

THE BOOK OF ACTS



UNSTOPPABLE GOD

**THE CONTINUING MISSION OF JESUS
THROUGH THE CHURCH**

**PART II:
WEEKS 7-12**



And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

ACTS 4:31

THE BOOK OF ACTS



UNSTOPPABLE GOD

**THE CONTINUING MISSION OF JESUS
THROUGH THE CHURCH**

You've made it to Part II! This booklet contains the final six weeks of study for our series *Unstoppable God*. If you're looking for an introduction to this series, the book of Acts, or SOMA, please consult Part I. It is our hope that this will help you grow as a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ.

Here are some of the helpful sections in this book:

- 2.....The Gospel is Good News**
- 4-47.....Weeks 7-12: Notes, Devotions & Discussion**
 - 10.....Serve Experience*
 - 30.....Share Your Story Experiment*
- 44.....Evangelism Helps**
- 46.....Serving Resources**
- 48.....Persecuted Church Map**
- 50.....Historical Stories of Transformation & Faith**
- 52.....Rooted**

The Gospel is Good News

& WE HAVE BEEN ENTRUSTED TO MAKE IT KNOWN!

A few years ago I was sitting in A's Burgers across from a young man who had been at our church the past two weeks. Through the course of the conversation I discovered that he had been coming on and off for years. He loved reading the Book of Revelation, seeing how it connected with what's going on in Israel, and in his words, "had really grown in his faith."

Yet I wasn't sure what his faith was really in, so I asked him a question:

"If someone wanted you to explain the gospel in a minute, what would you say?"

After a bit of silence, he simply said, "God is love."

Now, I'm not saying that this young man wasn't a Christian, but I am saying that it has become very easy for us to distance ourselves from, and lose a good understanding of, what the gospel really is.

What is the Gospel?

A simple definition: *The gospel is the joyful message from God about His saving work through Jesus Christ.*

The term, gospel, means "good news." In it's most basic sense it is a message to receive and believe, or to reject. It's news that is central to the entire storyline of the Bible and it answers 4 big questions:

1. Who is God?

God is our creator and King; He is loving, holy and just.

2. Why are we in such a mess?

People are made in God's image to rule under Him, but we willfully rebel against God in sin and have turned from his children to his enemies deserving God's righteous punishment.

3. What did Jesus do?

Jesus lived a sinless life and took on the punishment we deserved through His death on the cross. His death paid for our sins and His resurrection from the dead guarantees our hope for life in Him.

4. How can we get back to God?

We must repent and believe in Jesus, meaning we must acknowledge our sin and turn away from it (repentance) and trust in Christ's offering on our behalf while submitting to His kingship for the rest of our days (belief).

So, what is *the gospel*?

When we were lost in our rebellion, Jesus died and rose again to forgive us, so we can regain our joy-filled relationship with the loving Creator.

The gospel, it is not just good news, it is the best news of all. It is the single most important thing that we can hear and trust in in this life and it is therefore the single most important thing that we can share with other people.

It's our hope, as we continue to progress through the book of Acts, that you will **1) learn the gospel well** through the many examples of the good news shared about Jesus; **2) be inspired by their boldness** and the sand traps of persecution that they don't let get in their way; **3) see the transformation the gospel causes** in the lives of ordinary and unlikely converts; and **4) feel God leading you to share your story and the gospel with others** who desperately need to hear it.

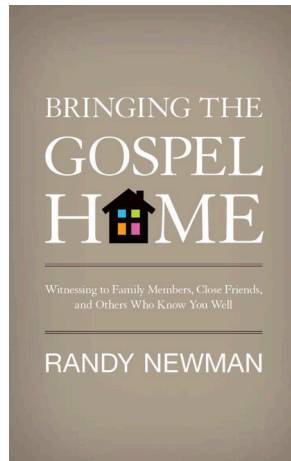
We're not asking you to suddenly go out and evangelize ten strangers, but I am asking you to partner with your church to develop a culture of evangelism, where we each see sharing Jesus as our responsibility and our privilege, where we become a loving community committed to sharing the good news of Jesus as part of the ordinary lives that we live together.

It's good news!

Derick Zeulner

Associate Pastor
South Shores Church

P.S. Here are two books I've recently read and highly recommend to help encourage you in sharing the gospel with others.



SERMON NOTES

WEEK 07 | May 23, 2021

BIG IDEA

NOTES

RESPONSE

- S Soak**
Read the passage slowly asking the Holy Spirit to open it to you. What from its surroundings or style is important?
- O Observe**
Take note of what is there. What is going on? What seems significant? Do you have any questions you'd like to ask the author?
- M Meaning**
Think through why this is in the Bible. What is the author trying to say? What is the main point of the passage? How is the church continuing Jesus' mission?
- A Apply**
The goal is transformation. How will the meaning of this passage transform your head (knowledge/beliefs), heart (desires/attitudes), and hands (actions/habits)?

DAY 1

Acts 6:1-15

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Finish your time in prayer.

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Finish your time in prayer.

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Finish your time in prayer.

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Finish your time in prayer.

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Finish your time in prayer.

Group Discussion

WEEK 07

STORIES OF GOD

Start with a story of God's power to transform (personal or historical).

INTRO QUESTION

How are the ideas of service and sacrifice connected? In what ways do they go against our natural inclinations? In what ways are they admired (think novels, movies, history)?

OPEN SHARING (use these questions to look back at your O, M & As of your devotions)

How did God get your attention this week in your devotional reading?

Was there any specific way you wanted to apply your reading into your life?

FINAL QUESTIONS

This week's reading begins with a ministry of service and ends in martyrdom.

How might the first prepare a Christian for facing the second?

Discuss Jesus' words in Mark 10:45: *"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

How can you actively participate in serving in the church and in the community?

How do you think God can use that in preparing you for future hardships?

PRAYER

Ask God to help you find ways to serve in Jesus' name. Ask Him to use service to firm up your resolve to follow Jesus in the face of any opposition.

Notes/Prayers

WEEK 07

Serve Experience

Somewhere between weeks 7 and 9, we want your group to serve in your community. The goal is to show the love of Christ through relational service outside of a Sunday worship gathering. We believe that our love for Jesus will spill out into the community through intentional Christ-like acts. Consider these points as you serve (adapted from **ROOTED**):

LIFE-CHANGE

Serving is not something we do to check off a box, but rather a lifestyle to adopt. Our hope is that you will want to continue finding ways to serve in our community.

BEING VS. DOING

Each serving opportunity is intended to be highly relational. It's not just about a service or product to provide, but a chance to interact with another person who also needs the love and grace of God. You will find that you are not so different than those you help, and their primary need is the same need you have: peace with God.

DEBRIEF

Gather as a group at the end of your time of serving to pray, and to debrief your experience. What is God speaking to you about your life? About serving? About possible next steps? Share with your group.

FLEXIBILITY

Serving can get messy and unexpected things will happen. Please be flexible and remember we are there to serve, so be ready and willing to do whatever is asked of us that day. It's all part of the adventure!

Our group is serving on _____ at _____.

Serving resources can be found on page 46.

**TAKE TIME TO REFLECT ON YOUR THOUGHTS, PRAYERS, STORIES
AND MORE AS YOU SERVED.**

SERMON NOTES

WEEK 08 | May 30, 2021

BIG IDEA

NOTES

RESPONSE

- S Soak**
Read the passage slowly asking the Holy Spirit to open it to you. What from its surroundings or style is important?
- O Observe**
Take note of what is there. What is going on? What seems significant? Do you have any questions you'd like to ask the author?
- M Meaning**
Think through why this is in the Bible. What is the author trying to say? What is the main point of the passage? How is the church continuing Jesus' mission?
- A Apply**
The goal is transformation. How will the meaning of this passage transform your head (knowledge/beliefs), heart (desires/attitudes), and hands (actions/habits)?

DAY 1

Acts 8:1-8

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Finish your time in prayer.

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Finish your time in prayer.

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Finish your time in prayer.

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Finish your time in prayer.

S**O****M****A**

Finish your time in prayer.

Group Discussion

WEEK 08

STORIES OF GOD

Start with a story of God's power to transform (personal or historical).

INTRO QUESTION

What's the difference between remorse, regret, and repentance? What pictures (from your life or others) can you give of each?

OPEN SHARING

How did God get your attention this week in your devotional reading?

Was there any specific way you wanted to apply your reading into your life?

FINAL QUESTIONS

Why didn't the Holy Spirit come upon the Samaritans until the Apostles came?
(*Hint: Acts 1:8*)

How would you summarize Simon's sin? What good things today could similarly cause us to place our trust or excitement in over and above Jesus?

Note: While Simon's ultimate fate is not described in Acts (and scholars disagree), here is a helpful article on Luke's warning to us in the error of Simon:
<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/simons-perversion-of-signs-and-wonders>

PRAYER

After looking at repentance in Psalm 51, spend some time, in quiet prayer repenting of sin against God. Then pray aloud to encourage each other to walk in grace and truth away from your sin.

Notes/Prayers

WEEK 08

SERMON NOTES

WEEK 09 | June 6, 2021

BIG IDEA

NOTES

RESPONSE

- S Soak**
Read the passage slowly asking the Holy Spirit to open it to you. What from its surroundings or style is important?
- O Observe**
Take note of what is there. What is going on? What seems significant? Do you have any questions you'd like to ask the author?
- M Meaning**
Think through why this is in the Bible. What is the author trying to say? What is the main point of the passage? How is the church continuing Jesus' mission?
- A Apply**
The goal is transformation. How will the meaning of this passage transform your head (knowledge/beliefs), heart (desires/attitudes), and hands (actions/habits)?

DAY 1

Acts 8:26-34

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Finish your time in prayer.

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Finish your time in prayer.

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Finish your time in prayer.

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Finish your time in prayer.

S**O****M****A**

Finish your time in prayer.

Group Discussion

WEEK 09

STORIES OF GOD

Start with a story of God's power to transform (personal or historical).

INTRO QUESTION

What has been the most helpful resource (book, person, experience) in aiding your ability to understand the Bible?

OPEN SHARING

How did God get your attention this week in your devotional reading?

Was there any specific way you wanted to apply your reading into your life?

FINAL QUESTIONS

In what way was Philip prepared to help the Ethiopian eunuch?

Why do you think Isaiah 53 is still a powerful passage in sharing the gospel with Jews today?

Do you have a good grasp of the basics of the gospel? How can you work to improve your ability to share it with others?

PRAYER

Pray for God to help you to know the gospel well and to be ready to share it in part or in its entirety with someone who needs to hear it this week.

Notes/Prayers

WEEK 09

SERMON NOTES

WEEK 10 | June 13, 2021

BIG IDEA

NOTES

RESPONSE

UNSTOPPABLE GOD

WEEK 10 DAILY DEVOTIONS

- S Soak**
Read the passage slowly asking the Holy Spirit to open it to you. What from its surroundings or style is important?
- O Observe**
Take note of what is there. What is going on? What seems significant? Do you have any questions you'd like to ask the author?
- M Meaning**
Think through why this is in the Bible. What is the author trying to say? What is the main point of the passage? How is the church continuing Jesus' mission?
- A Apply**
The goal is transformation. How will the meaning of this passage transform your head (knowledge/beliefs), heart (desires/attitudes), and hands (actions/habits)?

DAY 1

Acts 9:1-9

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Finish your time in prayer.

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Finish your time in prayer.

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Finish your time in prayer.

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Finish your time in prayer.

S**O****M****A**

Finish your time in prayer.

Group Discussion

WEEK 10

STORIES OF GOD

Start with a story of God's power to transform (personal or historical).

INTRO QUESTION

Why are stories of transformation and salvation so powerful to hear?

OPEN SHARING

How did God get your attention this week in your devotional reading?

Was there any specific way you wanted to apply your reading into your life?

FINAL QUESTIONS

What stands out most to you in Paul's story of transformation?

Look again at 1 Timothy 1:12-17. What can you learn from how he shares his story?

What aspect of God would you like to emphasize in telling your story?

Commit to the "Share your Story Experiment" on the following pages.

PRAYER

Thank God for His great mercy and power at work in Paul's life as well as His great mercy and power at work in your life. Ask Him for the opportunity and the boldness to share your story with someone in the next two weeks.

Notes/Prayers

WEEK 10

Share Your Story Experiment

We believe that God is continually in the business of life transformation. He has worked in your life and He wants to work through you to transform others. Sharing how God has changed you is a great way to remind yourself of God's power, encourage other believers, and create opportunities for sharing the gospel.

In Acts 26, Paul gives his “defense” through sharing his story of transformation before King Agrippa. Often, like in *Rooted*, this is shown as evidence of a tried and true formula: a) our life before coming to faith; b) the circumstances through which we came to faith; and c) how our life is different now that we have faith in Christ. While this is a great starting point, this experiment hopes to take this a step further.

STEP 1: LIFE BEFORE FAITH (BEFORE)

Think through the details about your history: what you were like, cared about, focused on, etc. Remember, you have to be selective: you can't include it all.

STEP 2: COMING TO FAITH (COMMITMENT)

Recount the events and circumstances that caused you to consider Christ as the solution to your searching. Identify the steps that brought you to the point of trusting Christ.

STEP 3: THE DIFFERENCE FAITH IN CHRIST HAS MADE (AFTER)

Write down what your life has been like since you made your commitment to follow Jesus. How has Christ changed where it's headed?

(Steps 4&5 taken from Randy Newman's *Unlikely Converts*)

STEP 4: ADD IMPORTANT THEOLOGY

What facts, evidences, and arguments corrected your wrong thinking about God, Jesus, eternal life, and so forth? Weave those into your story with phrases like, "I never understood that ____," or "I found out that ____," or "I realized I had been wrong about ____." Write out those important realizations.

STEP 5: COMBINE TRUTH AND GOODNESS

The gospel is true, but it's also good. People need to hear about both. A good defense helps hearers understand and appreciate, become informed and hungry, and say, "Now I understand," as well as, "How can I experience that?" We need to tell people what caused us to believe, but we also need to say, "Here's why I'm glad that I did." Write out the positive benefits you've experienced.

STEP 6: PUT IT INTO ACTION

Once you have put together your story and refined it, it is time to share it! Start with a family member, spouse, or friend that is a believer and ask if you can practice on them. Then, pray for, and look for, an opportunity to share with the person you put on your prayer list back on Week 1 or anyone God places in your path these next two weeks.

Share your experience with your group and with Pastor Derick dzeulner@southshores.org

BIG IDEA

NOTES

RESPONSE

- S Soak**
Read the passage slowly asking the Holy Spirit to open it to you. What from its surroundings or style is important?
- O Observe**
Take note of what is there. What is going on? What seems significant? Do you have any questions you'd like to ask the author?
- M Meaning**
Think through why this is in the Bible. What is the author trying to say? What is the main point of the passage? How is the church continuing Jesus' mission?
- A Apply**
The goal is transformation. How will the meaning of this passage transform your head (knowledge/beliefs), heart (desires/attitudes), and hands (actions/habits)?

DAY 1

Acts 9:32-43

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Finish your time in prayer.

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Finish your time in prayer.

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Finish your time in prayer.

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Finish your time in prayer.

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Finish your time in prayer.

Group Discussion

WEEK 11

STORIES OF GOD

Start with a story of God's power to transform (personal or historical).

INTRO QUESTION

What have been your experiences with favoritism, both good and bad?

OPEN SHARING

How did God get your attention this week in your devotional reading?

Was there any specific way you wanted to apply your reading into your life?

FINAL QUESTIONS

Why was it such a big deal for Peter to go and share the gospel with Cornelius' family?

"Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him." Acts 10:34. How should this truth about God impact our witness?

What does the "Great Commission" mean for us today?

PRAYER

Ask God to give you a heart for the nations as well as those locally that are different than your own ethnicity, culture, or values. Pray that God would use us to cross barriers and extend His gospel.

Notes/Prayers

WEEK 11

BIG IDEA

NOTES

RESPONSE

- S Soak**
Read the passage slowly asking the Holy Spirit to open it to you. What from its surroundings or style is important?
- O Observe**
Take note of what is there. What is going on? What seems significant? Do you have any questions you'd like to ask the author?
- M Meaning**
Think through why this is in the Bible. What is the author trying to say? What is the main point of the passage? How is the church continuing Jesus' mission?
- A Apply**
The goal is transformation. How will the meaning of this passage transform your head (knowledge/beliefs), heart (desires/attitudes), and hands (actions/habits)?

DAY 1

Acts 11:19-30

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Finish your time in prayer.

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Finish your time in prayer.

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Finish your time in prayer.

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Finish your time in prayer.

S**O****M****A**

Finish your time in prayer.

Group Discussion

WEEK 12

STORIES OF GOD

Start with a story of God's power to transform (personal or historical).

INTRO QUESTION

What do you think it will look like for God to overcome the present threats to Christianity in our world?

OPEN SHARING

How did God get your attention this week in your devotional reading?

Was there any specific way you wanted to apply your reading into your life?

FINAL QUESTIONS

How has this series in Acts impacted you? What have you seen change in you, your thoughts of God, and the church's mission in the world?

Affirmations:

Take turns affirming each person in the group for what you have seen God do in their lives during this series and what you appreciate about them.

PRAYER

Share with each other your hopes (and fears) for the summer break. Make a list of how you can pray for each other during the next two months.

Notes/Prayers

WEEK 12

EVANGELISM HELPS

FROM “UNLIKELY CONVERTS” BY RANDY NEWMAN

STARTERS:

We all need a few gospel conversation starters. Ways to help transition from ordinary, casual conversations to eternally significant ones. After finding out a little about people (where they're from, what they do, etc.) try one of these:

- *Was religion part of your upbringing? How has that shaped you today?*
- *Do you ever find yourself wondering about God or some of life's big questions?*
- *What kinds of things give you a sense of meaning or purpose?*
- *Do you ever think much about spiritual things?*
- *What part has faith ever played in your life?*

INVITATIONS:

Inviting people to a gathering of believers seems more intimidating than it should be. We feel more awkward asking than many non-Christians feel about being asked. Here are a few ways to start the process:

- *We'd love to have you guys over for dinner sometime. Could that work with your schedules?*
- *I wonder if you'd ever be interested in joining me at a Bible study I go to.*
- *Some friends of mine and I get together and discuss spiritual things on Sunday nights. Would you ever like to join us?*
- *I don't know if you're looking for a church to go to. Are you? If you'd want to join us, just let me know.*

COMMON GROUND:

Some people who might not want to discuss spiritual issues are more than willing to banter about politics, sports, movies, books, and an almost endless list of other topics. Listening for things that dominate their attention could suggest good places to engage about weightier issues. Perhaps some of these transitions to the gospel would be worth a try:

- *That movie really raises some big issues, doesn't it? What did you think about the way they approached those topics?*
- *Isn't it amazing how, sometimes, a sunset or something beautiful makes you stop and wonder? Do you know what I mean?*
- *Are you much of a reader? What kinds of books do you like to read? What kinds of themes are you drawn to?*
- *How was your vacation? I'd love to hear about it. I always find that time away gives me space to think about things more deeply. Does that ever happen to you?*

PRAYING WITH PEOPLE:

While it may seem like the last thing you should do, in some cases, praying with nonbelievers can be powerful. People who are inquiring need to know of the supernatural nature of their search. Offering to pray with people could propel them toward belief better than answers, discussions, or proclamations. Here are a few ways to venture into these intercessions:

- *We've been talking for quite a while. I hope this has been helpful. But there's more to faith than just having answers. I wonder if you'd be OK with my praying for you right now -- for God to make Himself known to you?*
- *Sometimes people ask God to answer the questions that people can't. Could we just pause right now to ask God to do that for you? I'll pray and you can just join me silently. Or you could pray out loud if you want.*
- *Are you at the point where you can pray something like this: "God, if you're really there, can you help me know you?"*
- *I've been praying for you for a long time. At this point, how would you want me to pray?*

CLARIFICATION:

Communication is harder than we realize. Communicating concepts that are as alien to most people as holiness, sin, forgiveness, atonement, and eternity pose even greater challenges than normal communication. Here are some ways to move from cloudiness to clarity:

- *I realize these topics might be confusing. I certainly don't have them all figured out. Do you have any questions about what we've been talking about?*
- *Is this making sense?*
- *Why don't you try to restate what I've been saying in your own words? Maybe that will help us connect better.*
- *Let me see if I'm understanding the question you just asked me. Are you saying _____?*
- *Some people find they need a little time to think about these things. Would that be helpful? It might also help if you read some of the Bible on your own. I recommend you check out John's gospel. Here, I'll show you where it is in the Bible.*

You'll find these helpful tips
and a whole lot more in:

Unlikely Converts

IMPROBABLE STORIES OF FAITH
AND WHAT THEY TEACH US
ABOUT EVANGELISM



Randy Newman
Author of *Questioning Evangelism*

SERVING RESOURCES

WAYS TO SERVE IN OUR COMMUNITY AND OUR CHURCH

IN THE COMMUNITY

Here are some ministries South Shores Church partners with in our area.

Family Assistance Ministries

An opportunity to donate food and help with meal distributions and organization of supplies

family-assistance.org

Contact: Elizabetha@family-assistance.org

(714) 721-2254

Unidos South OC

An opportunity to help with tutoring and after school programs for the underserved kids in San Juan Capistrano

unidossouthoc.com

Contact: John Chapman

John@unidossouthoc.com

(949) 627-3120

Laguna Niguel YMCA

<https://ymcaoc.org/laguna-niguel-family-ymca/>

Contact: Kelly Kneubuhl

Kkneubuhl@ymcaoc.org

Kathy's House/Casa de Kathy & Casita de Kathy Thrift Stores

An opportunity to volunteer through donation or working in the stores

kathyshousesjc.org

Contact: Jon Phillips

Jon.phillips@kathyshouse.org

(949) 310-8704

San Clemente Pregnancy Resource Center

An opportunity to help women and men faced with crisis pregnancies

friendsofprcsc.com

friends@prcmedicalclinic.com

(949) 218-5777

Welcome Inn

An opportunity to cook and serve meals to the homeless once a month

welcomeinnoc.org

Contact: Connie Veldkamp

connie.veldkamp@cox.net

(949) 933-6814

IN THE CHURCH

It takes a lot of hands to make our church open, friendly, and available for those in person and at home. Here are some ways you can bless your church family on Sundays mornings and through the week. Email or call 949.496.9331.

Sunday Morning Greeters & Ushers

Contact: Linda Doucette
ldoucette@southshores.org

Sunday Morning INFO CENTER

Contact: Linda Doucette
ldoucette@southshores.org

Sunday Morning Parking Team

Contact: Linda Doucette
ldoucette@southshores.org

Sunday Morning Hospitality Team

Contact: Linda Doucette
ldoucette@southshores.org

Front Office Volunteers

Contact: Linda Doucette
ldoucette@southshores.org

Kids Ministry Teachers and Aids

Contact: Katie Poole
katie@southshores.org

Tech Team: ProPresenter Operator, Camera Operator
Live Stream Producer

Contact Barbara Hughston
bhughston@southshores.org

Tech Team: Sound Board & Lighting

Contact Jack Spear
jack@southshores.org

WHAT IS THE WORLD WATCH LIST?

The World Watch List is an annual report on the global persecution of Christians ranking the top 50 countries where Christians are persecuted for Their faith. Released at the beginning of each year, the list uses data from Open Doors field workers and external experts to quantify and analyze persecution worldwide.

HOW ARE THE COUNTRIES RANKED?

Countries are ranked by the severity of persecution of Christians, calculated by analyzing the level of violent persecution plus the pressure experienced in five spheres of life.

**VISIT
OPENDOORSUSA.ORG
FOR MORE INFO AND
WAYS YOU CAN HELP
THE PERSECUTED
CHURCH**



- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| 1 North Korea | 11 Iraq |
| 2 Afghanistan | 12 Syria |
| 3 Somalia | 13 Sudan |
| 4 Libya | 14 Saudi Arabia |
| 5 Pakistan | 15 Maldives |
| 6 Eritrea | 16 Egypt |
| 7 Yemen | 17 China |
| 8 Iran | 18 Myanmar |
| 9 Nigeria | 19 Vietnam |
| 10 India | 20 Mauritania |



WORLD WATCH LIST 2021

VERY HIGH PERSECUTION

- | | | | | | |
|----|--------------|----|--------------------------|----|------------|
| 21 | Uzbekistan | 31 | Bangladesh | 41 | Kazakhstan |
| 22 | Laos | 32 | Burkina Faso | 42 | Cameroon |
| 23 | Turkmenistan | 33 | Tajikistan | 43 | Bhutan |
| 24 | Algeria | 34 | Nepal | 44 | Oman |
| 25 | Turkey | 35 | Central African Republic | 45 | Mozambique |
| 26 | Tunisia | 36 | Ethiopia | 46 | Malaysia |
| 27 | Morocco | 37 | Mexico | 47 | Indonesia |
| 28 | Mali | 38 | Jordan | 48 | Kuwait |
| 29 | Qatar | 39 | Brunei | 49 | Kenya |
| 30 | Colombia | 40 | Dem. Rep. of the Congo | 50 | Comoros |

HISTORICAL STORIES OF TRANSFORMATION & FAITH

FROM THE CHURCH

Rarely do we think about the faithful builders and martyrs of church history, those who gave their work and even their lives in witness to the faith. Take courage from the people listed below. Research their stories to share in your groups or simply study them on your own.

REFORMATION

William Tyndale - AD 1485-1536 | Translator of the English Bible

Tyndale was a university scholar who came to saving faith in Christ by reading the New Testament in Greek. Because most people couldn't read Greek, Hebrew, or Latin, Tyndale determined to translate the Bible into English so that all the people of England could read it for themselves. He completed his translation of the New Testament in 1525. Eventually Tyndale was arrested for his actions and was sentenced to be burned at the stake. His final words were a prayer, "Lord, open the king of England's eyes." Less than two years later, King Henry VIII granted permission for the publication of the Bible in English and decreed that a copy of it be placed in every church in England.

Anne Askew - AD 1521-1546 | The Lord's Bold Witness

Late in the reign of King Henry VIII, Anne Askew's husband kicked her out of their home because a priest had called her a heretic. Anne was a fierce devotee to the scriptures and openly spoke of the church's false beliefs. The Church of England arrested her and sentenced her to death. To the court she replied, "I have searched all the Scriptures, yet I have never found that either Christ or His apostles put anyone to death." As she was brought to the stake, a bishop delivered a sermon nearby, so Anne, brave as she was, pointed out each error in his message as she faced the flames. A year later, King Henry VIII died, and shortly thereafter, the beliefs that Anne died for became the official teachings of the Church of England.

John Knox - AD 1514-1572 | Scottish Reformer

At 33, John Knox suffered the life of a galley slave, serving among convicted criminals and horrific health conditions. His crime: seeking to reform the church in Scotland. After nearly two years in chains, France released him and he helped the reformation movement in England. After 12 years in exile, Knox returned to Scotland amidst huge crowds that longed to hear him preach. Though Scotland's queen was against him, he said to her, "I must obey God. His Word commands me to speak plainly and flatter no one on the face of the earth." At his funeral a man said, "Here lies one who never feared the face of man."

POST-REFORMATION

The Two Margarets - AD 1622-1685 | The Solway Martyrs

Margaret MacLachlan was a poor, old widow known by her neighbors as a generous and devout Christian. Officers of the king bullied her to forsake her minister and worship God only the way the king ordered. She would not comply and was hauled to jail. 18-year-old Margaret Wilson also refused to submit to the king's rules for worship and was arrested. At a trial together they were declared guilty of treason and sentenced to death. They were taken to the sea and tied to two poles at low tide. As the older Margaret silently faced the rising tide and could breathe no more, a soldier asked the younger Margaret what she thought. She replied, "I see Christ wrestling there. Do you think we are the sufferers? No, it is Christ in us." Some of her final moments were spent reading Romans 8:18-39.

John Bunyan - AD 1628-1688 | Happy Pilgrim

John Bunyan first turned toward religion when a woman shamed him for his cursing tongue. He began reading the Bible and became proud of his ability to speak and act religiously. Yet, again, God convicted him through a group of poor women he overheard speaking of new birth, the work of God and the joy of their salvation. It was with them and their pastor, John Gifford, that Bunyan discovered the grace of Jesus and salvation. Bunyan became a traveling preacher, but was arrested on November 12, 1660 for doing so. Over the course of the next sixteen years, he spent 12 and a half years in prison, during which he made leather boot laces to support his family, preached to others in jail, and wrote 12 books including *Pilgrim's Progress*, an allegory of the joys and sorrows of the Christian life.

John Newton - AD 1725-1807 | Slave Trader Saved by Grace

As a cabin boy on his father's ship, Newton adapted quickly to life on the sea and the sinful ways of sailors. Eventually he ended up on a slave-trading ship. He cared nothing for the humans in the cargo-hold and composed vulgar songs. It took a storm and a near ship-wreck for God to get his attention; to beckon him to the Christ his mother had taught him about as a child. Through a long journey God turned this slave-trading sailor into a servant of song, writing great hymns for the faith about God's "Amazing Grace." He also worked with William Wilberforce to end Britain's slave trade. On his deathbed, John remarked, "My memory is nearly gone; but I remember two things: that I am a great sinner, and that Christ is a great savior."

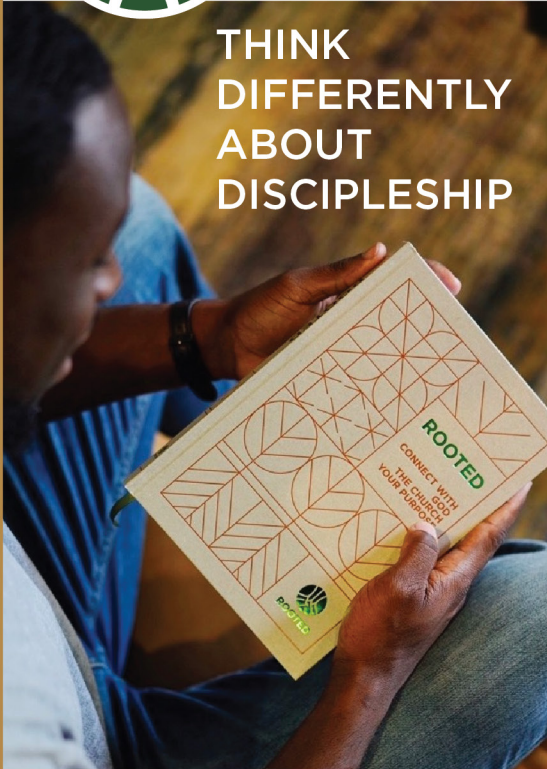
FOR FURTHER READING

- *Trial and Triumph: Stories from Church History* by Richard Hannula
(Great with kids)
- *Eerdman's Handbook to the History of Christianity* by Tim Dowley
- *The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs* by John Foxe
- *Sketches in Church History* by S.M. Houghton
- *History of the Christian Church* by Philip Schaff



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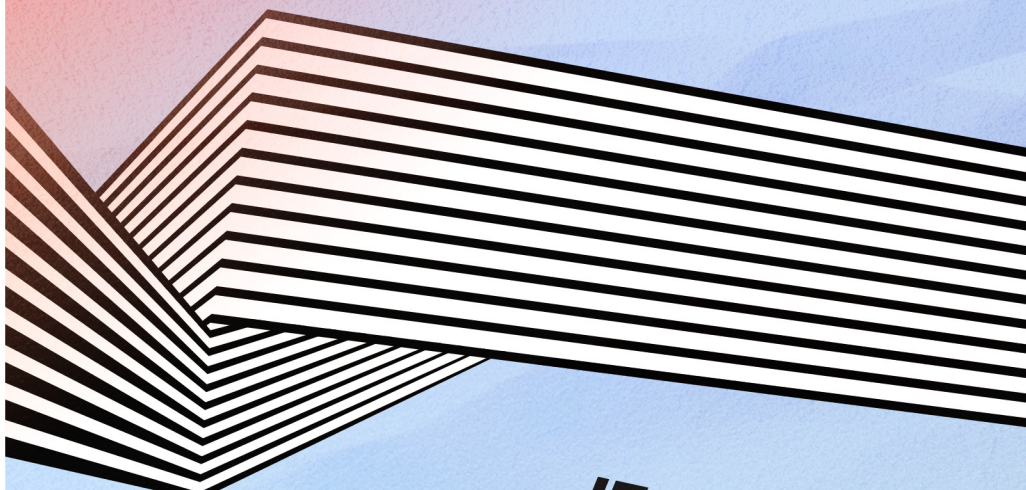
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But the word of God increased and multiplied.
ACTS 12:24

How was your ***Unstoppable God*** experience? Let us know by sending an email to Pastor Derick at dzeulner@southshores.org



**IF IT
IS FROM
GOD,
YOU WILL NOT
BE ABLE
TO STOP
THEM** ACTS 5:39



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