

# reACT

catching up with the spirit

daily devotions for week 4

OPPOSITION



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## MONDAY – The word of God will persevere, no matter what!



**Luke 22: 3 NIV** *Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve.*

**Acts 1: 16-17 NIV** *“Brothers and sisters, the Scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus. He was one of our number and shared in our ministry.”*

This week we will explore passages in Acts that deal with opposition to the New Way as taught by the Apostles.

**Acts 1: 15-20** tells the story of Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. Matthew Skinner, in his book *“Acts: Catching up with the Spirit”* says that it is ironic that Judas through his betrayal of Jesus, kick-started the sequence of events that led to the death of Jesus on the cross, and his subsequent resurrection. **Acts 1: 8** states the mission for the community of believers as bearing witness to Jesus, which is the exact

opposite of Judas’ action. In Luke as well as in Acts, Judas is Satan’s agent (Luke 22: 3), but God used Judas’ evil ways to fulfil Scripture.

**Reflection:** How do you as a believer respond to whatever impedes your ability to live out the generosity and hospitality of the good news?

The narrative throughout Acts shows us that when one does that by and through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the promise of new life in Christ is far more powerful than any potential opposition.



**Prayer:** Lord, as we explore times of conflict and opposition in the first century church, make us aware through the Holy Spirit of attacks either on the church or on ourselves, and guide us to remain faithful in the face of such opposition. AMEN



“Where the Spirit of the Lord is”; Hillsong Worship  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vt8k62M7oBI>

## TUESDAY – Escalating the conflict



**Acts 5: 18-20** *They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. “Go, stand in the temple courts,” he said, “and tell the people all about this new life.”*

Acts is a narrative about ordinary people like you and me who, 2000 years ago experienced the events as narrated in the book first-hand and could therefore witness about it and vouch that it was the truth. In the process Jesus made salvation and the power of the Holy Spirit a present reality for both the apostles and the rest of the church.

The apostles were enthusiastic about the church and used every opportunity to witness about the amazing events they had witnessed. The leaders of the Temple in Jerusalem ordered the apostles to stop speaking in Jesus'

name. By the time we get to Acts 5 the Jewish high priest orders the arrest of the apostles. During the night an angel of the Lord frees them from jail, and sends them back to again witness in the Temple, thus escalating the conflict. Ultimately the Jewish council is shown to be toothless, with no answer to the powerful testimony of the apostles about the risen Lord Jesus.

**Reflection:** Reflect on the good things that God has done in your life! Have you told others in the circles where you move about what God has done for you?



**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, make salvation and the power of the Holy Spirit a present reality for me and my family, and open our spiritual eyes and ears to discern where You want us to witness about the good news. AMEN



“Come Holy Spirit”; with Mark Counihan, Langa Mbonambi and LIV Village Kids

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKAIsYb2V6o>

## WEDNESDAY – Money cannot buy salvation



**Acts 8: 18-20** *When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money!"*

As the apostles witnessed about the good news and The Way, as the church was called in those days, the good news was carried out from Jerusalem. Philip went into Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there.

When Philip came to Samaria he baptised those who believed, healed the sick and drove out impure spirits. Simon, a sorcerer, saw this, believed and was baptised as well. When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that the Samaritans had accepted the Word of God, they sent the apostles Peter and John to Samaria, where they prayed for the new believers to

receive the Holy Spirit. Simon offered money to Peter and John to also give him the ability to offer the Holy Spirit to people. Peter immediately rebuked Simon (Acts 8:20), telling him that one cannot buy the gift of God with money, and money cannot buy salvation.

**Reflection:** When we make decisions, either in our private or work life, or as a community of believers, does it involve reflecting on who God is, what God desires from us and how we as believers can play a part in fulfilling God's purpose?



**Prayer:** Lord, we praise and worship You for the miracle of creation and thank You for choosing us as Your chosen people. Lord Jesus, give us discernment to timeously recognise those who oppose Your divine purpose. AMEN



"Holy Spirit You are welcome here"; Heavens Mutambira & Amplified Praise

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2q7hMfmVL3I>

## THURSDAY – False prophets in the Church



**2 Peter 2: 1a** *But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you.*

**Acts 13: 9-11** *Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, “You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord?”*

When Paul and Barnabas arrived in Cyprus, they continued proclaiming the word of God as they travelled through the island. At one of their stopovers they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet, Bar-Jesus, also called Elymas. When the proconsul (Roman governor of Cyprus) sent for Paul and Barnabas, because he wanted to hear the word of God, Elymas opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul away from the faith. Through the power of the Holy Spirit Paul had been able to identify and call out an opponent to the divine purpose of God (Acts 13: 10). The rest of this story in Acts 13: 4-12 tells us that Elymas was, for a period, struck with blindness and

that the proconsul believed, because he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord (verse 12). In Matthew 13: 24-30; 36-43 Jesus told the crowd the parable of the weeds (tares) and later explained its meaning to the disciples. This parable warns believers always to be attentive, even in what they presume to be a safe Christian environment, for false prophets and false teachings.

**Reflection:** This parable is as relevant today as it had been 2000 years ago – have you given thought to how you would react if you discerned falseness in your safe community of believers?



**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, let the fire of the Holy Spirit infuse and cleanse us, wherever we gather as a community of believers, so that we can witness in truth about our journey and spread the good news about salvation, which is available to all who believe. AMEN



Spirit of the Living God; Vertical Worship

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ogGOIGswStA>

## FRIDAY – Persecution creates opportunities – the story of Paul



**Acts 26: 15** *“Then I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord replied.*

**Acts 26: 17-18** *I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’*

In the book by Matthew Skinner “Acts: Catching up with the Spirit” one of the recurring themes is that as the first century church was being persecuted it opened up opportunities for the church to grow. Nowhere is this more clearly illustrated than in the life, history and journeys of Paul (previously Saul). From watching over the coats of the witnesses at the stoning of Stephen, to the persecution of the disciples, to Saul’s conversion after encountering Jesus on the road to Damascus, to the manner in which Paul witnessed ceaselessly about Jesus and the good message is a compelling roller coaster ride.

**Reflection:** Stories from the past strengthen our spirit – it was true for the first century believers and it is equally true for us today. The narrative of Paul’s journey from persecutor of the Lord’s disciples, through the road to Damascus, his various missionary trips through his four missionary journeys to Asia Minor and Europe, ending up in Rome, has opportunity written across it in **CAPITAL LETTERS**.

Do you have stories from your past that could strengthen the spirit of other believers? **Is your spirit sufficiently strengthened to go out and witness about your journey with our Lord Jesus?**



**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, the various narratives in Acts that relate the persecution of Paul and the apostles, disciples and believers and the associated opportunities that arose for the church to grow, fill us with confidence that in Your name and with the strength of the Holy Spirit we can also witness about our journeys. AMEN

“Breathe on us”; Kari Jobe

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0PCT0P6zi\\_s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0PCT0P6zi_s)

