

ACTS AND THE LETTERS: A TEACHING PACK

A flexible lesson in reading journeys, relationships, and evidence together.



Illustration: an imagined first-century setting, not evidence of a particular event.

Plan one 45–60 minute session, or spread these five activities across a short series. Learners need a Bible, the route map, and space to write. Begin with the story, compare it with a letter, and end by naming both a connection and a question. The printable pack includes room for observation, interpretation, and application.

Acts narrates a journey; letters speak into particular relationships and needs. A chronology helps place them alongside one another, but some dates and connections are reconstructions. Use the date ranges and confidence notes in the timeline below. A matching place or person can illuminate a connection without proving every proposed sequence.

THE IDEA IN THREE STEPS

1

Locate

Find the place and follow the broad sequence in Acts.

2

Compare

Read a related letter for the community's relationships and concerns.

3

Explain with care

Name what the texts state, what you infer, and what remains uncertain.

Sources: Acts 16:11–40 · Philippians 1:3–11 · Acts 18:1–18

You may share and adapt these original study resources with credit to PaulineLetters.com (CC BY 4.0). Bible text is not included.

MAP · TIMELINE



Acts and the letters placed on one uncertainty-aware chronology.

c. AD 50	Sails Troas→Samothrace→Neapolis, then inland to Philippi: Lydia believes; the slave girl freed; beaten and jailed; the jailer saved; the church founded. References Acts 16:11-40; Phil 1:5 · Confidence high
c. AD 51/52	Brought before Gallio, who dismisses the case — the chronological anchor. References Acts 18:12-17 · Confidence high
c. AD 52/53-55/56	Two years in the hall of Tyrannus; the word spreads through Asia; magic books burned. References Acts 19:1-20; 20:31 · Confidence high
c. AD 57	Arrives with the collection; purification rites; accused of defiling the temple; seized. References Acts 21:15-36; Rom 15:25-28 · Confidence high
c. AD 60-62	Acts ends with Paul in Rome under house arrest. The prison-letter placements traditionally associated with this period are reconstructions, not claims made by Acts. References Acts 28:16-31 · Confidence high

I · FIND THE ROUTE

Read: Acts 13:1–4 · Acts 16:6–12 · Acts 20:1–6

Allow about eight minutes. Find Antioch, Philippi, Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome on the map. Ask learners to trace the broad movement from the eastern Mediterranean toward Rome. The familiar numbered “missionary journeys” are a way of organizing Acts; they are not headings Paul gives his own life.

Consider

Which places recur? How might a second visit differ from a first arrival?

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What does the passage say?

What does it mean in its setting?

What might faithful action look like?

2 · A PLACE BECOMES A PARTNERSHIP

Read: Acts 16:11–40 · Philippians 1:3–11 · Philippians 4:10–20

Allow about twelve minutes. Read Acts' account of Philippi, then compare Paul's gratitude and thanks for support. List the people and actions explicitly mentioned in each reading. Put possible connections in a separate column. Acts and Philippians illuminate a relationship from different angles.

Consider

What can you say directly from each passage? Which connection is plausible but not directly stated?

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3 · READ BESIDE A HISTORICAL ANCHOR

Read: Acts 18:1–18 · 1 Corinthians 1:10–17

Allow about ten minutes. Acts places Paul in Corinth during Gallio's time as proconsul. An inscription from Delphi helps date Gallio's office, giving the chronology an external point of reference. It does not date every event in Paul's life. The later letter shows a community facing divisions beyond the moment of its founding.

Consider

What does the Gallio evidence help establish? What does it leave open about the letter's exact date and circumstances?

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4 · LEAVE ROOM FOR A QUESTION

Read: Acts 9:26–30 · Acts 11:27–30 · Acts 15:1–29 · Galatians 1:18 – Galatians 2:10

Allow about ten minutes. Compare the Jerusalem visits in Acts with Paul's account in Galatians. Readers differ over how the visits correspond. Invite learners to notice purpose, companions, and sequence before choosing an explanation. It is reasonable to leave a question open while learning from what each passage clearly says.

Consider

Which details would a proposed correspondence need to explain? How can a timeline display uncertainty honestly?

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5 · EXPLAIN ONE CONNECTION

Read: Acts 16:11–40 · Philippians 1:3–11

Allow about ten minutes. In pairs, prepare a two-minute explanation linking one place, one passage from Acts, and one passage from a letter. Include a clear observation, an interpretation supported by the reading, and one question that remains. Finish by considering how the relationship described might shape a community today.

Consider

What would you want a new reader to understand, and what would you avoid claiming more confidently than the evidence allows?

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