

SHINE Devotional

Week 35 – Lesson 1



The Acts of the Apostles

Scripture reading Acts 10:34 & 38

“Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:” “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.”

In college, our literature professor encouraged us to use action verbs in our writing. There are state of being verbs: am, is, are, was, were, be, etc. A sentence seeking to induce excitement or engagement utilizes action verbs: ran, hit, lift, swim, etc. Action verbs communicate movement and energy. The book of Acts is the history of the apostles. Certainly, these individuals held strong beliefs. Their opinions mattered. Without a doubt, the apostles slept and ate dinner. They made jokes and enjoyed down time, but none of those habits merited the recording of God’s inspired Word. It was their actions that made history. God calls people to action. God called Gideon to action.

We too must act. Communication today often encourages apathy. “Stay home save lives”, and “Be a hero wear a mask” mark our contemporary vernacular. Though the sentiment and its ideals make sense in this environment, we must refuse to accept apathy as acceptable or noble. The children of God are people of action. The kingdom is not some docile hope of retreat. Christians carry the banner of the Savior. We act!

Is your life being defined by action? Have you allowed the message of our day to rob you from action? Our country was founded on the courageous efforts of patriots who believed in a cause bigger than themselves: liberty. Christianity spread by the Acts of the apostles. Reject the subtle enticement of apathy and act and you, as a believer, will SHINE.

SHINE Devotional

Week 35 – Lesson 2



From Knowing to Believing

Scripture reading Acts 10:36-37

“The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached;”

Knowing about someone differs greatly from knowing someone. I know a lot about some people. As a teenage boy, I could tell you the statistics of entire sports teams. I watched ESPN each afternoon waiting to hear the iconic SportsCenter theme. The afternoons led with an NBA show where we studied the triangle offense of the Chicago Bulls, contemplated the West Coast offense of the San Francisco 49ers, or mimicked the batting stance of the Bash Brother from Oakland. Knowing someone and knowing about someone differ greatly. At the beginning of the Big-League weekends in Las Vegas, the minor league affiliate hosted popular or regional teams. In the early 90s, Oakland and Chicago participated in one such weekend. The A’s star leadoff player was Rickey Henderson. The Cubs had a young right fielder named Sammy Sosa. They acquired him in a trade with the White Sox and he showed much promise. The speedster, Ricky Henderson, put on a show. He wowed fans with his athleticism, and everyone wanted to meet him. My brother and I got a tip on the best place to meet players. About an hour after the game, players emerged from their locker rooms and boarded the buses. When Sammy Sosa stepped into the crowd, many people confused him with Henderson. Being a Cubs fan payed off when I corrected the clamoring autograph hounds by saying, “Hey, that’s Sammy Sosa.” The future long ball hitter stopped, looked at me and said, “That’s right!” as he boarded the bus. I knew much about Mr. Sosa, but I do not know him.

The Roman audience of Peter knew about Jesus, but they did not know Him. Peter told His story. The Gospel message intrigued the audience and moved them from knowledge to belief. Our world knows about Jesus. Some use His name in vain. Many understand the stories of His Gospels. Our responsibility is to share more than His biography, we must encourage belief in His atonement. Jesus is known, but for salvation He must be believed.

SHINE Devotional

Week 35 – Lesson 3



Conscience or Conviction

Scripture reading Acts 10:13-15

“And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.”

Would God ever ask someone to violate their conscience? The answer, of course is yes! After expecting to have an heir to the promise of God for years, God honored Abraham’s faithfulness by blessing him with a son, Isaac. Years passed, and God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son. Did it make sense? Was this the plan of God? I am sure there were some struggles with adhering to the command of God. Maybe this command violated his conscience. Bible students know how God demonstrated His provision and never exacted this duty from Abraham, but He was less concerned with Abraham’s conscience and more interested in him following His commands. When Moses took the mantle of leader for the Israelite people, God required an awkward practice of circumcision to be performed on his sons. In Exodus 4:25, his wife, Zipporah, expressed her disdain for the practice by calling Moses a bloody man. It violated her conscience, but Moses followed the command. Peter’s involvement with the Centurion brought a believer to the same crossroads. His conscience forbade eating unclean meats. He argued with God three times about the command but submitted. His conscience was violated, but the command won followed. Cultural heritage, patriotism, and religious practices build up a conscience barrier in our lives. Often, these matters of conscience promote a healthy walk with God. However, there is a place of conflict when our conscience fails to align with the clear commands of God. Peter felt that tension and appealed to God to relieve the tension and was denied. The Disciple of Christ must consider their conscience. *“Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth”* (Romans 14:22). God may use our conscience, but maturity in Christ heeds the Holy Spirit and differentiates between conscience and conviction. Conscience allows cultural Christianity to rest in the ease of standards and check lists. The commands of Christ break out the stale parade of religion and unleash the power of the Holy Spirit through relationship. Peter wisely violated his conscience for the command of God.

SHINE Devotional

Week 35 – Lesson 4



No Choice

Scripture reading Acts 10:38

“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.”

On September 16, 1940, the United States instituted the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940, which required all men between the ages of 21 and 45 to register for the draft. This was the first peacetime draft in United States' history. Prior to this legislative act, people (specifically men) had no compulsory obligation to take up arms. There may have been shame, family obligation, or even national pride, but whatever the motive, there had always been a choice. In World War II, the government removed the choice and thousands of men fought for the stars and stripes in the Pacific theatre or on European soil. They were drafted.

Every citizen of earth faces a far greater foe and a similar choice. Satan, not the Axis powers, rages against the sons of Adam. Our very existence insults the demonic leader. Thus, he rails against man, enthusiastically cheers on disease, and stirs rebellion towards the only hope for humanity, Christ. No one escapes His terror. Peter denounced the evil of the Deceiver and praised the salvation of the Hero. A striking truth reveals itself. Everyone is in conflict with the villain. The unsaved labor under the existence of an evil lord who cares only for selfish ambition. The carnal Christian experiences temporary ease from the fight, but soon falls victim to the entrapment of his deceits and wallows in wages of his sin. The only choice we have is to engage the enemy in battle. Christians must confront the harsh reality of spiritual warfare. Passivity and hope for appeasement fail in the battle for humanity. All humans received their draft notice at birth. We are all in the battle. Choose the best (and only) option: reliance, and faith in Jesus.

SHINE Devotional

Week 35 – Lesson 5



23 and Me

Scripture reading Acts 10:40-43

“Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.”

My heritage is very cloudy. I only know the names of one of my great grandparents. I only met three of my grandparents. My history traces back generations, but the memory of the past fades and the pinnacle figures of my existence are lost on this generation. Maybe it’s a Vegas thing, who knows. Through DNA tracing and modern technology, individuals can now research the tracing of their lineage. Public Broadcasting Station’s docutainment production “Find Your Roots” gives viewers a glimpse into the heritage of celebrities as they uncover their past. Knowing where you come from is important. It helps define us. Our roots help ground our purposes and cast vision for our futures.

Peter understood the importance of tradition and lineage. He connected the Gospel message to Cornelius through the revered prophets of old. In verse 43, he stood upon the authority of Moses, Elijah, and Abraham to convey the authenticity of Jesus Christ. Peter was the caretaker of the Gospel in his generation. It was not a new message. It was timeless, from before the foundations of the world. As Ephesians 1:4 says, *“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.”* Peter was just the next in a long line of cavalcade of saints. As Moses protected the heritage of faith in his generation, Peter too proclaimed the message. The only difference was the timing. Peter saw in faith. Those preceding him anticipated in faith. Christians today claim the same authority and privilege. Any blood bought believer is given the opportunity to stand with these pillars of the faith. The same way the saints received salvation, we did too. This is our generation. Claim the heritage you have been provided, and share the faith of Moses, Daniel, and Peter.

SHINE Devotional

Week 35 – Lesson 6



Peter's Believe It or Not

Scripture reading Acts 10:44-47

“While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?”

In over nineteen locations across the USA, Ripley invites people to observe the curious, unnatural, and spectacular. Leroy Robert Ripley was an American cartoonist and media personality. He reveled in the obscure findings of science and anthropology. He introduced Americans of the 1930s and 40s to such oddities as the shrunken head, a 78-inch mustache, and a bed of nails. Each of his oddities baffles the audience and brings them to a new point of curiosity and wonder.

Reading the last few verses of Acts 10 illuminates the modern-day reader to the wonder of Gentile evangelism. Upon hearing the Gospel, Cornelius and his company believed and trusted in the good news of Jesus Christ. Their belief was immediately manifest through the sign gift of the Holy Spirit speaking in tongues. The same proof to unbelieving Israelites of the validity of Pentecost was exhibited to the believing saints of Jewish heritage. The Roman centurion and his company were saved! The Bible records their reaction in verse 45: ASTONISHED. The word literally means, their minds were blown. In our culturally diverse age, we fail to comprehend the magnitude of their wonder. God saved Gentiles!

Have you ever considered how amazing your salvation is? The awesome God of the universe saw us in our sinful condition and saw fit to save us. Romans 5:8 tells us, He loved us in spite of ourselves. Have you lost the wonder of salvation? Do you doubt your salvation? Have you considered the amazement in which God paid for your sin? Believe it or not, He loves you. Believe it or not, when you trusted Him as your Savior you got eternal life. Let the work of the Savior leave you in AWE for a moment.