INTRODUCTION

Under Construction.

The very words imply everything from delays to messy rooms and traffic congestion. When something is “under construction,” it’s not exactly pretty, or perfect. It’s where things get messy before they get beautiful.

The study you’re about to begin is all about that moment in church history when things get messy. Jesus Christ, the One who designed the blueprints and started the project, ascends to heaven, leaving the work of implementation to 11 scared and confused men. Suddenly emboldened by a supernatural act, they begin to confront the ugly realities of religion, the rules that keep people separated from God, and from each other, and their own petty insecurities.

Sounds a little bit like the church today, doesn’t it? It shouldn’t surprise us. Jesus never promised that the act of building His church would be completed before His return. The church today, just like the church in Acts, is under construction. We are still confronting the ugly realities of religion, rules that keep people separated from God, from each other, and our own petty insecurities.

We are all “under construction,” and there’s no better place to build than right here in this group. Here, you’ll get a chance to go deeper into community, develop better relationships, and discover how much you and those in your group might have in common with men like Peter and Paul.

Just like the people of the early church, you’ll get to focus on practical, real-life application of what God is saying to you. At the end of each study, you’ll find daily devotions, ways to go deeper, and even a guide for helping your family study together. As you study together here, you’re joining the larger church family—in services, in homes, in coffee shops, and even online—who are all discovering what it means to be “under construction.”

In addition to the written study, this curriculum incorporates a short video teaching for each session from Pastor Troy and the Teaching Team. DVDs can be picked up in the lobby or you can watch each video online at: www.nlchurch.com/actsvideos.

It might get a little messy, but like the early church, we think you’ll discover how amazing it is when we’re all “under construction” together.

USING THIS WORKBOOK

1. Notice in the Table of Contents there are two sections: (1) Sessions and (2) Life Group Resources. Familiarize yourself with the Life Group Resources. Some of them will be used in the sessions themselves.

2. If you are hosting or co-hosting this Life Group, the Life Group Resources section will give you some hard-learned experiences of others that will encourage you and help you avoid many common obstacles to effective Life Group facilitation.

3. Use this workbook as a guide, not a straightjacket. If the group responds to the lesson in an unexpected but honest way, go with that. If you think of a better question than the next one in the lesson, ask it. Take to heart the insights included in the Life Group Resources section.

4. Enjoy your Life Group experience and have fun together.

5. Pray before each session—for your group members, for your time together and for wisdom and insights.
BEGINNING THE MISSION

The story of the church begins with Jesus. Although the book's full title is “The Acts of the Apostles,” it’s more accurate to describe it as the acts of a bunch of imperfect people commissioned by Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit to change the world.

Everything that happens in the book, from the church’s humble beginnings in Jerusalem to explosive growth throughout the Roman Empire and beyond, happens because Jesus sets it in motion.

In the video you’re about to watch, Pastor Troy reminds us that there is nothing the church—that is, us, the ones who follow Christ—can’t do when we are empowered by God. He is the one building the church, and He will give us everything we need to make it happen.

GETTING STARTED

We have a lot more in common with the people of the early church than we may realize. They were imperfect people, sometimes argumentative, often opinionated, and fearful of change. Sounds like us, right? Use the following questions to discover areas you might be like the disciples Jesus used to build His church.

1  When you see a construction zone, how do you feel? Anxious? Nervous? Worried? Why?

2  If the church—and you—are under construction, why is it important to be in a group like this?

WATCH IT

Take a moment now to watch the video. You can pick up a DVD in the lobby or watch online at nlchurch.com/actsvideos.

HOST NOTE:

After watching the video, ask someone to read the scripture below. Then use rest of the SOAP guide to lead and direct discussion among the group. As you go through each of the subsequent sections, it may be helpful to ask someone else to read the questions and direct the discussion.

SCRIPTURE

Acts 1:4-8 (NIV)

4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.

5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

6 So when they met together, they asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”
Observation

The book of Acts begins with Jesus empowering His followers. The power behind the early church was anything but human, and as it grew, it became a threat to both the established Jewish culture and the Roman Empire. Use the questions below to spark discussion and observations on the passage.

Historical Note

Acts is considered a historical document. It was written by Luke, a medical doctor, as a companion piece to his Gospel, which was an account of the life of Christ. Acts is full of actual places and people in Roman history that have been corroborated by archeological evidence. In fact, the British archeologist Sr. William Ramsay set out to disprove the book, but eventually became convinced of the book’s reliability and converted to Christianity.

1. The early church begins around a meal with Jesus, who promises His followers that they will have supernatural help to make it happen. Considering the historical context of the book, why is this so important?

2. Jesus says they will be His witnesses in “Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” What does that mean?

3. If Acts can be trusted as history, what does that say about the reality of the power Jesus gave to His disciples and to us?

Application

When you apply something, you put it into practice. It’s one thing to read the Bible, it’s another thing to live it out. A practical application of what you just observed from today’s study can help you discover just how much impact Scripture can have on every situation of your life!

In this section, discuss together ways you can apply what you’ve learned from the video teaching and Bible study. Then, think about some practical ways you can live out what you’ve learned.

1. The disciples were focusing on something small when Jesus wanted them to see His bigger picture. What are some times you’ve focused on the wrong thing?

2. Jesus promised that His followers would take His message to “the ends of the earth.” What does that imply for those of us who follow Him today?

3. In promising the Holy Spirit, Jesus showed His followers that while He would expect great things out of them, He knew they could not do it on their own, apart from Him. How can that encourage us today?

_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
**Prayer**

**Host Note:**
Before you end the session, encourage everyone to write a prayer down in the space provided. Then, gather everyone together and pray as a group.

“How can we pray for you this week?” Invite everyone to share, but don’t force the issue. Be sure to write prayer requests in your Life Group Prayer Journal on page 59.

---

**Going Deeper**

If you feel God nudging you to go deeper, take some time before the next meeting to get further into His Word. Explore the Bible passages related to this session’s theme on your own and write your reflections in a SOAP journal or in this study guide. A great way to gain insight on a passage is to read it in several different translations, so you may want to use a Bible app or website to compare translations.

---

**Read John 14:25-27**

1. This reference to the Holy Spirit is made by Jesus before His death and resurrection. What do we learn here that is a great reminder of why Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to His followers in the book of Acts?

2. When facing our task to build the church He asked us to build, how can this great reminder help us?

**Read Romans 1:8-10**

1. What is Paul so thankful for as he begins his letter to the church in Rome?

2. Remembering that Rome was the government seat of the Roman Empire, why do you think Paul was in constant prayer for the church?

---

**Family Focus**

The book of Acts is a great book for families to study together. It has all the makings of an epic film, with daring escapes, crazy dreams, shipwrecks, miracles, and more! It’s important to remember, though, that it all begins with Jesus. Everything that happens in the book is set in motion by Jesus, who gives His followers then, and us, today, a great gift in the Holy Spirit.

Ask your kids this question and then pray together as a family.

Q: Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to everyone who follows Him. How can the Holy Spirit help you be who God created you to be? (Answers will vary, but encourage kids to see that the Holy Spirit helps them make wise choices, trust God in every situation, treat others right, talk to God every day, etc.)
Use the following space for your daily S.O.A.P. devotionals. SOAP is an acronym that stands for:

S = Scripture
O = Observation
A = Application
P = Prayer

Use these daily SOAP devotionals to journal your prayer time.
The “construction” of the church really kicks into high gear in the second chapter of Acts. Jesus provided the blueprint of what would come in His final instructions to His followers and said they “would receive power...to be my witnesses.”

It is the Holy Spirit who truly empowered the early believers with the strength, wisdom, direction—and power—they would need to carry out Jesus’ instructions to take the Gospel into all the world. We receive the Holy Spirit as well when we entrust our lives to Jesus—which means we have that same power!

In today’s video, Pastor Troy reminds us that there’s nothing weird about the Holy Spirit. In fact, the amazing power to do all that God has created us to be comes from Him!

It’s kind of interesting that the Holy Spirit came while all of Jesus’ followers were gathered together in one place. The beginning of the church didn’t happen in a temple or synagogue, but in a small room—maybe a room like the one you’re in right now. Use these questions to help you consider what this means about how God can use you to help build His church.

1. Why do you think it’s such a big part of God’s plan for the church for people to gather not in rows, but in circles—in homes, not just in churches?

2. What feelings and thoughts might the early believers have shared with you and your group? Why is it good for us to be with others?

WATCH IT

Take a moment now to watch the video. You can pick up a DVD in the lobby or watch online at nlchurch.com/actsvideos.

HOST NOTE:

After watching the video, ask someone to read the scripture below. Then use rest of the SOAP guide to lead and direct discussion among the group. As you go through each of the subsequent sections, it may be helpful to ask someone else to read the questions and direct the discussion.

SCRIPTURE

Acts 2:1-4 (NIV)

1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.
Observation

In just one day, the church grows by 3,000 people. What was just a rag-tag bunch of people hiding out from both the Jewish authorities and the Roman government is now a church the size of New Life! Use the questions here to engage your group in discussion and observations on the passage.

Historical Note

Pentecost is the Greek name for the Jewish festival “Feast of Weeks,” which commemorated when God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses. According to Luke (the historian who wrote the book of Acts), the Holy Spirit arrived on this day, which is actually 50 days after Christ’s Resurrection—and the word “Pentecost” actually means “the fiftieth day.”

1. When you read this passage, what do you notice about the way the Holy Spirit arrived and what happened next? How does this affect the way people may view Him?

2. At least 14 places are mentioned in Acts 2, and all of them heard “the wonders of God in our own languages.” What is significant about this?

3. Over the course of 17 verses, the fisherman Peter delivers the first sermon about Jesus. How can this encourage us to share our faith?

Application

When you apply something, you put it into practice. It’s one thing to read the Bible, it’s another thing to live it out. A practical application of what you just observed from today’s study can help you discover just how much impact Scripture can have on every situation of your life!

In this section, discuss together ways you can apply what you’ve learned from the video teaching and Bible study. Then, think about some practical ways you can live out what you’ve learned.

1. Have you ever felt “weird” about sharing your faith? What can you learn from the disciples experience in Acts 2 that may help you feel more comfortable?

2. The Holy Spirit gave the disciples the ability to speak in many languages, but all for the purpose of hearing “the wonders of God” in their own languages. How can you use what God has empowered you with to share the wonders of God with people in your community?

3. Some people might respond negatively as you share your faith. Some people even accused the disciples of being drunk. What can you learn from Peter’s response?
Prayer

Host Note:
Before you end the session, encourage everyone to write a prayer down in the space provided. Then, gather everyone together and pray as a group.

“How can we pray for you this week?” Invite everyone to share, but don’t force the issue. Be sure to write prayer requests in your Life Group Prayer Journal on page 59.

Going Deeper

If you feel God nudging you to go deeper, take some time before the next meeting to get further into His Word. Explore the Bible passages related to this session’s theme on your own and write your reflections in a SOAP journal or in this study guide. A great way to gain insight on a passage is to read it in several different translations, so you may want to use a Bible app or website to compare translations.

Read Joel 2:28-32

1. This passage from Joel is quoted prominently by Peter in his Pentecost sermon. What is significant about this Old Testament prophecy?

2. Why does Peter use this Scripture to explain the events of Pentecost to the onlookers?

Read 2 Peter 2:3

1. What can you learn about how to live through this later reflection by Peter?

2. If we have everything we need through the power of the Holy Spirit, what changes might you need to make to truly live the kind of life Peter refers to here?

Family Focus

You may have your own questions about the Holy Spirit, and after you read the passage, your kids might have some, too. The key to remember is that while we may not understand everything about Him, we are clear on one thing: the Holy Spirit empowers anyone who loves Jesus to do exactly what He created us to do.

Ask your kids this question and then pray together as a family.

Q When the Holy Spirit came, He gave everyone power to share the Gospel. How can the Holy Spirit help you tell others about Jesus? (Answers will vary, but encourage your kids to understand that the Holy Spirit will give them boldness, He will help them know what to say, etc.)
DEVOTIONALS

DAY 1

S.O.A.P.

1 JOHN 4:7-8 (NIV)

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

DAY 2

S.O.A.P.

JEREMIAH 29:11 (NIV)

For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

DAY 3

S.O.A.P.

EPH. 3:20-21 (NIV)

God...is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

DAY 4

S.O.A.P.

PROVERBS 13:7 (MSG)

A pretentious, showy life is an empty life; a plain and simple life is a full life.

DAY 5

S.O.A.P.

ISAIAH 26:3 (TEV)

You, LORD, give perfect peace to those who keep their purpose firm and put their trust in you.

DAY 6

Use the following space for your daily S.O.A.P. devotionals. SOAP is an acronym that stands for:

S – Scripture
O – Observation
A – Application
P – Prayer

Use these daily SOAP devotionals to journal your prayer time.
Acts 2 begins with an event worthy of a Hollywood summer blockbuster: rushing winds, huge crowds, flames, an inspiring speech, and lots of special effects. But the chapter ends quite differently. After the church grows from a small group of people to a megachurch of more than 3,000, the early believers did something shocking: the bigger they got, the smaller they became.

They not only did the expected (getting together for worship and teaching, much like churches do today), they did something we may not expect: they spent time eating, praying, and even serving together.

In the video you’re about to watch, Pastor Matt reminds us of four characteristics we discover in the early church—and how the best way to let God grow His church might not be what you would think!

GETTING STARTED

From the start of the church, it becomes apparent that God really places an emphasis on community. Jesus shared His plan for the church around a meal, the Holy Spirit came while His followers were all in a living room, and in today’s passage we find them doing nearly everything together.

1. How might this be different from what you expect from church?

2. Why does God place such a big importance on community? How does this make you feel about church?

WATCH IT

Take a moment now to watch the video. You can pick up a DVD in the lobby or watch online at nlchurch.com/actsvideos.

HOST NOTE:

After watching the video, ask someone to read the scripture below. Then use rest of the SOAP guide to lead and direct discussion among the group. As you go through each of the subsequent sections, it may be helpful to ask someone else to read the questions and direct the discussion.

SCRIPTURE

Acts 2:41-47 (NIV)

41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. 42 They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.
The idea of community shown in this section of Acts can be inspiring and also a little scary. The way the early church shared everything, spent so much time together sounds appealing in our busy, disconnected world. Yet being close means being together when life gets messy, too—and that takes work. As you consider the passage today, use the questions below to foster conversation about what being in community means for you.

**Observation**

**Historical Note**

This is the only place in the book of Acts where we see this communal aspect of the church. Terminology in this passage even echoes other Greek philosophical writings that describe an ethic of friendship and shared giving that can be realized through ideal social and political arrangements. Luke makes clear that this community was key to the fact that God helped them grow daily.

1. Why is it key to note that the early church enjoyed “the favor of all the people?” How might that differ from your church experience?

2. Verse 42 says they “devoted themselves” to teaching, praying, being together, and eating together. Which of these is most “church-like” to you—and what seems the most “unlike” your experience?

3. As you read the passage, why do you think the “Lord added to their numbers daily those who were being saved”?

**Application**

When you apply something, you put it into practice. It’s one thing to read the Bible, it’s another thing to live it out. A practical application of what you just observed from today’s study can help you discover just how much impact Scripture can have on every situation of your life!

In this section, discuss some ways you can apply what you’ve learned from the video teaching and Bible study. Then, think about some practical ways you can live out what you’ve learned.

1. Being devoted to something means to give your heart and soul to it. What are some things you are most devoted to?

2. They met together in the temple and in each others’ homes. What ways can you “do life” with people both at church, in your neighborhood, and in your community?

3. The early church “ate together with glad and sincere hearts,” which might sound pretty special. What do you think it takes to create an environment where people do things together with that kind of attitude?
HOST NOTE:
Before you end the session, encourage everyone to write a prayer down in the space provided. Then, gather everyone together and pray as a group.

“How can we pray for you this week?” Invite everyone to share, but don’t force the issue. Be sure to write prayer requests in your Life Group Prayer Journal on page 59.

GOING DEEPER
If you feel God nudging you to go deeper, take some time before the next meeting to get further into His Word. Explore the Bible passages related to this session’s theme on your own and write your reflections in a SOAP journal or in this study guide. A great way to gain insight on a passage is to read it in several different translations, so you may want to use a Bible app or website to compare translations.

READ 1 TIMOTHY 6:18
1. Although written much later in church history than what Luke writes about in Acts 2, Paul’s advice to Timothy echoes the earlier actions of the church. Why does Paul encourage a similar outlook?

2. What is so important about the generosity of spirit and action that Paul shares here?

READ ROMANS 12:3-8
1. How can Paul’s writing here encourage you as you consider doing community with others in the church?

2. How can the advice in verse 3 make an eternal difference in the way we do life together?

FAMILY FOCUS
Today’s Scripture is something kids can relate to. They understand what it means to live in community a little easier than we may, because that’s what they do every day. They play together, eat together, they understand the concept of giving—and are frequently reminded to share what they have.

Read the following questions with your kids and then spend some time praying for each other.

Q. What ways do you live like the people in the early church? What is easiest for you—what might be more difficult? How is our family like the people in today’s Bible passage?
DEVOTIONALS

DAY 1
S.O.A.P.

EPHESIANS 5:17 (MSG)
Don’t live carelessly, unthinkingly. Make sure you understand what the Master wants.

DAY 2
S.O.A.P.

PHILIPPIANS 3:13 (NLT)
I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead.

DAY 3
S.O.A.P.

PHILIPPIANS 3:15 (MSG)
So let’s keep focused on that goal, those of us who want everything God has for us.

DAY 4
S.O.A.P.

JOHN 14:6 (NIV)
Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”.

DAY 5
S.O.A.P.

ROMANS 12:2 (TEV)
Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God—what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect.

DAY 6

Use the following space for your daily S.O.A.P. devotionals. SOAP is an acronym that stands for:

S – Scripture
O – Observation
A – Application
P – Prayer

Use these daily SOAP devotionals to journal your prayer time.
Construction sites are busy places. If you have ever stopped to watch the flurry of activity, you can see workers building, walls being developed, cranes moving, and trucks coming and going.

The church under construction is also a busy place, as God begins to expand His church in exponential ways. Sometimes, the problem with being busy is that it can be tough to stop and notice what is going on around you.

In today’s lesson, Pastor Troy reminds us that even in the midst of the busy-ness of building the church, Peter and John stopped, and paused -- then did something even greater for God. We can’t be so busy building God’s kingdom that we don’t notice the people He has placed in our way.

**GETTING STARTED**

When you stop and think about what it means to build the church, you may have your own ideas. As we learned last week, the disciples devoted themselves to many things. They were busy people--a lot like you and I might be today! Use these questions to spur some conversation in your group.

1. Have you ever felt like you were so busy doing what God has asked you to do that you’ve lost sight of why you were doing it?

2. How does being busy sometimes cause us not to see people the way Jesus would want us to?

**WATCH IT**

Take a moment now to watch the video. You can pick up a DVD in the lobby or watch online at nlchurch.com/actsvideos.

**HOST NOTE:**

After watching the video, ask someone to read the scripture below. Then use rest of the SOAP guide to lead and direct discussion among the group. As you go through each of the subsequent sections, it may be helpful to ask someone else to read the questions and direct the discussion.

**SCRIPTURE**

Acts 3:1-8 (NIV)

1 One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer--at three in the afternoon. 2 Now a man crippled from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts.

3 When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money.

4 Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, “Look at us!”

5 So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

6 Then Peter said, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.”

7 Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong. 8 He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God.
Observation

In today’s passage, Peter and John are continuing in the traditions they grew up with. At an appointed time each day—specifically at three in the afternoon—there was a time of prayer at the temple. Everyone did it, walking the same route, doing the same thing. But in one moment, Peter and John shake things up.

Historical Note

Luke is very clear about where and when this event took place. It’s important to note because at the time of day, the gate was one of the busiest places in Jerusalem. The lame man had been there every day of his life, and nearly anyone coming to the temple would have seen him. When Peter heals the man in the name of Jesus, his follow-up sermon was delivered to an impressive crowd, gathered for afternoon sacrifices. There is nothing accidental about what occurred because Peter and John stopped and looked at someone everyone else passed by.

1. What is significant about the fact that Peter and John “looked straight at” the lame man, and his words, “Look at us”?

2. When the man was healed, he went “walking and jumping, and praising God.” Why was this response so astonishing to the people?

3. Peter gives credit for the healing to Jesus alone. How does he model a proper way of honoring God for what happens in our lives?

Application

When you apply something, you put it into practice. It’s one thing to read the Bible, it’s another thing to live it out. A practical application of what you just observed from today’s study can help you discover just how much impact Scripture can have on every situation of your life!

In this section, take some time to discuss ways you can apply what you’ve learned from the video teaching and Bible study. Then, share some practical ways to live out what you’ve learned.

1. Peter and John both stopped in the middle of their worship to see someone everyone else passed by. How can this example help inspire you to stop and see hurting people around you?

2. When people see God at work in your life, are you able to speak boldly about it like Peter? Are there things you can learn from him in this passage to help you share your faith more readily?

3. God still has power to heal those who need it. This supernatural blessing isn’t mystical or weird—it’s one of the ways the Holy Spirit can work in us. How can you more actively pray for people who need healing?
PRAYER

HOST NOTE:
Before the session ends, take time to write some prayers down in the space below. Encourage everyone to gather together and pray for each other.

“How can we pray for you this week?” Invite everyone to share, but don’t force the issue. Be sure to write prayer requests in your Life Group Prayer Journal on page 59.

GOING DEEPER

If you feel God nudging you to go deeper, take some time before the next meeting to get further into His Word. Explore the Bible passages related to this session’s theme on your own and write your reflections in a SOAP journal or in this study guide. A great way to gain insight on a passage is to read it in several different translations, so you may want to use a Bible app or website to compare translations.

READ 1 JOHN 4:13-16

1. John went on to write several of his own letters to the church. In this passage, he communicates a powerful testimony of his own. What does John say here that should be a great encouragement for believers today? (v. 13-14)

2. Why is it so important for us to remember what John says here? (v. 15-16)

READ GALATIANS 5:22 AND 25

1. When the Spirit is alive in us, it produces definite fruit. What is being produced in your life? What do you need to work on?

2. What does Paul mean to “live by the Spirit” here? How can we encourage each other to “keep in step with the Spirit” as well?

FAMILY FOCUS

This is one of the most famous stories in the New Testament, and if you grew up in church you may even remember a song about the man who went “walking and leaping and praising God!” The important thing for kids to remember—and that they will appreciate—is that Peter and John took time to notice the lame man. They stopped and looked right at him and encouraged him to “look at me,” a phrase you may have used with your own kids.

Ask your children the following question, then pray together.

Q. Why was it so important that Peter and John stopped to look at the man? Why did Peter ask the beggar to look at him? (Answers may vary, but God wants us to remember to see everyone, to not pass anyone by, and to be aware when He is about to do something in our lives.)
### DAY 1

**S.O.A.P.**

1 COR. 10:13 (TEV)

...God keeps his promise, and he will not allow you to be tested beyond your power to remain firm; at the time you are put to the test, he will give you the strength to endure it, and so provide you with a way out.

### DAY 2

**S.O.A.P.**

JAMES 1:12 (GW)

Blessed are those who endure when they are tested. When they pass the test, they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

### DAY 3

**S.O.A.P.**

PSALM 24:1 (TEV)

The world and all that is in it belong to the LORD; the earth and all who live on it are his.

### DAY 4

**S.O.A.P.**

MATTHEW 25:21 (NIV)

'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

### DAY 5

**S.O.A.P.**

LUKE 12:48 (NIV)

From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

### DAY 6

Use the following space for your daily S.O.A.P. devotionals. SOAP is an acronym that stands for:

- S – Scripture
- O – Observation
- A – Application
- P – Prayer

Use these daily SOAP devotionals to journal your prayer time.
Whenever something is under construction, it seems that it inevitably hits setbacks or delays. Whether it’s caused by rain or just faulty equipment, circumstances arise that cause everyone to come to a stop.

As the church continues to grow, it finally hits its first significant setback. And it doesn’t come as the result of outside influences, but from people within the church. In the middle of some amazing growth, two people cause such damage that the Bible says “great fear seized the whole church.”

In today’s video, Pastor Vinnie reminds us that there is tension between our “saved” selves and the old selves that want to drag us down. When we don’t let God fully rule every part of our lives, we can cause a major—and in this case, deadly—delay in the work God is doing.

Have you ever struggled with something from your past? Sometimes we have great intentions, but bad choices or outside influences trip us up and cause us to lose our focus and our way. When we are “under construction,” we need to be ready for these moments. Use these questions to jump start the conversation.

1. When you see a construction delay, do you see it as an inconvenience or an opportunity for the builders to make sure everything is going the right way? Why or why not?
2. What might be a way our “old self” trips up the new creation we are in Christ Jesus?

Scripture

Acts 5:1-11 (NIV)

1 Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. 2 With his wife’s full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles’ feet. 3 Then Peter said, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? 4 Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn’t the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God.” 5 When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. 6 Then the young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him. 7 About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 Peter asked her, “Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?” “Yes,” she said, “that is the price.” 9 Peter said to her, “How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also.” 10 At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. 11 Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.
**Observation**

This isn’t the easiest passage to read or even understand. Here in the middle of explosive growth and incredible generosity, a man and his wife keep a little money for themselves and God strikes them dead. One might even say, “Well, that escalated quickly.” But what is key here is why Luke includes this story, a cautionary reminder in the book of Acts. Use the questions below to help further expand your observations.

**Historical Note**

Some historians point out that the harsh judgement on Annanias and Sapphira is a reminder of the importance of benefactors in the Greco-Roman world. Like the early church, the Roman families shared material wealth, and to hold anything back for themselves would be shameful to the whole family. Lying about it would have been even worse.

1. Does striking both Annanias and Sapphira dead for their actions seem like an overly harsh punishment? Why or why not?
2. What was the actual sin of this couple? Was it keeping some of the money for themselves, or just being dishonest about it?
3. As we serve God and grow in our faith, what can we learn from this incredibly tragic example?

**Application**

When you apply something, you put it into practice. It’s one thing to read the Bible, it’s another thing to live it out. A practical application of what you just observed from today’s study can help you discover just how much impact Scripture can have on every situation of your life!

In this section, discuss together ways you can apply what you’ve learned from the video teaching and Bible study. Then, think about some practical ways you can live out what you’ve learned.

1. Annanias and Sapphira acted out of the wrong motivations. Why is it so important to God that our heart matches our actions?
2. We may not fully understand why God punished this couple so severely, but it is clear that it affected the entire church as a result. Why do our choices have such a huge impact on so many other people?
3. Sapphira had a second chance to be honest, yet chose to continue her husband’s lie. When God gives an opportunity to make things right, what should our choice be?
**PRAYER**

**HOST NOTE:**
Before you end the session, encourage everyone to write a prayer down in the space provided. Then, gather everyone together and pray as a group.

“How can we pray for you this week?” Invite everyone to share, but don’t force the issue. Be sure to write prayer requests in your *Life Group Prayer Journal* on page 59.

---

**GOING DEEPER**

Is God encouraging you to go deeper in your faith? Take time before the next meeting to get further into His Word! You can explore the Bible passages here, (all related to this session’s theme) on your own and write your reflections in a SOAP journal or in this study guide. A great way to gain insight on a passage is to read it in several different translations, so you may want to use a Bible app or website to compare translations.

---

**READ LUKE 6:44-46**

1. Compare the story of Annanias and Sapphira to these words from Jesus. How does what Jesus says here shed light on their actions?

2. “For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.” If this is true, what was honestly in the hearts of this couple? What were their motivations? (v. 45)

---

**READ PSALM 51**

1. David has sinned greatly, and here he confesses his sin to God. What is significant about his response to his actions?

2. Compare verse 11 with the story of Annanias and Sapphira. Why was the result of David’s sin so different from that of the lying couple?

---

**FAMILY FOCUS**

If this is a difficult passage for adults, it’s even harder for kids. It seems cruel and a bit arbitrary. It’s important to not focus on what happened to Annanias and his wife, but their motivations. Kids understand what it means to not be entirely truthful. Helping them know that God knows the truth even when we try to hide it can be motivational in helping them make the wise choice. It’s important to emphasize that God wants everyone who loves Him to be honest and truthful.

Share this question with your family and then pray together.

Q: What is the most important thing to remember from this story? *(Answers will vary, but direct kids to focus on the importance of being honest, God knows our heart, don’t think you can lie to God, etc.)*
Use the following space for your daily S.O.A.P. devotionals. SOAP is an acronym that stands for:

S – Scripture
O – Observation
A – Application
P – Prayer

Use these daily SOAP devotionals to journal your prayer time.

DAY 1

S.O.A.P.

PSALM 39:4 (NLT)

“LORD, remind me how brief my time on earth will be. Remind me that my days are numbered—how fleeting my life is.

DAY 2

S.O.A.P.

JOHN 15:5 (CEV)

I am the vine, and you are the branches. If you stay joined to me, and I stay joined to you, then you will produce lots of fruit. But you cannot do anything without me.

DAY 3

S.O.A.P.

ROMANS 12:5 (GW)

…Christ makes us one body and individuals who are connected to each other.

DAY 4

S.O.A.P.

HEBREWS 2:10 (NCV)

God is the One who made all things, and all things are for his glory. He wanted to have many children share his glory.

DAY 5

S.O.A.P.

1 JOHN 3:1A (NLT)

See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are!
If the structure of a building is off by just a bit, the building won’t survive. As something is under construction, it’s constantly evaluated by the engineers, architect, and builders to ensure it has integrity, that it will withstand earthquakes, fires, and other problems.

The church under construction must be the same way. The apostles quickly discover that while what God is building is amazing, the structure is off—it won’t be able to support itself in the future, and eventually, if they aren’t careful, the whole thing will collapse.

In this week’s video, Pastor Troy points out the importance of everyone who is part of the church realizing they have a part to play. It took a structural change in the church’s makeup to ensure everyone would have the opportunity of growing the way Christ wanted them to.

As things grow, it naturally takes more and more people to make them happen. The team that begins a building is much smaller than the one that is there as the skyscraper goes up. In fact, the disciples suddenly realized they were getting overwhelmed doing what God had called them to do. The questions below can help start this week’s conversations.

1. If you had to choose, would you rather be involved at the start of something, the middle of it, or at the end?

2. Have you ever felt overwhelmed doing what God has called you to do? What is the result when that happens?

**SOAP GUIDE**

**S**cripture

Acts 6:1-7 (NIV)

1 In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. 2 So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. 3 Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.” 4 This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. 5 They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. 6 So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

**H**ost **N**ote:

After watching the video, ask someone to read the scripture below. Then use rest of the SOAP guide to lead and direct discussion among the group. As you go through each of the subsequent sections, it may be helpful to ask someone else to read the questions and direct the discussion.

**W**atch **I**t

Take a moment now to watch the video. You can pick up a DVD in the lobby or watch online at nlchurch.com/actsvideos.
Observation

Much like the church today, the early church was growing into a multicultural group of people. Believers were of many nationalities, races, and creeds. Sadly, they began to face some trouble. While “the trouble” originated over concerns whether one group was getting preferential treatment over the other, it quickly became clear that the church actually faced a structural problem. As you make your own observations, use the questions below to further your discussion.

Historical Note

While the early church was primarily Jewish in makeup, two distinct groups emerge in this chapter: Hebraic Jews, who followed traditional Hebrew culture and customs, and Hellenistic Jews, who had adopted the Greek language and its cultures. Differences in language and culture prompted the first major cultural crisis in the church.

1. Why do you think cultural differences seem to cause so much division in the church? What is the best response to division like this?

2. The men chosen in verse 5 are all Greek Jews. What is significant about the fact that the apostles were willing to entrust the work to them?

3. Why was the disciples’ decision to change the structure of the church a good one? (See v. 7)

Application

When you apply something, you put it into practice. It’s one thing to read the Bible, it’s another thing to live it out. A practical application of what you just observed from today’s study can help you discover just how much impact Scripture can have on every situation of your life!

In this section, take some time to discuss ways you can apply what you’ve learned from the video teaching and Bible study. Then, share some practical ways to live out what you’ve learned.

1. The seven who jumped in to help the serving of food had a significant impact on the growth of the church. How could your serving make a difference in the growth of the church today?

2. The apostles were able to focus on what they needed to do, the seven were able to focus on what they were supposed to do. Everyone has a role to play in the structure of the church. What role do you think you should play?

3. When you see trouble in the church, what is your response? Do you look for ways to help or do you find ways to complain? What response is modeled in this chapter?
**Prayer**

*Host Note:*
Take a moment before you end this session to ask those in your group how your group can pray for them.

“How can we pray for you this week?” Invite everyone to share, but don’t force the issue. Be sure to write prayer requests in your Life Group Prayer Journal on page 59.

---

**Going Deeper**

If you feel like, God wants you to go deeper, take some time to dig into His Word. Explore the Bible passages related to this session’s theme on your own and jot your reflections in a journal or in this study guide. A great way to gain insight on a passage is to read it in several different translations. You may want to use a Bible app or website to compare translations.

---

**Read Exodus 18:13-26**

1. In this passage, Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law reminds him that the structure of his leadership is not working. He’s doing all the work. What is important about Jethro’s question in verse 14?

2. Why does Jethro advise Moses to appoint men to help him? (v. 22-23)

---

**Read Romans 16:1-16**

1. What is significant about the people Paul lists in this letter?

2. What can we learn about God’s plan for the structure of the church from Paul’s list of fellow workers?

---

**Family Focus**

Kids understand the idea of working together. Watch them play on the playground and you’ll see how they know the importance of every person playing the part they need to play. What’s awesome is that this is how God wants us to serve Him, too. Encourage your kids to find their area of service—the role they are supposed to play in the church—because everyone has a part to play.

Take a moment to pray together as a family and ask God to help your family discover where they fit into the structure of the church and the way God wants to use you!
DAILY
S.O.A.P.

DEVOTIONALS

DAY 1
S.O.A.P.

COLOSSIANS 2:7 (TLB)
Let your roots grow down into him and draw up nourishment from him. See that you go on growing in the Lord, and become strong and vigorous in the truth you were taught. Let your lives overflow with joy and thanksgiving for all he has done.

DAY 2
S.O.A.P.

ROMANS 8:29 (MSG)
God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him.

DAY 3
S.O.A.P.

EPH. 4:22A-24 (MSG)
…take on an entirely new way of life—a God-fashioned life, a life renewed from the inside and working itself into your conduct as God accurately reproduces his character in you.

DAY 4
S.O.A.P.

PHILIPPIANS 2:13 (NLT)
For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

DAY 5
S.O.A.P.

EPHESIANS 4:15 (MSG)
God wants us to grow up, to know the whole truth and tell it in love—like Christ in everything. We take our lead from Christ, who is the source of everything we do.

DAY 6
Use the following space for your daily S.O.A.P. devotionals. SOAP is an acronym that stands for:
S – Scripture
O – Observation
A – Application
P – Prayer
Use these daily SOAP devotionals to journal your prayer time.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the first thing we should do as a group?
We recommend you start with a party! Have a meal together, do something fun, laugh together. This is a great way to break the ice with your group before you begin your study. You can incorporate this party into your first night or get together before your first study.

Where do we find new members for our group?
We encourage you to pray and then brainstorm a list of people from work, church, your neighborhood, your children’s school, family, the gym and so forth. We all have a tribe—friends...people we do life together with. No matter how you find members, it’s vital that you stay on the lookout for new people to join your group. The next person just might become a friend for life. You never know!

How long will this group meet?
Under Construction, a study on the book of Acts, is a 6-week study. Most groups meet weekly, but every other week can work as well. After it’s over we encourage you to keep going! At the end, each group member may decide if he or she wants to continue on for another study. Some groups launch relationships for years to come, and others are stepping-stones into another group experience.

What if this group is not working for us?
You’re not alone! This could be the result of a personality conflict, life stage difference, geographical distance, level of spiritual maturity, or any number of things. Relax. Pray for God’s direction, and at the end of this six-week study, decide whether to continue with this group or find another. You don’t typically buy the first car you look at or marry the first person you date, and the same goes with a group. However, don’t bail out before the six weeks are up—God might have something to teach you!

How do we handle childcare for our group?
Childcare may be a barrier for families engaging in a Life Group, so before it starts make sure you have a plan! You may offer shared care at your house, have all kids at another nearby house, or encourage parents to get their own childcare. New Life offers Childcare Reimbursement for Life Groups. Go to www.nlchurch.com/groups for more info and to submit a reimbursement request.

LIFE GROUP RESOURCES
Resources to make your Life Group experience even better!
HOST TIPS

Take a second to let us know you’re meeting.
Our team would love to encourage you while you host this group.
Please take 30 seconds to let us know you are meeting by going to the New Life website, and emailing Life Groups.

Sweaty palms are a healthy sign.
The Bible says God is gracious to the humble. Remember who is in control; the time to worry is when you’re not worried. Those who are soft in heart (and sweaty palmed) are those whom God is sure to use.

Bring your uniqueness to the study.
Lean into who you are and how God wants you to uniquely facilitate the study. Be authentic! You don’t need to try to be anyone else but yourself.

We have made this study to be easy for you to facilitate! The best thing you can do to prepare each week is to pray for the people in your group. We encourage you to take a peek at the upcoming session in this study guide before each session. You can even preview the video if it will help you feel more confident.

Remember that you are not alone.
God knows everything about you, and He knew that you would host this group. Remember that it is common for all good leaders to feel that they are not ready to lead. God promises, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). Whether you are leading for the first time or the hundredth time, you will be blessed as you serve.

Don’t try to do it alone.
Enlist others to help lead your group. Ask people to help read portions of the study, to lead in prayer or to organize snacks or a serving project. You might just find a future Life Group leader in your group. This doesn’t need to happen overnight, but consider how you can help someone in your group facilitate a Life Group of their own in the future. As God entrusts more people to our church we will need more people to host a Life Group.

When you ask a question, be patient.
Someone will eventually respond. Sometimes people need a moment or two to think about the question. Keep in mind, if silence doesn’t bother you, it won’t bother anyone else. After someone responds, affirm the response with a simple “thanks.” Then ask, “How about somebody else?” Be sensitive to new people or reluctant members who aren’t ready to say, pray or do anything. Don’t feel the need to follow up their responses with your own answer. Your job is to facilitate discussion, not be the source for every answer.

Provide transitions between questions.
When guiding the discussion, always read aloud the transitional paragraphs and the questions. Ask the group if anyone would like to read the paragraph or Bible passage. Don’t call on anyone, but ask for a volunteer, and then be patient until someone begins. Be sure to thank the person who reads aloud.

Break up into smaller groups if your group gets too big.
If your group has more than ten people, we strongly encourage you to have the group gather in discussion circles of five or six people during the Watch It, Scripture, Observation, Application, and Prayer sections of the study. With a greater opportunity to talk in a small circle, people will connect more with the study, apply more quickly what they’re learning and ultimately get more out of it.
LIFE GROUP CALENDAR

Planning and calendaring can help ensure the greatest participation at every meeting. At the end of each meeting, review this calendar. Don’t forget birthdays, socials, church events, holidays, and service projects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Host Home</th>
<th>Dessert/Meal</th>
<th>Leader</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11/16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Steve and Laura’s</td>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>Bill</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SERVING WITH YOUR GROUP

Growing means Serving.
Each Life Group at New Life is designed to help you grow in your relationship with Jesus. A natural outflow of that growth will be a desire to serve. We encourage you to do a service project with your group. Not only does serving together bring everyone closer together it is the way we can be the hands and feet of Jesus to our community.

How often should we serve?
We encourage you to do a service project sometime during this Acts Part 1 group. For ongoing groups we encourage finding at least 2-3 times per year to serve. Try to make this part of the culture of your group and not just a one-time event.

Where should we serve?
We encourage every Life Group to serve through one of our Community Partners. New Life has partnered with local organizations that we encourage groups to connect with.
**NL Community Partners**

- The Salvation Army, Renton
- Renton Meal Coalition
- Birthday Dreams
- Vision House
- Vine Maple Place
- Maple Valley Food Bank & Emergency Services
- Northwest Harvest - Kent Warehouse
- Seattle’s Union Gospel Mission
- Volunteer Chore Services (Catholic Community Services)
- World Relief - Seattle
- World Vision - Pacific Northwest
- Habitat For Humanity Seattle/South King County
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Puget Sound
- Highline Area Food Bank
- Hospitality House

To contact these Community Partners, visit our website at nlchurch.com/communitypartners and find the organization you would like to work with. When talking with the organization remember to take the following steps:

1. Identify yourself as a Life Group from New Life Church
2. Identify an upcoming opportunity from the organization.
3. Schedule your volunteer time at least 2 weeks out from when you call.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact us at communitypartners@nlchurch.com.