

ACTS PART V

A CLASH
OF CULTURES

7-Week
Complementary
Devotional



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A Seven-Week Reading Plan Through Acts 13-20

This devotional accompanies our journey through Acts 13–20. As the gospel moves into new cities and cultures, it challenges what people trust, what they value, and how they live. Each day includes a short passage, a brief reflection, and a few questions to help you think, pray, and respond. Write your answers in a journal or discuss them with your family at dinner, a friend over a cup of coffee, or with your small group. The goal is not perfection, but consistency; staying engaged with God's Word and taking small steps of faith as He leads.

WEEK 1 | Acts 13:1-12 | The Mission Begins

This week, we see how the mission of God begins and how the gospel first encounters resistance in a new setting. Before anything happens, the church is listening to the Spirit, and when the mission begins, it immediately confronts false sources of truth. This passage reminds us that the gospel reveals what is true and challenges what is not. As you read, consider how God is leading you and what voices or influences may be shaping your understanding of truth.

Day 1 | Acts 13:1-3 | Starting with the Spirit

Devotional Thought:

Before anything happens, the church is gathered in worship, fasting, and listening. The mission of God does not begin with strategy, but with surrender. The Spirit calls, sends, and empowers. We often make plans and ask God to bless them; in Acts, God leads and His people follow. The starting point for mission is attentiveness to God.

Reflection Questions:

- What does it look like for you to listen to God in this season?
- Are your decisions driven more by planning or by prayer?
- Where might God be inviting you to trust His direction?

Day 2 | Acts 13:4-6 | Sent, Not Scattered

Devotional Thought:

Paul and Barnabas are not randomly traveling; they are sent by the Spirit. There is purpose behind where they go and what they do. Following Jesus is not just reacting to life, but being sent into it. Wherever God has placed you, you are there on purpose.

Reflection Questions:

- Where has God placed you right now?
- How might your everyday life be part of God's mission?
- Who around you might God be calling you to engage?

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Day 3 | Acts 13:6-8 | Recognizing Spiritual Opposition

Devotional Thought:

As the gospel moves, it meets resistance. Elymas tries to turn people away from the truth. Not everything that appears spiritual leads toward God. The gospel confronts what is false and calls people to what is true.

Reflection Questions:

- Where do you see spiritual confusion today?
- Why is truth sometimes resisted?
- How can you grow in discernment?

Day 4 | Acts 13:9-11 | Confronting What is False

Devotional Thought:

Paul speaks clearly, exposing what is false. Love does not ignore deception; it confronts it. Following Jesus sometimes requires clarity and courage. The gospel is both gracious and truthful.

Reflection Questions:

- Why can it be difficult to speak truth clearly?
- Where might God be calling you to stand firm?
- How can you balance truth and grace?

Day 5 | Acts 13:12 | The Power of the Word

Devotional Thought:

The proconsul believes because he is astonished at the teaching of the Lord. Miracles may draw attention, but the Word transforms hearts. God uses His Word to shape what we believe and who we become.

Reflection Questions:

- What is shaping your thinking most right now?
- How has God's Word impacted you recently?
- How can you prioritize Scripture this week?

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WEEK 2 | Acts 13:13-14:23 | The Gospel vs. Spiritual Counterfeits

As the gospel continues to spread, a clear pattern begins to emerge. Some people are curious and want to hear more, some believe and are transformed, and others resist and push back. At the same time, the gospel confronts misplaced worship and begins forming new communities of faith. This week helps us see that following Jesus is not just about individual belief; it is about being part of a growing, resilient community shaped by truth. As you read, pay attention to how people respond and consider how you are responding to God's work in your own life.

Day 1 | Acts 13:13-16, 26-31 | Proclaiming the Story of Jesus

Devotional Thought:

When Paul enters a new city, he begins by telling the story of what God has done, culminating in Jesus. He does not start with opinions or arguments, but with God's activity in history. The gospel is not advice about how to live better; it is an announcement of what God has already done through Jesus. This matters because it means our faith is not built on ideas we created, but on truth that has been revealed. As we follow Jesus, we are invited not just to believe this story, but to share it with others.

Reflection Questions:

- How would you summarize the message of Jesus?
- Why does it matter that the gospel is rooted in real events?
- Who needs to hear this story?

Day 2 | Acts 13:42-45 | Curiosity and Resistance

Devotional Thought:

As people hear the gospel, their responses begin to diverge. Some are curious and eager to hear more, while others become resistant and even hostile. The message has not changed, but the reactions are very different. This reminds us that the power of the gospel is not dependent on how people respond to it. Our role is not to manage outcomes, but to remain faithful in sharing what is true. It also challenges us to reflect on our own posture. Are we open and responsive when God speaks, or do we resist when it challenges us?

Reflection Questions:

- Where do you see different responses today?
- How do you respond to resistance?
- How can you remain faithful regardless of outcome?

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Day 3 | Acts 13:48-52 | Joy in the Midst of Opposition

Devotional Thought:

Even as opposition grows, the disciples are filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. Their circumstances are not easy, yet their joy remains steady. This reveals something important about the nature of joy in the Christian life. It is not rooted in comfort, success, or approval, but in God's presence. When our joy is tied to circumstances, it rises and falls. When it is rooted in God, it remains. This passage invites us to consider what our joy is anchored to.

Reflection Questions:

- What most affects your joy?
- How can your joy be rooted in God?
- What does reliance on the Spirit look like daily?

Day 4 | Acts 14:8-15 | Redirecting Worship

Devotional Thought:

After witnessing a miracle, the crowd quickly shifts from curiosity to misplaced worship, attempting to elevate Paul and Barnabas as gods. This moment reveals how easily people can misdirect their devotion. While we may not worship individuals in the same way today, we often elevate success, influence, or personality to a place they do not belong. The gospel calls us to continually examine what we are giving our attention and devotion to, and to redirect our worship to the One who is truly worthy.

Reflection Questions:

- What do people elevate too highly today?
- Is anything taking God's place in your life?
- How can you refocus your worship this week?

Day 5 | Acts 14:21-23 | From Belief to Formation

Devotional Thought:

As people come to faith, Paul and Barnabas do not simply move on. They return, strengthen the believers, and appoint leaders in each church. This shows that the goal of the gospel is not just conversion, but formation. Following Jesus is not a one-time decision; it is a lifelong process of growth. That growth happens in community, through encouragement, accountability, and shared faith. The gospel does not just change individuals; it creates a people who grow together.

Reflection Questions:

- How are you connected to a church community?
- Where do you need strengthening?
- How can you invest in someone else?

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WEEK 3 | Acts 15 | The Gospel vs. Religious Exclusion

This week centers on an important question: is faith in Jesus enough, or do we need to add something more? The early church wrestles with this tension, and their conclusion shapes the future of the gospel. This passage reminds us that the gospel is built on grace, not performance. It is easy to drift toward adding expectations or requirements to our faith, but the truth is that salvation comes through Jesus alone. As you read, reflect on where you may be carrying unnecessary pressure and what it looks like to live in the freedom of grace.

Day 1 | Acts 15:1-5 | Adding to the Gospel

Devotional Thought:

The early church faces a significant question: is faith in Jesus enough, or does something need to be added? Some insist that additional requirements are necessary, revealing a natural human tendency to complicate what God has made simple. We may not add the same requirements today, but we often attach expectations, performance, or identity markers to our faith. The gospel reminds us that salvation is not something we earn or improve upon. It is something we receive through grace.

Reflection Questions:

- Have you felt pressure to earn God's approval?
- What are modern ways we add to the gospel?
- How does grace reshape your relationship with God?

Day 2 | Acts 15:6-11 | Saved by Grace Alone

Devotional Thought:

Peter stands and reminds everyone that God made no distinction between people, but cleansed hearts by faith. This moment re-centers the church on the core truth of the gospel: salvation comes through grace, not through human effort. This truth is simple, but it is easy to drift away from it. We often find ourselves measuring our standing with God based on performance instead of trusting in what Jesus has already done. The gospel invites us to rest in grace rather than strive for approval.

Reflection Questions:

- Where are you tempted to rely on your own effort instead of God's grace?
- What does it mean for you to rest in what Jesus has done?
- How would your life look different if you truly lived from grace?

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Day 3 | Acts 15:12-18 | God's Bigger Plan

Devotional Thought:

As the leaders reflect on what God is doing, they begin to see that His plan is larger than they originally imagined. The gospel is not limited to one group, one culture, or one background. God is drawing people from everywhere into His family. This challenges our assumptions about who belongs and who is far from God. His grace reaches further than we expect, and His invitation is broader than we often realize.

Reflection Questions:

- Who do you assume is far from God?
- How does this expand your view of God's family?
- How can you align with God's heart for others?

Day 4 | Acts 15:19-21 | Truth and Unity

Devotional Thought:

The leaders make a decision that protects the truth of the gospel while also promoting unity within the church. They choose not to place unnecessary burdens on new believers, while still encouraging wise and loving practices. This moment shows that following Jesus involves both conviction and care. Truth matters, but so does how we live in relationship with others. The gospel forms a community where both are held together.

Reflection Questions:

- Why is unity important?
- Where do you need to show more grace?
- How can you live with both truth and love?

Day 5 | Acts 15:22-29 | Encouragement and Freedom

Devotional Thought:

When the decision is shared with the church, it brings encouragement and relief. The gospel lifts burdens rather than adding them. Where legalism creates pressure and uncertainty, grace brings clarity and freedom. This does not mean that how we live is unimportant, but it means our relationship with God is not based on performance. It is grounded in what Jesus has already accomplished. Living in that truth changes how we approach our faith.

Reflection Questions:

- Are you carrying unnecessary spiritual burdens?
- How has the gospel brought you freedom?
- How can you live more fully in that freedom?

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WEEK 4 | Acts 16 | The Gospel vs. Political Power

In this chapter, the gospel enters a city shaped by power, status, and control, and it begins to change lives in unexpected ways. From a slave girl to a jailer to a businesswoman, people from very different backgrounds are brought into the same story. At the same time, we see that following Jesus can come with a cost. This week invites us to consider where we place our identity and loyalty. As you read, think about what it means for Jesus to be your highest allegiance, even when it is difficult.

Day 1 | Acts 16:16-18 | True Freedom

Devotional Thought:

This young slave girl is being exploited in every way, spiritually, financially, and personally. She brings profit to others, but she has no freedom of her own. When Paul commands the spirit to leave, her life is changed instantly. The gospel brings real freedom, not just internally, but in the whole of life. Jesus does not simply improve our circumstances; He restores what has been broken and gives us a new identity. In a world where people search for freedom in success, autonomy, or control, this passage reminds us that true freedom is found in Christ alone.

Reflection Questions:

- Where do people look for freedom apart from God?
- How has Jesus brought freedom into your life?
- Where do you still need to trust Him for freedom?

Day 2 | Acts 16:19-24 | When Faith Costs You

Devotional Thought:

Paul and Silas are beaten and imprisoned, not because they made a mistake, but because they were faithful. Their obedience disrupted the system around them, and it came with consequences. This challenges the assumption that following Jesus will always make life easier. Sometimes it does the opposite. Faithfulness may lead to misunderstanding, resistance, or hardship. Yet even in those moments, God is still at work. This passage reminds us that the cost of following Jesus is real, but so is His presence in the middle of it.

Reflection Questions:

- Have you ever experienced difficulty for doing what is right?
- What fears hold you back from living boldly for Jesus?
- How can you trust God in challenging situations?

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Day 3 | Acts 16:25-30 | Worship in Difficult Moments

Devotional Thought:

In the middle of the night, in chains, after being beaten, Paul and Silas are praying and singing. Their response is not denial of their situation, but trust in God within it. Worship in difficult moments becomes a powerful testimony. The other prisoners are listening, and eventually the jailer's life is changed. How we respond in hardship often speaks louder than what we say. The gospel forms a kind of faith that is not dependent on circumstances, but rooted in the character of God.

Reflection Questions:

- How do you typically respond when life is difficult?
- What would it look like to worship even in hard moments?
- Who might be impacted by your response to challenges?

Day 4 | Acts 16:31-34 | A New Kind of Family

Devotional Thought:

The jailer goes from guarding prisoners to washing their wounds. His life changes direction in a single night. Not only does he believe, but his whole household is brought into this new life. The gospel does not just change individuals; it creates a new kind of community. People who were once separated by background, status, or story are brought together through Jesus. This reminds us that faith is not just personal, it is relational. God is forming a people, not just saving individuals.

Reflection Questions:

- What does it mean to you to be part of God's family?
- How has your faith connected you to others?
- How can you help create a welcoming community?

Day 5 | Acts 16:35-40 | Loyalty and Identity

Devotional Thought:

Paul chooses to use his rights as a Roman citizen, but he does not build his identity around them. He engages the system without being defined by it. This is an important balance for us. We live within cultures, systems, and nations, but our ultimate identity is not found there. The gospel calls us to a deeper allegiance. We can participate in the world around us, but our primary loyalty belongs to Jesus. That shapes how we think, how we live, and how we respond.

Reflection Questions:

- Where do people place their identity today?
- What does it mean for Jesus to be your primary identity?
- How can you live that out this week?

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WEEK 5 | Acts 17-18 | The Gospel vs. Human Wisdom

This week takes us into environments filled with ideas, questions, and competing perspectives. In Athens, people are searching for truth, while in Corinth, influence and persuasion shape what people believe. In both places, the gospel stands apart. It does not depend on human wisdom or impressive communication; it is grounded in the truth of who Jesus is. As you read, consider what voices or ideas shape your thinking and what it looks like to stay rooted in truth in a world full of opinions.

Day 1 | Acts 17:16-21 | Searching for Truth

Devotional Thought:

As Paul walks through Athens, he sees a city filled with idols, ideas, and constant conversation. People are always searching for something new, something meaningful, something true. This feels very familiar. Our world is filled with opinions, perspectives, and competing beliefs. In the middle of that noise, the gospel offers something steady and unchanging. Truth is not something we create or discover on our own; it is something God has revealed. This passage invites us to consider what we are trusting as our source of truth.

Reflection Questions:

- Where do you see people searching for meaning today?
- How do you navigate a world full of competing ideas?
- What helps you stay grounded in truth?

Day 2 | Acts 17:22-27 | God is Near

Devotional Thought:

Paul begins where the people are, acknowledging their spiritual curiosity, but then gently redirects them toward what they are missing. He reminds them that God is not distant or unknowable, but near and involved. Many people assume that God is far removed from everyday life, but the gospel tells a different story. God is present, active, and drawing people toward Himself. We do not have to search endlessly for Him; He has already come near.

Reflection Questions:

- Do you tend to think of God as near or distant?
- Where have you seen His presence in your life?
- How can you grow in awareness of Him daily?

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Day 3 | Acts 17:28-31 | A Call to Respond

Devotional Thought:

Paul moves from explanation to invitation. He calls people to respond, not just reflect. The gospel is not just information to consider, it is truth that calls for a decision. At some point, each of us must decide what we will do with Jesus. It is possible to stay in a place of curiosity without ever stepping into commitment. This passage challenges us to move beyond reflection and toward response.

Reflection Questions:

- What does it look like for you to respond to God right now?
- Are there areas where you have been hesitant?
- What step might God be asking you to take?

Day 4 | Acts 18:1-4 | The Power of a Simple Message

Devotional Thought:

In Corinth, Paul intentionally avoids relying on impressive speech or persuasive techniques. Instead, he keeps the focus on Jesus. This is a helpful reminder in a culture that values confidence, influence, and presentation. It is easy to feel like we need to have all the right words or say everything perfectly. But the power of the gospel is not in how it is presented, it is in what it proclaims. God works through simple, faithful communication of truth.

Reflection Questions:

- Do you ever feel pressure to have all the right words?
- How does this passage encourage you?
- Who could you share your faith with simply and honestly?

Day 5 | Acts 18:9-11 | God Meets Us in Fear

Devotional Thought:

God tells Paul not to be afraid, which reveals something important: Paul was afraid. Even someone as faithful and committed as Paul experienced fear and uncertainty. Following Jesus does not eliminate those feelings, but it changes how we respond to them. God does not promise that challenges will disappear, but He does promise His presence. That presence is what gives us the courage to keep going.

Reflection Questions:

- What fears are you currently facing?
- How does knowing God is with you change your perspective?
- Where do you need courage to keep going?

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WEEK 6 | Acts 19 | The Gospel vs. Economic Idolatry

As the gospel spreads in Ephesus, it begins to impact not just individuals, but an entire system built around money, identity, and power. When people turn to Jesus, it changes what they value and how they live, and that creates tension. This week shows us that the gospel does not stay contained in one area of life. It reshapes everything. As you read, reflect on what may be competing for your trust and what it looks like to center your life more fully on Jesus.

Day 1 | Acts 19:1-7 | Growing in Understanding

Devotional Thought:

These believers had begun their journey of faith, but their understanding was incomplete. When they hear the full message of Jesus, their lives are changed. This reminds us that spiritual growth is a process. None of us have it all figured out, and that is okay. God continues to teach, shape, and deepen our faith over time. What matters is that we remain open and responsive to what He is showing us.

Reflection Questions:

- Where is God inviting you to grow in your understanding?
- What has helped you grow in your faith?
- How can you take a next step in learning?

Day 2 | Acts 19:8-10 | Faithfulness Over Time

Devotional Thought:

Paul teaches consistently over an extended period, and eventually the message spreads throughout the entire region. This is a reminder that growth is often gradual. We live in a culture that values quick results, but God often works through steady, faithful obedience over time. The small, consistent steps we take in following Jesus can lead to significant impact.

Reflection Questions:

- Where do you need to stay consistent?
- How have you seen growth over time in your life?
- What does faithfulness look like for you this week?

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Day 3 | Acts 19:17-20 | Letting Go of What Holds Us

Devotional Thought:

When people encounter Jesus, they begin to let go of practices and objects that once held influence over their lives. This is not forced; it is a response to transformation. Following Jesus often means releasing things we once depended on for security or identity. While that can feel difficult, it leads to freedom. What we let go of makes room for something better.

Reflection Questions:

- Is there anything in your life that has too much influence over you?
- What might God be asking you to release?
- What would it look like to trust Him more fully?

Day 4 | Acts 19:23-27 | When the Gospel Disrupts

Devotional Thought:

As the gospel spreads, it begins to affect the local economy. People who once profited from idol worship feel threatened. This shows us that the gospel does not stay contained in one area of life; it touches everything. When Jesus becomes central, it often reshapes our priorities, our decisions, and even our livelihoods. That kind of change can create tension, but it also leads to a more aligned and meaningful life.

Reflection Questions:

- How has your faith changed your priorities?
- Where do you feel tension between your faith and your lifestyle?
- What is one area where God may be calling you to change?

Day 5 | Acts 19:28-41 | What We Value Most

Devotional Thought:

The crowd's reaction reveals how deeply their identity and security are tied to their idols. When those idols are threatened, their response is emotional and intense. This invites us to consider what we value most. What we build our lives around will shape how we think, act, and respond. The gospel calls us to center our lives on Jesus, not on things that can ultimately fail us.

Reflection Questions:

- What do your choices reveal about what you value most?
- What competes for your devotion?
- How can you center your life more fully on Jesus?

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WEEK 7 | Acts 20 | The Gospel vs. Self-Preservation

In this final week, the focus shifts inward. After seeing how the gospel confronts culture, we are asked a more personal question: how will we live in response? Paul reflects on a life marked by faithfulness, sacrifice, and purpose. He does not live to protect his life, but to give it. This week challenges us to examine our priorities and our perspective. As you read, consider what it means to live a faithful life and where God may be inviting you to trust Him more deeply.

Day 1 | Acts 20:18-21 | A Faithful Life

Devotional Thought:

Paul looks back on his life and sees a pattern of humility, consistency, and obedience. His ministry was not built on moments of recognition, but on steady faithfulness. This challenges how we often think about impact. We tend to focus on big moments, but God often works through quiet, consistent obedience over time. A faithful life is not always visible, but it is deeply meaningful. What matters most is not how impressive our lives appear, but how faithfully we follow Jesus day by day.

Reflection Questions:

- What does faithfulness look like in your daily life?
- Where do you need to grow in consistency?
- How can you focus more on obedience than outcomes?

Day 2 | Acts 20:22-24 | A Life Worth Spending

Devotional Thought:

Paul knows that suffering lies ahead, yet he continues forward with clarity and purpose. He does not view his life as something to protect, but something to give. This stands in sharp contrast to a culture that prioritizes comfort, safety, and self-preservation. The gospel invites us into a different way of living. Our lives are most meaningful not when they are guarded, but when they are surrendered to something greater than ourselves. Trusting God with our lives means believing that His purposes are worth it.

Reflection Questions:

- What are you most tempted to protect in your life?
- What would it look like to live with greater purpose?
- Where is God inviting you to trust Him more fully?

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Day 3 | Acts 20:25-27 | Holding Nothing Back

Devotional Thought:

Paul says he did not hesitate to proclaim anything that would be helpful. He lived and spoke with openness and integrity, holding nothing back. This kind of life requires courage. It is easy to withhold truth, avoid difficult conversations, or keep parts of our lives guarded. But the gospel calls us to live fully and honestly. Following Jesus means allowing Him to shape every part of who we are, not just the areas that feel comfortable or convenient.

Reflection Questions:

- Are there areas of your life where you are holding back?
- What would it look like to live more fully for God?
- How can you grow in courage and honesty?

Day 4 | Acts 20:28-31 | Pay Careful Attention

Devotional Thought:

Paul urges the leaders to pay careful attention to their own lives and to the people they lead. This is a reminder that spiritual growth requires ongoing awareness and intentionality. We never outgrow the need to stay grounded in our faith. It is possible to drift slowly if we are not paying attention. Following Jesus involves both outward faithfulness and inward attentiveness. We are called to watch over our lives with care.

Reflection Questions:

- How do you stay spiritually grounded?
- What influences are shaping your life right now?
- Where do you need to be more intentional?

Day 5 | Acts 20:32-35 | A Life of Generosity

Devotional Thought:

Paul ends by reminding them that it is more blessed to give than to receive. This statement captures the heart of a gospel-shaped life. Instead of living primarily for ourselves, we begin to live with generosity and purpose. This is not just about finances, but about how we use our time, energy, and attention. A life centered on Jesus naturally overflows into the lives of others. And in that giving, we discover a deeper kind of joy.

Reflection Questions:

- Where can you be more generous this week?
- How has generosity impacted your life?
- What is one practical way you can serve someone else?

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