

Acts of the Apostles

IGNATIUS CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE QUESTIONS

Welcome

“You are approaching the ‘word of God’. But for thousands of years, ... the Word of God has been approaching you.”

The following guide is provided to enhance your reading of the Acts of the Apostles using the *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*. If you are new to this resource or to reading the Bible, we recommend you read the general Introduction before you begin. It explains what it means that Scripture is the Word of God as well as how we understand and interpret it as Catholics. It also introduces the special features of the Study Bible and tells how they can enrich your reading and study.

A simple rhythm of prayer followed by reading and reflection is offered below to guide you through the book one chapter at a time. Questions draw attention to key footnotes and word studies to lead you into a deeper understanding of what you read and then prompt you to consider how to apply what you have learned. For a deeper dive, take advantage of additional features as you go: not just the other footnotes but also cross-references to Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* that are provided above the footnotes as well as any maps, charts, or essays that are not touched on in the questions.

Don't miss these helpful icons as you read! They highlight footnotes that pertain to the Church's criteria for interpreting Scripture (see CCC 112–14):



Be attentive to the content and unity of Scripture

Notes marked with a Bible icon connect Old Testament passages and New Testament mysteries, fostering appreciation for God's unified plan.



Read Scripture in light of the Church's living tradition

This icon marks notes drawn from the Holy Spirit's guidance of Church teaching and the spiritual senses of scripture. Here you'll find official teaching as well as interpretations from Fathers, Doctors, and saints of the Church.



Be attentive to the “analogy of faith”

Explore notes marked with an icon of keys to learn how the mysteries of faith, revealed in Scripture and defined by the Church, clarify and connect with one another in a unified, coherent way.

May God bless you as you read his word!

of God,* did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷ but emptied himself,[†] taking the form of a servant,[‡] being born in the likeness of men.[§] And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.[¶] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name,^{||} that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,^{|||} and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

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12 Therefore, obeyed, so now much more in salvation with f work in you, bo pleasure.
14 Do all thi tioning,¹⁵ that y children of God crooked and per

2:9–11: Rom 10:9; 14:9; Eph 1:20–21. 2:13: 1 Cor 15:10. 2

2:7 emptied himself: The Greek verb *kenōō* means “empty out” or “render void”. The idea is, not that Christ divested himself of divinity when he united himself with humanity, but that he restricted his rightful exercise of certain divine abilities during his earthly life and accepted certain limitations of the human condition. In effect, the Son of God made himself poor in order to make us rich with his grace (2 Cor 8:9) (CCC 472). • Christ emptied himself by compressing the glory of his Godhead within our smallness. What he always was remained perfect and incomprehensible, but what he assumed was in proportion to the measure of our nature (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Apollinarius*).

2:8 death on a cross: The ultimate indignity. Death by crucifixion was the most awful and degrading form of criminal execution in the ancient world. The Romans reserved it for slaves and insurrectionists. See note on Mk 15:24.

2:9 exalted him: By raising him from the dead, enthroning him in heaven, and clothing his humanity with divine glory. A similar destiny awaits all who humble themselves as Jesus did (3:21; Lk 14:11).

2:10 every knee should bow: An allusion to the divine oath in Is 45:23. • Yahweh swore that all peoples, to the very end of the earth, would acknowledge his Lordship and bow before him in homage. Paul moves Christ into the center of this prophecy as the divine Lord destined to be revered by all. **heaven ... earth ... under the earth:** The three principal realms in the world view of ancient Israel (Ex 20:4). Homage will come from all creatures great and small—the angels and saints above, the family of man and beasts spread over the earth, and the dead and the demons of the underworld.

2:11 confess: I.e., acknowledge. Included in this open dec-

serious that we pur sense of awe at ser the prospect of sinn Encouragement con readers that God's g desire (intention) at 21; CCC 308) (CC “work”, he address and trembling”, he good deeds were th not boast of your g within you (St. Augu **2:15 pervers** • Deuterono poetic lawsuit that and ingratitude du

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Prepare

Read the Introduction to Acts, paying particular attention to the *Structure* and *Themes* of the book. What one thing stands out to you, that you would like to remember?

Read the Outline of Acts to get an overview of the book. What are its major divisions?

Pray

Use the following questions to guide your reading of Acts, going at a pace that is comfortable to you. Before you begin each new section, pray simply for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit:

Come, Holy Spirit, open my heart to hear and receive these words as what they truly are, the Word of God. Enlighten my understanding and give me grace to put what I read into practice in my life. Amen.

Read and Reflect

Read and reflect on Acts as follows:

- Pray before you read
- Read a section of biblical text by itself
- Read the text again, referring to the notes that accompany the text
- For deeper understanding and to aid in applying what you read, answer the questions that follow. The references at the top of each numbered question correspond to particular notes.

At the end of each chapter, review what you have written and linger where you feel drawn, asking the Lord to speak to your heart and into your life. What do you hear? Respond in prayer and ask his help to live what you hear in your attitudes and actions this week.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Chapter 1

For understanding

1. **1:6.** How are the political aspirations of Judaism given a spiritual fulfillment in Acts? What two interrelated traditions echo in the question of the disciples about the restoration of the kingdom to Israel? How does Acts confirm the hopes of the disciples?
2. **1:8.** To what are the disciples to be witnesses? What is the Greek origin of the word “witness”? From what OT passage does the witness motif come, and what significance does it have there?
3. **1:10.** What is the implied link between the two men whom the apostles see when Jesus ascends into heaven and the figures of Moses and Elijah?
4. **1:20.** Why does Peter quote from Ps 69 and 109? How does he apply them to the Messiah? To what does the term “office” refer?

For application

1. **1:5.** What does the expression “baptized in the Holy Spirit” mean to you? If you were to compare baptism in water with taking a bath in a tub, what might “taking a bath in the Holy Spirit” suggest that Jesus is promising you?
2. **1:8.** Why do you think that being a witness to Jesus’ death and Resurrection would require power from the Holy Spirit? What kind of power? What does “being [Jesus’] witness” mean to you, personally?
3. **1:12–13.** Why do you think the disciples chose the upper room to return to after the Ascension? If you have ever returned to a location that was important to you, why did you do it?
4. **1:14.** Recall a time when you “devoted yourself to prayer” for any purpose. What was the purpose? How long did you keep it up, and what was the result? What part (if any) does Mary play in your prayer, and why (or why not)?

Chapter 2

For understanding

1. **2:1.** What was the original meaning of the feast of Pentecost for Jews? What theological significance was added to the feast? What does it mean for Christians?
2. **2:17–21.** What age does Pentecost confirm? What does Joel 2:28–32 say will happen in this age? How does Peter link the “wonders and signs” in Joel’s prophecy with the person of Jesus?
3. **Topical Essay: Peter, Prince of the Apostles.** Citing Scripture, the essay lists nine points concerning Peter’s importance in the Gospels. What are they? In what nine ways does this prominence continue into the Book of Acts?
4. **2:38.** In this passage, what does Peter claim is the effect of Baptism? What does the Council of Trent mean when it describes Baptism as the “instrumental cause of our justification”?

For application

1. **2:1–13.** Have you ever had a strong religious conversion experience? If so, how did your behavior change, and what did your family and friends think of it? What did you think of it?
2. **2:16–21.** What do you think would happen if Joel’s prophecy were to be fulfilled among us now as literally as it was among the disciples on the first Pentecost? Do you think it is being fulfilled today? If so, where do you see it? If not, why not?
3. **2:22–36.** If God foresees that the crucifixion of his Son will turn out for the good of the world, how might he use your mistakes and sins for your own good? What evidence do you see that he has done exactly that?
4. **2:41–47.** What did those who heard Peter do after they were baptized? When you receive the Holy Spirit as they did, what does this passage suggest should be the effect on the general direction of your life?

Chapter 3

For understanding

1. **3:8.** What does the leaping of the man healed by Peter and John signify? How do the passages from Isaiah and Malachi contribute to this understanding?

2. **3:13.** Why does Peter invoke the song of the messianic Servant of the Lord (Is 52:13) to describe Jesus? How does the context of the Isaiah passage clarify the idea that God has glorified Jesus?
3. **3:22.** If Jesus is the messianic prophet envisioned in the Torah, what does Deut 18:15–19 say about failure to heed him?
4. **3:25.** By contrast, how does Jesus make the covenant with Abraham an instrument of blessing? For whom?

For application

1. **3:4–6.** What should the poor be able to expect from you? If you cannot spare money to aid them, what do you have that you can offer them?
2. **3:12–16.** Have you ever been to a service where faith healing was the purpose of the gathering? What happened there? What did the leaders say about the power that produced any healings that occurred?
3. **3:19–21.** What are three outcomes of the repentance and “turning” that Peter mentions? Of these three, which means the most to you?
4. **3:24–25.** How seriously do you take these verses? If, as Peter says, all Scripture points to the Christian era, how important to you is your Catholic faith in the secular culture in which you live?

Chapter 4

For understanding

1. **4:6.** Since Annas had been replaced as high priest in A.D. 15, why is he still referred to as high priest more than 20 years later? Who are the other persons listed in the note?
2. **4:11.** Why does Peter select Ps 118 to talk about the rejection of Jesus by the Sanhedrin? What is the significance of calling the members of the Sanhedrin “builders”?
3. **4:12.** What does the name of Jesus mean in its Hebrew form? Why is it invoked in Acts?
4. **4:25–26.** What is the significance of the quotation from Ps 2:1–2 in the community’s prayer? If you read the psalm as a prophecy, how does it apply to the situation that the Church was facing in this passage?

For application

1. **4:11.** How often have you rejected spiritual counsel or direction because it seemed impractical, untimely, or simply annoying? What is your current attitude toward such “free advice”, especially when it seems to criticize the way you manage your spiritual life?
2. **4:19–20.** What is your attitude toward the teaching authority of the Church on moral issues? What is the Catholic teaching on dissent in conscience? (See CCC 162, 892, 912, 1782–85.)
3. **4:32.** What is the link here between generosity and unity? What do you think a lack of generosity can do to a parish community?

Chapter 5

For understanding

1. **5:4.** Why was the deception of Ananias and Sapphira so blameworthy? How does this passage hint at the personhood of the Holy Spirit? What did the First Council of Constantinople say about our attitude toward the Holy Spirit?
2. **Word Study: Church (5:11).** How is the term *ekklesia* used in Greek literature? How is it used in the Greek OT? How does the NT use the term?
3. **5:29.** As a foundational text on civil disobedience, on what does this passage insist? What is the Christian mission in this context?
4. **5:34.** Who was Gamali-el? Why was he remembered in Christian antiquity?

For application

1. **5:1–11.** This story seems unusual in the New Testament because of the severity of the punishment. What do you think is the point of telling it? What is the impact on the community of an individual’s sin, even when the sin is kept private?
2. **5:29.** If all authority comes ultimately from God, how can a Christian disobey any civil law? Are there laws in your country that a Christian *should* disobey (assuming a properly formed conscience)?

3. **5:38–39.** According to Gamali-el, how do you distinguish a work of men from a work of God? How long do you think it takes to recognize a work of God? How would you apply Gamali-el’s “rule of thumb” to events or trends in your own experience?
4. **5:41.** Have you encountered opposition because of your religious beliefs? Did your attitude resemble that of the apostles on this occasion?

Chapter 6

For understanding

1. **6:1–6.** Who were the Hellenist members of the Jerusalem Church? Who were the Hebrew members?
2. **6:6.** What does the gesture of “laying on of hands” signify here? What three considerations suggest that the Seven are the first ordained deacons of the Church?
3. **6:8—7:60.** What cause resulted in the death of Stephen? How does Luke compare Stephen’s trial and death to those of Jesus?
4. **6:13.** Although Luke assigns the accusations against Stephen to false witnesses, what criticisms does Stephen make before the Sanhedrin?

For application

1. **6:1.** What kinds of “growing pains” was the Church in Jerusalem experiencing? What kinds of tensions exist in your own church community? How does the community deal with them?
2. **6:2–3.** What criteria did the apostles have for the selection of the Seven? If you know any ordained deacons, how would you describe their ministry?
3. **6:8–10.** Besides waiting tables, what did Stephen’s ministry consist of? How would you describe the ministry of an apologist? Why does that ministry require wisdom and a sensitivity to the Spirit?

Chapter 7

For understanding

1. **7:1–53.** How does Stephen’s speech stress a historical pattern of rebellion in Israel? In what way does Stephen undermine Jewish reverence for the land of Israel and for the Jerusalem Temple?
2. **7:9–16 and 7:17–41.** What is the connection between the story of Joseph and that of Jesus? How does the Moses story follow that pattern?
3. **7:41.** What does literary analysis of the Pentateuch reveal about the story of the golden calf? What was the purpose of the sacrificial laws and liturgies in Exodus and Leviticus? How do the texts referred to in the note illustrate the point that these laws were of secondary importance? What do they suggest is primary?
4. **7:48.** Why does the note say that Stephen’s description of the Temple as something “made with hands” is *subversive*? What did Solomon, who built the first Temple, know about it that the Israelites forgot?
5. **7:49–50.** What contrast between God’s creation and man’s is Stephen making in his citation of Is 66:1–2?

For application

1. **7:27.** What is your attitude toward authority? Do you grow or chafe under it? When you realize that you resent authority, how do you deal with the resentment?
2. **7:35–39.** What sort of respect or disrespect have you shown toward bishops or pastors who were duly appointed to lead you? How has your behavior both illustrated your attitude and strengthened it (for example, through habit) either positively or negatively?
3. **7:51.** How might a baptized Christian become stiff-necked and stubborn and so resist the Holy Spirit? What patterns of resistance to the Spirit do you see in yourself?

Chapter 8

For understanding

1. **Word Study: Laid Waste (8:3).** To what does this expression usually refer? What does it underscore about Saul’s attack on the Church? What did Saul hope to accomplish, and how did he go about it?

2. **8:5.** Who was Philip? What does his successful ministry in Samaria display about the gospel?
3. **8:16.** What distinction is being made in this passage? How does it reflect a similar distinction between Baptism and Confirmation, and between Philip's role and that of Peter and John?
4. **8:27.** What were the restrictions on the Ethiopian eunuch regarding the worship for which he had come to Jerusalem? What did Isaiah envision regarding eunuchs? What does the dawning of the Christian age convince Philip to do?

For application

1. **8:6–13.** What do you think is the difference between a miracle and magic? How might you discern whether your approach to the outcome of a sacrament such as Confirmation or Eucharist is based on a belief in the effects of grace or those of magic?
2. **8:13.** When was the last time you were amazed at what God has done? What was the cause of that amazement? If you have never been surprised or amazed at God's intervention, what do you think causes that apathy?
3. **8:30–31.** How hard is it for you to understand what you read in Scripture? What approach or technique do you use when reading it? If Scripture is hard to understand, what kind of guidance do you seek as you read it?

Chapter 9

For understanding

1. **9:2.** What two groups used the name "the Way" to identify themselves? How is the name connected to Isaiah and the Exodus? Through whom does this new way pass?
2. **9:8.** What was the irony for Saul in being blinded on the road to Damascus?
3. **9:30.** What was the significance of Tarsus in the empire?
4. **9:43.** Why was being a tanner an "unclean" occupation for devout Jews? What is the connection between Peter's decision to accept the tanner's hospitality and the conversion of Cornelius?

For application

1. **9:1–2.** How would you describe the difference between a religious fanatic and a person who is radically committed to his faith? Which of these was Saul? Which are you?
2. **9:10–16.** Have you ever felt led by God to do something you were afraid to do? What was the effect on your faith of actually *doing* what he was leading you to?
3. **9:26.** You often hear stories of celebrities or known enemies of the faith converting to Christianity. How would you recognize the genuineness of such a conversion?
4. **9:31.** What is meant by "walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit"? How does the Catholic community to which you belong (for example, your parish or prayer group) experience that fear or this comfort? How do you experience it?

Chapter 10

For understanding

1. **10:2.** Who were the "God-fearers"? Why were they not considered Jewish converts in the strict sense?
2. **10:14.** How does Peter's vision of the animals in the sheet work to overcome his objection to killing and eating what he had previously considered unclean? Of what was the lifting of the Mosaic ban on unclean foods a sign here?
3. **10:28.** What were the conventions for social contact between Palestinian Jews and Gentiles? What was the reason for these conventions? What does Peter say the vision has taught him?
4. **10:44–48.** How does the Baptism of Cornelius and his household echo the Pentecost experience?

For application

1. **10:4.** In what respect can almsgiving be considered a form of prayer? How much praying in that form do you do?
2. **10:13–15.** Are there any foods you refuse to eat for religious or ethical reasons? What are those reasons? Since Peter's vision can be taken both literally and as a metaphor (compare with v. 28), are there any *people* you refuse to associate with for similar reasons? In either case, how do your reasons accord with the Lord's reply?

3. **10:34.** If, as this verse says, God shows no partiality, how is it that some people (such as the saints) seem to be more “graced” than others? How do you think God regards you in comparison to those “graced” people? According to this passage, how *should* you compare yourself to them?
4. **10:44–48.** When were you last surprised by the action of the Holy Spirit, especially when it seemed contrary to your own expectations? Since the Spirit can apparently act “outside the box” of a theological position (such as, “people don’t receive the Spirit before being baptized”), what might that fact teach you about your opinions?

Chapter 11

For understanding

1. **11:2.** What was the “circumcision party”? Did this position prevail?
2. **11:17.** What shows the equal footing of Jews and Gentiles before God? How does Peter use this fact later in Acts?
3. **11:19–26.** Why does Luke place the episode of Barnabas’ trip to Antioch here? What was the importance of Antioch to the early Church?
4. **11:28.** Who was Agabus? What extrabiblical evidence is there to support the fulfillment of his prophecy?

For application

1. **11:2–3.** When someone asks you a “why” question (such as the one in the passage), what do you think he is really saying? How should you reply?
2. **11:12.** Many Christians justify what they do on the grounds that “the Spirit told them” to do it. How should you evaluate their claims? (See CCC 799–801.)
3. **11:19–23.** How would you recognize when the grace of God is acting in a person’s life? What might you do to imitate Barnabas’ encouragement of it?
4. **11:27–28.** As you read CCC 799–801, how would you evaluate claims for or against the exercise of charismatic prophecy in today’s Church? Because such prophecy falls into the category of “private revelation”, how would you evaluate it if you heard it?

Chapter 12

For understanding

1. **12:5.** How did early believers fight against persecution? What do the *Catechism* references in this note have to say about prayer?
2. **12:6–11.** What are some of the parallels between the deliverance of Peter in this episode and the account of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt?
3. **12:17.** Who is the James mentioned in this verse? What was his role after Peter left Jerusalem “for another place”? Where do early traditions say that Peter went?
4. **12:23.** Why did Herod Agrippa die as he did? Which extrabiblical writer corroborates this account of Acts?

For application

1. **12:1–5.** Persecutions often follow the pattern of Herod’s in attacking leaders. Why do you think the Jerusalem Church responded with prayer instead of following Jesus’ injunction in Mt 10:23? If a similar persecution were to break out here, what do you think the Church’s response should be?
2. **12:12–16.** From your own experience or that of someone you know, recall an example of an “impossible situation” that was resolved through an affirmative (if not miraculous) answer to prayer. What were the normal expectations of those involved in the situation? What did the answer teach you about God’s care?
3. **12:15.** How seriously do you take the Catholic belief in guardian angels? What does the *Catechism* (CCC 334–36) say about them?

Chapter 13

For understanding

1. **13:5.** What was Paul’s strategy when he entered a new missionary frontier? What were the practical as well as theological considerations that shaped this strategy?

2. **13:16–41.** Summarize the three main points of Paul’s inaugural sermon in the Pisidian Antioch synagogue.
3. **13:34–35.** How does Paul build his case for the Davidic kingship of Jesus from Isaiah and Ps 16? How does Paul apply these passages directly to Jesus? What other preacher made this same point in Acts?
4. **13:47.** What point is Paul making by citing Is 49:6 to support his Gentile ministry?

For application

1. **13:6–10.** Have you ever knowingly stood in the way of someone’s coming to faith or known someone who deliberately stood in the way of your conversion? How was the situation resolved? If you were to blame, how did you make amends?
2. **13:16–41.** What pattern of resistance to God can you see in your own life? How has God shown his patience with you?
3. **13:38.** If you know Jesus as your Savior, what does he save you from? What does he save you for?
4. **13:44–51.** Sometimes, what looks like a disaster or a setback actually turns out for the best. As you reflect on your life with the Lord and his Church, what are some examples where an apparent disaster has actually resulted in good fruit?

Chapter 14

For understanding

1. **14:4.** What is the significance of Luke’s use of the word “apostles” here? What other NT examples of this use of the term does the note cite?
2. **14:11–18.** After the healing of the crippled man, what prompted the crowd at Lystra to react as it did? What legend was in play here?
3. **14:15.** What are the “vain things” that Paul exhorts the Lystran crowd to turn from? What is the substance of his message? Where else does he preach it?
4. **14:23.** To what does the Greek expression, here translated “appointed”, allude? What did the rite provide for the Church? What process was followed in determining the elders?

For application

1. **14:1–4.** The preaching of the gospel sometimes leaves a community divided, some siding with one side, some with another. What divisions over the gospel exist in your family, community, parish, or diocese? If you are on one side or the other, how can you evaluate whether your opinion aligns with the Church’s Magisterium?
2. **14:16–17.** How is it *not* a good thing (according to Paul) for a person to “walk in his own way”, that is, to “do his own thing” in matters of faith regardless of anyone else? What antidote does Paul suggest? What do you think is the “witness” that Paul refers to here, and to what does it witness?
3. **14:22.** Why are “many tribulations” necessary for one to enter the kingdom of God? What is Paul exhorting people to do in the face of suffering?

Chapter 15

For understanding

1. **15:1–29.** Why was the Council of Jerusalem convened? What makes it the theological center of Acts? Why?
2. **15:20.** What requirements does James recommend the Council make of Gentile converts? What is his solution saying about ritual requirements of both Judaism and paganism? How is his recommendation shaped by the laws of Lev 17–18? Why did the Council of Florence in 1442 relax these requirements?
3. **Topical Essay: Kingdom Restoration: The Dwelling of David.** To what does the expression “the dwelling of David” refer? What was the high point in the history of this “dwelling”? What caused it to fail?
4. **Topical Essay: Kingdom Restoration: Rebuilding the Kingdom of David.** What is the vision of Amos that James is quoting? What does it have to do with the inclusion of Gentiles? In what respect does the restored “tent” of David not look like the original even though it is considered a true restoration?

For application

1. **15:2.** When dissension arises in your church community, to what authority do you turn for resolution? What is your attitude toward hierarchical authority?

2. **15:7–11.** What is there about Peter’s speech that silences everyone? What connection do you see here between what he says and his authority in the Church?
3. **15:28.** By what authority can the Church’s bishops act as if what they decide “seems good to the Holy Spirit”? How does a reading of Jn 14:16–17, 25–26, and 16:12–15 help you understand the role of the Holy Spirit in Church decision making?
4. **15:36–40.** Have you witnessed or been part of a heated disagreement between Church leaders whom you respected? As a faithful Christian, how should you relate to the disputants if a rupture between them occurs? What might be your responsibilities in Christ if you are yourself involved in the disagreement?

Chapter 16

For understanding

1. **16:3.** If Paul did not believe that circumcision was needed for Gentiles, why did he have Timothy circumcised? Why was Timothy’s descent from a Jewish mother important, despite the fact that his father was a Gentile?
2. **16:10.** Why does Luke insert the pronoun “we” at this point in his narrative? How many such “we” sections are there in Acts?
3. **16:12.** Of what importance was Philippi? After whom was it named? Why did the city apparently have no synagogue?
4. **16:16.** What was the “spirit of divination” that Paul exorcised? What could one controlled by such a spirit do? Why were the owners of the slave girl whom Paul exorcised angry at him?
5. **16:37.** When Paul mentioned that he was a Roman citizen, what privileges enjoyed by citizens was he hoping to receive, given his circumstances? Why did Paul point out his citizenship?

For application

1. **16:6–10.** How would you discern that a plan you had in mind to pursue was not what the Holy Spirit wanted you to do? What have you learned about spiritual discernment from the experiences you have had? What tools do you have to help you discern God’s direction in your life?
2. **16:16–18.** Why is the Church so opposed to the occult, including seemingly innocent practices such as reading horoscopes?
3. **16:34.** How long has it been since you rejoiced that you believe in God? If it has been a while, what prevents you from rejoicing?
4. **16:35–39.** What do you think of Paul’s tactic of forcing the magistrates to apologize for punishing him and Silas? When is it appropriate to accept an unjust punishment, and when is it appropriate to demand an apology for it?

Chapter 17

For understanding

1. **17:7.** What were the Jewish accusers of Jason and his companions apparently assuming when they brought their captives to the local court? What threat did the kingship of Jesus represent? From the Christian perspective, why was the accusation a misunderstanding?
2. **17:18.** Who were the Epicureans, and what did they believe, both originally and at the time of Paul’s arrival? Who were the Stoics, and how did they view God?
3. **17:23.** Why did the Greeks build altars to “an unknown god”? For Athenians, where might the desire to build such an altar have come from? Why does Paul allude to this tradition?
4. **17:32.** Why did the Athenians regard the notion of physical resurrection as strange and even scandalous?

For application

1. **17:1–15.** If you feel that God does lead you in a certain direction in your life, how easy do you think the going should be? Why might it be a good thing if the going were hard?
2. **17:17–18.** What is zeal? Have you ever witnessed or done street-corner evangelism? What do you think of it as an approach, especially when hecklers attack the speaker? If you have never done this kind of evangelism, how do you express your own zeal for God?

3. **17:27–28.** According to the passages that Paul cites, how near is God to you? What does it mean to “seek God”, especially if you already believe in him? How might you know when you “find” him?
4. **17:29.** What does it mean to “make God in your own image”? In what ways does our culture project its own image of God? In what ways does your mental image of God actually resemble some ideal of your own making?

Chapter 18

For understanding

1. **18:1.** What was Corinth, and what was its reputation? How many letters did Paul address to the Corinthians?
2. **18:2.** What relationship did Aquila and his wife have with Paul? What caused Emperor Claudius to expel Jews from Rome in A.D. 49?
3. **18:18.** What vow did Paul make? Of what was it probably a gesture, and what did its fulfillment involve?
4. **18:24.** Who was Apollos, and what kind of ministry did he have?

For application

1. **18:8.** What might a believer in a non-Catholic strain of Christianity lose by joining the Catholic Church (for example, if he or she were a leader of a congregation)? What might he or she gain by doing that?
2. **18:12–15.** When is it appropriate for civil authorities to become involved in religious matters? Who should judge disagreements *within* the Church?
3. **18:25–26.** Have you ever mentored anyone in the faith or been mentored by anyone? What might be the spiritual benefits for both the mentor and the candidate? Why might your parish or community want to consider starting some sort of mentoring program for its members? How might the mentors be trained?

Chapter 19

For understanding

1. **19:10.** How long did Paul stay in Ephesus? What impact did his stay have on the founding of other Churches in the region?
2. **19:11.** How does this passage support the Catholic tradition of venerating the bodies and belongings of the saints (relics)? Look up some of the other biblical passages cited here that corroborate the efficacy of holy relics.
3. **19:23–41.** Why did Demetrius start a riot among the Ephesian silversmiths? What impression does one get from this passage as to his character?
4. **19:24.** Who was Artemis? For what was she revered?

For application

1. **19:1–7.** What was your experience of the sacrament of Confirmation? What changes did it make in your behavior as a Catholic? If your experience was similar to that of the Ephesian disciples, what do you think may have been among the causes?
2. **19:11–12.** What non-religious “relics” do you keep of relatives or friends (such as photographs, clothing, lockets containing hair, and so on)? Why do you keep them? What do religious relics have to do with the Catholic doctrine of the Communion of Saints?
3. **19:19–20.** Have you ever dabbled in or been active in occult practices? How did you break with them? What did you do with the paraphernalia (books, boards, cards, and so on)? Why is a complete break—down to and including burning the paraphernalia—necessary?

Chapter 20

For understanding

1. **20:1–6.** Before arriving at Jerusalem, what did Paul intend to do? Why?
2. **20:7.** What is the “first day of the week” for a Jew? What kind of evidence does this passage provide for the Christian use of this day? How does the structure of worship described here reflect the essential structure of Christian liturgy?

3. **20:28.** To what does the Greek term translated “guardians” refer? Does the reference indicate any standardization (or lack of it) in meaning?
4. **20:35.** Where in the Gospels does one find the saying that Paul quotes? Read Jn 20:30 and 21:25. How do these passages relate?

For application

1. **20:1.** What does it mean to “exhort” a person or group? Have you ever exhorted anyone on a spiritual matter? When can you recall receiving an exhortation that made a change in your thinking or behavior?
2. **20:24.** Recall a story of someone sacrificing his life for another person or for a cause. What (if anything) would you sacrifice yourself for?
3. **20:29–31.** Commentators have long noticed a steady decline in Mass attendance, practice of virtue, vocations to the priesthood and religious life, and so on. How has this decline affected you or your community? What can you do to arrest or perhaps reverse it?

Chapter 21

For understanding

1. **21:10.** Why did the prophet Agabus act out his message to Paul instead of merely speaking it? Which other prophets did the same thing?
2. **21:21.** What rumors about Paul had reached Jerusalem ahead of him? From the perspective of Acts, who was exempt from circumcision and other rituals of the Torah? What did the Council of Florence in 1442 have to say about these rituals?
3. **21:28.** Where were Gentiles permitted and not permitted in the Jerusalem Temple? According to Luke, what was the basis of the charge against Paul?
4. **21:31.** What was a tribune? a cohort? Where were they stationed in this episode? How were they enabled to maintain order within the Temple courts?

For application

1. **21:4.** Have you heard stories about the Spirit directing a person to do or to avoid doing something, or have you experienced such direction yourself? How does one discern the validity of such directions? If a direction seems to be genuinely from God, why would someone such as Paul decide to ignore it?
2. **21:10–14.** According to the *Catechism* (CCC 2473–74), what is martyrdom? What does it say are some of its benefits (CCC 1434)?
3. **21:20–24.** Using these verses as a basis for discussion, when do you think it might be appropriate to “keep up appearances” in your practice of the faith? (For example, why might having your children see you practicing your faith be important?) When is such a practice hypocritical, and when can it be genuine?

Chapter 22

For understanding

1. **22:1–21.** How many defense speeches does Paul give in Acts, and to whom? What is the point of this speech to the Jerusalem mob?
2. **22:17.** What is the “trance” referred to here? What can such a trance be a means for?
3. **22:24.** What was a Roman flogging like? What were the potential consequences of being flogged this way?
4. **22:25.** How could Roman citizenship be obtained? What exemptions did Roman citizenship provide? What did it guarantee a prisoner like Paul?

For application

1. **22:3.** How were you educated in the Catholic faith? What effect has this education had on your personal relationship with Jesus Christ? In what areas of the faith do you think you need more education?
2. **22:4–5.** How eager have you been to spread or defend the faith, and what have you actually done about it? Have you ever left the Catholic Church and tried to draw others out? What do you think now of your behavior? If you never left the Church, how have you tried to draw others into her?

3. **22:8.** How closely do you think Jesus identifies himself with you? How often do you reflect on the way Jesus identifies himself with baptized persons who are homeless, ill, or in prison? What effects have such reflections had on your own behavior?
4. **22:25–28.** From a moral perspective, how appropriate is it to use one’s legal prerogatives to gain some kind of advantage from public authorities? How have you used your standing as a citizen to protest government injustice or government-sanctioned immorality?

Chapter 23

For understanding

1. **23:5.** What passage does Paul quote for his apology to the high priest? What does that passage say? Why does Paul apologize—and why did he not recognize who the high priest was?
2. **23:6.** What were some of the issues that divided the Pharisee and Sadducee parties? What was Paul’s strategy in identifying himself as a Pharisee?
3. **23:16.** How do we know that Paul had a sister?
4. **23:25–30.** Why does the tribune send a letter to the procurator in Caesarea? How does the tribune “rearrange” the facts?

For application

1. **23:1.** Read the section of the *Catechism* on conscience (CCC 1783–94). Can you give an example of a time when you acted sincerely but with an erroneous conscience?
2. **23:6–9.** With the answer to the previous question in mind, what do you make of Paul’s strategy of causing dissension in the courtroom? How do you deal with people who seem habitually inclined to stir up trouble? How do you restore peace in relationships?
3. **23:16–22.** Have you ever been faced with a decision whether or not to report wrongdoing to your superiors or the authorities? What did you do? In good conscience, how would you evaluate the rightness or wrongness of your decision?
4. **23:26–30.** Have you ever taken steps to cover your mistakes by rearranging certain facts, lest a superior find out the truth? Again, how would you evaluate in conscience your behavior on such occasions?

Chapter 24

For understanding

1. **24:2–8.** What does the orator Tertullus try to do in presenting his case against Paul? How does he make his case?
2. **Word Study: Sect (24:5).** To what does the Greek word *hairesis* refer? In what way is the word applied, first, to the Pharisees and Sadducees and, second, to Christians? How does the main group in the religion consider members of the sect? How else does the NT use the term?
3. **24:10–21.** How does Paul answer each of the charges laid against him by Tertullus?
4. **24:24.** Who was Drusilla, and what was her relationship with Felix?
5. **24:25.** Why did Felix become alarmed when Paul spoke about the Christian message?

For application

1. **24:5.** Read the sections in the *Catechism* on “Wounds to Unity” (CCC 817–19, 2089) and distinguish between *heresy*, *schism*, and *apostasy*. How does the *Catechism* apply these terms to present-day Protestants?
2. **24:10.** Contrast Paul’s demeanor toward Felix in this verse with that of Tertullus in vv. 2–4. What respect do Christians owe the government (even in the face of disagreements with specific government policies)?
3. **24:14–15.** How much do you know about the Jewish background of Christianity? What can you learn about the Christian faith by investigating the faith of ancient—or even modern—Judaism?
4. **24:27.** Have you ever been in jail or known anyone jailed for an extended period of time awaiting trial? What is the experience like? In what kinds of virtue may a Christian in those circumstances grow strong?

Chapter 25

For understanding

1. **25:11.** What were Paul's rights of appeal as a Roman citizen? Why did Paul appeal his case to Caesar?
2. **25:12.** Who was the emperor at this time? When did he reign?
3. **25:13.** Who is the Agrippa named in this verse? Assuming the year is A.D. 59 (see note for 24:27), how much longer did Agrippa rule? Who was Bernice?
4. **25:26.** Why does Festus tell Agrippa that he has "nothing definite to write" to the imperial court about Paul? What did the Roman procurator think after hearing both sides of the case? What does Luke stress about Festus' and Agrippa's belief about Paul's case?

For application

1. **25:12.** When a decision of yours starts in motion a process that cannot be stopped, what should be your spiritual attitude before God?
2. **25:13–22.** How do you respond when someone with whom you have personal, legal, or political dealings shows complete indifference to your religious beliefs? How might it change matters if the dealings concerned those beliefs directly (for example, on a moral issue about which you were firmly committed)?
3. **25:23.** Have you ever had to witness publically to your faith? How did you handle the situation? What lessons can you learn from the way Jesus—and, in this context, Paul—handled this kind of situation?

Chapter 26

For understanding

1. **26:7.** To what hope was Paul referring in this verse? How are the hope of the restoration of Israel and that in the resurrection of the dead combined in OT texts?
2. **26:14.** What are the origin and meaning of the proverb about kicking against the goads? What was Jesus telling Paul through that proverb?
3. **26:23.** According to Paul, how did Israel's hope in the resurrection become history? What is the probable allusion to Isaiah in this verse? What does the sequence of the Isaiah passage explain about apostolic missionary efforts?
4. **26:28.** Why did Paul's argument fail to make a Christian of Agrippa? What excuse did the king use to avoid the cogency of Paul's argument?

For application

1. **26:14.** When your inclination and the will of God diverge, whom does it hurt when you resist what God wants? Why?
2. **26:19.** Though God has given you free will, why does it make sense to obey him? How can obedience to God *enhance* free will?
3. **26:24.** Why does the world at large think that the Christian way of life is insane? What do you think of the sanity of the saints?
4. **26:27–28.** Have you ever been evangelized by someone who assumed that you either were not Christian or were not Christian enough? What was your immediate reaction? Over the long run, how have you responded to the call of Christ?

Chapter 27

For understanding

1. **27:1–28:16.** What are the three phases of Paul's journey to Rome? What aspect of Paul's character do we see in this journey?
2. **27:1.** How do we know that Luke was on board during this journey to Rome?
3. **27:7–28:1.** How would you summarize the journey of the second ship carrying Paul and his companions? How did the second ship end its voyage?
4. **27:35.** What hints of a eucharistic celebration do you get from the account of the last meal aboard ship? What is an alternative explanation for this verse? Which of the two explanations seems more probable?

For application

1. **27:10–11.** When it comes to taking risks with your faith, how wise is it to listen to the advice of secular professionals rather than to religious teachers or your own faith experience?
2. **27:18–20.** What has been the most violent temptation against faith that you have faced so far? What practical steps did you take to weather it? What do you think may be the positive value of such temptations?
3. **27:21–26.** In the midst of the temptation discussed in the previous question, what part did prayer play? Were you confident that prayer would help you through the temptation?
4. **27:33–36.** In the face of difficulty, what kinds of encouragement can you receive from the advice of a strong believer? When have you encouraged others, and when have you taken such encouragement in times of stress or grief?

Chapter 28

For understanding

1. **28:13.** How does the presence of Christians in Puteoli and in Rome confirm what Paul says elsewhere about them? When does tradition indicate that Peter first arrived in Rome?
2. **28:16.** What were Paul's living conditions in Rome? Which letters did he write from that living situation?
3. **28:17.** Why is it no surprise that Paul contacted the Jews living in Rome? Since Emperor Claudius had expelled Jews in A.D. 49, what explains their presence now?
4. **28:30.** Why do you think Luke is silent about the outcome of the fate of Paul's case before Caesar? In what two ways could the story of his case have ended? What hints do we have of Paul's subsequent missionary activity?

For application

1. **28:14–15.** If you were a Christian traveling in a strange area, what kinds of hospitality would you expect from fellow Christians in the vicinity? What kinds of hospitality have you been able to extend to traveling Christians?
2. **28:22.** What is your typical response when you enter a situation where Catholicism is spoken against? How do you defend or explain it? If you feel you need more information, how do you go about getting it?
3. **28:26–27.** If a person who has been taught to believe that Catholic Christianity is false hears you arguing that it is true, what sort of resistance might he show? How might you address or overcome such resistance?
4. **28:30–31.** How important is the preaching of the gospel to you? How much of your own resources would you be willing to spend to do it?