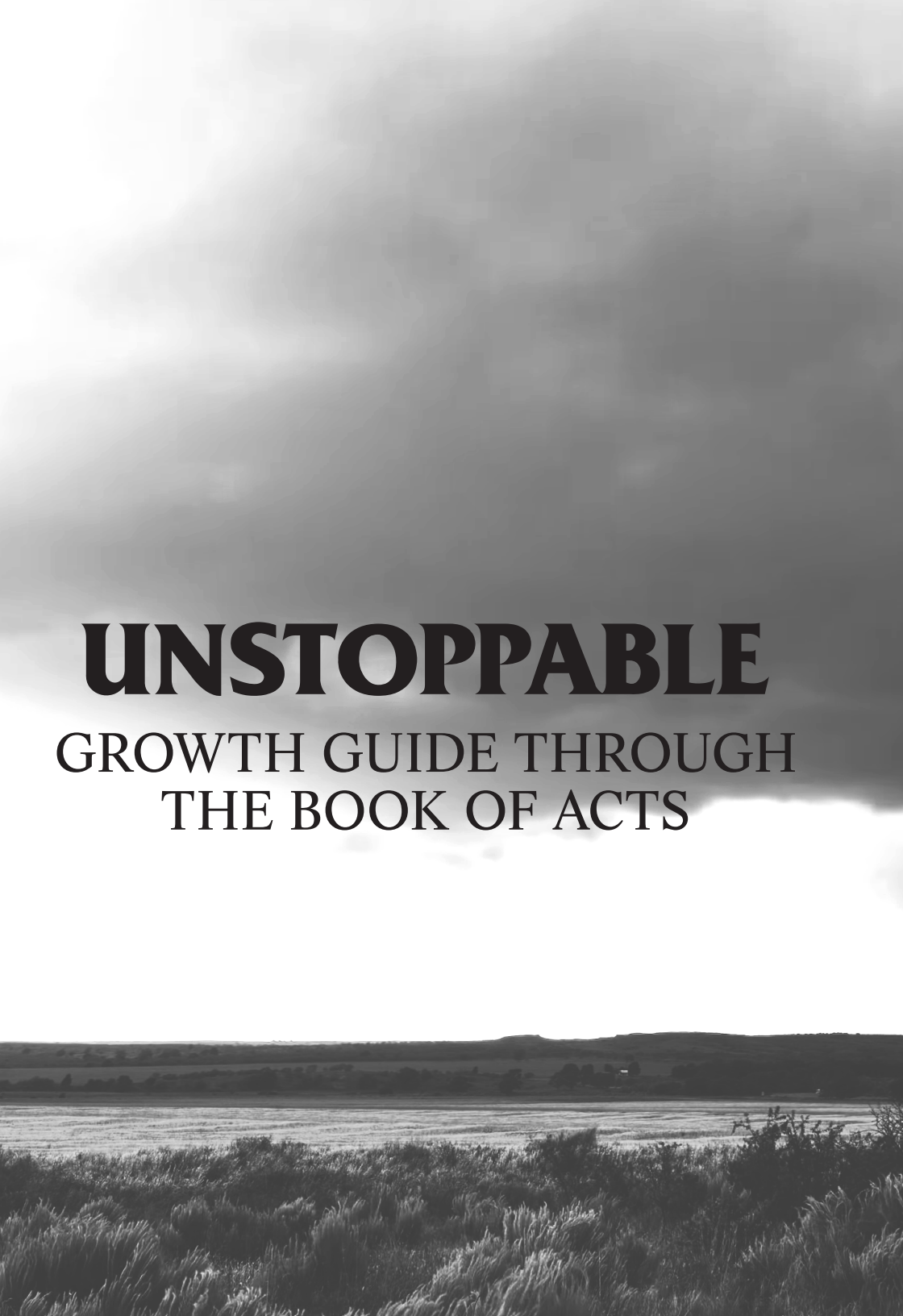


UNSTOPPABLE

GROWTH GUIDE THROUGH
THE BOOK OF ACTS



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WELCOME

Thank you for joining us as we not only journey through the book of Acts, but put it into action.

“The history of God’s people is not a record of God searching for courageous men and women who could handle the task, but God transforming the hearts of cowards and calling them to live courageous lives.”

–Eriwn McManus

PURPOSE

History is such a wonderful thing to learn from—especially church history. We’re able to learn from great people who were inspired by God. The Book of Acts is the origin of the great endeavor Jesus inspired when He said, *“I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”* (Matthew 16:18)

Believe it or not, this actually did come true. Conflict and controversy threatened to take the first-century Church, but instead of killing it, the challenges fueled the fire that spread across the first-century landscape.

Despite severe persecution, the Church not only survived, but grew from 120 people on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) to over 20 million people three hundred years later. Despite plagues, corruptions, crusades, and dictators, the Church has been reformed, renewed, and revitalized—even in our mid-COVID world today. Jesus is *still* building His Church through us.

You just can’t stop what God is doing! No matter what move man makes, God supercedes it; His purposes move forward. His hands are never tied. His message is never muted. No matter what opposition is thrown in its path, when the Church of Jesus Christ is what it’s intended it to be, it is flat-out an *unstoppable force*.

What this means for us is not to simply read Acts, but to put Acts into action. Let's continue to be unstoppable, reaching and loving a lost world that needs Jesus more than ever. Living unstoppable lives starts right here, together.

This growth guide is not designed to be used individually but to be interactive with a small group community to discuss what you read and takeaways from the previous Sunday message.

HOW

The Order of activities to fully maximize your experience:

1. Work on this **GROWTH GUIDE**; Read, reflect, and write for the week assigned.
2. Attend our Sunday **GATHERING**, and listen to the message related to the content you just completed in the guide the week before.
3. After the growth guide and gathering discussion, attend a small group meeting and complete the corresponding **ACT-OUT ACTIVITY** (see below for more details) you committed to during the small group meeting.

Additional Resources

For group questions based on each Sunday's Message, navigate to the "Doing Life Together" section of our Unstoppable website (ctk.church/NorthBay/Unstoppable) where you can find additional resources and growth tools.

You can also like and follow our Facebook page (@ctknorthbay) and look for weekly Unstoppable encouragements and accompanying video from Dan that will be available each Monday throughout the series.

INTRO

Courtesy of New Life Church in Silverdale, WA

Acts is the story of some of the first followers of Jesus, and is one that is chock-full of discovery. Everything at the time was new and unexpected. "What will happen next?" "What would it mean to follow Jesus now?"

"The mysterious presence of Jesus haunts the whole story of acts. Jesus is announced as King and Lord, not as an increasingly distant memory but as a living and powerful reality; a person who can be known and loved, obeyed and followed; a person who continues to act within the real world. We call the book 'the acts of the apostles,' but we should think of it as 'the acts of Jesus: part two.'"

-N.T. Wright

TITLE AND GENRE

The title "Acts of the Apostles" was not part of the original text. It was first used by a second-century church leader named Irenaeus. Some have suggested that the title of the book, Acts, ought to be interpreted as "The Acts of the Holy Spirit" or "The Acts of Jesus."

Acts 1 gives the reader the impression that this is an account of what Jesus continued to do and teach. The word Acts is a recognized genre in the ancient world: "characterizing books that described great deeds of people or of cities."

DATE

The original edition of Acts undoubtedly was written in the second half of the first century—within 30 to 40 years of Jesus' resurrection. Since Acts does not mention the death of Paul the Apostle nor the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, this original edition was likely penned before

both events. (Paul was beheaded by Caesar Nero in Rome between 62–67 CE. The Jerusalem Temple was destroyed by Rome in 70 CE).

AUTHOR

Luke, the author of one of the four Gospels found in the New Testament of the Bible, was also the one who composed Acts. He intended his Gospel and Acts to be consumed as a two-volume set.

The only known Gentile (non-Jewish) writer in the New Testament, Luke was neither actually an eyewitness of Jesus. Based on the prelude in Luke Chapter 1, he is functioning as a historian in a way the first-century reader would understand.

To compose the two books, Luke collected eyewitness accounts of the life, stories, and teachings of Jesus, and then collated them together in a two-volume set. In fact, roughly 50% of Luke's collected stories of Jesus are *not* found in any other Gospel. Another interesting fact is that Luke records 18 parables not found in the other Gospels—including “the Good Samaritan” and “the Prodigal Son.”

Luke was a co-worker of Paul the Apostle's and contributed a large portion of the writings of the New Testament. He is believed to have been a native of the city of Antioch. It's possible a fair number of Acts from Antioch are potentially a first-person eyewitness account of the unfolding Jesus Movement.

AUDIENCE

The name Theophilus literally means “loved by God” and carries the idea of “friend of God.” This could mean Theophilus is a generic title that applies to all Christians, but from the context of the books of Luke and Acts, it is also

probable that Luke is writing to a specific individual by that name. Luke addresses Theophilus as “most excellent,” a title often used when referring to someone of high honor or rank such as a Roman official.

Paul used the same term when addressing Felix (Acts 23:26; Acts 24:2) and Festus (Acts 26:25). It is possible—perhaps even probable—that Theophilus was a Roman officer or high-ranking official in the Roman government.

Another suggestion is that Theophilus was a wealthy influential leader in Antioch. Intriguingly there are second-century references to a man named Theophilus who was a great lord and a leader in Antioch during the time of Luke.

Many scholars believe that Theophilus could have been a wealthy benefactor who supported Paul and Luke on their missionary journeys, which could account for Luke's desire to provide a detailed and orderly account of the stories of Jesus and the rapid expansion of His Church.

THE WEEKS

Weekly Growth Guide Instructions

BIBLE READING

Read the assigned chapters in Acts for the week.

REFLECTION AND WRITING

After reading, reflect on and answer the following:

1. **What did Acts say?** Give a summary of what you read and any observations you found interesting enough to jot down.
2. **What does it mean to me?** What personal thoughts did you have that made you feel like God may have spoken to or challenged you?
3. **What do I do with it now?** Do you feel convicted after reading and reflecting? What specific action step(s) do you feel led to accomplish this week?

Be prepared to share with your small group what you got out of your personal growth time.

ACT-OUT ACTIVITY

How silly would it be to read a book called Acts and not actually take any action?

We've provided a list of Act-Out Activities in the back of this guide. Each week, pick one out from the list (or make up your own) that you will do either individually or with others. Be ready to share your experience with your group.

GROUP TIME

The following is a sample of a weekly small group outline:

- Connection and Fellowship; spend time catching up and enjoying each others' company
- Share your personal Growth Guide experience from previous week
- Discuss the Bible reading that was assigned or use the weekly Doing Life Together guide
- Act-Out Activity Update; share what action steps you are individually or collectively taking to put what was discussed into practice
- Pray for one another
- Preview and plan for next week

LET'S GET STARTED

We as a CTK North Bay staff sincerely hope you are able to have a profound experience with God through this weekly process of discovery, reflection, and growth. As you go through this guide individually and with your community, be encouraged to take notes and jot down any thoughts, prayers, revelations, or verses you don't want to forget. This book is meant to be used, so use it!

Thank you for taking on this challenge with us as we navigate the Book of Acts together as a Church body! God will be with you through this whole process!

WEEK 1

ACTS 1 - 2

REFLECTION AND WRITING

1. What did Acts say?
2. What does it mean to me?
3. What do I do with it now?

ACT-OUT ACTIVITY

(choose one and list below)

GROUP TIME

(visit ctk.church/NorthBay/Unstoppable or use the Doing Life Together discussion from Sunday's listening guide)

PRAYER NEEDS/UPDATES

WEEK 2

ACTS 3 - 5

REFLECTION AND WRITING

1. What did Acts say?
2. What does it mean to me?
3. What do I do with it now?

ACT-OUT ACTIVITY

(choose one and list below)

GROUP TIME

(visit ctk.church/NorthBay/Unstoppable or use the Doing Life Together discussion from Sunday's listening guide)

PRAYER NEEDS/UPDATES

WEEK 3

ACTS 6 - 8

REFLECTION AND WRITING

1. What did Acts say?
2. What does it mean to me?
3. What do I do with it now?

ACT-OUT ACTIVITY

(choose one and list below)

GROUP TIME

(visit ctk.church/NorthBay/Unstoppable or use the Doing Life Together discussion from Sunday's listening guide)

PRAYER NEEDS/UPDATES

WEEK 4

ACTS 9 - 10

REFLECTION AND WRITING

1. What did Acts say?
2. What does it mean to me?
3. What do I do with it now?

ACT-OUT ACTIVITY

(choose one and list below)

GROUP TIME

(visit ctk.church/NorthBay/Unstoppable or use the Doing Life Together discussion from Sunday's listening guide)

PRAYER NEEDS/UPDATES

WEEK 5

ACTS 11 - 13

REFLECTION AND WRITING

1. What did Acts say?
2. What does it mean to me?
3. What do I do with it now?

ACT-OUT ACTIVITY

(choose one and list below)

GROUP TIME

(visit ctk.church/NorthBay/Unstoppable or use the Doing Life Together discussion from Sunday's listening guide)

PRAYER NEEDS/UPDATES

WEEK 6

ACTS 14 - 16

REFLECTION AND WRITING

1. What did Acts say?
2. What does it mean to me?
3. What do I do with it now?

ACT-OUT ACTIVITY

(choose one and list below)

GROUP TIME

(visit ctk.church/NorthBay/Unstoppable or use the Doing Life Together discussion from Sunday's listening guide)

PRAYER NEEDS/UPDATES

WEEK 7

ACTS 17 - 19

REFLECTION AND WRITING

1. What did Acts say?
2. What does it mean to me?
3. What do I do with it now?

ACT-OUT ACTIVITY

(choose one and list below)

GROUP TIME

(visit ctk.church/NorthBay/Unstoppable or use the Doing Life Together discussion from Sunday's listening guide)

PRAYER NEEDS/UPDATES

WEEK 8

ACTS 20 - 23

REFLECTION AND WRITING

1. What did Acts say?
2. What does it mean to me?
3. What do I do with it now?

ACT-OUT ACTIVITY

(choose one and list below)

GROUP TIME

(visit ctk.church/NorthBay/Unstoppable or use the Doing Life Together discussion from Sunday's listening guide)

PRAYER NEEDS/UPDATES

WEEK 9

ACTS 24 - 26

REFLECTION AND WRITING

1. What did Acts say?
2. What does it mean to me?
3. What do I do with it now?

ACT-OUT ACTIVITY

(choose one and list below)

GROUP TIME

(visit ctk.church/NorthBay/Unstoppable or use the Doing Life Together discussion from Sunday's listening guide)

PRAYER NEEDS/UPDATES

WEEK 10

ACTS 27 - 28

REFLECTION AND WRITING

1. What did Acts say?
2. What does it mean to me?
3. What do I do with it now?

ACT-OUT ACTIVITY

(choose one and list below)

GROUP TIME

(visit ctk.church/NorthBay/Unstoppable or use the Doing Life Together discussion from Sunday's listening guide)

PRAYER NEEDS/UPDATES

ACT-OUT ACTIVITY IDEAS

#1 MEALS

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”
(Acts 2:42)

Share a Meal

Jesus spent a lot of time eating with people. Meals are important to the story of Jesus and our stories. Who can you plan to share a meal with in the coming weeks?

Who is in your life on a regular basis?

Neighbors? Friends? Invite people in your life to a meal.

Don't like to cook?

Order takeout! At school or work? Have lunch with someone new, bring a meal to a neighbor, or even a family member.

Give and Receive

Say yes when someone new invites you to a meal. Allow yourself to be a guest at someone else's table.

#2 THE LORD'S TABLE

“They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,”
(Acts 2:46)

Jesus invited his followers to remember him with a special meal, sometimes called Communion or the Lord's Table. When you are with your friends who follow Jesus, try taking communion together. Despite the common misconception, Communion is not just meant to be taken at a church service, but together as followers of Jesus; anytime, anywhere!

How to Celebrate Communion

All you need is something to eat, something to drink, and some people who want to remember how good Jesus's life, death, and resurrection are to them.

This special meal is a remembrance—something followers of Jesus throughout history have done because Jesus asked us to. You can read **Luke 22:14-20** together to prepare.

You can take Communion anywhere with any food items, but Jesus used bread and wine. The bread represents Jesus' body and the cup represents Jesus's blood. You might say to one another as you eat and drink: “This is Christ's body that was broken for you. This is Christ's blood shed for you.” Share about your gratefulness for Jesus around your table together.

#3 GIVE STUFF AWAY

“They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.”
(Acts 2:45)

The church in Acts jumped at any opportunity to give generously to anyone in and outside the faith. What do you have that can help others? Who do you know that has a need? How can you and your group help meet that need?

You might help a local organization, a neighbor, a friend, a stranger, or whoever has a need! How can you be generous?

Ideas:

Sock drive for homeless; give clothes away to Goodwill or Value Village; give food away directly or to a food bank; give away something that you have more of than you have immediate need for.

#4 SERVE THE COMMUNITY

Partner with a local non-profit organization and serve there individually or with your small group, or serve someone who you know has a need.

Is someone you know moving? Maybe you can help! Can you provide childcare? Can you help someone fix their car? If there is anything that exists in our world, it is an abundance of need.

If you're unsure of where to start, reflect on something that you're passionate about. Maybe the Lord is inviting you to serve there!

#5 SHARE FAITH CREATIVELY

There are numerous ways we can share our faith, such as through storytelling, art, poems, or graffiti (just kidding!). Come up with a creative way to use your gifts so you can share your faith with others.

Simply be with the people around you in the spaces where you already exist. Consider how to befriend someone and possibly share your faith with them when the right opportunity arises.

#6 MISSION WORK

Discuss with your small group or friends how you can organize an opportunity to reach out locally or even globally. Speak with agencies or other missions organizations to find out what might work for you.

It could be as simple as fulfilling a need through a local missions agency, supporting a missionary abroad, or taking the bold step of embarking on a mission trip of your own!

#7 PRAYER PARTNERSHIP

A very tangible way that we can support one another as a community is through prayer. Pick a prayer partner and commit to praying for one another every day throughout the week. This could be someone in your small group or a friend or fellow church member.

In Acts 13, Paul and Barnabas were sent out from the same church ministry. They traveled, taught and served God together. They were friends and without a doubt; the Christian mentor relationship was mutually enjoyable for both. Barnabas was an outstanding model of a sponsor and Christian mentor for Paul.

Who could be your Paul? Who could be your Barnabas?

#8 MY DAILY PRACTICE

Slow down every day this week. When you wake up in the morning, before you check your phone, spend time with God through prayer or the reading of scripture. Whenever you find yourself waiting, practice self-discipline by intentionally neglect to look at your phone, and spend the moment instead enjoying God's presence.

While in the car, practice spending a period of time driving in silence; leave the radio off and practice being still with your mind. The point of this practice is to become in tune with God by simply refusing distractions.

#9 FASTING

Fasting is one of the most ancient spiritual practices in Christianity. We fast to practice self-control, self-discipline, and dependence on the spirit of God. Fasting allows us to amplify the voice of God by silencing the voice of something else.

You can fast from all sorts of things things, though the most commonly associated fast is food. You can also fast from TV, music, social media, alcohol, sleeping in, and so much more. Choose something that will be challenging to give up so that you can enter into focused and intentional dependence on God.

#10 SABBATH

In our culture of more and more, of competitive busyness, the importance of the Sabbath seems obvious when we think about it. We find ourselves going through our days far too quickly; it seems we're always exhausted, and we often experience burnout.

Sabbath is an ancient command of the Lord that invites us to set aside one day per week that is solely focused on resting and delighting in the Lord. The point is not to do nothing—you don't have to spend the whole day praying or doing spiritual practices. Instead, take time to do things that actually rejuvenate you, that truly bring you joy. Delight in the Lord and choose thankfulness.

On your Sabbath day, choose to not work. In fact, don't do anything that even feels like work. If tasks like grocery shopping or laundry feel like labor to you, save those tasks for later or make sure to do them ahead of time in the future.

As worries appear in your mind, don't indulge them. Simply respond to them with, "I'm not thinking about that today," and pray the Lord guards your mind.

Most of all, if you choose to practice Sabbath, protect that time dearly. There will surely be opportunities that will threaten to replace that time. Instead, prioritize the Sabbath, and spend the other six days of the week taking care of those things you "need" to do.

CONCLUSION

Congratulations! You've made it to the end of this season's Growth Guide.

We sincerely hope you were able to glean some profound and memorable experiences with the Lord through your engagement with the practices in this guide. The Book of Acts is a richly deep account of the works of Jesus beyond the earth where He briefly dwelled. It is a comforting reminder that His work did not end at his ascension and that He yet remains with us even now through the Holy Spirit.

You are encouraged to revisit these practices again as often as you desire, and to work the Act-Out Activities you practiced into your daily and weekly interaction with the Lord. He never gets tired of you giving Him your praise and attention—He can never get enough of you!

Remember to keep ACTS in your prayer life as you go:

A doration

Give God praise and honor for who He is as Lord over all.

C onfession

Honestly deal with the sin in your prayer life.

T hanksgiving

Verbalize what you're grateful for in your life and in the world around you.

S upplication

Pray for the needs of others and yourself.

Over 2,000 years ago, roughly five hundred people saw the resurrected Jesus firsthand. As a result, a small band of his followers gathered and waited for what was next.

*As they gathered, the promised Holy Spirit came upon them, resulting in over 3,000 people also becoming followers of Jesus. It was from that room the message of Jesus spread across the world, which led to the transformation of whole communities, then regions, and eventually turned the entire world upside down. The message of Jesus became **UNSTOPPABLE**.*

So, what about us, the modern-day Church? Why would the message of Jesus be any less so today? Join us as we explore this by diving in as a church together through the Book of Acts this season!

*Christ The King Community Church
ctk.church/NorthBay*

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