

## The Best Bible Study Ever – Devotional Thoughts for the Week of January 3, 2021

*This is the first week of our series on Acts. Our devotional author this week is Brian Pollock. Brian is an avid reader and podcast junkie, but a novice when it comes to writing devotionals.*

### Week 1 Day 1



If you could go back in time Ebenezer Scrooge-style and see any event in history, what would it be? Many Christians say the Resurrection, but I have another idea. Near the end of his Gospel, Luke the Physician writes about two of Jesus' disciples

encountering the risen Savior on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35) on Resurrection Sunday. Cleopas and his buddy don't recognize Jesus until after He walks them through THE BEST BIBLE STUDY EVER. It wasn't until Jesus had finished explaining how the Hebrew Scriptures were about Him that they recognized that He was the risen Lord.

Just as they were about to eat dinner, Jesus blessed the food, broke bread, prayed, and disappeared before their eyes. They hustled back to Jerusalem and the Upper Room, and hadn't even finished telling their story to the Eleven, when Jesus showed up in their midst. After a snack, he "opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45). Two sessions of THE BEST BIBLE STUDY EVER in one day with the Risen Savior! How cool would that have been to be a part of?

How much do you read or study the Old Testament?

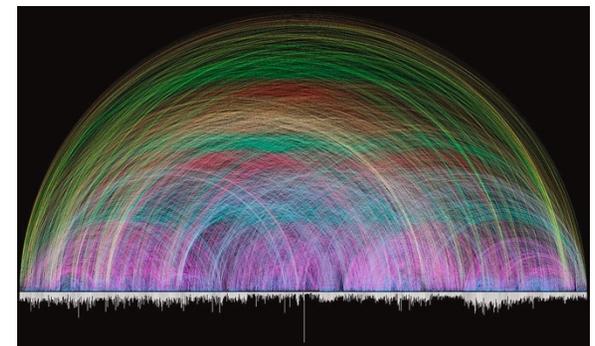
### Week 1 Day 2

What do you think? How did some fishermen, a political activist, a tax collector, and a bunch of other ordinary Jewish men know enough

about Scripture to take the Good News to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth? How could they explain Old Testament prophecies that the Pharisees and scribes didn't understand?

On that Sunday night in the Upper Room, Jesus said to them "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." He went on to say, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Jesus opened their minds and taught them to recognize how He was foreshadowed throughout all their Scriptures. Luke tells us in Acts 1:3 that "After Jesus' suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God." As they repeated what Jesus taught them, some men wrote down what they'd been taught with the help of the Holy Spirit and created the documents that make up what we call the New Testament. Combining what they saw and heard while they followed Jesus, with the knowledge He passed along after His resurrection under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, resulted in the documents that were collected in the New Testament.

Over the years, Bible publishers have put cross-references into the margins of most Bibles. How often do you look up those references and use them to increase your depth of understanding? It might be well worth your time!



Bible cross-reference chart. Computer visualization showing over 63,000 textual cross references found in the Bible. Created by Chris Harrison.



Spend some time today reflecting on and appreciating that you live on this side of the Resurrection. You are a 21<sup>st</sup> century beneficiary of THE BEST BIBLE STUDY EVER, and that you have insights into the Scriptures that the Old Testament saints did not.

### **Week 1 Day 5**

What did Peter and the other disciples do with all this understanding and insight that Jesus gave them? They waited. They waited for the Holy Spirit to come upon them. What did they do while they waited? They picked a replacement for Judas, for one thing: Matthias, who had been a part of the larger group of Jesus' followers the whole time. It's likely that he was one of the 72 disciples that Jesus sent out in Luke 10. Luke doesn't tell us what else transpired while they waited, but it is likely that they reviewed all that Jesus had taught them so they would be ready. Jesus had taught them parables about waiting and so they waited.



*Cristopher Slatoff, Peter Preaching at Pentecost*

Then came the day of Pentecost, and the world changed again. The Holy Spirit descended on them and filled them. God-fearing Jews from every nation were gathered in Jerusalem for the feast, and they all heard the disciples praising God in a language they understood. Peter stood up in the crowd and explained what was happening by quoting the prophet Joel. He then gave his eyewitness testimony of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, quoting King David multiple times. Just like Jesus, Peter used the Old Testament to prove that Jesus was both the Lord and Messiah. About 3,000 people believed Peter, received the Holy Spirit, and were baptized that day. The Kingdom of God took root, and the world has never been the same. Peter used his experience with Jesus and what he learned from THE BEST BIBLE STUDY EVER, with the

help of the Holy Spirit, to proclaim the truth about Jesus with grace. We can do the same.

We can get to know Scripture well enough to be able to connect the lines from the Old Testament to the New Testament. As part of that, before we ask what the Scriptures mean to us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we need to ask what they meant to the original audience. Then we, too can be in a place to benefit from THE BEST BIBLE STUDY EVER.