

Reading Schedule for April 2-8, 2018

There is something that I do every year that always encourages and challenges me at the same time. I want to read through the Book of Acts, even as we read about the implications of the resurrection. The story of the early church is fantastic, and gives us a glimpse of the kind of things that God can do when we honor him with all our hearts. May the Book of Acts come alive for you.

April 2 - Acts 1:1-11: “After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.” (v.3) This is a summary of what Jesus did after he was resurrected from the dead. The Gospel of Luke was dedicated to Theophilus, and so this book as well. We don’t know anything about this man, but we’re confident that he had a significant role in Luke’s life, and may be an early convert to Christianity. In 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 we read about Jesus appearing to many, even over 500 believers at one time. Acts gives us a specific time frame of a 40-day period for the resurrection appearances to have taken place. As Jesus did in the Gospels, he continued to speak on the Kingdom of God. This is not any political or military kingdom, but is pointing to the reign of God. With the goal of transforming individual lives by the power of the Holy Spirit that ultimately would make an impact in this world. The Book of Acts reveals to us how the Lord intended for his church to advance his Kingdom. What gets your attention in this first reading as recorded by Luke, a follower of Christ, as well as a physician?

April 3 - Acts 1:12-26: “They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.” (v.14) When we use the term “Upper Room,” we often are referring to the place where Jesus had his last supper with the disciples. We learn that there were about 120 gathered. (v.15) This particular upper room seems to be in a different location than the one that Jesus used for his disciples. I visited the historic location when Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper, and it would be difficult to fit 120 people in that room. I’m drawn to this verse because they waited on the Lord. Waiting seems to be one of our weakest qualities in today’s fast-paced world. In 1:4 we read about Jesus telling them to wait for the promise from the Father, which would be the Holy Spirit. Waiting on God and prayer are closely related throughout the Scriptures. It is most likely that they were asking the Lord to bring the promised Spirit, who would baptize them in power. I also have a hard time slowing down for prayer, and I want us to contemplate the significance and importance of waiting on the Lord in prayer. How might you live out this principle? What else do you notice in this reading that gets your attention?

April 4 - Acts 2:1-13: “Utterly amazed, they asked: ‘Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans?’” (v.7) When Jesus arrived on the scene, he did many miracles that led to his teaching on the Kingdom of God. So in the Book of Acts, we will read about many miracles that point to the power of Christ’s resurrection. We will read that 3,000 people were baptized as they professed their faith in Jesus Christ through this Pentecost event. Peter would do miracles, and so the evidence of God’s supernatural power will be seen in the church as a forerunner to the marvelous message of eternal life found in Jesus, proclaimed as the good news for all the world. This would be an amazing experience to have the disciples speaking in so many different languages, all at once, as they were telling everyone of the mighty works of God. May the Lord give us faith to courageously proclaim his message, and may he accompany it with the power and strength of the Holy Spirit. Do you agree? How does that challenge you?

April 5 - Acts 2:14-41: “When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’” (v.37) This phrase cut to the

heart is related to the conviction of the Holy Spirit. John told us in chapter 16:8 the Holy Spirit would convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness and judgment. The Holy Spirit was convicting those who heard the message about the resurrected Christ. I often look for a sense of conviction of the Holy Spirit on a person’s life. Hard-hearted people repel the message of Jesus. But those who are convicted by the Spirit are realizing their need for God’s work in their life through Jesus Christ. Recently a man told me that he was missing something in his life, but he wasn’t sure it was God. I told him that I thought it was and that I would be praying for him. I sensed some conviction in him, and I continue to pray that he will repent and believe. What inspires you about Peter’s message on the day of Pentecost? What do you notice?

April 6 - Acts 2:42-47: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” (v.42) This is an outline for me on what it means to advance as a follower of Christ. The foundation of our spiritual growth is in the teaching of God’s Word. We also gain traction as we deepen our relationships with each other. Obviously prayer is developing a closer, more intimate relationship with the Father God. Breaking bread can symbolize the marvel of the Gospel and affirming our need for grace and the salvation we have received. These are the foundations of discipleship. They spill over into the life of the church as there is generosity, compassion and abundant praise for our great God. What do you notice in this short paragraph about the early church?

April 7 - Acts 3:1-10: “He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping and praising God.” (v.8) I told you that the launch of the Book of Acts would be filled with miracles. Peter heals a lame man, and his response is a reflection of God entering his life. Also, the response of the people around him was one of praise for God. There were filled with wonder and amazement. I am also recognizing the joy that this man demonstrates because of God’s miracle on his behalf. The early church was magnetic and full of joy. The evidence of the Holy Spirit is often directly connected to joy. We know that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy . . . Joy is attractive and contagious. How is your joy? How do you respond to this inspiring paragraph highlighting a lame man being healed?

April 8 - Acts 3:11-26: “For Moses said, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you.’” (v.22) This verse is in reference to the Old Testament, as Peter quotes Deuteronomy 18:15. God performs a miracle, and then Peter uses that opportunity to share the message of Jesus Christ to those gathered. I often see this sequence in the Bible. I summarize it with the phrase “show and tell.” May we show the deeds of God so that we have opportunity to tell others about the good news. That is what I see Peter doing. He also is knowledgeable on how to speak to those who were listening. He points to the Old Testament and the promise of a prophet that would be like Moses, but yet surpass him. In other words, he says, “You accepted Moses; now accept the One who is even greater than Moses.” He also refers to Abraham in an effort to speak specifically to the people he is addressing. May God give us wisdom as we speak to others about our own faith and how life with Christ could begin in their lives as well. How do you respond to Peter’s message? How might you reenact what Peter demonstrates in this chapter?

Prayers - Pray that the Lord will continue to draw people to himself, especially those who were a part of our Easter Egg Hunt and our Easter morning gatherings.