



# LONG STORY SHORT

## A Year through the Bible

### Reflection Guide

#### New Beginnings Book of Acts

#### Exploring the Story, Chapter 28

The gift of the Holy Spirit sets off an explosion of God's power as the Good News about Jesus begins to spread. No matter how threatened God's promise to bless the entire world may be, God's faithfulness prevails, and the message about Jesus continues to spread.

#### MONDAY

*Read:* Acts 1–2

*Reflect:* With the resurrection of Jesus, the disciples—now called “sent ones” or Apostles—are commissioned to be Christ’s witnesses to the whole world. Jesus tells the Apostles to wait until they have been empowered by the Holy Spirit to do their work. What do you think it means for the Apostles to be Christ’s “witnesses” to the world? In what ways does the Holy Spirit empower the Apostles’ witness? In what ways, if any, has the Holy Spirit empowered you to be Christ’s witness?

*Respond:* In prayer, ask the Holy Spirit to empower you to continue the work of Jesus Christ.

#### TUESDAY

*Read:* Acts 3–4

*Reflect:* Peter and John are arrested for healing a man who had been unable to walk for more than forty years. The authorities order them to stop telling people about Jesus, but Peter replies that they cannot keep from telling others about him (4:20). Do you share Peter’s feeling that you cannot help but share your faith in Jesus with others? Why or why not? What obstacles, if any, do you face telling others about your faith? How, if at all, does the Holy Spirit empower you to overcome those obstacles?

*Respond:* In prayer, ask God for the power to overcome all the obstacles to sharing your faith with others.

#### WEDNESDAY

*Read:* Acts 5–6

*Reflect:* The internal life of the believers—how believers treat each other—is of such importance that the Apostles delegate the responsibility of administering a food program for widows to seven “deacons” so that favoritism is avoided. How might unfair treatment within the community of believers hamper the witness of the Christian community? How, if at all, has this story caused you to reconsider the importance of the internal life of the church for its role as a witness of Jesus Christ?

*Respond:* In prayer, ask the Holy Spirit to empower you to love others without favoritism.

#### THURSDAY

*Read:* Acts 7–8

*Reflect:* In his testimony before the council, Stephen recites the history of Israel. The history would have been familiar to everyone hearing Stephen speak, yet because of his experience of the resurrected Jesus and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, Stephen had come to a new understanding of the Bible’s story. Think back on the Big Story of the Bible. What new insights, if any, have you gained as you have read along with Long Story Short? How, if at all, has the Old Testament enhanced your understanding of the story of Jesus? How, if at all, has your reading of the gospels helped you come to new insights about the rest of the Bible’s story?

*Respond:* In prayer, ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand the story of Scripture and find your place in it.

#### FRIDAY

*Read:* Acts 9

*Reflect:* God frequently calls into service the most surprising and least qualified people. Saul, later called Paul, was a notorious persecutor of Christians. But after a dramatic conversion, he becomes an unstoppable force for spreading the good news of Jesus Christ. Are you surprised that God would use Paul to spread the message about Jesus? Why or why not? How, if at all, has God used you despite your lack of qualifications? How, if all, did the Holy Spirit empower you to answer God’s call?

*Respond:* In prayer, thank God for the privilege of doing God’s work, despite your lack of qualification.

#### SATURDAY

*Read:* Acts 10–11

*Reflect:* God intends for everyone, even non-Jews (called “Gentiles”) to hear the message about Jesus and to respond in faith. What, if anything, surprises you about God’s desire for the Gospel to be proclaimed to everyone? Who, if anyone, in your community might be prevented from hearing the Gospel? What could you do to ensure that everyone is able to hear and respond to the Good News of Jesus Christ?

*Respond:* In prayer, thank God that everyone “has the privilege of repenting of their sins and receiving eternal life” (11:18).

#### SUNDAY

*Read:* Acts 12

*Reflect:* Thus far, nothing has been able to stop the Good News of Jesus from spreading. Where else in the Big story of the Bible has the promise been threatened by people trying to thwart God’s power? How have you experienced God’s overwhelming power and faithfulness in your own life?

*Respond:* In worship this morning, praise God that nothing can stop the spread of the Gospel.

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