














Ripple Effect

Christ's Unstoppable Plan Advances

ACTS



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STRONG

curriculum

A world weak on truth needs a strong, trustworthy message. STRONG Curriculum builds stronger churches by teaching all Scripture to produce spiritually mature believers who measure up to the stature of Christ.

A Plan You Can Trust

The Bible has the answers to what students need most. No other book or philosophy contains God's power to save and transform lives. Because of this, we've made it our unwavering commitment to build Strong Students upon the sure foundation of God's Word. With this curriculum, your church can develop teens who will be strong defenders of the faith.

The Strong Students scope and sequence is designed around the seven teaching aims Jesus modeled in His ministry. Since these are Jesus' aims, teachers can be confident in the aims' effectiveness and purpose. Every lesson in the Strong Students scope and sequence addresses at least one of Jesus' teaching aims.

Every lesson also focuses on students' needs. We understand the challenge of teaching the Bible to today's teens because of four barriers culture has pushed on them:

- Struggles with identity
- Subjective view of truth
- Hope in a social utopia
- Belief that a career and wealth guarantee happiness

Strong Students takes care of the tough part for you by striking at the foundation of these barriers and providing a Biblical response to each one. With Strong Students, you can concentrate on communicating to your teens and helping them grow into strong believers in Christ without worrying whether you are effectively addressing the philosophies competing for their minds.

Look for the **BuildUP** icons in the table of contents and on the first page of each lesson.

JESUS' TEACHING AIMS



BELIEVE THE GOSPEL. Jesus taught His students to trust in Him alone for salvation and to share the gospel with others. This aim is obviously fundamental to all the rest



UNDERSTAND BIBLICAL ETHICS. Jesus instructed His students to live according to moral values. These values provided them with the tools to make wise decisions.



INTERNALIZE GODLINESS. Jesus taught His followers to be godly on the inside. He warned them not to become like the Pharisees, with a mere outward appearance of godliness.



LEARN DOCTRINE. Jesus knew the importance of teaching His students the truth and identified doctrine as one of the means for spiritual growth. Wishy-washy doctrine leads to faulty practice.



DEVELOP LIFE SKILLS. Jesus taught His followers to meet life's challenges in a way that honored and glorified God. He gave them the skills to navigate those challenges successfully.



UPLIFT OTHERS. Jesus' life was all about others. Leading by example, He taught His followers to be all about others too.



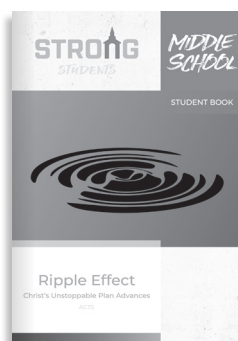
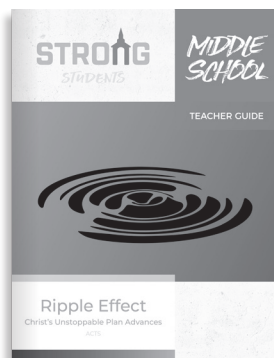
PREPARE TO SERVE. Jesus prepared His followers to serve in the context of local churches that were established soon after His ascension. He emphasized sacrifice and dedication.

STRONG[®] curriculum

Middle School Kit Contents

- ☐ Teacher Guide
- ☐ Student Book
Order one book for each student
- ☐ Resource CD with online download code
Includes worksheets, Home Connection Tool, and additional teacher resources
- ☐ DVD
- ☐ Verse Poster
- ☐ Posters

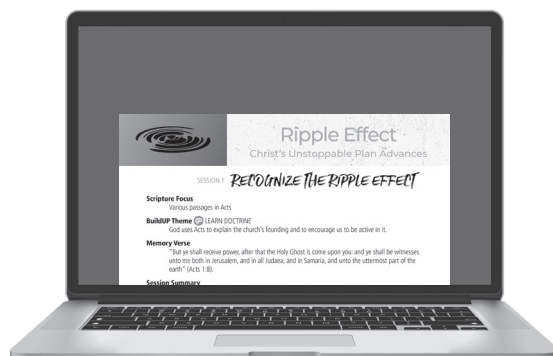
In this quarter's Strong Students for Middle Schoolers, the students will study the book of Acts. They will learn how Christ's church grew from a small group in Jerusalem. They will be encouraged to see the Holy Spirit at work in believers. And they will be challenged to join the ripple effect started in first century Jerusalem with the coming of the Holy Spirit.



Ordering Information

All materials are available from
Regular Baptist Press.

- Web: www.StrongCurriculum.com
- E-mail: orders@rbpstore.org
- Toll-free orders in the United States:
1-800-727-4440
- Fax: 1-847-843-3757
- Canada: Contact your distributor.



The Doctrinal Basis of Our Curriculum

A more detailed statement with references is available upon request.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures • Only one true God • The Trinity of the Godhead • The Holy Spirit and His ministry • The personality of Satan • The Genesis account of creation • Original sin and the fall of man | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The virgin birth of Christ • Salvation through faith in the shed blood of Christ • The bodily resurrection and priesthood of Christ • Grace and the new birth • Justification by faith • Sanctification of the believer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The security of the believer • The church • The ordinances of the local church: baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper • Biblical separation—ecclesiastical and personal • Obedience to civil government • The place of Israel | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pretribulation rapture of the church • The premillennial return of Christ • The millennial reign of Christ • Eternal glory in Heaven for the righteous • Eternal torment in Hell for the wicked |
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How to Teach **STRONG STUDENTS** Lessons

Leading a Student to Christ

STRONG STUDENTS has been designed to help you clearly present God's Word to your students. Each lesson will guide students through the Bible, encouraging them to interact with the material and apply it to their lives.

Familiarize yourself with the resources included in the kit so that you can maximize your effectiveness in the classroom. The key resources you need are Student Books, the PowerPoint (CD), and the Home Connection Tool (CD).

Encourage students to use their Student Books during each lesson so they can follow the PowerPoint presentation by taking notes. The words to fill in the blanks are either part of the outline or highlighted in orange in the sentences in the PowerPoint.

Some of the PowerPoint presentations contain additional slides that obviously tie into the teacher guide lessons. Make sure you review the PowerPoint presentations before teaching.

The student books include a daily devotional. Encourage your students to complete them either before or after coming to class.

The Home Connection Tool gives the parents of your students an idea of what you are teaching in class. Consider emailing those to each family represented in your class. You can find them on the CD or online using the download code.

Before Each Lesson

- Read the Scripture Focus passage several times.
- Do the Time with God section of the Student Book to know what your students are studying.
- Memorize the key verses.
- Prepare the materials you will need for each activity.
- Work through the Bible Study section and carefully plan the lesson.
- Plan how you will apply the Bible lesson to your students' lives. Make sure what you say is clear and shows students how they can use the lesson.
- Pray for yourself, your students, and your lesson.

AS A TEACHER, your most important concern is the personal salvation of your students. Find out whether your students know Jesus Christ as their Savior in a way that doesn't introduce doubt in their minds. An easy and gentle way to find this out is to give your students several minutes to write out an answer to a question like, How can a person get to Heaven? Collect their answers and read them during the following week. If any of your students seem confused about salvation, you can present the gospel to them and provide the opportunity for them to receive Christ. If possible, deal with students individually.

The Plan of Salvation

- Everyone is a sinner. No one can live up to God's perfect standard (Romans 3:23).
- Sin's penalty is death (Romans 6:23).
- God loves us and sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to pay for our sin. Christ died in our place (John 3:16; Romans 5:8).
- When a person places his trust in Jesus' payment for sins, Christ becomes his Savior. His sins are forgiven, and he receives God's gift of eternal life (John 1:12; 5:24).
- Everlasting life begins the moment we trust in Jesus (John 3:36).
- After that, nothing we ever do will take us out of God's hand; we are secure (John 10:27–29).
- The experience of the new birth (being born into God's family) is not based on a feeling, but on confidence in God's Word (1 John 5:11, 12).

Encourage students to pray, but explain that prayer does not save a person. Prayer is how we communicate our inward thoughts to God. Ask new believers to explain what they have done and what has happened to them.

Discipleship

Encourage new believers to read the Bible, and explain the importance of prayer. Also explain 1 John 1:9 to them so they can deal with sin in their new Christian life. Make it a priority to follow up with new believers.

Knowing Your Middle School Students

Description of Physical, Social, and Emotional Development

- I MAY feel developmentally out of step with my peers—behind or ahead in physical changes—as I enter and experience puberty.
- MAY be sensitive about my weight and body shape and worry about whether I am normal.
- I AM developing my own sense of identity.
- I AM more interested in and influenced by my peer group than by the adults in my life.
- I MAY be moody, depressed, or anxious about academic or social issues in my life.
- I AM very focused on myself and may feel both high expectations and lack of confidence.
- I AM better able to express feelings through talking, but I tend to respond dramatically, feeling that no one else has ever experienced the same feelings and emotions.
- I DO NOT always exhibit the emotional maturity that matches my more adult-like appearance. I have trouble thinking before acting; sometimes I seem silly and unfocused on the task at hand.

Effective Responses

- Provide emotional and spiritual support and encourage students to develop a strong sense of self as a valuable person, created by God.
- Accept students as they are and avoid comparing to others. Resist stereotyping. Not every tall boy is a basketball player.
- Generate an atmosphere of acceptance and love for all, demonstrating interest and care for each student.
- Create an atmosphere of mutual respect so youth feel they are part of a community.
- Help build genuine relationships by honestly sharing mistakes and life experiences.
- Help students talk through the ramifications of their choices without asking, “How could you? What were you thinking?”

- Avoid arguments by remaining calm and not engaging in banter over an issue.
- Be patient with the tendency of some youth toward constant personal grooming.

Cognitive (Learning) Development

- I MAY be hesitant to try new things for fear of embarrassing myself in front of my peer group.
- I AM developing new thinking skills and am able to think about multiple options and possibilities.
- I CAN think more deeply and significantly about abstract ideas such as faith.
- I AM developing a stronger sense of right and wrong.
- I MAY be ready to take significant steps in areas of faith and Christian growth.

Effective Instructional Methods

- Create an open and stress-free environment where youth can learn and share concerns in a confidence-building atmosphere.
- Provide background information, a purpose to the lesson, and understanding of the text.
- Combine love, high energy, enthusiasm, and seriousness with engaging ways to present the lesson. Use personal stories that illustrate Biblical principles to keep students engaged in learning.
- Provide honest answers to questions.
- Stimulate thinking in areas of salvation and Christian growth.
- Help Christians work through issues of assurance of salvation and to begin studying the Bible for daily decision making.
- Encourage students to articulate Biblical principles of right and wrong that they are learning from God’s Word.
- Invite volunteers to look up and read aloud Bible passages. But don’t put students on the spot or ask them to do things that make them feel foolish.

SESSION 1

RECOGNIZE THE RIPPLE EFFECT

Scripture Focus

Various passages in Acts

BuildUP Theme



LEARN DOCTRINE

God uses Acts to explain the church's founding and to encourage us to be active in it.

Measurable Response

Students will recognize the Spirit's transforming power and seek to share the gospel.

Memory Verse

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). NKJV

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). ESV

Teacher Preparation

- ☐ The book of Acts is a literary bridge between the Gospels, which record the life of Christ, and the Epistles, letters to the churches and church leaders. Without this historical narrative, we would have questions about who Paul is, how the church started, and how it spread from Jerusalem. Thankfully, the Spirit inspired Luke to write the important events for Theophilus.
- ☐ Read Luke 24:36–53 and Acts 1:1–11. Take a moment to remember who was faithful to obey Jesus' command and share the gospel with you.
- ☐ The gospel is powerful and exciting and life-changing! Lead your students to recognize its importance in their daily lives.

Focus

- ☐ This course focuses on the BuildUP aims Believe the Gospel and Prepare to Serve. Students will learn about the birth of the church, the Holy Spirit's empowerment, and the rapid spread of the transformational gospel message. They will be challenged to take an active role in the continuing spread of the gospel by serving in their local church and actively sharing the good news of salvation with the lost.

Cultural Barrier

- ☐ This lesson addresses the idea that a person's career and wealth bring him or her happiness. Accomplishments and money can thrill a person for a while, but neither can bring lasting joy. Finding one's part in Christ's plan to build His church gives a person a true purpose and leads to a deep satisfaction with life and a true sense of joy and peace.

Session Starters

Option 1—What’s Making That Sound?

Gather

- Objects to use to make distinct noises (e.g., crinkling a candy wrapper, touching an inflated balloon, eating popcorn).

Steps

1. Students sit facing away from you.
2. Crinkle the empty candy wrapper and ask students to guess what is making the sound. Repeat the process with the other objects you brought to class.
3. Students turn around. Show them the objects you used to make the sound.

ASK: How does sound travel from the object to your ears? *In waves that vibrate particles in the space in between.*

4. Transition to the Bible lesson.

As sound travels, one molecule vibrates a neighboring molecule until the vibration reaches your ears. As we begin our study of Acts, we’ll learn how the events described started “vibrations” that have traveled all the way to our church today.

Option 2—One Day Earlier . . .

Gather

- Paper and pens.

Steps

1. Pair students and give each pair a sheet of paper and a pen.
2. Read the following scenario out loud: You are sitting on a beach in full snow gear with a dirty, stray dog on a leash and a bag containing one million dollars.
3. Students work together to creatively describe a backstory for the twenty-four hours leading up to this scene.
4. Students share their backstories.
5. Transition to the Bible lesson.

Our local church's backstory isn't as crazy as the backstory you just invented. The backstory to the first church and the spread of the gospel, though, is quite compelling and exciting. Luke recorded that backstory in the book of Acts. We will examine it in detail so we might find our place in Christ's church and be an active part of its ongoing development.

Bible Study

Gather

- Resource 25-R16.

I. Background of Acts

ASK: What might a local church's history reveal? *A local church's history reveals God's hand in establishing the church, the sacrifice individuals and families made to establish it, and perhaps the consequences of failing to put Christ above all else.*

ASK: How might learning our church's history affect our part in our church today? *It could help us appreciate the church and better understand its purpose and mission.*

Each individual church has a unique story, but the history of the church in general traces back to the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost after Jesus' ascension back into Heaven. The coming of the Holy Spirit touched off a sequence of events that shaped the early church and is still shaping our church today. Luke wrote about Pentecost and the events that followed in the book of Acts, our focus for this course.

A. Author

Along with Acts, Luke also wrote the Gospel that bears his name. His writings account for about twenty-five percent of the New Testament, yet his name appears in only three passages (Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:11; Philemon 24).

READ: Colossians 4:14. **ASK:** How might Luke's thought processes have been influenced by his work as a physician? *As a physician, Luke regularly examined evidence and drew conclusions based on facts. He sought to know and understand the truth. He also had a concern for the well-being of others.*

Luke did not witness many events in his Gospel and some in Acts. Under the Spirit's guidance, he used careful skills of observation and research to produce his writing. In the book of Acts, he didn't refer to himself by name, but he did use first-person pronouns when he was an eyewitness to the events he was describing (Acts 16:10–17; 20:5—21:18).

READ: Philemon 24. **ASK:** What priorities might someone who worked with the apostle Paul have? *Sharing the gospel; making disciples.*

Luke understood that spreading the gospel is more important than anything else. He made himself available to God. God used him in tremendous ways.

B. Date

The omission of Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70 strongly suggests that Luke wrote the book before that event. Also, Luke did not mention the severe persecution under the Roman emperor Nero that occurred from AD 64 to 68. And he didn't record the outcome of Paul's Roman imprisonment. Paul's release happened in AD 62 or 63. It is likely that Luke wrote Acts before Paul's release. So Luke probably wrote in AD 62 or 63.

C. Literary style

READ: Acts 1:1–4; Luke 1:1–4. **ASK:** How are these passages related? *Acts is essentially a second volume to the Gospel of Luke.*

Luke and Acts are both narratives. They tell true stories. Luke addressed both books to Theophilus. Theophilus was most likely Greek. His name means "lover of God," and his mention is a clue that Luke probably wrote to Gentile (non-Jewish) Christians.

Acts contains literary features that we expect to find in narratives. One of these features is repetition.

READ: Acts 2:47; 6:7; 16:5; 19:20. **ASK:** What is repeated in these verses? *Reports on the spread of the Word and the growth of the church.*

Luke's updates on the progress of the early church serve as main markers in his narrative. These markers emphasize the theme of Christ's work to build His church through the power of the Spirit. They remind the readers that nothing could stop Christ from accomplishing His work.

As a narrative, Acts also has structure. The story follows an outline. Luke laid out the overall structure of his narrative in Acts 1:8.

READ: Acts 1:6–9. **ASK:** Where were the disciples to be witnesses? *Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the entire world.*

Before He ascended into Heaven, Jesus instructed His disciples to spread the good news of salvation through Him starting with Jerusalem and moving outward, like widening ripples, to the regions of Judea and Samaria and then on to the ends of the earth.

DISPLAY: Resource 25-R16. Show how the gospel would spread



25-R16

from Jerusalem, where the disciples were, to Judea, Samaria, and eventually to the outer regions of Italy, Spain, and northern Africa.

Luke developed his theme with four main plot points. He described how the church was born on Pentecost in Jerusalem with the coming of the Holy Spirit to indwell believers (1:1—6:7). As persecution increased, the church grew beyond Jerusalem and into Judea and Samaria (6:8—9:31) and eventually throughout the entire Mediterranean area (9:32—28:31). Luke used Jesus' instructions and the corresponding order of events to give structure to his narrative.

II. Purposes of Acts

There are multiple purposes for Acts. First, the book outlined the beginning and growth of the church. Luke established that the church was born on Pentecost and that nothing could impede its growth. As mentioned in the previous section, the book is dotted with statements about the onward movement of the Word and the church. The birth and growth of the church directly fulfilled Jesus' statement in Mathew 16:18 about building His church and the gates of Hell not being able to prevail against it.

Some people today view the church as a place for believers to retreat and form a type of defensive huddle. But Jesus' commission and the book of Acts show otherwise.

READ: Matthew 28:19, 20; Acts 1:8. **ASK:** How would you summarize Christ's call to the church? *Christ intends the church to be His witness in the world and to accomplish His mission of making disciples.*

Second, Acts legitimized taking the gospel to the Gentiles. The good news of salvation is for all nations, but the Jewish Christians in the early church had trouble accepting that fact. Prior to the church, God had focused on His promises to the Jews. The book of Acts recorded teachings and actions that demonstrated to the Jewish Christians that God expected them to reach Gentiles (Acts 10:34, 35). God even clearly appointed Paul to be His apostle to the Gentiles (9:15).

Third, Acts proved that the church was the new vehicle through which God would accomplish His purpose on earth (1:4–8). Starting with the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, the early church was God's new arm in the world. This is an important theological distinction. The church was a new entity and should not be understood as a replacement for the nation of Israel. Because Israel rejected her Messiah, God set the nation aside and formed the church to spread the message of redemption through Jesus. God still has plans for Israel in the future, but the church is the focus of this time in history. The nation of Israel will yet fulfill the Old Testament promises of a land and kingdom (Rom. 11:25–32).

ASK: God's program for today is still the church. So how should we view the church and its mission? *We should see it as central to our lives. We should be active in carrying out the church's mission.*

III. Key Emphases in Acts

Three key truths are emphasized in the book of Acts.

A. Jesus is alive

READ: Acts 1:1–5; 7:54–56. **ASK:** What do these verses demonstrate concerning Jesus? *He is alive and active.*

Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension are foundational to the church. Jesus didn't abandon His church when He left the earth. Instead, He worked through the Holy Spirit to build His church as He had promised (Matt. 16:18).

B. Jesus is one with His church

Luke emphasized that all believers have the Holy Spirit and that all believers share a oneness with Jesus. For example, when Ananias lied to Peter in Acts 5:1–11, Peter said that Ananias had lied to the Holy Spirit.

READ: Acts 9:1–5. **ASK:** How do you see the oneness and unity of Jesus and His church in this passage? *Jesus characterized Saul's persecution of the church as persecution against Himself.*

ASK: How should our shared oneness with Christ affect how we treat each other? *We ought to respect, care for, and love each other as one in Christ. We should be supportive teammates.*

United in Christ, the disciples immediately began to meet for worship and fellowship (2:42–47). Jesus prayed in John 17:21 that the church would be one as He and the Father are one. The early church demonstrated the oneness of Christ and the Father.

C. Jesus' gospel is powerful

Luke showed that the Spirit uses the gospel to transform lives. For example, on the Day of Pentecost over three thousand souls were saved and transformed (Acts 2:41). And Jesus' disciples had incredible boldness as they proclaimed the gospel despite persecution.

The gospel's power affected men, women, and children of all ethnic, economic, and social backgrounds. Both Samaritans and Gentiles came to Christ (14:27). Even Saul, the most dangerous man to threaten the early church, trusted in Jesus for salvation (22:6–15).

ASK: When have you witnessed the power of the gospel?

ASK: What unleashes the power of the gospel? *Believers have to know, live, and share it.*

God entrusted us with the power of the gospel. Its potential resides in us. It will remain dormant, though, if we don't prepare to share it and live it.

Memory Builder

Steps

1. Write out Acts 1:8 and review its meaning.

Acts 1:8 outlines Acts reveals how the gospel spread. After Pentecost, the Jerusalem church exploded into existence with the salvation of thousands of souls. Believers carried the gospel message throughout the regions of Judea and to Samaria. As the Holy Spirit continued to empower believers, the gospel spread to distant lands, bringing many people into a right relationship with God.

2. Ask students to suggest actions for "power" and "come upon."
3. Using the students' suggested actions, recite the verse together. Have students take a step forward with each mention of a new location in the verse.

ASK: How are we part of this verse? *We know the gospel because it spread to the ends of the earth. We continue this work by sharing the gospel with people who have not heard it.*

Session Application

Gather

- Markers or colored pencils.
- Join the Ripple Effect poster.

Steps

1. Review the lesson.

Luke wrote Acts to document the beginning and spread of the early church. By reading the book, we learn how the Holy Spirit worked to move the gospel of Christ from a small group of disciples huddled in Jerusalem to countless believers around the globe. The spread of the gospel didn't end with the last words of Acts. It continues today.

2. Share with students your testimony of salvation, including who shared the gospel with you and how the gospel has changed your life.



3. Ask volunteers to share how they first heard the gospel.
4. Challenge students to consider their place in Christ's church.

DISPLAY: Join the Ripple Effect poster.

This quarter we will learn about the movement of the gospel from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, Macedonia, Rome, Spain, and beyond. The movement resembles ripples that continue to move outward, growing ever wider. Those ripples are still moving. We must do our part to join the gospel's ripple effect.

5. Students use markers or colored pencils to draw themselves in one of the circles along the bottom of the poster. If you have a large class, consider having students share a circle, or cut out extra circles to put around the poster. Encourage students to draw themselves in a setting where God could use them to share the gospel. Hang the poster in your room for the remainder of the quarter.
6. Ask the students to consider what they want to gain from the course on Acts by finishing the following sentence: "While we study Acts, I want to . . ." Their answers might include "become more like Christ," "share the gospel more effectively," or "become more active in Christ's work through our church."

Session Takeaways

Before dismissing the students, draw their attention to the Time with God page in their student books. Instruct them to complete the study on their own. The activity reviews key truths from the lesson.