was born. The disciples were trying to understand all that had transpired before them, probably remembering the discussion Jesus had with those on the way to Emmaus, when He began with Moses and went through the whole Old Testament and showed them how the things that they had witnessed in Jerusalem had to happen. They came to pass because each detail had been predicted centuries before by the Old Testament prophets. After Jesus ascended, the Apostles went back to the upper room and searched through the Scriptures to see if they could find anything about Judas, and they read David’s prophetic writing about the one who would betray the Messiah and how that one would have to be replaced. “For it is written in the Book of Psalms: ‘Let his dwelling place be desolate, and let no one live in it’; and, ‘Let another take his office’ ” (v. 20).”

By the way, I'm all for information. When it comes to the Bible, I'm an information junky. I can't get enough. And I'm all for meditation and cogitation. By all means muse upon and mull over and ponder deeply the truths of God's Word. But don't stop there. The final step is application. Observation. Interpretation. Application.

And look what they do. Look at **verse 23**.

²³ And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. ²⁴ And they prayed and said, "You, Lord,⁵⁴ who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen⁵⁵ ²⁵ to take the place in this ministry and apostleship⁵⁶ from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place."⁵⁷

Notice there's more prayer here. That's good. Prayer, Bible reading, and application. That's pre-church church right here. The church hasn't even been launched yet, and they are already doing what churches do.

Look at **verse 26**,

²⁶ And they cast lots⁵⁸ for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Jesus went up on a mountain and prayed all night before choosing the twelve (see **Luke 6:12-16**). A similar process takes place here. The disciples pray. **This wasn't just random happenstance like someone winning the lottery**. They chose two men that were qualified for the position. Then they prayed to God. And then they left the final decision in God's hand.

Write this down. Thirdly, while waiting for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit...

3) The disciples **shored up** their **leadership** (1:23-26)

Eleven men is good enough for football players on a football field. But it's not good enough for Jesus's apostles. Like Texas A&M football, they needed a twelfth man! And they get their twelfth man before the Holy Spirit is poured out.⁵⁹

Coincidentally this twelfth man isn't just important for **Acts**, it's also important for the book of **Revelation**. Because at the end of the end, when we take part in the New Jerusalem, the foundations of the walls of that city are named after the twelve apostles (**Rev 21:14**). And one of the names of those foundations will be Matthias. He saw Jesus baptized by John. He saw Jesus's ascension. And he took Judas's place as one of

⁵⁴ David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 127: "The 'Lord' addressed here is almost certainly the Lord Jesus (cf. v. 21; 7:59-60)."

⁵⁵ JOHN CALVIN: "For there was this difference between the apostles and pastors, that whereas the pastors were chosen simply by the church, the apostles must be called by God. Thus Paul in the preface of his epistle to the Galatians declares himself to be an apostle "neither of men nor made by man." Therefore as the distinction of this office was so great, it was fitting that in the election of Matthias, however well people had done their duty, the final decision should be left to God. Christ had appointed the others with his own voice; if Matthias had been adopted into their ranks by the choice of people alone, his authority would have been less than theirs." Quoted in Chung-Kim and Hains, *Acts: New Testament*, RCS, 17.

⁵⁶ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 57: "The prayer points out that this was to be God's choice (v. 24). God had already chosen who would take the place in the closed apostolic group, so the men did not pray for God to choose one of the two, but to reveal which choice He had made... The request could be worded this way: "In light of the fact that You, Lord, are omniscient and that You know the hearts of these two men, show us which of these two You have chosen."

⁵⁷ David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 128: "Judas abandoned his 'place' among the apostles to go to 'his own 'place'. The last expression is a euphemism for his final destiny, most likely death and the judgment of God beyond that. Without being specific about the details, Luke offers an implied warning to all apostates (cf. Heb. 6:4-8; 10:26-31)."

⁵⁸ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 79: "The lots probably were stones with a name on them, shaken in a bag or vessel until one fell out."

⁵⁹ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 93: "There could be no apostolic succession, since there were no further eyewitnesses to succeed them. Note that James was not replaced after his martyrdom (12:2). It was necessary to replace Judas because he had abandoned his position. His betrayal, not his death, forfeited his place in the circle of Twelve. Even after death James continued to be considered an apostle."

the twelve.⁶⁰ So you won't see Judas as one of the twelve foundations of the New Jerusalem. You won't see Paul either. You'll see Matthias.⁶¹ Good for him.⁶²

Now, let's transition to application. I want to spend the rest of our time together talking through some application points for this passage. You can see those four application points in your notes.

These verses in **Acts 1** absolutely fascinate me. This is the kind of passage that if you're not paying attention, you might just speed-read right past it. Jesus ascends into heaven in **Acts 1:1–11**. The Holy Spirit descends in **Acts 2**. And you might think, “Here's some stuff that happened between those events to take up some space. Here's some filler. Let's hurry past this and get to the good stuff.”

But let me ask you a question. Is there anything in the Bible that could be described as filler? I don't think so. And lodged in this passage, I think are some very important principles for us as a church.

So with that in mind, let me walk you through four application principles as we close. Write quickly. I'm going to deliver these fast.

Application:

1) When you're not sure what to do **next**, it's time to **pray**

You guys know my heart. I want to see San Antonio turned upside down by the gospel of Jesus Christ. I want to see a world-altering revival start right here in this church. If that's going to happen, we need God to show up. It's God's work, not ours. So we need to pray.⁶³

By the way, prayer's going to come up a lot in **Acts**. **Luke** and **Acts** both abound with references to prayer. There are 31 references to prayer in **Acts** alone! And prayer is mentioned in 20 out of its 28 chapters.⁶⁴ So get ready, church. We're going to be talking about prayer a lot in the sermons that follow.

Someone asked **Charles Spurgeon** once to explain the secret of his remarkable ministry. He replied, “My people pray for me.”⁶⁵ **J. Edwin Orr** said once, “No great spiritual awakening has begun anywhere in the world apart from united prayer – Christians persistently praying for revival.”⁶⁶ The church father **Augustine** said once, “Pray as though everything depended on God, and work as though everything depended upon you.”⁶⁷ **Matthew Henry** said once, “When God wants to do something special in the world, he first gets his people to start praying.”⁶⁸ **John Wesley** remarked, “God does nothing but by prayer, and everything with it.”⁶⁹ **D. L. Moody** said once that, “Every great movement of God can be traced to a kneeling figure.”⁷⁰

Write this down as a second application.

2) If you're serious about **Scripture**, get serious about **application**

⁶⁰ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 58: “According to Matthew 19:28, this role includes sitting upon one of the twelve thrones and the judging of the twelve tribes of Israel. Revelation 21:14 states that the New Jerusalem, the eternal abode of all redeemed people, will have twelve foundations named after the twelve apostles. It will be Matthias who will sit on one of the thrones as a judge of the twelve tribes of Israel, and his name will be written upon one of the foundation stones of the new city of Jerusalem.”

⁶¹ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 94: “Matthias, whose name means gift of God, is merely mentioned with no further fanfare. Later tradition speculated that he became a missionary to the Ethiopians or that his bones were buried in Germany at Treves.”

⁶² See also the twelve thrones Jesus referred to in Luke 22:30.

⁶³ Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, Chapter 2, Kindle Edition: “Would you like the wind of the Spirit in your sails? Believe that Christ will do just as he said. Join the expectancy of the Upper-Room fellowship. Believe that it is possible not only for others, but that it will happen to you. Ask expectantly. Ask him to fill your cup and make it overflow. Ask for the wonderful winds of God! ‘... how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!’ (Luke 11:13).”

⁶⁴ Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC, 74.

⁶⁵ Taken from Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 415–6.

⁶⁶ Quoted in Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC, 80.

⁶⁷ Quoted in Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1, 419.

⁶⁸ Quoted in Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC, 80.

⁶⁹ This is a paraphrase of what he said in *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, chapter 11 “Reflections”: <https://www.worldinvisible.com/library/wesley/8317/831711.htm>

⁷⁰ Quoted in Roger F. Campbell, *Preach for a Year* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1997), 155.

We are not just hearers of the Word. We are not just hearers; we are doers. Peter models this for us in this passage. He took two passages that he knew were Messianic (**Psalm 69** and **109**). And to the best of his ability he interpreted those passages and applied them.⁷¹

I've heard some preachers interpret this passage as if Peter made a mistake. They say he should have just stayed in Jerusalem and bided his time and waited for the Holy Spirit before he did anything. I understand that interpretation. But I don't buy it.⁷²

Jesus didn't say, **"Go to Jerusalem and turn your brains off. Don't read your Bible and don't pray. Just sit there. Just twiddle your thumbs and wait for the Holy Spirit."** He said go to Jerusalem and don't depart from there as his witnesses until the Holy Spirit comes. What they did there in the upper room—pray, interpret Scripture, apply Scripture, shore up leadership—was good. **We need to do those things too.**

Part of that flawed interpretation, that Peter made a mistake, is that Matthias wasn't really the twelfth apostle. Paul was. And so Peter impetuously did something that God would have to remedy later. Some have argued that because Matthias isn't mentioned in the book of **Acts** ever again, he wasn't really an apostle. Well, it's true that Matthias isn't mentioned again. But that's also true of most of the other apostles (all of them except Peter, John, and James).⁷³

And Paul was added to the apostles later. Paul was an apostle! But he was never called one of the twelve.⁷⁴ He couldn't be. Because he didn't see the beginning of Jesus's ministry.⁷⁵ He saw Jesus raised from the dead. That was key to his apostleship as he argues elsewhere (see **Gal 1:10–24; 2 Cor 10:1–13:10**). But Paul was never part of the twelve.

Here's a third application.

3) Personal betrayal is not an excuse for **bitterness** or **quitting**

Put yourselves in the shoes of the apostles for just a moment. One of their own betrays Jesus and the rest of their inner circle. They walked with Judas. They ministered with Judas. They shared meals with him. And then, at the time when they needed him most, he betrayed Jesus and them too.⁷⁶

If you've ever experienced deep hurt in ministry... if you've ever dealt with personal betrayal in the church... let me assure you, you're not the first. Jesus had his Judas. The apostles had their Judas. Paul had his Demas, Alexander, Phygelus, and Hermogenes. **And seventeen hundred and fifty years before Benedict Arnold betrayed George Washington and the American cause, Jesus was betrayed by one of his twelve.**

And here's the temptation. When we see ministers or church leaders fail us, we want to quit. "I can't do this anymore. I don't want to be a part of something where someone like Judas Iscariot is considered a leader."

There are people that do that right now. "Did you see what that church leader did? Did you see how treacherous that person was? He was a deacon in the church! He was a pastor! Did you see what that televangelist lied about?" And they use that as an excuse for retreat or bitterness or quitting.

⁷¹ Psalm 41:9 communicates something similar, "Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me."

⁷² Vickers, "Acts" in *John–Acts*, ESVEC, 345 calls this interpretation "absurd." "The choice of Matthias is based on prayer, devotion, and waiting on God. There is no indication that it is in any way wrong or turns out to be an error."

⁷³ Notice though that the Acts 6:2 states, "And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, 'It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.'" So even though Matthias (and other members of the twelve) weren't mentioned by name, they were referenced as a group. And this is before Paul is explicitly called as a Apostle!

⁷⁴ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 57: "There were two categories of apostles: those who were with the Messiah from John's baptism until the ascension and those who saw the resurrected Messiah (1 Cor. 9:1). The first group was the inner group of twelve. The second group was made up of an unknown number of apostles. Some within the book of Acts who qualified for this second category of apostleship included James, Barnabas, and Paul."

⁷⁵ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 79: "Paul, although not counted as one of the Twelve by Luke, is seen as a special, directly appointed witness when the Lord directly bring him into the church."

⁷⁶ Fernando, *Acts*. NIVAC, 75: "Peter views Judas's act of betrayal as a fulfillment of Scripture (v. 16). That, however, does not take away from the pain of what happened, for, as Peter says, 'he was one of our number and shared in this ministry' (v. 17)."

But what did Peter and the disciples do. Next man up! They replaced Judas and got right back to it. Peter knew himself that he had failed. And his response to Judas wasn't bitterness or resignation. He shored up apostolic leadership, he prayed for restoration in the ministry, and he and the disciples got right back to work doing the things that God had called them to do.

One of the questions that I want you to process after the sermon is this one. It's in your sermon notes. Here's the question, "Why is Judas in the Bible?" Why is he here? You might say, "Well someone had to betray Jesus!" Let me just say that I think that there's more for us to learn from Judas and from how Jesus and the disciples responded to Judas and his failure than that.

Listen, if you get burned in this life... if you experience some kind of personal betrayal or letdown from someone you love... take heart. Jesus did too. The disciples did too.

I actually think that the persecution that comes from the world is easier to endure than the betrayal that happens with close friends or family. When an enemy of Christ betrays you, that can be painful. But when a brother in Christ betrays you, that hurts!

And there are two great temptations in those moments: 1) Bitterness and 2) Quitting. Peter does neither. He gets back on the horse and he gets after it again.

I think one of the things that helped Peter was his realization that God knew all along. He looked in the OT and saw Judas's actions were predicted by God in the OT. God never gets caught off guard. God never says, **"I didn't see that coming."** God never says, **"Oops."**

In the OT, David was betrayed. And Jesus, the Son of David, the antitype to Davidic typology was betrayed too.⁷⁷ And if God is sovereign, then truly it must be said that "All things work for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose" (Rom 8:28).⁷⁸

And finally. Write this down as #4.

4) Important decisions require both prayerful **discernment** and faith-filled **action**

For the record, I don't think that we should cast lots as a church. Some of you might be wondering about that. **The Moravians, a group of Protestants that were really prominent in the eighteenth century, would actually cast lots.** Should we? I don't think so.⁷⁹

You might remember a few weeks back I made a distinction between that which is prescriptive and that which is descriptive for us in **Acts**. This is one of the first instances of something that I believe is descriptive but not prescriptive in this book. The NT disciples cast lots when they had a difficult decision to make here. Luke describes it for us, but he doesn't prescribe it for us.

⁷⁷ Fernando, *Acts*. NIVAC, 75: "The early Christians saw David, the righteous sufferer, and his enemies as types of Christ and his enemies (the antitypes). Differences between David and Jesus and between David's enemies and Judas in these psalms can be explained by the fact that the antitype is always greater than the type." Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, PNTC, 123: "There is an underlying, and frequently surfacing, Davidic Christology in Acts that makes it possible for passages related to David and his experiences to be applied to Jesus and his experiences (and so to Judas as his betrayer). The implication of this argument is that Jesus was not wrong to choose Judas, since such betrayal was a necessary part of the divine plan for the Messiah."

⁷⁸ Vickers, "Acts" in *John-Acts*, ESVEC, 346: "Theologically, we feel tension between God's sovereignty and human responsibility. It was no surprise to Jesus that Judas, whom he chose, would betray him (Matt. 26:50; Mark 14:18-20; John 17:12)."

⁷⁹ Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, PNTC, 128-9: "It is important to observe that there are no further examples of such decision making in the NT. As those who were about to enjoy the benefits of the New Covenant, the apostles were using a practice that was sanctioned by God but belonged to the old era. It took place before Pentecost, when the Spirit was poured out in a way that signified a new kind of relationship between God and his people. From Luke's later emphasis on the Spirit's role in giving wisdom, guidance, and direction, it would appear that the apostolic example on this occasion is not to be followed by Christians today." Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 58-9: "Some question the apostles' right to cast lots, but at this point in history, it was still a valid method to determine God's will. After Acts 2, which describes the coming of the Holy Spirit, things changed. Once they were permanently indwelt by the Spirit, the apostles would not need this method anymore; but obviously, the events of Acts 1 occurred before then, and thus, casting lots was still a legitimate, valid method to determine God's will... Acts 1:26 describes the last time in biblical history that the method of casting lots was used. Today, believers make choices by the leading of the Spirit, so the casting of lots is no longer necessary."

One of the reasons that I think that this is the case is that despite the prevalence of casting lots in the OT, it's never something that is affirmed in the NT. It was a Jewish custom for decision-making, and Paul nowhere in his letters or James or Peter or John tells us to cast lots when we have a difficult matter.⁸⁰

But what is prescriptive in this passage for us? Here's something prescriptive—pray! Even before they cast lots the disciples prayed. Paul affirms repeatedly in the NT that we need to be men and women of prayer. Paul says, “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess 5:17). Paul says, “Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints” (Eph 6:18). Paul says, “I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people” (1 Tim 2:1).

Now here's another thing that's prescriptive here. Be wise. Be thoughtful. Consider the options. Pray. Discern. And then make a decision. The disciples did that here. They found two people who were well-qualified for the position. They prayed for God's leading. And then in faith, they acted.

I think there are some Christians that are so fearful about making a mistake that they basically immobilize themselves. Some are so impetuous that they run ahead without any prayerful discernment at all. That's not good either. Others are paralyzed by their own fear of making a mistake; they fail to act in faith. Just do something. Risk making a mistake. I wish some people in that category would cast lots if it would help them to make a decision faster.⁸¹

I'll close with this. I want to tell you a little bit about a man committed to prayer named Jeremiah Lanphier. This is an excerpt from Ajith Fernando's commentary on Acts, “In the 1850s... the United States was in a weak spiritual state, as people were preoccupied with concern for material things. In 1857 a quiet forty-six-year-old businessman, Jeremiah Lanphier, felt led to start a noon-time weekly prayer meeting in New York City, in which business people could meet for prayer. Anyone could attend, for a few minutes or for the entire hour. On the first day Lanphier prayed alone for half an hour. But by the end of the hour six men from at least four denominational backgrounds had joined him. Twenty came the next week and forty the week after. Soon they decided to meet daily, and the group swelled to over one hundred. Pastors who came started morning prayer meetings in their own churches. Soon similar meetings were being held all over America. Within six months there were more than ten thousand meetings daily in New York City alone.”⁸²

All of this was the result of one person who was committed to prayer. Here's my challenge to you, church. **You go be that person. You be that person to start a prayer group at your work. You be that prayer warrior in the midst of your family. You be that prayer warrior for your church. You be that spark that ignites a raging inferno. Maybe God wants to save two people. Maybe God wants to save 2,000! Whatever the case, let's entreat him to do a mighty work in our midst.**

⁸⁰ BEDE: “So it was that Matthias, who was appointed before Pentecost, was chosen by lot, while in the case of the seven deacons, who came later, there was no shaking of lots but only the disciples' choice; and indeed they were appointed by the prayer of the apostles and the imposition of hands. Therefore if there are any who, under the compulsion of some difficult situation think that because of the example of the apostles they should consult God with lots, they should see that these same apostles needed only the assembly of the brothers gathered together and prayers poured forth to God.” Quoted in Martin and Smith, eds., *Acts*, ACCS, 18.

⁸¹ See Kevin DeYoung, *Just Do Something: A Liberating Approach to Finding God's Will* (Chicago: Moody, 2009). This is a brilliant diagnosis of the paralysis of analysis that is systemic in our culture. If you find yourself in that category, read that book. Or just heed this applicational principle from Acts 1 to combine both prayerful discernment and faith-filled action.

⁸² Fernando, *Acts*. NIVAC, 80–81.