



WEEK OF MARCH 3, 2024  
(COVERS READINGS FROM MARCH 3-9)

## Overview

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*The following information is provided as a basic orientation to reading the Bible. Feel free to add to it and use it in any way that is helpful for your group. Also, feel free to make copies of these pages for members of your group!*

**John 11** narrates the powerful story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, a pivotal sign demonstrating His mastery over life and death, underscoring His identity as the Son of God. The grief of Lazarus's sisters, Martha and Mary, and Jesus' emotional response, reveal the depth of His humanity and compassion. This miracle leads to increased belief among many, setting the stage for the events of Jesus' Passion by heightening the tension between Him and the religious authorities, ultimately leading to their decision to plot His death.

**John 14:27–15:17** contains part of Jesus' farewell discourse to His disciples, offering comfort and instruction in anticipation of His departure. Jesus promises the Holy Spirit as a Helper and Advocate, ensuring His continued presence and guidance. The metaphor of the vine and branches (John 15) emphasizes the importance of abiding in Him for spiritual life and fruitfulness, teaching on love and obedience as central to the relationship between Jesus and His followers. This section sets a foundational understanding of Christian community and the nature of discipleship.

**John 17** presents Jesus' high priestly prayer, offering profound insights into His relationship with the Father and His desires for His followers. He prays for their unity, protection, and sanctification, reflecting His care for them and His mission. This prayer not only highlights the intimacy of Jesus' relationship with the Father but also sets a vision for the unity of the church, underlining the theological and ecclesiological themes central to Christian faith.

**Acts 1:1-11** describes the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus, His final instructions to the apostles about receiving the Holy Spirit, and His ascension into heaven. This passage marks the transition from the ministry of Jesus to the era of the Church, emphasizing the apostles' role as witnesses and the anticipation of the Spirit's empowering presence, which is foundational for understanding the mission and expansion of the early church.

**Acts 2** recounts the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, enabling the apostles to speak in various languages and effectively inaugurating the church's mission. Peter's sermon, which leads to the conversion of

about three thousand people, underscores the fulfillment of prophecy and the lordship of Christ. This chapter is crucial for understanding the empowerment of the church, the role of the Spirit, and the inclusive, multiethnic nature of God's kingdom.

**Acts 3-4** narrates Peter and John's healing of a lame man and their subsequent arrest and trial before the Sanhedrin. Their bold witness in the face of opposition exemplifies the apostolic proclamation and the power of Jesus' name for healing and salvation. The community's response, marked by unity and prayer for boldness, reflects the early church's communal ethos and its determination to continue Jesus' mission despite persecution.

**Acts 6:8-8:8** tells of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, whose arrest and eloquent defense before the Sanhedrin culminate in his execution. His death initiates a broader persecution, scattering the church beyond Jerusalem, paradoxically furthering the mission to Judea and Samaria. This section highlights themes of witness, martyrdom, and the spread of the Gospel, illustrating how persecution serves to disseminate the faith rather than extinguish it.

## General Discussion Questions

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*Use any or all of the following questions, depending how much time you have:*

- How familiar were you with this week's readings? Was there anything that surprised you?
- What do you learn about God from these readings? What do you learn about humanity, or about human nature? How did the authors of these writings understand their relationship with God?
- What passages or aspects of these readings give you comfort or assurance? What passages or aspects of these readings do you find difficult to accept?
- Are there any particular passages that you want to study in-depth?

## This Week's Discussion Questions

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*John 15* | Considering Jesus' metaphor of the vine and branches, what does 'abiding in Him' look like in practical terms within our community? How can we foster an environment that nurtures spiritual growth and fruitfulness in every member?

*Acts 4:29-31* | After facing opposition, the early believers prayed for boldness to continue speaking God's word. What are some challenges or fears we face in sharing our faith or advocating for justice? How can we support each other in praying for and practicing boldness in these areas?

## Closing Prayer

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Lord God, we wish to see Jesus. By your Spirit's power, give us eyes to see his glory.  
Through Christ we pray. Amen.

– based on John 12:21