

Adult Teaching Resources

April 14, 2024



Season of Easter

April 7, 2024—"True Community"—Acts 4:32-35

April 14, 2024—"Why the Surprise?"—Acts 3 (RCL 3:12-19)

April 21, 2024—"This Is the Way"—Acts 4:1-12 (RCL 4:5-12)

April 28, 2024—"What Hinders Me?"—Acts 8:26-40

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Why the Surprise?

Acts 3 (RCL 3:12-19)

FIT Teaching Guide

by David Woody

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Key Verse

When Peter saw it, he addressed the people, “You Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk?” (Acts 3:12)

Opening

After everyone arrives, ask each person to find a partner. Once each couple is settled, ask everyone to think of a memorable event that led to a major change in their life.

What was the event?

What impact did that event have on your life?

What changed in your life because of that event?

How were you changed?

How were those around you changed?

Give each couple time to share with each other, then open the floor for large group sharing and conversation before moving to the Bible.

Reading the Bible

What did Peter do after he saw it? (He addressed the people)

What did he ask them? (why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk?)

Who did Peter say glorified his servant Jesus? (The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob,[c] the God of our ancestors)

According to Peter, what did the people do to Jesus? (whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him)

Who did the people ask for instead of Jesus? (asked to have a murderer given to you)

What was Peter a witness to? (The people killed the author of life, whom God raised from the dead.)

What has happened by faith in his name? (his name itself has made this man strong)

Reading the Bible *continued*

What has happened by the faith that is through Jesus? (It has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you.)

How did Peter say the people acted? (They acted in ignorance, as did also their rulers)

What did God fulfill that was foretold through the prophets? (that his Messiah would suffer)

What does Peter say folks should do? (Repent, therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out)

Making Connections

Share a time when you heard a sermon that you knew was not “prepared” and instead was being tailored to that one moment in time. Who preached? What was the topic? How did you know it was not “prepared?” What impact did it have on you?

Our Lesson Writer explains, “The fiery apostle could not resist reminding his hearers that they had turned against Jesus, however, asserting that Pilate would have released Jesus if not for the influence of certain Jewish leaders. As a result, Peter declared them corporately responsible for Christ’s death.” Is this idea that Jews are responsible for Jesus’ death new to you, or did you hear this sometime in your past? If this is new, how do you feel about hearing this? If this is not new, what did you think when you first heard it? Why do you think Peter made the sweeping statement that he did?

After charging his listeners with murder, Peter back-pedals a bit and instead says they were ignorant. When have you been accused of something heinous to then have someone back-pedal on you and be accused of something not as bad? How did you handle both accusations?

What do you think you would have done if you were a part of the crowd when asked who to release—Jesus or Barabbas? Why do you say that?

When have you, like Peter, denied knowing Jesus? What was the situation? What were you afraid of? What did you do about it?

How has your own faith journey, with the high points and low points informed the way you relate to others and their faith journey? How do you wish others would treat you, knowing what you have endured on your own faith journey?

So What?

Ask everyone to gather back together with their partner from the beginning of the lesson. Share the words from our Lesson Writer, “Peter believed that repentance was needed. Fulfilling Jesus’ prediction of Peter’s denial did not make the apostle less guilty. He had needed to repent, and so did all who had contributed to Jesus’ death (v. 19).”

So What *continued*

Ask each couple to answer these questions:

What does “repent” and “repentance” mean to you?

Why do you think Peter felt the need to repent?

Why is it important to repent as a person of faith?

Do you feel that we are responsible for what happened to Jesus? Why do you say that?

Do you feel the need to repent for Jesus’ death? Why do you say that?

Give each couple time to share with each other, then open the floor for large group conversation and discussion.

The Challenge

This week, as a part of your prayer time, spend time in repentance, asking God to forgive you. Turn your back on what you have done wrong and focus your eyes on Jesus.

Prayer

Loving God, there are moments in life that change us. We all have significant moments that have shaped us and continue to shape us. As people of faith, we pray those moments bring us closer to you. Open our eyes to the things we need to repent from and give us the strength to come to you and ask for your forgiveness. Amen.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartledge

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

A similar pattern—J. Bradley Chance notes that this story reflects a pattern first shown in the Gospel of Luke. After Jesus’ first sermon (Luke 4:16-30), he performed acts of healing, including one for a man who had been paralyzed (4:31-5:25). Jesus’ claim of authority to forgive sins as well as to heal prompted conflict with the Jewish authorities.

A similar pattern is shown in Acts 3. Shortly after Peter finished his sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), he healed a lame man (3:1-11) and spoke of the authority of Jesus to heal and forgive (3:12-26), leading to a confrontation with the Jewish leadership (*Acts* [Smyth & Helwys, 2007], 68).

Jesus as servant—The description of Jesus as God’s “servant” would have reinforced the connections between Jesus and earlier Jewish heroes, including Moses (Josh. 1:7, 13; 9:24; 1 Chr. 6:49). Prophetic references to a coming messiah often used servant terminology (Ezek. 34:23-24, 37:24-25; Zech. 3:8), including the “servant songs” of Isaiah 42:1-4, 49:1-6, 50:1-11, and 52:13-53:12.

Divine titles—Peter used an impressive assortment of titles for Jesus (vv. 14-15). The Jesus who had been crucified was no ordinary man: he was “the Holy One,” “the Righteous One,” and the “Author of Life.” The word translated as “Author” (also used in Acts 5:31; Heb. 2:10, 12:2) could also mean “Founder” or “Pioneer Leader.” Humans put “the author of life” to death, but God raised him up: Christ initiated a new kind of life that reaches beyond death.

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartledge

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Which prophets did Peter quote?

In his sermon, Peter spoke much about Jesus as the fulfillment of prophecies, but he offered little in the way of specifics. Modern readers may wonder just what prophets or prophecies Peter had in mind.

We cannot be sure, of course, but the reference to it being foretold that Jesus would suffer could point to the “Servant Songs” of Second Isaiah (v. 18, cf. Isa. 42:1-4, 49:1-6, 50:1-11, and 52:13-53:12). Although the songs sometimes seem to speak of Israel itself as the suffering servant, they also speak of an individual who would suffer on behalf of others, and the songs had come to be interpreted as Messianic.

Peter also mentioned Moses, who the ancients considered to be a prophet as well as a lawgiver. Moses had reportedly said that God would raise up another prophet like him, one who would hear and declare God’s commands to God’s people (v. 22, cf. Deut. 18:15-18). Peter considered Jesus to be the long-awaited prophet like Moses, who spoke for God, and who should be obeyed.

But who did Peter have in mind when he spoke of “the time of universal restoration that God announced long ago through his holy prophets” (v. 21)? Prophetic traditions from Isaiah 2:2-4, 9:5, 7; 11:6-9, as well as Micah 4:1-4, and others looked forward to a new age of peace when God would reign over the earth and all peoples would bend the knee in worship as they lived together in harmony.

The issue becomes a bit thornier when we consider v. 24: “And all the prophets, as many as have spoken, from Samuel and those after him, also predicted these days.” Samuel was regarded as a faithful prophet whose words were true. They “never fell to the ground,” according to 1 Sam. 3:19-20, but none of his recorded speeches mention a coming messiah or time of restoration. His public preaching called for the Israelites to repent (1 Sam. 7:3-5) and warned them against the dangers of trusting a king rather than God (1 Sam. 8:10-18, 12:6-25). He predicted that Saul was destined to become king (1 Sam. 9:20, 10:1-8), but then criticized his failure to obey at every turn (1 Sam. 13:10-15, 15:10-31), even from beyond the grave (1 Sam. 28:15-19).

The closest Samuel came to predicting anything that could be construed as messianic is found in 1 Sam. 12:22, where he warned against the dangers of kingship but said, “For the LORD will not cast away his people, for his great name’s sake, because it has pleased the LORD to make you a people for himself.” When criticizing Saul, Samuel said that God would have established his kingdom forever, but would instead choose “a man after his own heart” (1 Sam. 13:13-14, cf. 15:28). Samuel later anointed David to be that king, but he made no predictions about his reign that we know of (1 Sam. 16:13).

The Hardest Question *continued*

In Jewish thought, however, the entire books of 1-2 Samuel are associated with Samuel. So, although it is Nathan who predicted that God would make David's kingdom an everlasting one (2 Sam. 7:4-17), the prophecy could have been associated with Samuel. It was this prophecy that gave rise to later predictions that a descendant of David would arise and restore Israel to its former glory. Thus, Peter could claim that "Samuel and those after him all predicted these days." He was speaking in broad generalities about the prophetic tradition, rather than specific prophecies.