



May 10 - Trusting God While Taking Action

Weekly Reading - John 20-Acts 3

Today's Passage - Acts 1:12-26

Main Point

The sovereignty of God does not negate the responsibility of man.

MAIN PASSAGE - ACTS 1:12-26

Matthias Chosen to Replace Judas

[12] Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away.

[13] And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James.

[14] All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

[15] In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said,

[16] "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.

[17] For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry."

[18] (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out.

[19] And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

[20] "For it is written in the Book of Psalms,

“May his camp become desolate,
and let there be no one to dwell in it’;
and
“Let another take his office.’

[21] So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

[22] beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.”

[23] And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias.

[24] And they prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen

[25] to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” [26] And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles. (ESV)

Background

Acts 1:12–26 takes place in the days immediately following Jesus’ ascension, as the disciples return to Jerusalem and wait for the promised coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4–5). This period is marked by anticipation and uncertainty. Jesus has given the mission to be His witnesses, but the power to carry it out has not yet come. The disciples gather in an upper room, likely the same setting as the Last Supper, and devote themselves to prayer along with other followers of Jesus, including the women and Jesus’ family. Their unity and dependence on God reflect an early model of the church’s posture in seasons of waiting.

In verses 15–26, Peter takes a leadership role in addressing the need to replace Judas Iscariot, who had betrayed Jesus and died. Drawing from Old Testament Scripture (Psalms), Peter demonstrates that Judas’s betrayal and the need for his replacement were not outside of God’s sovereign plan. The criteria for a new apostle emphasize eyewitness testimony to Jesus’ ministry and resurrection, highlighting the importance of apostolic authority and gospel credibility. The process of selecting Matthias—including prayer and the casting of lots—reflects both human responsibility in decision-making and trust in God’s sovereign direction. This passage shows that the early church did not remain passive while waiting on God but acted faithfully within His revealed will.

Christ Connection

This passage ultimately points to Jesus as the risen and reigning Lord who sovereignly guides His people and accomplishes His purposes. Even in Judas’s betrayal, God’s redemptive plan was not thwarted but fulfilled according to Scripture. Through His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus secured the foundation of the gospel message that the

apostles were called to witness. As the disciples waited for the Holy Spirit, they did so in confidence that Christ was still at work, directing His church. Today, believers live with the same assurance: Jesus is not absent but actively ruling, calling His people to trust Him, obey His Word, and faithfully carry out His mission, knowing that God's sovereign plan will stand.

Life Group - The Flow

- 15 minutes - Conversation and relationship-building
 - 15 minutes - Year of Prayer guided prayer time
 - 5 minutes - Introduction (icebreaker, activity, or illustration)
 - 35 minutes - Study and apply the Bible
 - 5 minutes - Optional activity
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Year of Prayer (15 min)

Always pause and ask the Holy Spirit to guide your time of prayer.

We begin our time of adoration by acknowledging that you are the God whose right hand is filled with righteousness as we read in Psalm 48:10.

Psalm 108:4 reminds us of Your great mercy. We acknowledge that You are the Great I Am and are worthy of all our worship and praise.

Offer your words of worship at this time. (pause)

As we are still in the Father's presence, we are reminded of Psalm 51:17: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." Father may our hearts be broken for what breaks Your heart. Forgive us Father when we care more about what the world thinks of us than we care about our relationship with You.

Ask the Holy Spirit to search Your heart and reveal any unconfessed sin, in the quiet of this moment. (pause)

Father, we ask for a growing desire and ability to live out Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight. We come seeking Your divine direction. Guide our thoughts this morning/evening and open our hearts and minds to all You desire to teach us. May Your wisdom lead us in all that we do as we grow in our understanding of how You would have us to advance Your kingdom.

John 3:36 reminds us that “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on them.”

In the quiet of this moment pray for those on your heart that have yet to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. (pause)

Father, we ask for Your wisdom in all our decisions. May we make choices that bring You honor, allowing others to see Jesus in us. Guide us with Your Spirit so that we may act with discernment and integrity.

Share your petitions and intercessions at this time. (pause)

- **Have group members start with those we are asking God to Save:**
 - **Friends**
 - **Family**
 - **Co-workers**
 - **Others**

Then have group members share Prayer Requests

Thank you, Father God, for your promise in Matthew 18:20 that reminds us that where two or three gather in the Father’s name, He is with us.” Thank you for being with us this evening.

May we take time everyday to count our blessings – from the very air we breathe, to the restorative sleep at night, for bringing us together to support and uplift one another. May our collective thankfulness strengthen our bonds.

We offer these words with grateful hearts in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

Introduction (5 min)

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Ask:

- **Who is one person you would likely ask for advice if you had a big decision to make? Why that person?**
- **Do you consider yourself to be pretty decisive or do you like to make decisions more slowly? Has your speed of decision-making (either fast or slow) ever frustrated someone close to you? When?**

Transition to Passage 1:

We make decisions of all shapes and sizes every single day. From moving to a new city to choosing what to have for lunch, our hours are made up of a string of considered and made decisions. The question, though, is how the sovereignty of God fits into all those decisions we make. God's sovereignty does not negate our responsibility in making decisions; in fact, it frees us to make wise decisions in faith.

Study and Discuss (40 min)

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says about a particular topic.

Passage 1 – Acts 1:12-14

READ THE PASSAGE – Have a volunteer read Acts 1:12-14.

Matthias Chosen to Replace Judas

[12] Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away.

[13] And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James.

[14] All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

Commentary

Leader Prep: Use the following commentary to prepare ahead of time. As you lead, feel free to summarize key insights rather than reading it word-for-word.

1:12. After Jesus' ascension, the disciples return to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, which was about a Sabbath day's journey away (roughly three-quarters of a mile). Their obedience to return reflects their trust in Jesus' instruction to wait for the promised Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4). This moment marks a transition from Jesus' earthly ministry to the beginning of the church's mission.

1:13. The disciples gather in an upper room, likely a familiar meeting place. Luke lists the eleven apostles by name, emphasizing continuity with Jesus' chosen witnesses. Judas Iscariot is notably absent, highlighting the need for restoration of the apostolic group. This gathering demonstrates intentional community and shared purpose among the early believers.

1:14. The group is described as being "continually united in prayer." This unity is not merely relational but spiritual, centered on dependence on God. The inclusion of the

women, Mary the mother of Jesus, and His brothers shows the expanding circle of believers. Their posture of persistent prayer reveals that waiting on God is not passive but actively rooted in seeking Him together.

Guide Discussion

Leader Note: You do not need to cover every question. Use the questions that best help your group engage with the passage.

1. **Good for Students.** What stands out to you about what the disciples were doing during this time?
2. **Discuss.** Why is it important that they were united and continually devoted to prayer?
3. **Discuss.** Have you ever experienced a season of waiting in your life? Why is that difficult?
4. **Deeper Dive.** Why does isolation often make seasons of waiting harder on our faith, and what does our tendency to withdraw from others reveal about how we're really trusting God?

Transition to Passage 2:

"We've seen how the disciples responded while they were waiting - united in prayer and dependent on God. But they didn't just wait passively. Let's look at how they began to take action while still trusting in God's plan."

Passage 2 - Acts 1:15-26

READ THE PASSAGE - Have a volunteer read Acts 1:15-26

[15] In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said,

[16] "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.

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[18] (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out.

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Commentary

Leader Prep: Use the following commentary to prepare ahead of time. As you lead, feel free to summarize key insights rather than reading it word-for-word.

1:15. Peter emerges as a leader among the believers, addressing a group of about 120 people. This number suggests that the early church, though still small, had already grown beyond the original twelve. Peter’s leadership reflects the restoration he experienced after his denial of Jesus and prepares him for his prominent role in the early church.

1:16. Peter grounds his words in Scripture, explaining that Judas’s betrayal was foretold by the Holy Spirit through David. This demonstrates a key theological truth: even tragic events like betrayal fall within God’s sovereign plan. The early church understood Scripture as authoritative and directly applicable to their present situation.

1:17. Judas is acknowledged as having been one of their number and sharing in their ministry. This highlights the sobering reality that proximity to Jesus does not guarantee true faith. Judas’s role serves as both a warning and a reminder of the seriousness of genuine belief.

1:18-19. Luke provides a brief account of Judas’s death and its aftermath. The details emphasize the consequences of his betrayal and the public nature of his downfall. The field associated with his death becomes known as “Field of Blood,” reinforcing the gravity of his actions and their fulfillment within God’s plan.

1:20. Peter again appeals to Scripture (Psalms 69:25 and 109:8), showing that Judas’s replacement was not merely a practical decision but one rooted in God’s revealed Word. This reflects the early church’s commitment to aligning their actions with Scripture when making decisions.

1:21-22. The criteria for selecting a replacement apostle are clearly defined: the individual must have accompanied Jesus throughout His ministry and be a witness to His resurrection. This emphasizes the foundational role of eyewitness testimony in establishing the credibility of the gospel message and the authority of the apostles.

1:23. Two men, Joseph (called Barsabbas, also known as Justus) and Matthias, are nominated. The presence of multiple qualified candidates shows that the community is thoughtfully discerning rather than acting impulsively. It also highlights that more than just the twelve had faithfully followed Jesus during His ministry.

1:24-25. The group prays, acknowledging that the Lord knows the hearts of all people. This prayer demonstrates humility and dependence on God's perfect knowledge. Rather than relying solely on human judgment, they seek God's guidance in revealing His chosen servant.

1:26. They cast lots, a practice used in the Old Testament to discern God's will (Proverbs 16:33). While this method may seem unfamiliar today, it reflects their trust that God is sovereign over the outcome. Matthias is chosen and added to the eleven apostles, restoring the number to twelve. This moment underscores the balance between human responsibility (nominating, praying, acting) and divine sovereignty (God determining the result).

Teaching Toolbox Tip

Casting Lots - What it is, and what it isn't:

Casting lots was a common Old Testament practice used to make decisions when people had already sought God through prayer and Scripture. It wasn't gambling or guessing - it was a way of trusting God to direct the outcome when human wisdom had gone as far as it could.

Important to note is that this happens before the Holy Spirit comes in Acts 2. After that, we don't see believers using this method again. Instead, we see them relying on the Holy Spirit, Scripture, and wise counsel.

Tip: If you don't clarify this, some people may either:

- dismiss it as strange
- or misunderstand it as something to imitate

Your job is to anchor them in the **principle behind the practice**.

Guide Discussion

Leader Note: You do not need to cover every question. Use the questions that best help your group engage with the passage.

1. **Good for Students.** What steps did the group take to choose someone to replace Judas?
2. **Discuss.** What is the difference between waiting passively and waiting actively, and how do we see the disciples actively waiting in this passage?
3. **Discuss.** What principles can we learn from this passage about making decisions in a way that honors God?

4. **Deeper Dive.** Where in your life are you trying to control outcomes instead of trusting God's sovereignty, and how is that shaping your decisions?
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Optional Activity (5 min)

Choose one of the following activities if time allows.

Option 1: The Decision Filter

Transition from Passage 2: "The disciples didn't just wait—they trusted God enough to act. Let's take a moment to think about how we do that in our own lives."

Time: 5 minutes

Supplies: None (optional: index cards)

Instructions

Say:

We've seen in this passage that the disciples didn't just sit and wait - they prayed, sought wisdom, and then acted while trusting God.

Then ask

- Think of a decision you're currently facing - or one you've been putting off.
-

Give them 30 - 60 seconds to think. Have them write their answer on an index card.

Walk through this 4-question filter, asking them one at a time and giving members time to think and write their answers:

- Have you prayed about it consistently?
- Have you sought wise, godly counsel?
- Are you making this decision based on Scripture or just preference?
- Are you trying to control the outcome—or trust God with it?

Invite pair sharing or silent reflection

Final Question:

What would it look like for you to take the next faithful step in that decision this week?

Have them write their answer on an index card or put a task/reminder in their phone

Option 2: Song Reflection - “Trust In God”

Transition from Passage 2: “We’ve seen that Jesus doesn’t just call us to love—He first calls us His friends and shows us what that love looks like. Let’s take a moment to reflect on that through this song.”

Time: 5–6 minutes

Supplies: Index Cards

Instructions

Play the song as a group (or read a portion of the lyrics). Have members write down what stands out to them as the song plays.

Then ask 1-2 of the questions below:

- What line from the song stood out to you the most, and why?
 - How does this song reflect what we see in the disciples as they waited and made decisions in Acts 1?
 - Where do you find it hardest to trust God right now—and what would it look like to surrender that to Him?
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Final Takeaway and Prayer

After discussion concludes, read the takeaway statement:

God’s sovereignty gives us confidence to move forward in faith, knowing that as we seek Him and act wisely, He is guiding every step.

Either pray something like the guide below, or invite someone in the group to close in prayer.

As you close in prayer, thank God that He is sovereign over all and yet has equipped His children with wisdom. Pray that we would not be paralyzed by decisions, but instead would actively wait for God’s work by making wise decisions.