

Spring one: Word

Main point: The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament alone are the source and norm of Christian doctrine

Memory verse: *All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth. Colossians 1:6*

Welcome back to your ACTS group! Please review the following:

1. **Definition:** An **ACTS group** is a small group of up to 12-15 people meeting weekly, living out an experience of adventure, community, transformation, and sending. The effectiveness of each group is assessed by using all four values, not just one or two.
2. **Covenant:** Last week your group took time to share expectations and understandings. This might be a good time to review your covenant and make sure that everyone is still on the same page. *A simple covenant should include: 1.) the commitment to meet weekly for six weeks; 2.) a pledge of confidentiality; 3.) a commitment to not 'talk politics'; and 4.) any other commitments that may be important to the group.*
3. **Memory verse:** If members of your group committed to memorize last week's passage (Colossians 1:9), this might be a good time for sharing that verse.

Get into a discussion group (3- 5 people) and share:

1. What's one of your favorite quotes? Share! These could be thought-provoking, humorous, awe-inspiring, or just plain silly.
2. Think of a person who has been influential in your life (parent, grandparent, coach, teacher, church leader, etc). Tell your group about your connection to this person and something they *said* which has had a lasting influence on your life.
3. What connections or conclusions can your group make concerning "the power of words"?

Read aloud Colossians 1:3-8:

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints—the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel that has come to you...

All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth. You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

Discuss:

4. Looking back over the first paragraph above, notice all the places where Words come into play: "We always T____ God.... when we P____ for you... because we have H____ of your faith... and that you have already H____ about in the W____ of truth, the G____ that has come to you."
5. Note how the apostle Paul equates "the word of truth" with "the gospel that has come to you." In addition to being *true*, Paul explains that the gospel is *productive*! Read the second paragraph once again for the details on how the gospel is producing fruit all over the world. In what ways do you see the work of the gospel continuing at local and global levels *today*?
6. Paul wrote these words at a time when there were many living eyewitnesses to the truth of the gospel (the record and good news about Jesus Christ). He is basically saying, "This is true... and you can check it out for yourself" In his book, *The Reason for God*, Timothy Keller writes:

"It would have been impossible, then, for this new faith to spread as it did had Jesus never said or done the things mentioned in the gospel accounts. Paul could confidently assert to government officials that the events of Jesus' life were public knowledge. "These things were not done in a corner," he said to King Agrippa (Acts 26:26). The people of Jerusalem had *been* there... The New Testament documents could not say Jesus was crucified when thousands of people were still alive who knew whether he was or not. If there had not been appearances after his death, if there had not been an empty tomb... Christianity would never have gotten off the ground. The hearers would have simply laughed at the accounts." (p. 102).
7. Discuss the point that Keller raises. How does this give you confidence in the authority and the truth of Scriptures - especially as one living 2,000 years after the events occurred?

Dig deeper (optional):

8. If you have time, you can explore a bit more about how the Bible came together. Take a few minutes to consider and discuss the perspective that Eugene Peterson shares in [Eat This Book](#) (an excellent recommendation, by the way, if you want to grow in your reading of Scripture!):

"The early Christian community was handed, ready-made, a Bible, what we now name the Old Testament, the Torah and Prophets and Writings that were normative for the Hebrew people. For the first generation or so those Hebrew scrolls were the Christian Bible. But then the writings of Paul and other leaders in the early Christian communities began to be circulated widely, and the stories of Jesus that provided content for the good news, the "gospel" that were being gladly and urgently preached and taught, were written down. These writings were recognized to be continuous with the Holy Scriptures that they were already honoring and believing, preaching from and teaching. It gradually became obvious to them that the two sets of writings were congruent with one another..." (p. 25).
9. Timothy Keller provides another pretty good summary ([The Reason for God](#), p. 101):

"The canonical gospels were written at the very most forty to sixty years after Jesus' death. Paul's letters, written just fifteen to twenty-five years after the death of Jesus, provide an outline of all the events of Jesus' life found in the gospels - his miracles,

claims, crucifixion, and resurrection. This means that the Biblical accounts of Jesus' life were circulating with the lifetimes of hundreds who had been present at the events of his ministry. The gospel author Luke claims that he got his account of Jesus' life from eyewitnesses who were still alive (Luke 1:1-4)."

10. Look up Luke 1:1-4. In what ways does this add to your confidence in the Scriptures and, specifically, the story of Jesus (the gospel)?

Discussion continued:

11. Note the confidence with which Paul assures Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:14-17. Why does Paul tell Timothy that he can put his trust in the Scriptures? Who in your life has been instrumental in bringing you to put your trust in the Scriptures?
12. 2 Timothy 3:14-17 and Hebrews 4:12-13 both speak of the *power* of the Word of God. Notice that God gives us his Word not merely for our *information*, but for our *formation*. In what ways is God using the Scriptures, in this season of your life, to form *you*? (Transformation!)

Jump into action:

13. Read this final quote by Eugene Peterson ([Eat This Book](#), p. 18):
"Christians feed on Scripture. Holy Scripture nurtures the holy community as food nurtures the human body. Christians don't simply learn or study or use Scripture: we assimilate it, take it into our lives in such a way that it gets metabolized into acts of love, cups of cold water, missions into all the world, healing evangelism and justice In Jesus' name, hands raised in adoration of the Father, feet washed in company with the Son."
14. Discuss specific ways in which your group's "feeding on Scripture" might be "metabolized" into acts of SENDING. Decide upon "next steps."
15. Read aloud the memory verse one more time. Then pray together that this verse would become 'real'... beginning in your hearts, and then moving around the world. Pray that God might use *you* in the spreading of this powerful Word.
16. Plan to participate in the coming weekend's Worship Gathering, where you will learn about "Spring two: Trinity." Perhaps your ACTS group could make plans to meet at the same Gathering (ie: sit together, share a meal together afterwards, etc.)
17. If you will not be able to participate in the Gathering, be sure to listen to the Message online or download the Podcast before your ACTS group meets again. Go to www.actschurchlakeway.com/media/message-podcast/