

The Body of Christ, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 2: Added to the Body: How One Enters

Acts 2:36–47

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This is one of the two or three most doctrinally significant lessons in the study, and it deserves your heaviest preparation. Acts 2 is the hinge of the whole Bible, the day the church began, the kingdom was established, and the gospel was first preached in its fullness. What is at stake is nothing less than how a person is saved and how a person enters the body of Christ. Peter answers the most important question a human can ask, “What shall we do?”, and his answer is not “pray this prayer” or “simply accept Jesus.” His answer is: repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins (v. 38). Your task is to let that answer stand exactly as Peter gave it, clearly and without apology.

Two doctrinal guardrails belong in your mind. First, salvation is not by “faith only.” Faith is essential, but the same gospel that calls for faith calls for repentance, confession, and baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Romans 10:9–10; Galatians 3:26–27; Mark 16:16). Baptism here is not a work we boast in; it is the appointed moment when God washes away sin and adds the saved to Christ. Second, no one joins the church of his own choosing. Verse 47 says the Lord added the saved. We do not vote ourselves in, shop for a body that suits us, or create membership by preference. God adds the obedient believer to the one church.

At the same time, do not let this become a dry checklist. The crowd was “cut to the heart,” and the chapter pulses with wonder, gladness, and shared life (vv. 42–47). The aim is not merely to get the steps right but to see the beauty of what God does: He takes guilty people, washes them, and knits them into a living family devoted to His word and to one another. Help your students feel both the precision of the gospel and the joy of belonging to the people the Lord is gathering and saving day by day.

Question 1

Student Question:

Peter's sermon reaches its climax in verse 36: “God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” Why does Peter ground his entire call to action on the lordship and resurrection of Jesus, and how does the truth of who Jesus is create the urgency the crowd suddenly feels?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Peter's whole sermon has built to verse 36. He has shown from the Scriptures and from the resurrection that Jesus is the promised one. Now he declares the verdict: God has made this

crucified Jesus both Lord and Christ. The resurrection is God's public vindication of Jesus' identity.

Stress that the lordship of Jesus creates the urgency. If Jesus is merely a dead teacher, the crowd has nothing to fear. But if the man they crucified is Lord and Christ, raised and reigning, then they have rejected their own King, and they must do something about it. Doctrine produces conviction.

Note the phrase "whom you crucified." Peter does not let the crowd remain spectators. The truth about Jesus is also the truth about them. Good gospel preaching brings the hearer into the story, not as an observer but as one accountable.

Connect this to the kingdom. Jesus is now reigning at God's right hand (v. 33–36). The kingdom is not merely future; the King is enthroned now. This is the established reign Daniel foresaw (Daniel 2:44), beginning on this very day.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The lordship of Christ established by the resurrection.
- The resurrection as God's vindication of Jesus' identity.
- Christ reigning now at God's right hand, the kingdom established.
- Gospel preaching that brings the hearer into accountability.

Discussion Prompts

- Why does Peter ground his entire appeal on the resurrection and lordship of Jesus?
- How does the truth of who Jesus is create urgency for the crowd?
- What does it mean that Christ is reigning now, not only in the future?

Question 2

Student Question:

Luke says the crowd was "cut to the heart" when they understood what they had done. When the gospel confronts you honestly, do you tend to let it pierce you, or do you find ways to soften the blow? What does a heart truly "cut" by the gospel look like?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self question follows the crowd's response: they were "cut to the heart." The Greek pictures a piercing, a deep stab of conviction. The truth did not merely inform them; it wounded them in the best way.

Help students see the difference between being informed and being pierced. We can hear the gospel a thousand times and remain unmoved. Genuine conviction is when the truth reaches past the ears into the conscience and will.

Guard against two errors. One is shallow emotion that never leads to obedience. The other is hardened familiarity that no longer feels anything. A heart truly cut by the gospel is moved to ask, "What shall we do?" and then to do it.

Invite honest reflection without manipulation. The goal is not to engineer tears but to ask whether the gospel still reaches the heart, and whether that conviction leads to action.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Conviction of sin as the Spirit's work through the preached word.
- The difference between being informed and being pierced.
- Godly sorrow that leads to repentance, not mere emotion.
- The danger of gospel-hardened familiarity.

Discussion Prompts

- What is the difference between hearing the gospel and being pierced by it?
- When did the truth of Christ last cut you to the heart?
- How can long familiarity with the gospel dull our hearts, and what helps?

Question 3

Student Question:

When the convicted crowd asked, "What shall we do?", Peter answered, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (v. 38). Walk through what Peter actually commands here, and explain why he ties baptism directly to the forgiveness of sins rather than treating it as an optional afterward.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is a heavy doctrinal block and the heart of the lesson's first half. The crowd asks, "What shall we do?" Notice they already believe; their question assumes faith. Peter does not answer, "Nothing, just believe." He answers, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins."

Walk through the command carefully. Repent means to turn from sin, a change of mind and direction. Be baptized means to be immersed, the consistent New Testament picture of burial and resurrection (Romans 6:3-4). "In the name of Jesus Christ" means by His authority and into relationship with Him. "For the forgiveness of your sins" states the purpose: baptism is unto, toward, in order to receive, the remission of sins.

Address the common objection directly but kindly. Some teach that baptism is merely an outward symbol of a salvation already received. But Peter ties baptism to the forgiveness of sins in the same breath as repentance. The same grammar that makes repentance necessary makes baptism necessary. We do not get to keep one and discard the other.

Clarify that this is not salvation by human merit. Baptism is not a meritorious work we boast in; it is the appointed moment when we submit to God's grace and He washes us (Acts 22:16; Titus 3:5). The power is God's; the response is ours. Faith without obedience is not the faith the New Testament commends (James 2).

Reassure the class that this is good news, not bad news. God has told us plainly where forgiveness is given. There is no guessing, no waiting for a feeling. The penitent believer can be baptized and know, on the authority of Christ, that sins are forgiven.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Baptism for the forgiveness of sins, not as a mere symbol (Acts 2:38).
- Repentance as turning from sin, a change of mind and life.
- Baptism as immersion, picturing burial and resurrection (Romans 6:3–4).
- Salvation by grace through obedient faith, not human merit.
- The assurance of forgiveness grounded in Christ's promise, not feelings.

Discussion Prompts

- What exactly does Peter command the believing crowd to do?
- Why can we not keep repentance as necessary while treating baptism as optional?
- How is baptism an act of submission to God's grace rather than a work we boast in?

Question 4

Student Question:

Peter called for repentance, a real turning from sin. What is one area of your life where the call to repent is not a one-time event from your past but a turning Christ is asking of you now?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self question presses repentance beyond a one-time past event. Peter called for repentance at conversion, but the New Testament knows an ongoing turning as well (Revelation 2:5; Acts 8:22). The Christian life is a life of continual repentance.

Help students name a specific area, not a vague admission of sinfulness. Repentance is concrete: a habit laid down, a relationship made right, a pattern of thought surrendered. Generic guilt changes nothing; named repentance changes a life.

Connect repentance to hope, not despair. The God who calls us to turn also gives the grace to do it. Repentance is not groveling; it is coming home.

Aim for one nameable turning this week. What is Christ putting His finger on, and what is the first concrete step away from it and toward Him?

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Repentance as both a decisive turn at conversion and an ongoing posture.
- Concrete, named repentance versus vague guilt.
- The grace of God that empowers and welcomes the one who turns.
- Repentance as coming home, not groveling.

Discussion Prompts

- Where is Christ calling you to turn right now, not just in the past?
- What makes named, specific repentance more powerful than vague guilt?
- How is repentance an act of hope rather than despair?

Question 5

Student Question:

Across the New Testament, entrance into Christ follows a consistent pattern: hearing the gospel, believing in Jesus as Lord and Christ, repenting of sin, confessing Him, and being baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:36–38; Romans 10:9–10; Romans 6:3–4). Why does it matter that salvation is described this way, rather than as accepting Christ by “faith only”?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Return to careful doctrine. Lay out the consistent New Testament pattern of entrance: one hears the gospel (Romans 10:17), believes in Jesus as Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36; John 8:24), repents of sin (Acts 2:38; 17:30), confesses Christ (Romans 10:9–10; Acts 8:37), and is baptized into Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3–4; Galatians 3:27).

Stress that this is not a man-made checklist but the pattern drawn from how people actually entered Christ throughout Acts. Every conversion in Acts involves hearing and responding to the gospel, and baptism is always present. The pattern is descriptive of what God Himself established.

Address “faith only” directly and fairly. Faith is utterly essential; without it no one can please God (Hebrews 11:6). But the phrase “faith only” appears in Scripture exactly once, and there it is denied: “a person is justified by works and not by faith alone” (James 2:24). Saving faith is faith that obeys, faith that repents, confesses, and is baptized.

Help the class see why this matters pastorally. If we tell people they are saved at the point of faith only, we may assure them of a salvation they have not yet received, and rob them of the very obedience God commands. Loving people means telling them the whole gospel.

Keep the tone of wonder. The plan of salvation is not a burden God imposes; it is the gracious way He has opened for guilty people to be washed and added to His family. Marvel that God has made the way so clear.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The New Testament pattern: hear, believe, repent, confess, be baptized.
- Saving faith as obedient faith, not “faith only” (James 2:24).
- Confession of Christ as Lord (Romans 10:9–10).
- Baptism into Christ as the point of union with Him (Galatians 3:27).
- The pattern as God-established, drawn from the conversions in Acts.

Discussion Prompts

- Why does it matter that we follow the pattern of conversion shown throughout Acts?
- How does James 2:24 speak to the idea of salvation by “faith only”?
- Why is telling people the whole gospel an act of love, not legalism?

Question 6

Student Question:

Three thousand people obeyed the gospel that very day, without delay (v. 41). Is there any step of obedience to Christ that you have understood but kept putting off? What do you think holds you back, and what would obedience look like now?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self question follows the immediacy of the three thousand. They did not wait; “those who received his word were baptized” that same day (v. 41). There is an urgency to obedience that we easily lose.

Help students examine delayed obedience. Many of us understand a command of Christ and quietly postpone it: a person who believes but has not been baptized, a Christian who knows of a sin to forsake or a duty to take up but keeps deferring.

Name the usual reasons for delay: fear of what others think, comfort, the assumption that there is always more time. The crowd had every reason for caution too, yet they obeyed at once.

Press toward a concrete now. Whatever the understood-but-postponed step is, ask what obedience would look like this week, and what the first move would be.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The urgency of obedience to a known command of Christ.
- The danger of understanding the gospel yet postponing obedience.
- Fear, comfort, and presumption of time as causes of delay.
- Obedience without delay as a mark of a pierced heart.

Discussion Prompts

- Is there a step of obedience you understand but keep putting off?
- What tends to hold you back from obeying at once?
- What would obedience look like this week, and what is the first step?

Question 7

Student Question:

Verse 47 says, “And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.” Who does the adding in this verse, and what does it teach us about how a person becomes part of the church, compared with the common idea of “joining the church of your choice”?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is a crucial doctrinal block. Verse 47 says, “the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.” The subject is the Lord. He does the adding. We do not add ourselves.

Draw out the contrast with the common modern idea of “joining the church of your choice.” In the New Testament, no one shops for a congregation that fits his taste and signs up. When a person obeyed the gospel, the Lord Himself added that person to the one body. Membership is God’s act, not a consumer decision.

Connect this to the oneness of the church from Lesson 1. There is one body (Ephesians 4:4). The Lord adds the saved to it. He does not add some to one denomination and others to another. The saved are simply added to the church Christ built.

Clarify what local membership is, without contradicting this. A Christian does identify with and work within a particular local congregation (Acts 9:26–28). But that is the working out of a membership the Lord first granted by adding the saved to His body. The local relationship flows from the divine addition, not the reverse.

Let the class feel the comfort and the seriousness. The comfort: if you have obeyed the gospel, God Himself has added you to His people; your belonging rests on His act. The seriousness: the church is not a human club to be joined or left at whim, but the body into which the Lord places the saved.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The Lord, not the believer, adds the saved to the church (Acts 2:47).
- Membership in the body as God’s act, not a consumer decision.
- The saved added to the one church, not to competing denominations.
- Local membership as the working out of the Lord’s addition.
- The church as Christ’s body, not a club joined and left at whim.

Discussion Prompts

- Who does the adding in verse 47, and why does that matter?
- How does this differ from the idea of joining the church of your choice?
- If God adds the saved to His body, how should that shape how you view membership?

Question 8

Student Question:

The new believers did not drift off alone after their baptism; they immediately devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers (v. 42). How devoted are you to the shared life of the church, and where might the Lord be calling you deeper into it?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self question turns to the shared life of verse 42. The new converts “devoted themselves” to the apostles’ teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers. The word devoted means a steady, persevering commitment.

Help students measure their own devotion against this fourfold pattern: the word, fellowship, the Lord’s Supper, and prayer. These are not optional extras for the eager few; they are the ordinary life of the saved.

Address the drift toward isolated, private faith. Many today want Jesus without His people. But the saved in Acts immediately gave themselves to a shared life. You cannot live the New Testament Christian life alone.

Aim for one concrete deepening: more faithful presence, a fellowship relationship pursued, a renewed seriousness about the Lord’s Supper or prayer.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Devotion to the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, the Lord’s Supper, and prayer.
- The shared life of the church as ordinary, not optional.
- The error of wanting Christ without His people.
- Perseverance and steadiness in the practices of the body.

Discussion Prompts

- How does your devotion compare with the fourfold pattern of verse 42?
- Where are you tempted toward an isolated, private faith?
- What is one way you could give yourself more fully to the life of the body?

Question 9

Student Question:

This passage describes both how one enters the body and what the body looks like once gathered (vv. 38–47): saved people, added by the Lord, devoted to apostolic teaching, sharing life, worshiping, and growing daily. Why is it significant that entrance into salvation and entrance into the church are not two separate events here, but one? What does that say about anyone who claims to be saved while remaining apart from the Lord's church?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block of the lesson, drawing together entrance and belonging. The passage does not present salvation and church membership as two separate transactions. The same act by which the saved are forgiven is the act by which the Lord adds them to His body (vv. 38, 47).

Make the central point unmistakable: to be saved is to be added to the church. There is no category in the New Testament of a saved person who is not part of the Lord's body. When God forgives, He also incorporates. The church is simply the saved, gathered.

Address the modern claim that one can have Christ without the church, a private faith with no covenant people. This passage rules it out. The Lord adds the saved; He does not leave them unattached. To be in Christ is to be in His body.

Be pastorally careful. This does not mean the church saves anyone; Christ saves, and adds the saved to His church. Nor does it mean every name on a roll is saved. It means salvation and membership in the one body are inseparable in God's design.

Draw out the implication gently for anyone claiming to be saved while living apart from the Lord's church. Such a claim runs against the grain of this text. The God who saves is the God who adds, and He means His people to live the devoted, shared life of verses 42 through 47.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Salvation and addition to the church as one act of God, not two.
- No category of a saved person outside the body of Christ.
- The error of a private Christ without His covenant people.
- Christ as the one who saves; the church as the saved, gathered.
- The seriousness of claiming salvation while living apart from the Lord's church.

Discussion Prompts

- Why is it significant that salvation and being added to the church happen together here?
- What does this passage say to the idea of having Christ without His church?
- How does this guard us from both neglecting the church and idolizing it?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across Acts 2:36–47. Whether you are examining your own entrance into Christ or your life in His body since, name one specific way this passage is calling you to respond, and what is the first step you will take?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the capstone. The lesson has shown the doorway into Christ and into His body, and the shared life that follows. The question now turns the whole passage on the student.

Be ready for two kinds of responses. Some students may realize they have never actually obeyed the gospel as Peter preached it; for them, the loving step is to hear, believe, repent, confess, and be baptized. Others, already in Christ, may sense a call back to the devoted life of verse 42.

Keep the invitation warm and unforced. The same God who added three thousand in one day still adds the saved. No one need leave this lesson uncertain about how to come to Christ.

Press for one nameable step and a first move. The aim of the whole lesson is not information about salvation but the response Peter's hearers gave: they did something, that very day.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Personal response to the gospel as preached in Acts 2.
- Obedience to the gospel for the one who has never obeyed it.
- Renewed devotion to the shared life for the one already in Christ.
- The Lord still adding the saved today.

Discussion Prompts

- Having seen how one enters Christ, where does this passage leave you?
- What is the one specific step you need to take in response?
- What is the first move, and when will you make it?