



# The Acts Of the Apostles

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## Syllabus

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## Course Description

The only thing better than a good story is a good sequel. The Book of Acts is the intended sequel to the Gospel of Luke, showing how the new community of faith applied Christ's teachings to life and how they proclaimed His message throughout the world. In this course, learners complete an exegetical study of the Book of Acts by focusing on the biblical theology of the book, the historical background of events, and the theological emphasis of the speeches. The goal of the course is to enable learners to articulate the message of Acts in ways that are both textually accurate and contemporarily relevant, and to apply that message to life.

## Course Objectives

*As a result of the course the student should be able to:*

1. Exegete a piece of narrative material and isolate the key theological themes it teaches.
2. Trace the argument of Acts through its units.
3. Determine with appropriate support elements the background of a narrative account that contributes to the setting and argument of a text.
4. Be prepared to communicate the message of a passage that is accurate with regard to the text and relevant to a contemporary audience.

## Course Structure

The recorded lectures will work through the argument of Acts, concentrating on its central themes. The detailed notes in the *Expanded Study Guide* supplement that discussion and are assumed in the lecture, so the student should keep them handy for reference while listening. Daily assignments are on a time completion basis. The student should spend **90 minutes** in the passage covered by each lecture in whatever way he or she wishes. This will prepare the student to reflect on the lectures.

**The course can be used on either a Greek or Non-Greek track.** The Greek Track is available to students who have had at least 2 years of prior Greek studies.



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## Course Textbooks

You are required to have **two commentaries** on Acts for the course, selected from the following list. Williams, Longenecker and Marshall are more popular in approach, while Conzelmann and Haenchen are heavily critical.

J.B. Polhill, *Acts*, (New American Commentary). Nashville: Broadman, 1992.

D. Williams, *Acts*, (New International Bible Commentary). Peabody, MA: Hendricksen, 1990.

I.H. Marshall, *Acts*, (Tyndale NT Commentary). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980.

R. Longenecker, *Acts*, (Expositor's Bible Commentary). ed. F. Gaebelein, vol. 9. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.

F.F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text With Introduction and Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.

H. Conzelmann, *Acts*, (Hermenia). Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987.

E. Haenchen, *Acts*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971.

The course also contains an *Expanded Study Guide* to be used for supplemental notes in the class. It contains the lecture outlines, lecture notes, study questions and a brief bibliography.

### COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Whether you sit in a traditional classroom or study from a distance, you will benefit from interaction, collaboration, and spiritual formation (ATS schools, note Standards 3.2.1.3; 10.3.3.3; 10.3.4.3). In order to meet this need in distance theological education, ITS is developing structures and resources to encourage spiritual formation and community interaction in our courses. In this course, we have included three collaborative learning features:

1. [ITS Online Interactivity Forum](#) (see course requirements) – fosters peer-to-peer interaction in a global, threaded discussion (required for all students)
2. [Spiritual Formation Project](#) (see course requirements) – fosters mentor-to-learner interaction in a mentor-guided reflection, discussion and application (required for all students)
3. [Learning Community Assignments](#) (see end of syllabus) – fosters peer-to-peer collaboration in a group approach to assignments (optional but recommended where possible)

Go to [www.ITScourses.org/interactivity/](http://www.ITScourses.org/interactivity/) for the most up-to-date ITS resources.



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## Course Requirements

### 1. Daily Preparation

#### a. Translation/Reading

Greek Track: Translate the entire book of Acts with the aid of Sakae Kubo or an equivalent lexical list. You may use other tools as needed if you get stuck but only after making a reasonable effort to work with the original text. Use this translation as preparation for each lecture by working through the relevant Acts passage before listening. See Course Schedule (p. 7).

Non-Greek Track: Read the relevant Acts passage **twice** before listening to each lecture. See Course Schedule (p. 7).

**b. Additional preparation**: In addition to translation/reading, spend **one hour** of preparation per lecture in whatever way you desire. You may pursue a particular issue in a passage, read the commentaries on that passage, or whatever else is of interest. As such, this part of the requirement has only a "time spent" element. *Four drops are permitted.* NOTE: You may also use your study time to pursue the 'thought questions' in the *Expanded Study Guide*. They are not required as part of the grade but will help you reflect on the content and issues in Acts.

### 2. Problem or Theme Study

Isolate for special study a theme or problem of your choice from Acts (may range from exegetical issues to a given theme in Luke-Acts), and write an **eight (8) page, single-spaced paper** covering your findings. Your grading professor must approve your chosen topic, and together you should set a due date that is mutually agreeable. When pursuing this assignment, all daily requirements for the week before the due date (two lectures total) are waived, except for translation/reading requirements. In this paper, you are expected to raise issues in greater detail than any notes you have received.

### 3. Short Exegetical Paper

Choose a passage from Acts and write a short exegetical paper that reflects careful use of and interaction with the text. (*Greek Track students should analyze the Greek text; non-Greek Track students should interact with the English Bible.*) The paper should be no longer than **nine (9) single-spaced pages** and should note any points of background that apply as well as isolate and develop any key theological themes.



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The format of the paper should include an outline of the passage and a discussion of the text in whatever form that effectively presents the teaching of the text. *A commentary like style is recommended.* Footnotes, endnotes, or parentheses should be supplied as necessary to present key supplemental or bibliographic data. Close the paper with a list of applications to show how you would teach this material to a lay audience. The paper is due on the date mutually agreed upon by the student and the grading professor. You may drop one daily preparation day (not the translation/reading) as credit toward your time on exegetical work.

## 4. ITS Online Interactivity Forum

Participate with other students worldwide in an ongoing asynchronous threaded discussion of two major course topics. Go to [www.ITScourses.org/interactivity/](http://www.ITScourses.org/interactivity/) to register for and enter the ITS Online Forum. In order to get the fullest benefit from the Forum, complete the assignment **after** you have listened to *all* the lectures. Be sure to return to the forum after finishing the course to see how others respond. Follow these steps to complete the assignment:

- ◆ Post an original answer to each question for your course (75 words).
- ◆ Post your response to any previous answer given to each question (75 words).
- ◆ Submit a document to your proctor that contains the original questions, your postings, and the postings to which you responded.

**NOTE: Please read the “Assignment Instructions” in the Forum for details.**

Objective: to develop critical thinking skills through personal interaction with the content of the course and the responses of others within a diverse community of learners.

## 5. Spiritual Formation Project

**RATIONALE:** Ministry preparation and the Christian life require more than academic exercises. Learners also need personal, spiritual formation, which involves theological reflection and critical thinking on their current practices and assumptions. This process occurs as learners engage in self-reflection and interaction in a community of learning. **With this in mind**, ITS includes in all courses a capstone project addressing these issues and facilitating interaction beyond the formal learning environment (ATS schools, note Standards 3.2.1.3; 4.1.1; 10.3.3.3).

Write a **five-to-six page reflective essay** and **interview a mentor**, discussing the spiritual impact of this course on your life. *Identify your mentor early in the course*, and submit the essay to your grader at the end of the course. This last project



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should not be a summary of course content, but an application of course principles. Complete the following:

**1. Personal Reflection and Evaluation: *Reflect on the course*** – To integrate your academic studies with your walk of faith, reflect on the content of the course and evaluate your life in light of what you learned.

a. Follow these steps in your reflection:

Step 1: What **one** theme, principle, or concept in the course is the most significant to you personally? Why is it significant?

Step 2: What portion(s) of the course brought this theme/principle/concept to light?

Step 3: Think about your past. Why is it vital now for you to deal with and apply this theme/principle/concept?

Step 4: How should this affect your thoughts and actions, and what *specific steps* should you take to *concretely* apply what you have learned?

b. Write your answers to the above questions in full paragraph form. (Recommended length for this reflection: **approximately three pages**)

c. Give a copy of this reflection to your mentor (see #2).

**2. Community Reflection and Interaction: *Interview a mentor*** – Since the Holy Spirit uses the input of others to guide and form His people, interview a mentor according to the following guidelines:

a. Who should you interview? (1-3 are required; 4-6 are recommended)

1. Someone with whom you have a reasonably close relationship.
2. Someone who is a mature Christian ministry leader (i.e. a pastor).
3. Someone who is **not** your grader or a family member.
4. Someone who values the spiritual formation process.
5. Someone who is familiar with and values the subject of the course.
6. Someone who has experience using the content of the course in ministry.

NOTE: ***Identify your mentor early in the course***, and give him/her the page entitled “Guidelines for Mentors.”

b. Focus of the interview – Your interview should focus on the issues and questions you raise in your essay. For example:

- ♦ What feedback can your mentor give in response to your essay?



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- ♦ In light of the course content, are the conclusions you made appropriate? Why or why not?
- ♦ What additional advice, deeper insights or broader applications might he/she suggest from his/her own life and ministry?

NOTE: Conduct this interview either in person (preferred) or over the phone. Do **not** use electronic communication (i.e. email, instant messenger, etc). Suggested length: 45 minutes.

3. **Synthesis and Application: *Draw your final conclusions*** – Having reflected on the course and the discussion with your mentor, synthesize what you have learned in these three sections:
- a. Section 1: Begin your essay with the personal reflection from #1 above. This should be exactly what you gave your mentor for the interview.
  - b. Section 2: Comment on your interview, explaining what you discussed and the insights you gained from your mentor. Include the following:
    - ♦ What were the mentor's comments regarding your essay?
    - ♦ What advice did he/she give?
    - ♦ How did his/her comments expand or correct your application of the course?
    - ♦ Include the person's name, occupation, and the length of the interview.
  - c. Section 3: Conclude with a synthesis of what you have learned. Answer the following:
    - ♦ If your mentor corrected any thoughts in your "Personal Reflection and Evaluation", how do you feel about these corrections? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
    - ♦ Synthesizing your thoughts from section one and your mentor's insight in section two, what final conclusions have you reached? How is this different from section one?
    - ♦ In light of the interview and further reflection, what additional, *specific* changes need to occur in your life and what *concrete* steps will you take to implement them?

**NOTE TO STUDENTS:** Your effort in this assignment will determine its benefit. If by the end of this course you have not yet reflected critically on your life in light of what you have studied, allow this assignment to guide you in that process. The instructor for this course will not score your essay based on the amount of spiritual fruit you describe; so do not exaggerate (or trivialize) what you have learned. **The primary grading criteria is that you have thoughtfully considered the principles of the course and realistically sought to apply them to your life.** If you have done this and met the minimal requirements (as noted above), you will earn the full points for this assignment.



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Note on confidentiality: Perhaps the Holy Spirit is dealing with you in some very personal areas of your life. Because of this, your grader will keep your essay entirely confidential and either return or discard it.

Objective: to stimulate reflection and interaction on course principles in order to enhance personal spiritual formation.

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## Course Grading

1. Daily Preparation .....	25%
2. Problem or Theme Study.....	25%
3. Short Exegetical Paper.....	35%
4. ITS Online Interactivity Forum .....	5%
5. Spiritual Formation Project .....	10%
	<u>100%</u>

## Course Schedule

Lecture 1 .....	Introduction; Acts 1	Lecture 13 .....	Acts 15
Lecture 2 .....	Acts 2	Lecture 14 .....	Acts 16
Lecture 3 .....	Acts 3	Lecture 15 .....	Acts 17
Lecture 4 .....	Acts 4	Lecture 16 .....	Acts 18-19:20
Lecture 5 .....	Acts 5	Lecture 17 .....	Acts 19:21-20:38
Lecture 6 .....	Acts 6-8:1a	Lecture 18 .....	Acts 21:1-23:11
Lecture 7 .....	Acts 8:1b-40	Lecture 19 .....	Acts 23:12-24:9
Lecture 8 .....	Acts 9:1-10:23a	Lecture 20 .....	Acts 24:10-25:22
Lecture 9 .....	Acts 10:23b-11:18	Lecture 21 .....	Acts 25:23-26:23
Lecture 10 .....	Acts 11:19-12:24	Lecture 22 .....	Acts 26:24-27:44
Lecture 11 .....	Acts 12:25-13:52	Lecture 23 .....	Acts 28
Lecture 12 .....	Acts 14	Lecture 24 .....	Review of the Theology of Acts

## Course Bibliography

A select bibliography is supplied in the *Expanded Study Guide*.

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## **Notes Regarding This Downloaded Syllabus**

This downloadable syllabus is not exhaustive. It is designed to provide learners with a picture of the course, not a full outline of the course. Grader Guidelines, Appendixes, Bibliographies, Lecture Outlines, and Review Questions have been removed. The complete course syllabus is included with purchase of the course in either a digital or hard-copy format.

Likewise, individuals taking the class for credit are responsible for the syllabus requirements of the specific institution through which the course is offered. Each individual institution has reserved the right to alter or change the syllabus as deemed necessary.