

Growing Up in God's Word

Bible Curriculum

“...from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures...”
(II Timothy 3:15, NKJV)

Acts, Part 2

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Introduction

Why teach children the Bible using only the Bible? Can they understand it? Yes! Is it too boring? No! I have taught a children's Bible class on Sunday mornings for over twenty years and have home-schooled my three children, teaching them the Bible in our home. Guess what? Children are a lot smarter than we give them credit for! There are just a few key things to remember in teaching the Bible to children. First, we need to be enthusiastic about the Bible ourselves. If children see that we think the Bible is boring, they will most likely adopt the same opinion. Be excited about opening the word of God together! Second, don't be afraid to tell them you don't know an answer to their question. There are many things in the Bible that we have questions about; some things we are able to study and find an answer for, others will have to wait until we get to heaven and can ask God. It's okay to let them know you're stumped too, but encourage them to search for the answer with you. Third, set the bar high for them. Please, please, please don't “dumb” the Bible down to “their level”. Children can understand a lot through patient explanation and teaching. For example, if you read a hard word in the Bible that they may not be familiar with, stop and ask them what they think it means, then give them a correct definition. Now they have learned a new word and understand the passage you've just read at the same time. Children like to be challenged and to meet our expectations for them.

The method in this curriculum works because it has been tried among many children of different ages, abilities and levels. Here is the best proof I can offer to you: One of my regular Sunday morning students brought a friend to our class one day. She answered a few questions but mostly sat very quietly, absorbing everything that was going on. Later on, the woman that brought her to church said that the little girl told her on the way home that she wanted to come to our Sunday school class every week because we “*actually teach from the Bible*”. This little girl is not “unchurched” by any means; in fact, she regularly attends a denominational megachurch every Sunday. As the scripture says, “Out of the mouths of babes!”

May your children be like Timothy who, “*from childhood has known the holy Scriptures*” (II Timothy 3:15) and may God bless you as you study His word together.

How to Use this Curriculum

Life began in a garden, so we will be using garden references and symbols throughout this curriculum to designate the different activities. Luke 8:11 says that “*the seed is the word of God*”. Our hearts are the soil that the seed needs to be planted in. We should desire to cultivate the soil of our hearts and the hearts of our children to receive the word so that it will grow and produce good fruit for our Lord.



“Growing In The Word”: Lesson Text & Discussion

This is the most important part of the curriculum – the teaching of God's Word. The lesson text is broken down into manageable sections to be read aloud and then discussed. If children are old enough to read, let them read out loud. If there are several verses to be read as a section, you could take turns reading a couple of verses per person. If it helps your child, let them jot down notes or write down definitions to new words as you discuss the passage. Encourage them to ask questions and ask them leading questions to get them thinking. The discussion section is basically a paraphrasing of what was just read to make sure there is comprehension of the material. Frequently there are questions to be answered during the discussion phase as well. The section of verses often leave off at a “cliffhanger” moment which helps keep the children engaged. You read and discuss and then you're ready to read on to see what happens next. At the end of this section of the curriculum there are review questions. These can be used in several ways: You may ask them at the end of the lesson, at the end of the week for a review, or if you want to have a graded assignment, you can use them as an oral or written quiz.

*A word about translations. It is important to use a reliable and accurate translation. Some dependable ones are KJV, NKJV, and ASV (American Standard). Many modern translations have compromised the integrity of the Scriptures in trying to put it in “easier to understand” language. All references in this curriculum are taken from the New King James Version.



“Putting Down Roots”: Memory Work

Memory work should be practiced every day for the entire week. Use whatever method works the best according to your child's learning style. Here is a link with a list of aids for memorizing scripture: <http://pryorconvictions.com/memorizing-scripture/> The Psalmist said in Psalm 119:11, “*Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against Thee.*” I cannot stress enough how important it is to memorize Scripture. In addition to Scripture, sometimes there are other items included in the Memory Work such as lists of things or categories. A challenge to parents: memorize it with your children!



"Farther Afield": Map Work

There are blank maps provided in Appendix A in the back of the book. These may be photocopied for home use with this curriculum. Most lessons have mapping activities to serve as a visual aid of the places you read about in scripture. To be consistent, you may want to follow a system such as: cities – red, countries – green, bodies of water – blue, wilderness or desert areas – brown, lands or regions – yellow. The map work will indicate different places to be located on the map. Locate and label each item.



"Harvest Fun": Games & Activities

There are games and activities for each lesson to help review and reinforce the material that was covered. It is best to read through these at the beginning of the week to see if any planning ahead needs to be done.



"Digging Deeper": Research

This is primarily for the older students who are able to work independently. If your younger children wish to do these assignments with your help, then by all means, let them! It is a good idea to keep a notebook for these written assignments. These assignments are meant to encourage students of the Bible to learn how to study a topic deeper by using other resources to shed light on the subject. Primarily, books and the Internet will be your sources of information so it's important to do two things: 1) Check the reliability of your source, and 2) Check multiple sources; you might find two or more very different theories or opinions. Some good resources to use are Bible commentaries, concordances (such as Strong's), Bible dictionaries, Bible atlases and Bible software. There are many things we run across in the Bible that we would like to know more about. Have fun exploring!



"Food For Thought": Puzzles

There are at least two puzzles with each lesson to, again, provide review and reinforcement or plain just to have fun! The puzzles may be worked in the book or photocopied. All puzzle answers are provided in the Answer Key in the back of the book.



"Fruits Of Our Labor": Crafts

There are at least two crafts to do with each lesson. They vary in level of difficulty, but are another means of reinforcement of material covered. Crafts are a good activity for the kinesthetic (hands-on) learner as well as a tangible reminder for the visual learner. Please read ahead early in the week to see what materials you may need to gather in advance.

A Word About Acts

The book of Acts is a history of how the church began. It contains numerous examples of conversions, sermons, miracles, and events that took place throughout what was then the known-world. Because of the numerous references to ancient countries, regions, and cities, it is suggested that you keep a good Bible atlas with you as you study these lessons to have a reference point as to where the events of the lesson are taking place. Map work is included in each lesson, but as places are usually mapped only the first time they are mentioned, one might forget the location of such places when they appear in later lessons. An atlas will be especially helpful in tracking the missionary journeys of Paul.

Suggested Schedule

This curriculum is designed to be used five days a week, 30 minutes to 1 hour per day. It is designed to be used with multiple ages with some activities geared toward older children and others geared toward younger. You may use as much or as little of the activities listed as you choose. Please feel free to alter the suggested schedule to fit the time constraints and needs of your family. However, the lesson and memory work portions should be used for all ages.

Begin or end each day's activities with prayer.

- Day 1 – Read “Growing in the Word”: Lesson Text and Discussion. Begin “Putting Down Roots”: Memory Work assignments.
- Day 2 – Continue memory work, do “Farther Afield”: Map Work activities, and “Harvest Fun”: Games and Activities.
- Day 3 – Continue memory work, do “Digging Deeper”: Research activities, and/or “Food for Thought”: Puzzles.
- Day 4 – Continue memory work, do “Fruits of Our Labor”: Crafts, or continue working on previous activities.
- Day 5 – Recite memory work, do lesson Review Questions and finish any assignments or activities from the week that time didn't permit.

Lesson 1: The Jerusalem Council

Text: Acts 15



"Growing In The Word": Lesson Text & Discussion

Read Acts 15:1-2. At the end of Acts 14, Paul and Barnabas were in the city of Antioch working with the church there. As the church grew, Gentiles (non-Jews) were becoming Christians and being added to the church. Several men came to Antioch from Judea to teach these new Christians that they needed to follow the Jewish law of circumcision and to keep other parts of the law of Moses. Did these new Christians need to follow the commands of the law of Moses? (No) The law of Moses was the "old law" and the law of Christ was the "new law". Since the law of Moses was no longer in effect, new Christians didn't need to obey the specific commands and laws from the law of Moses, but rather, they needed to obey the apostles' teaching of the law of Christ. Paul and Barnabas argued with these men that what they were teaching these new Christians wasn't right, but the teachers weren't convinced. They decided to send Paul and Barnabas along with some others to the apostles and elders to settle the matter. What city were they sent to? (Jerusalem)

Read Acts 15:3-6. On the way to Jerusalem, what regions did Paul and his companions pass through? (Phoenicia and Samaria) They made stops along the way at various churches so they could share some good news with their brothers in Christ. What did they report to the churches? (The conversions of the Gentiles) The fact that Gentiles were obeying the gospel of Christ and being added to the church by the Lord was a big deal and would have been major news. How did the Christians react to this news? (With great joy) Paul and his companions finally reached Jerusalem and gave a report about all of the things God had done through them. Who was it that insisted that all of the new Gentile Christians be circumcised? (Some of the Pharisees) You may remember that the Pharisees were a strict group of religious leaders of the Jews who were teachers of the law of Moses. When the church was established, there were some Pharisees who became Christians. They wanted to place requirements from the law of Moses (like circumcision) on the new Gentile converts. Who came together to discuss the matter? (The apostles and elders of the church at Jerusalem)

Read Acts 15:7-11. After much discussion, who stood up and spoke first? (Peter) He makes the point that not only does God accept Gentiles into His kingdom, but that He doesn't make any distinction between them and the Jews or require them to do anything special or extra in order to be saved. In fact, Peter says that requiring them to be circumcised would be like placing a yoke on their necks. It would be a heavy burden for them that was even hard for the Jews to bear. You might want to look at a picture of a team of oxen wearing a yoke to give you an idea of how heavy and cumbersome a yoke is. This is what Peter compares circumcision to. Peter concludes by saying that Jews and Gentiles are both saved the same way. What are they saved through? (Grace)

Read Acts 15:12-21. Who gets up to speak next? (Paul and Barnabas) They talk about all of the miracles and wonders God worked through them to show the Gentiles. They are

continuing to prove the point that God wanted the Gentiles to be Christians too. Who spoke after Paul and Barnabas? (James) James quotes from an Old Testament prophet to help prove the case that God had always planned to accept those who were not Jews into His kingdom. Which prophet does he quote? (Amos) James says that it is obvious from scripture that Gentiles would also seek the Lord and they would be called by His name. That being the case, if God accepts them, can the church turn them away or make them do things God has not required them to do? (No!) James does suggest that they send a letter to the Christians at the church in Antioch to teach them more about what God does want them to do and not do in their worship. There are four things that these new Christians should abstain(keep away) from. What are they? (1. Things polluted by idols, 2. Sexual immorality, 3. Things strangled, 4. Blood.) These four things all had to do with idol worship. Many of the Gentiles had been worshipers of idols before they became Christians. They had to learn that God must be worshiped in spirit and in truth (John 4:24) and *not* worshiped as idols were.

Read Acts 15:22-29. What did the apostles and elders think of James' plan to send a letter? (They were pleased with it.) Of course, this letter would have to be hand-delivered. Who was chosen to take the letter to the church in Antioch? (Paul, Barnabas, Judas who was also called Barsabas, and Silas) This letter was addressed specifically to the Gentile Christians – the ones who had been told that they must be circumcised and keep parts of the law of Moses. Which churches was the letter written to? (The church in Antioch, and other churches throughout Syria and Cilicia) If you look at a Bible atlas or map, you will see that the city of Antioch is in the country of Syria and the region of Cilicia is just north of Syria, so these churches are all in the same area. Who was the letter from? (The apostles, the elders, and the Christians in Jerusalem) The letter was one of encouragement and explanation. It assured these new Christians that they do *not* have to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses, but they were told the four things to keep away from so they would not be associated in any way with idol worship.

Read Acts 15:30-35. Paul and his companions reached Antioch, gathered everyone together and gave them the letter. What was the reaction of the church after the letter was read? (They rejoiced!) These new Christians felt so encouraged by the letter and were very happy. In their new walk with Christ, they wanted to be pleasing to him and to do what was right. Now, there was no question or confusion about which laws they had to obey. They knew what they needed to do to be obedient and they were happy to do it. Who spoke to them to encourage them further? (Silas and Judas) Does your Bible say they “exhorted” them? If it does, the word exhort simply means to encourage, or to build up. Silas and Judas wanted to help these new Christians and were encouraging them all that they could. What a great example! We too, should always want to encourage our brothers and sisters in Christ and do all we can to build each other up and not tear each other down or discourage one another. What does the Bible say Silas and Judas were? (Prophets) Paul, Barnabas, Silas, and Judas stayed in Antioch for awhile, but then one of them returned to Jerusalem. Who went back? (Judas) What did the other three remain there to do? (Teach and preach the word of God)

Read Acts 15:36-41. After a few days in Antioch, Paul is ready to move on with Barnabas. What does he want to do? (Revisit the churches in the cities they had preached in to see how the new Christians were doing) Barnabas was ready to go, but wanted to take someone else along too. Who did he want to take? (John Mark) Barnabas and John Mark were related.

Read Colossians 4:10 to see how they were related. Paul did *not* want to take John Mark with them. Why was he so opposed to him going on this journey? (John Mark had been with them on the first missionary journey and had left halfway through to return home. Paul thought he wasn't dependable.) Paul and Barnabas could not come to an agreement about John Mark. What solution did they come up with? (They went separate ways.) Paul chose to take Silas with him and Barnabas and John Mark traveled together in a different direction. Sometimes we will have disagreements with others in the church, even with our close friends. It is important to come up with a solution that works for everyone and not to do anything to let the friendship be destroyed. We read later on in the New Testament that Paul speaks of working with Barnabas again (I Corinthians 9:6) and he sends for John Mark in Rome because he would be helpful to Paul (II Timothy 4:11). So they all remained friends and co-workers together in the church. Where did Barnabas and John Mark go? (Cyprus) If you look at your map, you will see that Cyprus was an island that had been visited during the first missionary journey. Where did Paul and Silas go? (Syria and Cilicia) They are visiting the churches that are close by to Antioch. All of them have the same goal as they visit the churches. What are they there to do? (Strengthen them) It was important then and it is important now that the church be strong in order for it to grow and do the will of the Lord.

Review Questions: (Answers are in the Answer Key.)

1. What did some of the Jewish Christians say the new Gentile Christians had to do?
2. Who disagreed with their teaching?
3. What city did they all go to in order to settle the matter?
4. Who was it specifically that wanted the Gentile Christians to be circumcised?
5. Who stood up and spoke first?
6. What did he compare the circumcising of the Gentiles to?
7. How did he say all are saved?
8. Who spoke next?
9. Who spoke third?
10. What Old Testament prophet did he quote from?
11. What suggestion did he give to the group?
12. What four things were they told in the letter to abstain (keep away) from?
13. Who delivered the letter to the church in Antioch?
14. What was the reaction of the Gentile Christians when the letter was read?
15. Who returned to Jerusalem?

16. What did Paul want he and Barnabas to do?
17. Who did Barnabas want to take with them?
18. Why did Paul not agree to Barnabas' suggestion?
19. Who did Paul take with him to Syria and Cilicia?
20. Where did Barnabas and John Mark go?



"Putting Down Roots": Memory Work

- Memorize Acts 15:16 & 17
- Memorize Acts 15:18
- Memorize the apostles - Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Thomas, Matthew, Bartholomew, James the less, Simon, Thaddeus, Matthias, Paul - This list is different than the one in the Life of Christ book. In the book of Acts, Judas had died and been replaced by Matthias and Paul is now an apostle as well.



"Farther Afield": Map Work

Maps 1 & 2

- Locate the regions of Judea, Samaria, Pamphylia, and Cilicia
- Locate the cities of Jerusalem and Antioch (of Syria)
- Locate the countries of Phoenicia and Syria
- Locate the island of Cyprus



"Harvest Fun": Games & Activities

- Special Delivery - The letter from the apostles and elders in Jerusalem had to be hand-delivered to the church in Antioch of Syria, a journey of roughly 300 miles. It would have been a long journey, possibly with some obstacles along the way.

The object of this game will be to carry a letter through an obstacle course and safely deliver it at the end. In a large room or back yard, set up your obstacle course. You can use things like old refrigerator boxes set on their sides as tunnels to crawl through, 5 gallon buckets set up to zig zag around, stepping stones to hop on, croquet wickets to hurdle over, strung up clothesline to "limbo" under, etc. Before you begin, have Mom or the teacher write the name of a secret treat that has been prepared ahead of time on a piece of paper and seal it in an envelope. Let players line up at the starting line of the obstacle course. Place the envelope in the first player's hand. When "Go" is called, start a timer. Record the player's time as they cross the finish line. Hand the envelope to the next player and record their time. Whoever has the fastest recorded time at the obstacle course is the winner and gets to open the envelope and announce the treat everyone is about to enjoy!

- Law of Moses or Law of Christ - For this game, each player needs two index cards. On one, write "Law of Moses". On the other, write "Law of Christ". As the following statements are read, decide which law it falls under and hold up the correct answer. Remember that some of the Jewish Christians were trying to get the Gentile Christians to follow things that were under the law of Moses when they only needed to follow the law of Christ.
 1. The Sabbath day must be observed. (Law of Moses) - [Exodus 20:8]
 2. Singing is to be done with the heart and not man-made instruments. (Law of Christ) - [Ephesians 5:19]
 3. You must believe and be baptized in order to be saved. (Law of Christ) - [Mark 16:15,16]
 4. You must offer to God the firstfruits of your harvest. (Law of Moses) - [Leviticus 23:9-10]
 5. Circumcision must be done as a sign of the covenant. (Law of Moses) - [Genesis 17:10-14]
 6. Forgiveness is obtained through the blood of Christ. (Law of Christ) - [Ephesians 1:7]
 7. The feast of Passover must be observed. (Law of Moses) - [Exodus 12:21-28]
 8. Worship takes places on the first day of the week. (Law of Christ) - [Acts 20:7]
 9. God requires a burnt offering without spot or blemish. (Law of Moses) - [Leviticus

1:3]

10. Amount we are to give is not specified, but only to give as we are prospered. (Law of Christ) - [I Corinthians 16:1,2]
11. The high priest must wear a linen ephod with a breastplate of 12 precious stones. (Law of Moses) - [Exodus 39:1-31]
12. The Lord's Supper is to be observed through the breaking of unleavened bread and the drinking of the fruit of the vine. (Law of Christ) - [I Corinthians 11:23-29]
13. Prayers are to be offered in the name of Jesus. (Law of Christ) - [John 14:13, 14]
14. Certain animals are unclean and not to be eaten. (Law of Moses) - [Leviticus 11]
15. The altar of incense is one of the articles used in worship. (Law of Moses) - [Exodus 30:1-10]
16. The tenth day of the seventh month is the Day of Atonement. (Law of Moses) - [Leviticus 23:26, 27]
17. No animal is to be called unclean and all may be eaten. (Law of Christ) - [Acts 10:12-15]



"Digging Deeper": Research

- Pharisees - Who were the Pharisees? When and why did they originate? What were their religious beliefs? What does the name "Pharisee" mean?
- John Mark - Paul and Barnabas had a disagreement over taking John Mark with them as they departed from Antioch. Let's learn some more about this young man. Who was his mother? Who was his cousin? What is his Jewish name and his Roman name? What book of the Bible did he write? How did Peter refer to him in I Peter 5:13?
- *This topic is to be researched at the discretion of the parents. Circumcision - This was the sign of the covenant established between God and Abraham in Genesis 17. What was circumcision? When was it done? Who was it to be done to? What would happen if it was not done?



"Food For Thought": Puzzles

- Who Am I? - Read the following clues, choose the correct name of the person, and write it on the line. Answers are in the Answer Key.

Barnabas	Moses	Amos	Silas	Paul
John Mark	Judas	Simon	Peter	James

1. I spoke to the council in Jerusalem after Peter, Paul, and Barnabas. _____
2. Paul did not want me to go with Barnabas and him when they left Antioch.

3. Barsabas was another name for me. _____
4. Paul chose me to go with him to Syria and Cilicia. _____
5. I was the first one to address the Jerusalem council. _____
6. I went with Barnabas to Jerusalem to meet with the apostles and elders. _____
7. James did not refer to me as Peter but by this name. _____
8. I stayed in Antioch with Paul for a few days. _____
9. I am the Old Testament prophet from which James quoted. _____
10. In the Old Testament, God gave His law to the people through me and it bears my name. _____

- Where Am I? - Read the following clues, then choose and write the name of the correct location on the line. You may use a map or atlas to assist you. Answers are in the Answer Key.

Samaria	Syria	Judea	Antioch	Tarsus
Phoenicia	Jerusalem	Cyprus	Pamphylia	Cilicia

1. I am the city where the temple is located. _____

2. I am the city to which Paul and his companions brought a letter. _____
3. I am the region that John Mark departed from on the first missionary journey.

4. I am the region in which Jerusalem is located. _____
5. I am an island which Barnabas and Mark sailed to. _____
6. I am the country in which Antioch is located. _____
7. I am a sea coast country that Paul and Barnabas passed through on their way to Jerusalem. Tyre and Sidon are two of my cities. _____
8. I am a region Paul and Silas traveled through located north of Cyprus.

9. I am a region located north of Judea. The Jews did not like to travel through it.

10. I am the capital city of Cilicia and the hometown of the apostle Paul. _____



"Fruits Of Our Labor": Crafts

- Parchment Paper - The apostles and elders wrote an official letter to the church in Antioch which Paul and his companions delivered. Let's make some ancient-looking parchment paper and then write a letter on it. The next craft will explain how to make a wax seal to officially seal your letter. For this craft you will need: some plain white paper, a cup of brewed coffee or tea (cooled), and a hairdryer. First, brew a cup of coffee or tea and let it cool. Coffee will stain the paper with brown spots, tea will leave yellowish or light brown stains. Next, take a piece of white paper and crumple it up into a tight ball. Carefully smooth it back out. Use a clean sponge to "paint" the cooled coffee or tea over your paper. Make some areas darker than others. While the paper is still damp, you can make small tears along the edges or rip small holes in it with your fingers, taking the torn parts and patching it onto another part of the paper to create some raised areas. When you achieve the color you'd like, let your paper air dry or speed up the drying process with a hairdryer. Now you're ready to write a letter on your "ancient" paper.
- Wax Seal - Some official letters in ancient times were sealed with wax or clay and imprinted with an official seal. To make your own wax seal to officially seal up your letter, you will need: Sculpey clay, a toothpick or straight pin, and a small

jewelry charm, button, etc. To make your official seal, you will need to start with Sculpey clay which can be baked and hardened. Take a large lump of Sculpey clay and knead it until it is softened and pliable. Next, roll the clay into the shape of a cylinder, flattening the bottom smooth with a diameter of about an inch. By the way, seals for men generally tended to be round while seals for women tended to be oval, but you can shape the cylinder however you'd like. Once you have the clay cylinder with a flattened bottom, press the item you want as your seal into the clay. For example, you can find different small jewelry charms like an animal, a flower, a music note, etc. You could also use a neat button with a coat of arms on it. Carefully press the item deep into the bottom of the cylinder to get a nice impression. Gently pry the item out with a pin or toothpick. Bake the clay cylinder in the oven at 275 degrees for about 15-20 minutes. Let your seal cool completely. Once it's ready, roll up your letter. You may need adult supervision to help with this next part. Light a wax candle and let some wax pool around the base of the wick. Take a generous amount of olive oil and coat the inside of the wax seal mold to prevent sticking. Hold the candle at a 45 degree angle about 2-3 inches above the seam of the letter in the middle and drip the wax into a nice circle large enough and deep enough to place your seal. Press your seal down into the warm wax. Press firmly and then pull up. (Only hold in hot wax 1-2 seconds.) Let the impression dry. Now, you have an officially sealed letter! You can also place a letter in an envelope and seal the envelope shut with this method.