

# reACT

catching up with the spirit

daily devotions for week 6

THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING



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## MONDAY – The Kingdom of God is here and now



**Luke 17: 20-21** *Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, “The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is in your midst.”*

According to the Gospels, Jesus spoke about “the kingdom of God” more than any other topic. In fact, it is mentioned more than 80 times in the New Testament, mostly in the synoptic gospels.

The kingdom of God is sometimes referred to as the “kingdom of heaven”.

In Matthew 6: 9 – 10 Jesus taught us to pray – “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your

kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

Matthew Skinner tells us that Jesus wasn’t talking about a place, like a far-off heaven where none of our problems can follow us. “The kingdom of God” refers to the state of affairs in which God’s gracious intentions for humanity and all creation finally become fully actualized. That new reality begins to emerge in Jesus’ presence and activity, here on earth.



**Prayer:** As we open the Book of Acts again, O God, again open us – heart and mind, strength and spirit – to the radical power of Your Holy Spirit to change us and to change the world. As Your Son’s earliest followers were accused of turning the world upside down, may our words and our deeds put Your priorities above our own and Your values above our society’s, that we may live as the citizens of heaven You have called us to be, active for liberty and love as we await the coming of Your Saviour, Jesus Christ. AMEN.  
*(Matthew Skinner)*

## TUESDAY – Private or political?



**Acts 14: 10, 14-15** *When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they started shouting in their own Lycaonian language, “The gods have become like men and have come down to us!” ... <sup>14</sup> But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into crowd, shouting: “Friends, why are you doing this? We too are only human, like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them.*

“People who say that Jesus wasn’t interested in politics misunderstand that at the heart of His message and His compassionate deeds was a vision for a new society – a different way for people to live together into the wholeness, justice, human flourishing, reconciliation and generosity that God desires. Anyone who talks about making this kind of existence a reality is unavoidably stepping into political currents, because all of these topics have implications for how people organize their communities, what values will characterize their life together, who gets to possess power over others, and whose needs will have priority.”  
*(Matthew Skinner)*

We are bombarded every day with “political” rhetoric and news in the press. However, in this devotion’s sense, the term ‘political’ is the generic sense of the word, that is, the way that people living in groups make decisions.

Paul and Barnabas were astounded at the reaction of the crowds. All they wanted to do was to bring the good news of Jesus.

### **Reflection:**

Paul and Barnabas continued to bear witness to Jesus. How would you have reacted if you were in Paul and Barnabas’ shoes?



**Prayer:** Lord, help me to stay focused and not to take my eyes off You. AMEN.

## WEDNESDAY - Not a private matter



**Acts 4: 1-3** *At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Greeks believed. But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the other Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of His grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders.*

When I grew up it was not considered polite conversation to talk about your salary, religion or politics in company. And to do so at work was absolutely taboo. However, time and again we read in Acts that the disciples grasped every chance they could to talk and minister to the people. Spreading the gospel was not a private matter. They used every opportunity to witness about God's power over death and the resurrection of Jesus.

Matthew Skinner writes – “Even if Acts rarely portrays the church's representatives as deliberate agitators, nevertheless the kingdom of God that they preach and embody has a way of challenging

the status quo and its prevalent values. Their conception of God and the good news has real implications for people's lives. Conventions, cultural assumptions, class and status-based privileges, political loyalties, and economic systems are put in peril when the missionaries come to town.”

### **Reflection:**

In Matthew 28:19-20 Christ told his disciples: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”



**Prayer:** Lord help me to be bold like the disciples in spreading Your word. Guide me in spreading Your message of justice, mercy and love. AMEN.

## THURSDAY: So how does this change everything?



**Acts 19: 18-20** *Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed what they had done. A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. ....In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.*

How does our journey through Acts “change everything”?

Matthew Skinner writes: “When studying this passage (Acts 19:11-41), I like to ask groups what should the church’s resisters be worried about in your neighbourhood right now? What businesses, ideologies, or political interests have reason to feel jeopardised by the Christian witness about Jesus? And what could change if the church’s members realised the influence they possess?”

Christian faith affects all aspects of one’s life. It works to see God’s

desires for human existence come to fruition. Jesus Christ is supposed to influence how we live in the world. A person’s Christian faith should make a difference in how that person uses money, votes in elections, raises children, understands obligations to his or her neighbours and knows when it’s time to walk away from a job or some other requirement. We have to allow our faith to inform all aspects of our lives. Keeping our Christian faith totally isolated from our other commitments and responsibilities makes that faith no longer aligned with the kind of life Jesus lived.”



**Prayer:** Spirit of God, You continue to blow through the world unhindered, always leading us to new experiences of Your freedom, Your power, and Your love. Keep us faithful in following after You, knowing we pursue You only because You have first pursued us; and trusting You to draw others, through our witness, to the people You have formed for yourself in Jesus Christ, our Saviour. AMEN.

## FRIDAY – Thine is the Kingdom



**Acts 28: 30-31** *For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!*

“The Christian message and living, from the most soaring of public speeches to the invisible acts of hospitality and solidarity, have the potential to change everything. That is one of the most powerful ways that Acts urges its readers to dream big and expect more from their commitment to God. This makes Acts a challenging book and hopefully also for congregations that have grown satisfied with merely existing and not making a difference.

Acts does promote certain values that are evergreen. Those values are theological, meaning that they are rooted in our experience of God’s goodness, God’s commitment to deliver people

from all forms of oppression, the power of reconciliation and forgiveness, and the dignity and worth of each person. Such values go beyond generic notions of ‘justice’, ‘inclusion’, or ‘trust’, because they articulate specific trust we have come to learn from and about God.” (*Matthew Skinner*)

### **Reflection:**

“If we pray for God’s kingdom to come, we should be equipped to live an influential faith. If we do so motivated by love and generosity, modeled on the hospitality of self-giving that reside at the heart of Christian faith, who knows where God’s Spirit will guide us?”  
*Matthew Skinner*



### **PRAYER:**

*Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name.  
Thy Kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven  
Give us this day our daily bread.*

*And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass  
against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever.  
AMEN*