

Acts 1:1–11: Keys, Wallet, Phone

HOUSE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE — IN (LOOKING BACK) · UP (LOOKING UP) · OUT (LOOKING FORWARD)

Before You Meet: This week begins a new series in the book of Acts. Before sending his followers into a mission bigger than themselves, Jesus made sure three things were firmly in place — proof of his resurrection, the promised presence of the Spirit, and a clear sense of purpose. Using the everyday image of keys, wallet, and phone, we're invited to check whether those same essentials are actually present in our own faith, or whether something else has quietly taken their place.

The sermon content below is the **UP (Gospel)** portion of tonight's meeting — one third of the night. Don't let it swallow the whole evening. Give real time to IN and OUT as well; that's what makes this a House Group and not just a Bible study.

1

IN — Looking Back *(Community)*

Care · Worship · Celebrate Faithfulness · Motivation & Encouragement

Care

Go around the room and let people check in — highs and lows from the week, what's weighing on them, what they need prayer or practical help for. Take note of needs that might call for a meal, a text check-in, or a helping hand this week.

Worship

Take a few minutes to praise God together — a song, a moment of silence to reflect, or simply going around the room naming one thing from the week you're grateful to God for.

Celebrate Faithfulness

Before diving into the text, follow up on last week: did anyone take a step from last meeting's application — a conversation, a prayer, an act of obedience? Celebrate it out loud. Naming wins reminds the group that God is actually at work in each other's lives, not just in the abstract.

Motivation & Encouragement

Take a moment to encourage someone in the room — call out something you've genuinely seen God growing in them lately. This isn't flattery; it's naming grace at work.

2

UP — Looking Up *(Gospel — Sermon Discussion Guide)*

Feel free to reword questions or skip some — you don't need to cover them all. Pray through them and ask God to use them to create genuine conversation.

Background to Keep in Mind

- Acts was written by Luke, a physician who interviewed and traveled with firsthand witnesses of Jesus.
- Acts is a sequel to the Gospel of Luke, picking up where that account left off.
- The book is addressed to Theophilus, likely a Roman official investigating the significance of these events rather than someone who had witnessed them himself.

- Acts 1:8 lays out the scope of the mission Jesus gives his followers: witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Key Takeaways

- 1. Proof.** Before sending his disciples out, Jesus spent forty days presenting himself alive with many convincing proofs (Acts 1:3). He wanted a faith they had actually examined and settled for themselves — not one they were simply carrying because it had been handed to them.
- 2. Presence.** Jesus told his disciples not to go anywhere until they had received the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4–5, 8). The story of Acts was never really about what ordinary, broken people could accomplish through effort and strategy — it's about what the Spirit does through people who know they can't do it on their own.
- 3. Purpose.** Jesus gives his followers a mission bigger than themselves (Acts 1:8). Knowing what your life is actually for isn't a burden laid on top of faith — it's part of the gift, rescuing us from spending our energy on things too small to hold the weight of a soul.

Opening (Choose One)

- If you could go back in time and change one thing in history, what would it be and why?
- Have you ever traced your family history — through a grandparent's stories, ancestry sites, or old photos? What did you discover, and how did it shape how you see your own story?

Digging Into the Text

Read Acts 1:1–3. Luke reminds Theophilus that the risen Jesus spent forty days appearing to his disciples, offering many convincing proofs that he was alive.

How would you describe the foundation of your own faith right now — something you've personally examined and settled, or something closer to family habit, fear, or a decision made a long time ago that you've never revisited?

J. Warner Wallace, a former atheist and cold-case detective, wrote: *"I am a Christian today for one reason: Christianity is true. I'm a Christian because my high regard for the truth leaves me no alternative."* What would it take for your own faith to rest on that kind of settled conviction, rather than on borrowed certainty?

Have you ever seriously wrestled with whether the resurrection actually happened? What helped you work through it, or what questions are you still carrying?

Read Acts 1:4–5, 8. Jesus tells his disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they receive power from the Holy Spirit — the mission does not begin with their effort, but with his presence.

The book of Acts might be more accurately titled "The Acts of the Holy Spirit" than "The Acts of the Apostles." Why does that distinction matter, and how does it change the way you read the rest of the book?

The disciples, even after meeting the risen Jesus, were still confused and afraid. How does it land for you to know the same Spirit who steadied them now lives in ordinary, unfinished people today — including you?

When you face something hard in your faith — a difficult conversation, a season of doubt, a call to do something uncomfortable — do you instinctively reach for strategy and willpower, or for the Spirit's presence? What does that actually look like for you in practice?

Read Acts 1:8. Jesus names the scope of the mission he's sending his followers into — witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Do you experience this mission as a gift or as a burden? What shapes that for you?

Charles Spurgeon said: *"If Jesus is precious to you, you will not be able to keep your good news to yourself."* Think of something you genuinely love — a hobby, a person, an experience. How naturally do you talk about it, compared to how naturally you talk about Jesus?

A witness, in this sense, isn't a professor or an apologist — just someone who can say, "here is who Jesus is, here is what he's done, here is what he's done in me." Who in your own Jerusalem needs to hear that from you?

Going Deeper

- Underneath "proof, presence, and purpose," there's often a quieter set actually running things — fear of what happens if we're wrong, the pull of family or friends doing the same thing, or the constant project of trying to fix ourselves. Do any of those sound familiar? How might your faith look different if it were grounded in the real thing instead?
- The gospel moved from Jerusalem outward, eventually reaching a small city in southern Minnesota through people who were just links in the same chain. What does it mean to you that the story doesn't stop with us — it keeps moving through us?

Closing Reflection

Which of the three — proof, presence, or purpose — am I most often quietly substituting with something else, like fear, tradition, or self-effort? What would it look like to actually rest in Christ for that one this week, instead of managing it myself?

3

OUT — Looking Forward *(Mission)*

Preparing for the Mission · Going on Mission · Praying for the Mission

Preparing for the Mission

Set aside 30 minutes this week to honestly examine the foundation of your faith. Ask: Am I genuinely convinced the resurrection happened? Is my life marked by dependence on the Spirit, or on my own effort? Am I living for something bigger than myself? Bring what you find to God in prayer, not performance.

- If your conviction feels shaky or untested, pick up one recommended read this week: "The Case for Christ" or "The Case for Christianity," "The Reason for God," or "Cold-Case Christianity."

Going on Mission

Identify one person in your immediate world — your Jerusalem — and commit to praying for them by name this week. Ask God to open a natural opportunity to share who Jesus is and what he's done in you.

- Read the Gospel of Luke this week (about four chapters a day) to get the fuller context before the series continues.

Praying for the Mission

Go around the room and share, by name, someone in your Jerusalem who doesn't yet know Jesus. Pray for them together — that God would open a door, and give you the ordinary courage to say what he's done in you.

Closing

Close your time together by praying as a group for each of the three things Jesus gave his disciples before sending them out — that your conviction in the proof of the resurrection would deepen, that you would grow increasingly dependent on his presence through the Spirit, and that you would carry a genuine sense of purpose beyond yourselves, starting in your own homes, workplaces, schools, and community. This is what it looks like to enjoy God in closeness of relationship, and to join him in making his name known — starting right where you are.