

The Book of Acts, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 2: Waiting Together and Choosing Matthias

Acts 1:12-26

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Acts 1:12-26 may look like a quiet bridge between the ascension and Pentecost, but it carries real doctrinal weight. Here we see the church being formed in prayer and unity, the inspired authority of Scripture in Peter's use of the Psalms, the unique and unrepeatable office of the apostles as eyewitnesses of the resurrection, and a sober witness to the reality of falling away in the tragedy of Judas. Each of these will matter for how students understand the church, the Bible, and the security of their own walk with Christ.

The apostles' qualifications (vv. 21-22) guard us against modern claims of continuing apostleship, while Judas, a man chosen and numbered among the Twelve who turned aside to his own place, stands as a warning against the false comfort of once-saved-always-saved. Handle both carefully and biblically.

Yet the passage is also deeply formational. It calls students to value the gathered church, to give themselves to prayer in seasons of waiting, to submit to Scripture as God's word, and to guard their own hearts against a slow turning away. Aim to send students home both better grounded and more devoted, the kind of disciples who pray together and stay faithful.

Question 1

Student Question:

Luke notes that the believers, with the apostles, the women, Mary, and Jesus' brothers, all devoted themselves with one accord to prayer (v. 14). What does it tell us about the nature and foundation of the Lord's church that it began not with activity but with united prayer?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Before the church does anything visible in the world, Luke shows it on its knees. The first portrait of this community is not a sermon or a strategy but a prayer meeting. That is no accident. The church is not finally a human organization that prays; it is a praying people gathered by God around His risen Son.

Notice the breadth of who is gathered. Apostles and ordinary disciples, men and women, Mary and the once-skeptical brothers of Jesus, all together. The phrase one accord (*homothumadon*) describes a deep, shared unity of mind and purpose. The early church was marked by this oneness, and it began here, in the waiting.

Help students see the order. The power of Pentecost did not fall on a scattered, bickering crowd but on a united, praying body. God works through a people who are together. This is a gentle rebuke to the individualism that treats faith as a private affair and church as optional.

Practically, this teaches us that prayer is not the warm-up before the real work; prayer is the foundation of the real work. A congregation that wants to see God move would do well to begin exactly where the first church began.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The church as a praying community gathered around the risen Christ
- Unity (one accord) as a defining mark of the Lord's church
- Prayer as the foundation, not the supplement, of the church's work
- The gathered assembly as central to the Christian life, not optional
- God working through a united people rather than isolated individuals

Discussion Prompts

- What would change in our congregation if we treated prayer as the foundation rather than a formality?
- Why is unity so essential to the church's effectiveness?
- How does waiting together in prayer prepare a people for what God wants to do?

Question 2

Student Question:

The first believers waited on God together, with one accord, rather than each going their own way (v. 14). Think honestly about your own relationships in the body of Christ. Where do you need to pursue greater unity, and what is one barrier you could work to remove this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Unity is easy to admire and hard to live. The first believers were not a frictionless group; they included former rivals, a reformed skeptic or two, and people from very different backgrounds. Yet they were of one accord. That kind of unity is not the absence of differences but the presence of a shared love for Christ that is bigger than the differences.

Invite students to get specific. Is there a relationship in the body where I am holding a grudge, keeping my distance, or quietly competing? Disunity often hides behind politeness. Naming it is the first step toward healing it.

Encourage them to consider their own contribution rather than only the other person's faults. The path to one accord usually begins with one humble act: an apology offered, a phone call made, a critical spirit laid down, a prayer prayed for someone hard to love.

Remind them that Jesus prayed for our oneness (John 17:21) and that our unity is part of our witness to the world. To pursue peace with a brother or sister is to honor the Lord's own prayer.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Christian unity as a command and a witness (John 17:21)
- The believer's responsibility to pursue peace within the body
- Humility and forgiveness as the path to one accord
- Personal reconciliation as an act of obedience to Christ

Discussion Prompts

- Is there a relationship in the church where you need to take the first step toward peace?
- What barriers to unity do you tend to create without realizing it?
- What is one humble action you could take this week toward greater oneness?

Question 3

Student Question:

Peter said that the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas (vv. 16, 20). What does Peter's use of the Psalms teach us about the inspiration and authority of Scripture?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Peter treats the Old Testament as nothing less than the voice of God. Notice his precise language: the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David. David was the human author, but the Holy Spirit was the ultimate speaker. This is exactly the doctrine of inspiration the New Testament teaches everywhere (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

Peter also treats Scripture as authoritative and binding. The Scripture had to be fulfilled. He does not pick and choose; he submits to what God has said and lets it shape the church's action. When he needs guidance about the empty place among the Twelve, he goes to the Word.

This is a vital lesson for the church in every age. Our authority is not our preferences, our traditions, or the spirit of the times, but what God has spoken. If the first apostle anchored the church's decisions in Scripture, so must we.

Help students feel the weight of this. The Bible is not merely an ancient religious book; it is the living voice of God's Spirit, sufficient and authoritative for faith and practice. The same Spirit who spoke by David speaks to us through the completed Scriptures.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The verbal inspiration of Scripture: the Spirit spoke through human authors (2 Peter 1:20-21)
- The authority of Scripture as the rule for the church's faith and practice
- The unity of the Old and New Testaments under one divine Author
- Scripture as sufficient for guidance and decision-making
- Submission to God's Word over human preference or cultural pressure

Discussion Prompts

- What difference does it make that the Holy Spirit, not just David, is the author of the Psalms?
- How should the authority of Scripture shape the way our church makes decisions?
- Where are you tempted to let preference or culture override what God has spoken?

Question 4

Student Question:

Peter let Scripture, not his own feelings, govern how the church responded to a hard situation (vv. 16-22). In your own decisions, how much weight does the Bible actually carry? Name one area where you sense God calling you to submit your choices more fully to His Word.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

It is one thing to confess that the Bible is authoritative and another to actually let it govern our choices. Peter models the real thing: faced with a genuine problem, he turns first to what God has said.

Press students to honest self-examination. When I face a decision about money, relationships, work, entertainment, or how I spend my time, what actually drives me? My desires? My comfort? The opinions of others? Or the Word of God?

Many of us have a functional canon within the canon, the parts of Scripture we obey gladly and the parts we quietly set aside. Invite students to name the area where obedience is hardest right now.

Reassure them that submitting to Scripture is not bondage but blessing. God's commands are the loving instructions of a Father who knows what truly leads to life (Psalm 19:7-11). To submit our choices to His Word is to trust that He is good.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The practical authority of Scripture over the believer's daily choices
- Self-examination about areas of selective obedience
- Obedience to God's Word as an expression of trust in His goodness
- The sufficiency of Scripture for guiding the Christian life

Discussion Prompts

- What part of your life do you find hardest to submit to Scripture?
- How do you tell the difference between God's guidance and your own preference?
- What is one decision this week you could bring deliberately under God's Word?

Question 5

Student Question:

Peter said the replacement for Judas had to be someone who accompanied them from John's baptism until the ascension, a witness with them of Jesus' resurrection (vv. 21-22). What do these qualifications tell us about the unique role of the apostles, and why does this matter for claims of apostleship today?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The qualifications Peter lists are remarkable and specific. An apostle in this foundational sense had to have accompanied Jesus throughout His earthly ministry, from John's baptism to the ascension, and had to be an eyewitness of the risen Christ. This was not a job description anyone could grow into; it required firsthand experience that, by its very nature, could not be repeated by later generations.

This is why the office of these foundational apostles was unique and temporary. They were the authoritative eyewitnesses whose testimony, confirmed by signs, became the foundation of the church (Ephesians 2:20). Once that foundation was laid and their witness recorded in the New Testament, the office could not be passed on, because no one after them could meet the requirement of having seen the risen Lord and walked with Him.

This guards us against modern claims that there are living apostles today with the same authority. Scripture knows nothing of a continuing line of such apostles. Their work was foundational and finished; what remains is their inspired testimony in the New Testament, which is now our authority (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Jude 3).

Help students see the comfort in this. We are not waiting for some new apostle with new revelation. We have the complete, settled, sufficient word of the original eyewitnesses, and through it we meet the same Christ they met.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The apostolic qualifications: eyewitness of Christ's ministry and resurrection (vv. 21-22)
- The foundational and unrepeatable nature of the apostolic office (Ephesians 2:20)
- The completed apostolic testimony preserved in the New Testament
- The guard against modern claims of continuing apostleship or new revelation
- The sufficiency of the apostles' recorded witness as our authority today

Discussion Prompts

- Why could the office of these original apostles not be passed down to later generations?
- How does the New Testament preserve the apostles' eyewitness testimony for us?
- How should we respond to anyone claiming apostolic authority and new revelation today?

Question 6

Student Question:

Matthias was chosen to be a witness with the others of the resurrection of Jesus (v. 22). Though we are not apostles, every Christian is called to testify to the risen Christ. In what setting do you find it hardest to be a clear witness, and why?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

While the apostolic office was unique, the call to witness is shared by every believer. Matthias was added so the resurrection would have its full complement of witnesses, and the whole church inherits that heartbeat: we testify to a Lord who is alive.

Ask students where witness is hardest for them. For some it is at work, where speaking of Christ feels risky. For others it is among family who knew them before they came to faith, or among friends who would mock. Naming the hard setting brings it into the light.

Gently explore the why. Often the obstacle is fear, of rejection, of awkwardness, of not having all the answers. Remind students that a witness is not an expert who has all the answers but a person who simply tells what they have seen and known of the risen Lord.

Encourage one step. Witness rarely begins with a sermon; it begins with honesty about what Christ means to us, offered in love to one person who is watching our life.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Every Christian called to witness to the risen Christ
- The difference between the apostolic office and the universal call to testify
- Personal testimony as telling what we have seen and known of Christ
- Overcoming fear in the work of witness

Discussion Prompts

- In what setting do you find it hardest to speak openly about Christ?
- What fear most often keeps you quiet?
- What is one honest thing you could share about Christ with someone this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

The believers prayed, Lord, You know the hearts of all (v. 24), then cast lots before the Spirit was given, trusting God to make the choice. What does this scene teach us about God's knowledge of the human heart and about seeking His will in our decisions?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Their prayer rests on a profound truth: God alone knows the hearts of all people. He is not fooled by appearances. He saw what was hidden in Judas, and He sees what is hidden in every candidate, and in us. This is both searching and comforting; nothing in us is concealed from Him (Hebrews 4:13).

Notice their posture in decision-making. They gather all the relevant facts, they identify qualified candidates, and then they pray and entrust the outcome to the God who knows hearts. They want His choice, not merely their own.

It is worth noting that casting lots was an Old Testament practice for discerning God's will (Proverbs 16:33), used here before the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost. After Pentecost we never again see the church casting lots; they are led by the Spirit through the Word and through prayerful, Scripture-shaped wisdom. So the lesson is not the method but the heart: a humble desire for God's will over our own.

Help students apply this. We make decisions best when we do our diligent part, gathering wisdom and counsel, and then surrender the outcome to the God who sees what we cannot, trusting Him to lead.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's complete knowledge of the human heart (1 Samuel 16:7; Hebrews 4:13)
- Seeking God's will rather than merely our own preference in decisions
- Casting lots as a pre-Pentecost practice, not a pattern for the church today
- God's providence working through prayerful, diligent decision-making
- Surrender of outcomes to the God who knows what we cannot see

Discussion Prompts

- How does it change your decisions to remember that God knows your heart fully?
- What is the difference between seeking God's will and seeking a stamp on your own plan?
- How do believers today, led by the Spirit through the Word, discern God's direction?

Question 8

Student Question:

These believers wanted God to search and guide their hearts, not just bless their plans (v. 24). Are there decisions right now where you have already decided what you want and are only hoping God agrees? What would it look like to truly seek His will instead?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

There is a subtle form of self-deception in which we make up our minds and then ask God to bless what we have already chosen. The first believers model something better: they genuinely want God's choice.

Invite students to examine a current decision. Am I actually open to God's leading, or have I already booked the ticket and am only praying for smooth weather? The honest answer often reveals where our hearts are set on our own way.

Truly seeking God's will involves a real willingness to be told no or not yet. It means submitting our plans to Scripture, seeking godly counsel, praying with open hands, and being ready to lay down our preference if it does not align with His revealed will and ways.

Encourage them that this surrender is safe. The God who knows our hearts also loves us and works all things for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28). We can hold our plans loosely because He holds us securely.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Genuine submission of plans to God's will
- Self-examination about predetermined decisions disguised as prayer
- Openness to God's redirection as a mark of trust
- Confidence in God's goodness when surrendering our preferences

Discussion Prompts

- Is there a decision where you have already decided and are only seeking God's approval?
- What would change if you were truly willing to hear no from God?
- How can godly counsel and Scripture help you discern His will?

Question 9

Student Question:

Judas was one of the Twelve, chosen by Jesus and numbered among the apostles, yet he turned aside to go to his own place (vv. 16-17, 25). What sober warning does Judas' fall give us about the possibility of a person who once walked with Christ falling away, and how does this correct the idea that a believer can never be lost?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal moment of the lesson, and it deserves careful, compassionate teaching. Judas was not an outsider. He was chosen by Jesus, numbered among the Twelve, entrusted with ministry, and present for three years of the Lord's teaching and miracles. And he

fell. He turned aside to go to his own place. If it could happen to one so close, the warning is real for us all.

Scripture is consistent and sober on this point. The idea that a saved person can never be lost, sometimes called once-saved-always-saved, does not square with the Bible's many warnings. The writer of Hebrews warns believers, Take care lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God (Hebrews 3:12). Paul warns the Galatians that those seeking to be justified by law have fallen away from grace (Galatians 5:4). Peter describes those who, having escaped the corruptions of the world through knowing Christ, are again entangled and overcome, so that the last state is worse than the first (2 Peter 2:20-22).

These warnings are not meant to terrify the faithful but to keep us faithful. Salvation is secure for those who continue in Christ, who remain in His love, who hold fast to the end (John 15:6; Hebrews 3:14; Colossians 1:23). It is not an unconditional guarantee that ignores how we live. Apostasy is real, which is exactly why Scripture pleads with us to endure.

At the same time, balance the warning with assurance. The point is not that a faithful Christian must live in constant dread of losing salvation by accident. The God who saves us is faithful and keeps those who keep trusting Him (1 Peter 1:5; Philippians 1:6). The danger is not a single stumble but a heart that turns aside, as Judas' did, and refuses to repent. We are kept safe as we keep walking with Christ.

Pastorally, let Judas drive us not to anxiety but to perseverance and to gratitude. The same nearness to Jesus that Judas squandered is offered to us daily. Stay near. Keep repenting. Hold fast.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The reality that a person who once walked with Christ can fall away (Hebrews 3:12; 6:4-6)
- Judas as a sober example of apostasy from a position of nearness to Christ
- The error of once-saved-always-saved measured against Scripture's warnings
- Falling from grace as a genuine danger (Galatians 5:4; 2 Peter 2:20-22)
- Salvation preserved through ongoing faith and faithfulness (Hebrews 3:14; Colossians 1:23)
- Assurance for those who continue in Christ, balancing warning with hope (1 Peter 1:5)
- Perseverance, not perfection, as the call of the disciple

Discussion Prompts

- What made Judas' fall possible despite his closeness to Jesus, and how do we guard against the same heart?
- How do the warnings of Hebrews and 2 Peter correct the idea that a believer can never be lost?
- How can we hold the warning to endure and the assurance of God's keeping together without fear?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across this whole passage of a praying, waiting, Scripture-shaped church putting its house in order. Name one specific way the Lord is calling you, through Acts 1:12-26, to grow as a disciple, and what is one step you will take this week in response.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone calls students from observation to response. The first church gives us a model worth imitating: devoted to prayer, united in heart, submitted to Scripture, sober about the danger of falling, and trusting God with its decisions.

Invite each person to name one concrete area. Perhaps it is to commit to regular prayer with other believers, to pursue unity in a strained relationship, to submit a particular decision to Scripture, or to guard their heart so they do not slowly turn aside.

Keep the focus on transformation. The aim is not merely to admire the early church but to become the kind of disciple who prays, stays united, stands on the Word, and remains faithful to the end.

Close by reminding students that the same Lord who knew the hearts of all in that upper room knows theirs, loves them, and is ready to form them more fully into the image of Christ as they respond.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Discipleship as response to God's Word, not mere information
- The early church as a model of prayer, unity, and faithfulness
- The ongoing call to guard the heart and remain faithful
- Transformation as the goal of Bible study

Discussion Prompts

- Which mark of the early church, prayer, unity, Scripture, or faithfulness, do you most need to grow in?
- What specific step will you take this week?
- How can this group support you in it?