

Acts 2:36–38: Know For Certain

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

Before You Meet: This week we continue our series in Acts. Peter has just told the crowd they can know for certain that God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ, and the people are cut to the heart. Their question is the one certainty always raises: "What shall we do?" Peter offers three things in response — repentance, public declaration through baptism, and receiving the Holy Spirit — and we're invited to ask which of them is still unfinished in us. 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.

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.

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 2:36–38 closes Peter's Pentecost sermon. Verse 36 is the conclusion: God has made this Jesus, whom the crowd crucified, both Lord and Christ.
- To be "cut to the heart" (v. 37) is to be pierced by conviction, not merely persuaded by an argument. The crowd's question, "Brothers, what shall we do?", shows certainty pressing them toward action.
- Peter's answer in verse 38 holds three responses together: repent, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Key Takeaways

- 1. Certainty Calls for a Response.** Peter doesn't stop at "know for certain." The people hear the truth about Jesus and immediately ask what to do. Knowing who Jesus is was never meant to end in agreement alone.
- 2. Repentance.** Repenting means a change of mind that leads to a change of direction: turning from self-rule and toward the Lord God has made Jesus to be. Peter offers forgiveness to the very people who crucified him, which shows how God meets those who face the truth about themselves.
- 3. Public Declaration Through Baptism.** Baptism is an outward, visible statement that you belong to Jesus. God ties our response to something seen and shared, so that faith doesn't stay hidden or private.
- 4. Receiving the Holy Spirit.** The Spirit is promised as a gift, not a reward for the finished or the polished. God's own presence is given to those who respond to Jesus, and he works in us in ways we can't produce on our own.

Opening (Choose One)

- Think of a time you made a decision and then had to make it public — a move, an engagement, a new job. What made it feel real? What changed once other people knew?
- When you're convinced of something, do you tend to act on it right away, or wait and keep it to yourself? Give a recent example.

Digging Into the Text

Read Acts 2:36–37. Peter concludes that God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ. The crowd is cut to the heart and asks what to do.

Peter tells the crowd that the Jesus they crucified is the one God has made Lord. Why do you think hearing this "cut them to the heart" rather than simply making them angry or defensive? What is the difference between being intellectually convinced and being cut to the heart?

Read Acts 2:38. Peter calls them to repent, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Peter names the crowd's guilt and, in the same breath, offers forgiveness. What does that tell us about how God responds to people who honestly face what they've done?

Repentance is a change of mind that leads to a change of direction. What is the difference between feeling sorry and actually repenting? What does it look like to turn toward God in everyday life?

Baptism in Acts 2 is public and done in front of others. Why do you think God ties our response to something visible and shared rather than purely private? What would be lost if faith stayed completely hidden?

Read Acts 2:38–39. The gift of the Holy Spirit is promised to everyone who responds, along with the people Peter is speaking to and their children.

Peter promises the Spirit as a gift rather than something earned. Why does that matter for someone who feels they haven't done enough, or aren't far enough along? What difference does the Spirit make for a believer day to day?

Going Deeper

- If repentance feels unfinished, what is something you are still holding onto that keeps you on the throne? What would it take to let go of it?

- If receiving the Holy Spirit feels unfinished, where do you sense your life is running on your own strength? What would it look like to depend on the Spirit there this week?
- If public declaration feels unfinished, what is holding you back — fear, timing, family, pride, something else? If you haven't been baptized, what is your next step? If you have, who in your life still doesn't know where you stand with Jesus?

Closing Reflection

Peter offers repentance, public declaration through baptism, and receiving the Holy Spirit as the response to certainty about Jesus. Which of these three steps feels most incomplete or unfinished in your own spiritual journey right now?

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 ask honestly which of Peter's three steps feels unfinished in you. Is there something you need to turn from? Is there an area where you are running on your own strength instead of the Spirit's? Is there a step of public obedience, like baptism, that you've been putting off? Bring what you find to God in prayer, not performance.

- Standing question: Who's willing to share next week about a step they took, or are still working up to, in responding to Jesus? Let your leader know. An honest, ordinary account does more to build conviction in a group than a highlight reel.

Going on Mission

Identify one person in your life who doesn't yet know where you stand with Jesus and commit to praying for them by name this week. Let God examine your own motives first: are you hoping to win an argument, or do you actually want them to know the Jesus who has changed you?

- If you haven't been baptized, contact your church this week to ask about the next step.
- Don't wait until you have the right words. Make one concrete, low-pressure invitation this week — a coffee, a call, an invite to House Group — and let God carry the outcome.

Praying for the Mission

Go around the room and share, by name, someone who doesn't yet know Jesus or who is still weighing a response to him. Pray for them together — that God would cut through to their heart, that they would hear the invitation Peter gave, and that he would give you courage to speak.

Closing Close your time together by praying for each person's unfinished step: that those who need to repent would turn freely toward the Lord, that those longing for the Spirit would receive him as the gift he is, and that those ready to declare Jesus publicly would do so with courage.