



ACTS

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Lesson 01



Lesson 1: All Are Invited



Bible Verses: Acts 10:34-35,
John 1:12



Bottom Line: The early church in the book of Acts teaches us that all people are invited to become followers of Jesus Christ.

SUPPLIES

01

IN PERSON GAME

- Hula Hoops (several)
- Rugs/Mats about 4'x5' or smaller (several)
- **Alternate:** masking tape or painter's tape to mark off areas on the floor instead of hula hoops and rugs

02

ONLINE GAME

- Topics for 22 Sheet, one copy for the leader (included in files)
- Timer
- One student per team will need a paper and pen to record answers

03

SMALL GROUP SUPPLIES

- Large bags of M&M's – enough for one bag per small group
- Treat size or individual M&M's – enough for one per student
- Large bowl – one per small group
- Small bowls – six per small group

Series Prep

The lessons in this series form the acronym “ACTS,” but the lessons will not occur in the sequential order of the word.

One suggestion would be to have the word “ACTS” written out on the screen and light up or color in the letter of that week’s lesson until all four are complete.

This week’s lesson will light up the “A.”

Notes

All Scripture references are NLT unless otherwise indicated.



INTRODUCTION

We are kicking off a brand-new series today!

I am super excited to get to dive into this with you.

For the next four weeks, we are going to be looking at the book of Acts.

Acts is a book of the Bible in the New Testament, and it takes place right after Jesus rose from the dead.

It is a book that tells us the story of how the people who followed Jesus while He walked on the earth started the very first churches after He died, rose from the grave, and went back to heaven.

The people in the book of Acts have a lot that they can teach us about being followers of Jesus.

Over the next four weeks, we are going to take a look at four different things that the early church in the book of Acts teaches us about following Jesus today.

Each of these lessons will focus on one letter of the word ACTS, to make it easier to remember the lessons the early church wanted us to know.

We will light up each letter as we learn each lesson until the whole word “ACTS” is lit up.

But we won't always go in order.

[Point to the word “ACTS” on your screen or stage. Light up each letter in random order to show what will happen as the weeks go on.]

Today, we are going to start with the letter “A,” as we learn that the early church taught us that ALL ARE INCLUDED to become followers of Jesus.

[Light up the “A” in the word “ACTS” on the screen.]

But first, let's play a super fun game!



OPENING GAME

(IN-PERSON VERSION)

Shark Dinner

GAME SETUP:

Place Hula Hoops (islands) and rugs/mats (ships) randomly in your play area.

Ideally, begin the game with just enough space for most of the preteens to be safe on an island or ship piece when called.

As the game progresses, remove ship pieces and/or islands to make it more difficult for preteens to be safe.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME:

The object of the game is for preteens to get to the hula hoops (islands) or rugs/mats (ships) as instructed by the leader.

You will call out "island" or "ship" and the preteens will run to either the hula hoops or rugs/mats.

Have a couple of leaders be the judges of who is out each time.

Preteens that cannot fit on either an "island" or a "ship" are out. Preteens must have at least one body part on the item to be safe.

As the game progresses, remove some of the hula hoops and mats.

The winners are the final preteens in the game.

SAY:

- You have been shipwrecked and are floating with your life vest in the middle of the sea
- Around you are a few islands and a few floating pieces of the destroyed ship.
- The sea is very dangerous, and if you don't want to be shark dinner you need to get to a safe place fast.
- When we start, I will yell out a safe location, either "island" or "ship."
- The islands are over here [*point to the hula hoops*] and the ship pieces are over here [*point to the mats/rugs*].
- You will need to get to that location as quickly as possible.
- If you cannot fit on either an island or a ship piece, you will become shark dinner.
- Those eaten by the sharks must sit over there [*point to a location off to the side of the play area*].
- During the game, pieces of the ship may sink and islands may become destroyed by wind, volcanos, and rain, making it more and more difficult to get to safety.
- The final preteens remaining in the game are the winners!
- Let's play!

OPENING GAME

(ONLINE VERSION)

22

GAME SETUP:

Divide your group into teams of four to five preteens per team.

Each team will need a breakout room.

You will need a timer to time each round. *[It can take a few seconds for the breakout rooms to be filled, so set your timer for 25 seconds from the time they go to breakout rooms.]*

SAY:

- Tonight we are going to play a game called 22.
- You have been divided into teams, and each team has a breakout room.
- I am going to give the entire group a topic.
- Then you will all head into your breakout room to come up with as many items that fit that topic as you can.
- Have one team member write them down.
- You will have 22 seconds. Then the breakout rooms will close, and we will come back together and each team will share how many things they came up with.
- The team with the most will share their list.
- The team that has come up with the greatest number of valid answers is the winner.
- Who's ready to play?

TEACH

That was a super fun game!

[Skip ahead to the asterisk if you played the online game.]*

I'm so sorry for all of you that became shark dinner – I bet you were tasty.

What was it about that game that made it so hard to stay alive?

[Allow preteens to answer.]

It was too bad that the islands and ship pieces were so small.

Some of you might not have become shark dinner so soon if there had been enough room for all to be included on the islands and ships each time.

*Today as we start this new series on the book of Acts, we will see that the early church taught us that ALL ARE INVITED to become followers of Jesus Christ.

[Point to the "A" that is lit up on the screen in the word ACTS.]

Just like in our game, we will see that the early church had to decide if there was enough room for all people to be saved, or if only a select few could be included.

With a show of hands, who has ever been left out of something – who has ever not been invited?

[Preteens raise hands.]

Wow, that's a lot of you!

How does being left out make us feel?

[Allow preteens to answer.]

The early group of Jesus-followers that we meet in the book of Acts struggled with the question of who would be included in the new Christ-following churches.

Would they invite only the Jewish people – the ancestors of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – into their churches? Or could anyone be a part of the new church?

It was a big decision, and they wanted to make the correct choice.

Throughout the Bible, two groups of people are often talked about – the Jews and the Gentiles.

Does anyone know what a Gentile is?

[Allow preteens to answer.]

Anyone who is not Jewish is a Gentile.

In biblical times, Gentiles were not permitted to participate in the religious activities of the Jewish people, they were not included in any of the traditional ceremonies or holiday celebrations, and they were looked down upon by many of the Jewish religious leaders.

Sometimes we may think that God didn't really love the Gentiles or want them to be a part of the church, but we can find Gentiles participating in God's plan all throughout the Bible.

In fact, the wise men, who traveled from very far away to worship Jesus after He was born, were Gentiles.

The wise men played a really big part in the story of Jesus' birth and early years that we still celebrate to this day!

God has always loved the Gentiles as well as the Jews.

But the leaders of the new church that followed Jesus had a big decision – would Gentiles be included in their communities or not?

The heart of God is love for all people.

Let's open our Bibles to **Acts 10:34-35**.

Can one of you read these verses out loud for us?

[I love to have students read Scripture! If it works for you group, have them participate by reading out loud.]

34 Then Peter replied, "I see very clearly that God shows no favoritism.

35 In every nation, He accepts those who fear Him and do what is right."

God does not have favorites.

He doesn't love anyone more than anyone else.

In this verse when we read "every nation," who does that include?

[Allow preteens to answer.]

"In every nation" means ALL people are accepted by God if they have proper respect for God and obey Him.

This was a new idea for the early church.

All people everywhere could be followers of Jesus and participate together in worship of Him.

Jews and Gentiles ... ALL.

This is still God's desire today.

God wants ALL to be included in becoming His followers.

It doesn't matter what nation people live in, what language they speak, what color their skin is, how much money they have, what brand of clothing they wear, or what type of grades they get in math class ... God loves everyone and wants all to come to know Him and hear the good news about Jesus.

Can anyone tell me what the good news of Jesus is?

[Allow preteens to answer.]

Right, the good news of Jesus is that He came to Earth, lived a life without a single sin, was crucified on the cross, was buried in a tomb, and rose back to life on the third day.

This good news means that all of us who have sinned can be forgiven and live in eternity with God when we die.

Let's turn in our Bibles to **John 1:12**.

[Have a student read this Scripture aloud.]

But to ALL who believed Him and accepted Him, He gave the right to become children of God.

This is such great news that ALL people are included in God's family!

The early church in the book of Acts teaches us that ALL people are invited to become followers of Jesus Christ.

Let's pray and head to small groups.

This object lesson reminds preteens that we often try to divide people ... but God loves us all! And all people are included in God's family.

Just like M&M's all taste exactly the same regardless of the color of their shell, people are ALL loved by God the same regardless of their nationality, language, skin color, wealth, intelligence, etc.

Divide small group into six teams.

Give each team a small bowl.

Assign each team a color: Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, and Brown.

Dump the whole bag of M&M's into a large bowl in the center of the area.

SAY:

- When I say "go" each team will need to find their color M&M's and put all of them in their bowl.
- The first team to get all their M&M's sorted wins.
- No eating the M&M's!
- GO!

After all the M&M's are sorted by color, move to the small group discussion questions.

[For health reasons, have small individual or treat size M&M's packets for preteens to enjoy rather than having them eat the ones that they have all touched.]



SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Do you have a favorite M&M? Which one? Why?
- Which color M&M is the best tasting?
- If you could remove one color from the M&M bag, which color would you remove and why?
- Does it matter if the M&M's are separated by color? How come?
- How are the people in the world like a bag of M&M's?
- Why is it important to know that God loves ALL people?
- What is one thing you learned today about the book of Acts?
- What is one thing you can do this week to show others that they are included in the good news about Jesus?