

Promise of God's Spirit*

Acts 1:3-5, 8-14

Based on NLT (1996)

Transition (for use as a transition from the initial S-T4T story set, which ends with the return of Jesus into these Acts stories, if they are being shared back-to-back with a group)

You have heard the stories about how God has worked in the world to bring us into a right relationship with him. You have even heard some about how he sent his Spirit* to guide us and bring us together as believers*. Now, we are going to hear more about how God's Spirit worked to form the first church* and how we can follow that pattern for our worship* together even today.*

Acts 1:3-5

During the forty days after *he was killed (and raised from the dead)*, Jesus appeared to his closest followers*...and proved to them in many ways that he was actually alive....

Once as he was eating a meal with them, he told them, "Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father (God) sends you what he promised. ...In just a few days you will receive God's Spirit."

Acts 1:8

"...When *God's Spirit* has come upon you, you will receive power and will tell people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout *the surrounding countryside*, in *the next city*, and to the ends of the earth."

Acts 1:9-11

It was not long after *Jesus* said this that he was taken up into *heaven** while they were watching, and he disappeared into a cloud. As they were straining their eyes to see him, two white-robed men suddenly stood there among them. They said, "...Why are you standing here staring at the sky? Jesus has been taken away from you into heaven. And someday, just as you saw him go, he will return!"

Acts 1:12-14

Jesus' closest followers...walked...back to Jerusalem. Then they went to the...house where they were staying.... *There*, they all met together continually for prayer, along with *Jesus' mother*, several other women, and *Jesus' brothers*.

Words/Phrases to Consider

Please see the Glossary for information on the following terms:

Relationship*

God's Spirit*

Believers*

Church*

Worship*

Closest Followers/The Twelve*

Heaven*

'Father'

You may need to make it clear that 'Father' refers to God, as in 'God my Father,' or just 'God.'

Story Crafting

Transition

The first part of this story is similar to the last part of the *Alive* story in the initial S-T4T story set. This is used simply as a transition into the book of Acts.

'right relationship'

If your audience has heard the initial S-T4T story set where 'right relationship' with God was emphasized, it would be important to reference that in the transition into this story set, as we have done here.

'(and raised from the dead)'

This phrase is not found in Acts 1:1 but brings in information from other stories in order to help the hearer fully understand the setting and story.

'closest followers/the Twelve'

We have changed 'apostle' to 'closest followers' and 'the Twelve' in order to remove unfamiliar churchy terms. We use these terms interchangeably throughout the story set.

Jerusalem

If your listeners do not know Jerusalem, you may include information such as, 'a major Jewish city' or 'the place where the Jews worshiped' or 'the capital city of Israel.' This would have been known to the original audience.

'to the ends of the earth'

In order to avoid too many place names (foreign names to most listeners and difficult to remember), you may use description. This phrase may be expressed 'to as far as there is land,' 'far, far away' or 'to other countries.'

'taken up into heaven'

It is stated explicitly in the Luke account that Jesus was taken 'into heaven,' and 'sky' in this verse does refer to heaven. Keep in mind some languages have one word for 'heaven' and 'sky,' others have two separate words. Be sure your audience does not think Jesus now lives in a cloud somewhere. Also, it should be clear it was God who had taken Jesus into heaven.

'two white-robed men'

It is clear that the 'two white-robed men' were angels who, in this case, looked like men. If your audience does not understand that, you may want to make the fact explicit that they were angels.

The reference to John's baptism is removed from this story because not all of the hearers may be familiar with the previous stories. In addition, we want to focus on the receiving of God's Spirit which is about to happen.

In order to simplify the ending, you may say, 'Jesus' closest followers, together with the women, Mary the mother of

Jesus, and his brothers, joined together in a group to pray frequently.'

Intra-Story Cohesion

Jerusalem

If you use the city name Jerusalem or a description of what it was, be sure to use the same name or description throughout the story set. Jerusalem is referenced in *Peter before the Religious Leaders*, *Seven Men Chosen to Serve*, *Stephen Is Arrested and Stoned*, *African*, *Paul Meets Jesus*, *Ananias Obeys God*, *Peter Meets Cornelius*, *The Antioch Church*, *God Frees Peter from Jail* and *Paul & Barnabas Mistaken for Gods*.

'he disappeared into a cloud'

Be sure to include that Jesus disappeared into the clouds. This will become a point of cohesion in later stories that describe Jesus' return.

Worldview

'two white-robed men'

Some cultures may associate something different with men dressed in white, so you may want to make it explicit here that these were angels. For example, some Hindus associate the color white with death.

CHURCH FORMATION ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Extraordinary prayer

Obedience

Home meetings

Gospel for all peoples

God's Spirit*

CFT Version

Acts 1:15-26; 2:1-12

Based on NLT (1996)

Transition (Based on Acts 1)

The followers of Jesus stayed in the city to await the promised Spirit*, just as Jesus had instructed.*

Acts 1:15-16

While they were waiting, on a day when about 120 followers were present, Peter stood up and said: “Brothers, it was necessary for the Scriptures to be fulfilled concerning Jesus’ closest follower*, who guided the religious leaders* to have Jesus arrested. This was predicted long ago by God’s Spirit....*

Acts 1:20-22

Peter continued, “It is written in Scripture that someone else should take his place of leadership. So now we must choose another man.... It must be someone who has been with us all the time that we were with...Jesus—from the time he was baptized...until the day he was taken from us to be with God....”*

Acts 1:24, 26

Then they all prayed for the right man to be chosen. ...Matthias was chosen and became one of the Twelve, the group of Jesus’ closest followers who had now become the leaders of those who followed Jesus.*

Acts 2:1

Later, on the day of an important religious festival, seven weeks after Jesus was raised from the dead, his followers were meeting together in one place.

Acts 2:2-4

Suddenly, there was a sound...like the roaring of a mighty windstorm...and it filled the house where they were meeting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and sat on each of them. And everyone present was filled with God’s Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as God’s Spirit gave them this ability.

Acts 2:5-12

There were people in the city, descendants of Abraham from all over the world, for the festival. They came and heard Jesus’ closest followers speaking. They said, “These are local people, and yet we hear them speaking the languages of the lands where we were born...about the wonderful things God has done!” They stood there amazed and confused. “What can this mean?” they asked each other.

Words/Phrases to Consider

Followers*

We have referred to Jesus' followers as 'followers' until Pentecost, at which time we have changed to 'believers' to emphasize the importance of faith when someone chooses to follow Jesus.

Scripture*

This word refers to the Jewish holy writings, most often what we now consider the entire Old Testament. These writings were considered to have authority. You may use any generic term in your language for a set of holy writings which have authority. If you must qualify which holy writings, you could say something like, 'the holy writings of the descendants of Abraham.'

Religious Leaders*

Both Pharisees and Sadducees were Jewish religious parties at that time. Many scribes and priests were members of one of these sects. If possible, it is best to keep these sect names as generic as possible, e.g. 'religious leaders.' If you use a term for 'religious leaders' used in a major religion where you are, be sure that the term does not refer ONLY to a member of that specific religion.

Baptize*

If you have a Bible translation in your people group's language, you may choose to use what the translation uses. If the translation uses the borrowed term (as we also borrow the term from the Greek *baptizo*), but no one understands it, you might want to consider explaining the term. Some ideas for translating this term include:

- 1) 'to wash someone in water to make him ceremonially clean;'
- 2) 'to wash someone with water as part of their initiation into the religious community;'

3) 'bath,' with a qualification such as 'bath of enlightenment' (Tamil) or 'bath of dedication;'

4) using the word for a custom in the culture that refers to ceremonial washing to make something ritually clean.

Please see the Glossary for a fuller explanation.

'filled with God's Spirit'

'Filled with' refers to God's Spirit taking control of someone.

Alternate expression: 'everyone present was controlled by God's Spirit.' This phrase, or a similar phrase, e.g. 'full of God's Spirit,' will appear also in *Peter before the Religious Leaders*, *Seven Men Chosen to Serve*, *Stephen Is Arrested and Stoned*, *Ananias Obeys God*, *Peter Meets Cornelius* and *The Antioch Church*.

Story Crafting

'important religious festival'

This is another instance in which we have simplified a term in the story for a non-Jewish audience. Here, 'important religious festival' is substituted for 'Pentecost.' 'Religious festival' will occur again in *God Frees Peter from Jail*.

'descendants of Abraham'

Again, we have simplified terms that only a Jewish audience would understand. For example, we substituted 'descendants of Abraham' for 'the Jewish people' ('descendants of Abraham' was introduced in the initial S-T4T story set). This phrase, used in place of 'Jews' or 'the Jewish people,' is helpful for two reasons: One, it points the listener to a story he already knows (*Abraham*), thus providing cohesion throughout the megastory in the listener's mind, which is vital to an oral communicator's

understanding of the overall story. Two, it avoids any negative connotations that references to Israel or the Jewish people might have in certain cultures. However, if naming the country or people would be helpful to your audience, feel free to use 'Jewish people' or the name of God's nation, Israel. This term will appear in *Stephen Is Arrested and Stoned*, *Paul Meets Jesus*, *The Antioch Church* and *Return*.

We did not include the casting of lots to choose Judas' replacement because we felt it may be confusing. However, some people have found it a helpful teaching point to show that, before they received God's Spirit, the Twelve had to cast lots to determine God's will. Afterward, we see no other instance of believers casting lots; they simply prayed.

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same words or phrases you used in the previous story for **God's Spirit** and **closest followers/the Twelve**.

Worldview

'Brothers'

This may be understood as blood brothers in some cultures, so make sure that whatever word you use here refers to close friends or associates. This term will reoccur in *Peter's Sermon* and *The Antioch Church* ('brothers and sisters'). Be consistent with the term you use in each of these instances.

CHURCH FORMATION ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Scriptural authority
Extraordinary prayer

Peter's Sermon

Acts 2:14-16, 22-24, 33-47

Based on NLT (1996)

Transition (Based on Acts 2:7-13)

Although the crowd was amazed that the believers were speaking in the languages of the lands where they were born, others mocked them and said, "They're drunk!"*

Acts 2:14-17, 22-24, 33, 36-37

Then Peter (*one of the closest followers**) stepped forward with the eleven other *closest followers* and shouted to the crowd, "...Some of you are saying these people are drunk. It isn't true! It's much too early for that. People don't get drunk by nine o'clock in the morning. No, what you see this morning was *told by God's spokesmen** centuries ago, *that God would pour out his Spirit on all people.*

...Listen! God *proved that he sent Jesus...* by doing wonderful miracles, wonders, and signs* through him, as you well know. But you... murdered him. However, God...raised him back to life again.... Now he sits *at the place of highest honor in heaven**, at God's right hand. And *God*, as he had promised, gave him *God's Spirit** to pour out upon us, just as you see and hear today. So let it be clearly known...that God has made this Jesus whom you *killed* to be both *Master** and *Promised Savior*!*"

Peter's words convicted them deeply, and they said to him and to the *others*, "Brothers, what should we do?"

Acts 2:38-39, 41-42

Peter replied, "Each of you must turn from your sins* and turn to God, and be baptized* in the name of Jesus *the Promised Savior/ Promised One* for the forgiveness* of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of *God's Spirit*. This promise is to you and to your children, and even to *those who are not descendants of Abraham....*"

Those who believed* what Peter said were baptized and added to the church*—about three thousand in all. They joined with the other believers and devoted themselves to *Jesus' closest followers'* teaching and fellowship*...

Acts 2:44-47

And all the believers met together constantly and shared everything they had.... They worshiped* together...met in homes *to share the meal Jesus had told them to remember him by (Lord's Supper)**...all the while praising God.... And each day *God* added to their group those who were being saved.

Words/Phrases to Consider

Please see the Glossary for information on the following terms:

Spokesman*

Miracles, Wonders, and Signs*

Master*

Savior/Promised Savior*

Sins*

Forgiveness*

Believe*

Fellowship*

‘name of Jesus’

In the ‘name of Jesus’ is a way of speaking about the power and authority of Jesus himself, rather than just his name. Alternate expressions are ‘by the power of,’ ‘by the authority of,’ or ‘because Jesus has given me the power,’ or perhaps ‘because Jesus has the power.’ In some languages this phrase should be more specifically qualified so that it reads, ‘because Jesus has the power to heal you,...’ This phrase appears in *Peter and the Crippled Beggar*, *Peter before the Religious Leaders*, *The Twelve Are Rescued from Jail*, *Ananias Obeys God* and *The Philippian Jailer*.

‘saved’

Because your audience should understand this is a spiritual, not a physical salvation, you may need to be more explicit about from what God will save them, i.e. punishment for sin. ‘Saved’ is also in *Peter and the Crippled Beggar*, *Peter Before the Religious Leaders*, *Peter and Cornelius* and *The Philippian Jailer*.

Story Crafting

Much of Peter’s sermon has been omitted because we have found it is difficult for people to remember all of it. We have included the parts of the sermon that relate directly to previous stories or to the story line. We also wanted to

ensure that we highlighted Peter’s response to the people when they asked him, ‘...what should we do?’

‘God proved that he sent Jesus...’

This is the way that the CEV renders, ‘God publicly endorsed Jesus...’

‘pour out upon us’

If this idiom is not understood, you may say something like, ‘...gave him God’s Spirit to give to us.’

‘Master’

We have changed ‘Lord’ to ‘Master’ because ‘Master’ conveys better the meaning of the churchy word ‘Lord.’ Throughout the story set, ‘Lord’ is rephrased as ‘Master,’ ‘Jesus’ or ‘God,’ depending on the original text.

‘turn from...turn to...’

If this idiom is not understood in the target language, you may choose to say something like ‘stop disobeying God and start following God.’ This phrase reoccurs in *Peter and the Crippled Beggar*, *The Twelve Are Rescued from Jail*, *Steven is Arrested and Stoned*, *Peter Meets Cornelius*, *Paul & Barnabas Mistaken for Gods*, *Paul in Athens*, and *Return*.

‘those who are not descendants of Abraham’

‘Gentiles’ is a term not familiar to many, so we are using ‘those who are not descendants of Abraham’ to refer to those outside the Jewish population. The use of ‘descendants of Abraham’ is explained in *God’s Spirit*. The phrase ‘those who are not descendants of Abraham’ will appear again in *Peter and Cornelius*, *Peter Meets Cornelius* and *The Antioch Church*.

‘praising God’

If the term for ‘praising God’ in your target language is not

understood by the general community, you could substitute, ‘they talked about how great God is.’ This will reoccur in *Peter and the Crippled Beggar* and *Peter Meets Cornelius*.

Intra-Story Cohesion

Continue using the same words or phrases you have been using in this story set for **believers, closest followers/the Twelve, heaven, God’s Spirit, baptize, church and worship.**

Use the same term for **brothers** you used in *God’s Spirit*. Be sure the term you choose refers to close friends and not blood relatives.

‘the meal Jesus had told them to remember him by’ (Lord’s Supper*)

Use similar wording to your description in the initial S-T4T set, and see the Glossary for a full discussion of **Lord’s Supper***.

Worldview

‘God’s right hand’

Some cultures may not understand that ‘God’s right hand’ refers to a place of honor. You may choose simply to omit this phrase from the story if it is confusing. This phrase will appear also in *Stephen Is Arrested and Stoned*.

CHURCH FORMATION ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Rapid reproduction

Bold response to persecution

Rapid spread of the gospel

Healthy churches

Meeting in houses

Worship

Lord’s Supper

Baptism

Peter and the Crippled Beggar

Acts 3:1-19; 4:1-4
Based on NLT (1996)

Transition (Based on Acts 2:43-47)

Each day, more and more people became followers of Jesus..., and God continued to perform miracles through his followers to show who Jesus was....*

Acts 3:1-3

Peter and another of Jesus' closest followers* went to the place of worship* one afternoon to pray. As they approached the place, a man lame from birth was being carried in. Each day he was put beside the entrance of the place of worship... so he could beg from the people going inside. When he saw Peter and his companion...he asked them for some money.

Acts 3:5-8

The lame man looked at them eagerly, expecting a gift. But Peter said, "I don't have any money for you. But I'll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus...get up and walk!" Then Peter took the lame man by the...hand and helped him up. ...The man... was healed.... He jumped up...and began... walking, leaping, and praising God....

Acts 3:10

When all the people realized he was the lame beggar...they were absolutely astounded (that he had been healed)!

Acts 3:11-12, 16, 19

...The man was holding tightly to Peter and his companion.... And Peter saw his opportunity and addressed the crowd that had gathered. ... He said, "What is so surprising about this? And why look at us as though we had made this man walk because we have special powers or because we are so good before God? No, belief* in Jesus' name has healed this man.... Now turn from your sins* and turn to God...."

Acts 4:1-4

While Peter and his companion were speaking to the people, the religious leaders* came over to them. They were very disturbed that they were teaching about Jesus. These leaders arrested them and...put them in jail.... But many of the people who heard their message believed it, so that the number of believers* totaled about five thousand men....

Words/Phrases to Consider

Place of Worship*

If the word for 'temple' in your language refers only to a specific religion's place of worship or is not a common word, you may choose to change the word to something more general, e.g. 'place of worship.'

Religious Leaders*

Keep this term consistent throughout the stories. Even though in this passage the term is referring to the priests, the temple guards and the religious group that controlled the temple, the phrase 'religious leaders' is generic enough to include this group of people, as well as the Pharisees and Saducees referred to in *God's Spirit*. Please see the Glossary for further details.

Story Crafting

Peter

We chose to include Peter's name in this story because he appears several times in the story set. Since John appears only twice, we've left out his name for ease of retelling.

'(that he had been healed)'

You may add this portion in parentheses if you need to show cause for their amazement.

'we are so good before God'

'Godliness' may be a term unfamiliar to your audience. We have used 'we are so good before God' to express this concept in terms an oral communicator can better understand. Another way to express this concept is: 'because we worship God so well.'

Peter's message from Acts 3:12-26 is full of truths you may want to include in a story; however, the message does not move like a narrative and will be much more difficult to retell. You may choose to emphasize a different portion of Peter's message, but it must be kept brief if you want your audience to remember and retell the story.

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same words or phrases you have been using throughout the story set for **saved, miracles, closest followers/the Twelve, name of Jesus, praising God, belief/believe, Jesus' name, turn from...turn to..., sins and believers.**

You will want to be consistent in this story with the terms you chose in *Peter's Sermon* for **praising God and turn from... turn to....**

CHURCH FORMATION ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Abundant evangelism

Extraordinary prayer

Bold response to persecution

Rapid spread of the gospel

Rapid reproduction

Peter before the Religious Leaders*

Acts 4:5-33

Based on NLT (1996)

Acts 4:5, 7-8, 10, 12

The day after the religious leaders* arrested Peter and his companion, they met in Jerusalem. They brought them in and demanded, "By what power, or in whose name, have you healed this man?" Then Peter, filled with God's Spirit*, said to them, "...This man was healed in the name and power of Jesus.... In all the world there is no one else whom God has given who can save us."

Acts 4:13-15

The religious leaders were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and his companion... they saw that they were ordinary men who had had no special training. They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus. But since the man who had been healed was standing right there among them, the religious leaders had nothing to say. So they sent Peter and his companion away and talked among themselves.

Acts 4:18-21

So they called them back in and told them never again to speak...in the name of Jesus. But they replied, "Do you think God wants us to obey you rather than him? We cannot stop telling about the wonderful things we have seen and heard." The religious leaders then threatened them further, but they finally let them go because they didn't...want to start a riot....

Acts 4:23-24, 29-33

As soon as they were freed, Peter and his companion found the other believers* and told them what the religious leaders had said. Then all the believers...prayed together: "O...God, Creator of...everything...hear their threats, and give us great boldness in speaking your message. ...May miracles*...be done through the name/power of...Jesus." After this prayer, the building where they were meeting shook, and they were all filled with God's Spirit. And they spoke God's message with boldness. All the believers were united together...they shared everything they had. ...God's great favor was upon them all.

Words/Phrases to Consider

Religious Leaders*

In this passage, 'religious leaders' is referring to rulers, elders and teachers of the council. 'Religious leaders' is generic enough to include these men, as well as all the others that have been included in these stories as 'religious leaders,' so we encourage you to use the same general term that you have been using to this point in the story set.

'filled with God's Spirit'

As previously noted in *God's Spirit*, 'filled with' refers to God's Spirit taking control of someone. Alternate expressions which could be used in this story are 'God's Spirit enabled Peter to answer' and 'God's Spirit filled Peter's heart and therefore he answered them.'

'name and power of Jesus'

This phrase, like the phrase 'name of Jesus,' refers to Jesus' personality and power. You may say simply, 'by the power of Jesus.' When the religious leaders ask Peter not to speak in Jesus name again, you can say simply, 'You must under no circumstances speak or teach about Jesus.' When the religious leaders asked them, 'By what power, or in whose name, have you healed this man?' you could say something like, 'How did you do this?' or 'Who made you strong enough to do this?' or 'Who gave you authority to do this?'

Story Crafting

'Peter and his companion'

We chose not to include John's name in this story because he appears only in this story and *Peter and the Crippled Beggar*, therefore making the story easier to retell.

'In all the world there is no one else whom God has given who can save us.'

This is the TEV (Today's English Version) rendering of this verse. You also may say, 'No one else in all the world besides Jesus can save us.' As noted previously, you may need to specify from what Jesus saves people, i.e. punishment for their sins.

'were united'

We chose to simplify the phrase 'were of one heart and mind' to 'were united' as a way of saying that the believers related to each other completely harmoniously. That is, they thought similarly, and what they desired was also similar. The words 'heart and mind' together are a way of referring to the whole inner being of a person. Your language may have phrases related to the heart that might express the same meaning as 'one in heart and mind.' This phrase appears also in *The Lying Couple*.

'God's great favor was upon them all.'

Alternate expressions would be: 'God was exceedingly good to them all' or 'God blessed them all very much.' Most scholars think these words refer to God blessing all of the believers. That is, God was generously providing whatever the believers needed to live and to serve him. You would need to explore the meaning of 'blessed' with your story crafter. Please see the Glossary for 'bless.'

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same words or phrases you have been using throughout the story set for **Jerusalem, God's Spirit, save, name of Jesus, believers** and **miracles**.

However you should choose to say that Peter was **filled with God's Spirit**, you should be consistent here and in other stories, i.e. *God's Spirit, Stephen Is Arrested and Stoned, Ananias Obeys God* and *Peter Meets Cornelius*. It is an important point of cohesion and a foundational principle of this story set to show that the believers were now being given the power through God's Spirit that Jesus promised.

If you have found that you need to expound upon from what people are being saved, be sure you are consistently using this in each reference to **save/saved/saving**.

Express **name of Jesus** as you did in the two previous stories.

Speaking your message

The word 'preach' used in the original text means that he strongly urged or warned them. Because the word 'preach' in English is a religious word, we have chosen to use the more generic word 'speak.' You may choose to use a word that also includes the connotation of warning or urging. Throughout this story set, we have changed the word 'preach' to a word with less religious connotation. Most of the time, we have replaced 'preach' with 'speak' or 'tell' (which often is actually a more literal translation); but where we have used a different word, we have noted why.

CHURCH FORMATION ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Lay leadership
Boldness in persecution
Abundant prayer
Healthy churches

The Lying Couple

Acts 4:32, 36-37; 5:1-11

Based on NLT (1996)

Acts 4:32, 36-37; 5:1-2

All the believers* were *united*, and they felt that what they owned was not their own; they shared everything they had. For instance, there was *a man named Barnabas*.... He sold a field he owned and brought the money to *Jesus' closest followers** to give to those in need.

Also, there was...*another man*...who, with his wife...sold some property. He brought part of the money to *Jesus' closest followers*, but he claimed it was the full amount. His wife had agreed to this deception.

Acts 5:3-4

Then Peter said *to the man*, "...Why has Satan* filled your heart? You lied to *God's Spirit**, and you kept some of the money for yourself. The property was yours to sell or not sell, as you wished. And after selling it, the money was yours to give away. How could you do a thing like this? You weren't lying to us, but to God."

Acts 5:5-6

As soon as *the man* heard these words, he fell to the floor and died. Everyone who heard about it was terrified. Then some young men wrapped him in a sheet and took him out and buried him.

Acts 5:7-8

About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. Peter asked her, "Was this the price you and your husband received for your land?"

"Yes," she replied, "that was the price."

Acts 5:9

And Peter said, "How could the two of you even think of doing a thing like this—conspiring together to test *God's Spirit*? Just outside that door are the young men who buried your husband, and they will carry you out, too."

Acts 5:10-11

Instantly, she fell to the floor and died. When the young men came in and saw that she was dead, they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. Great fear gripped the entire church* and all others who heard what had happened.

Words/Phrases to Consider

Satan*

This name refers to the spiritual being, whom God created, who is the leader of the evil spiritual beings who decided to rebel against God. You may need to qualify the name 'Satan' with 'leader of the evil spirits*' if 'Satan' is unknown to your audience.

Story Crafting

Ananias and Sapphira

You may include the names of Ananias and Sapphira, but it is not necessary. The actions of Barnabas are included to show contrast to the actions of Ananias and Sapphira.

'Satan* filled your heart'

This means that 'Satan had control.' You could say something like, 'Why have you allowed Satan to control you?'

'lied to God's Spirit*'

Saying that the husband 'lied to God's Spirit*' means that he had committed a grave sin. He tried to deceive the believers into thinking he was a generous man, but the believers had such an appreciation for the authority of the Spirit among them that they felt that he had lied to the Spirit, as well.

'test God's Spirit'

To 'test God's Spirit' means that Ananias and Sapphira were trying to determine if God would allow them to get away with this deceit, and if he would punish them for it. Therefore, an alternate expression of this phrase could be: 'try to get away with this before God.'

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same words or phrases you have been using throughout the story set for **believers, closest followers/the Twelve, God's Spirit** and **church**.

You may want to consider the term(s) you used in the last story when saying the believers '**were united.**'

Barnabas has been named because he will appear in later stories in Acts.

Worldview

'and buried him'

This phrase may be problematic for listeners who cremate and are not familiar with burying the dead. You may omit the phrase, if you choose. (See also vs. 5:9-10. In v. 9, you could substitute the word 'took' for 'buried.')

CHURCH FORMATION ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Healthy churches

Integrity among believers

The power of God's Spirit

The Twelve* Are Rescued from Jail

Acts 5:12-42

Based on NLT (1996)

Acts 5:12, 14, 17-18

Meanwhile, *Jesus' closest followers**, the *Twelve**, were performing many *miracles** ...among the people. ...The *believers** were meeting regularly.... And more and more people believed*.... The *religious leaders* were extremely jealous*. They arrested the *Twelve* and put them in jail.

Acts 5:19-21

But an *angel** of *God* came at night, opened the gates of the jail, and brought them out. Then the *angel* told them, "Go to the *place of worship** and give the people this message of life!" So the *Twelve* entered the *place of worship* about daybreak and immediately began teaching....

Acts 5:21-25

...*The religious leaders met together....* Then they sent for the *Twelve* to be brought for trial. But when the...guards went to the jail, the men were gone. So they returned...and reported, "The jail was locked, with the guards standing outside, but when we opened the gates, no one was there!" When...the *religious leaders* heard this, they were *confused....* Then someone arrived with the news that the men they had jailed were...in the *place of worship*, teaching the people.

Acts 5:26-33

The *religious leaders had the Twelve arrested again...and brought to their meeting*. "Didn't we tell you never again to teach in this man's

(*Jesus'*) name?" the *head religious leader* demanded.... But Peter...replied, "We must obey God rather than *man*. ...God...raised Jesus from the dead after you killed him.... Then God put him in the place of honor... as...*Savior**. He did this to give...people...an opportunity to turn from their sins* and turn to God so their sins would be forgiven*. We are witnesses of these things and so is *God's Spirit**, who is given by God to those who obey him." At this, the *religious leaders were furious* and decided to kill them.

Acts 5:34, 38-40

But one *respected member of the religious council saw things differently....* He stood up and ordered that the *Twelve* be sent outside the *meeting....* "So my advice is, leave these men alone," he said. "If they are teaching and doing these things merely on their own, it will soon end. But if it is of God, you will not be able to stop them...." The *group* accepted his advice. They called in the *Twelve* and had them *beaten*. Then they ordered them never again to speak in the name of Jesus, and they let them go.

Acts 5:41-42

The *Twelve* left the *religious leaders* rejoicing that God had counted them worthy to suffer dishonor for the name of Jesus. And every day, in the *place of worship* and in their homes, they continued to teach and *proclaim* this message: "The *Promised One/Savior* you are looking for is Jesus."

Words/Phrases to Consider

Angel*

Please see the Glossary for details.

'message of life'

These words refer to telling people how God could cause them to live eternally. Of course, that would include telling them about Jesus because they needed to trust in him in order to live eternally. You may amplify this portion to give meaning or, during the discussion time, ask: 'What do you think the "message of life" was that the followers were teaching about?'

Savior*

Some languages do not have a word for 'savior' that conveys the appropriate meaning. 'One who rescues people from the punishment of sin' is one way to translate this. Please see the Glossary for further information.

'witnesses'

You may amplify this portion of the story to explain what a 'witness' is, i.e. 'We are telling you what we know has happened because we have seen these things ourselves.'

Promised One/Savior*

This word can be used interchangeably with 'Savior' but is best used in place of 'Messiah' or 'Christ,' as it is used in this instance. Please see the Glossary for further information.

Story Crafting

'respected member of the religious council'

Gamaliel is not named here, although his position is stated: 'respected member of the religious council.'

Both Peter's and Gamaliel's speeches are shortened to aid retelling and emphasize the main points of the story.

'worthy to suffer dishonor'

An alternate expression could be: 'considered them good enough to suffer.'

'They continued to teach and proclaim this message'

The NLT states, 'they continued to teach and preach the message,' but because the word 'preach' in English is a religious word with negative connotations, we have chosen to use a word that resembles closely what the original word in the text means. The point is that the men are both teaching (which implies a deeper, more involved communication) and proclaiming the Good News. If you want to simplify the story, however, you could just say that the men were 'proclaiming the message...'

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same words or phrases you have been using throughout the story set for **closest followers/the Twelve, miracles, believers, belief/believe, religious leaders, place of worship, sins, forgiven, God's Spirit and Promised One/Savior.**

Describe the phrases in **this man's (Jesus') name and name of Jesus** in the same way you have described it in other stories.

Continue to work with your story crafter in translating idiomatic phrases, such as **turn from... turn to....** This phrase first appeared in *Peter's Sermon* and appears numerous times in the story set.

CHURCH FORMATION ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Boldness in persecution

Abundant evangelism

Signs and wonders

Seven Men Chosen to Serve

Acts 6:1-7

Based on NLT (1996)

Acts 6:1-2

...The believers* (*in Jesus*) rapidly multiplied. *But*, there were rumblings of discontent. *The believers* who spoke *the Greek language* complained against those who spoke *the Hebrew language*. *They said* that their widows were being *overlooked* in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve* called a meeting of all the believers.

Acts 6:2-4

“We *Twelve* should spend our time *speaking* the message from God about Jesus, not *running* a food program,” they said. “Now look around among yourselves...and *choose* seven men who are well respected and are full of *God’s Spirit** and *wisdom**. We will put them in charge of this business. Then we can spend our time in prayer and...*telling* the message from God about Jesus.”

Acts 6:5-6

This idea pleased the whole group...they chose...Stephen. *Stephen believed** great things about God and was filled with God’s Spirit. *They also chose* Philip, and five other men, (*most of whom spoke Greek*). These seven were presented to *the Twelve*, who prayed for them as they laid their hands on (*the heads of each of*) them.

Acts 6:7

God’s message was *spoken* in ever-widening circles. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the *religious leaders** believed also.

Words/Phrases to Consider

'full of God's Spirit and wisdom'

As noted previously 'full of,' or 'filled with,' refers to the control of someone or something over a person. Another way to phrase the statement in this story could be: 'whom the Spirit of God controls completely and who are very wise.'

Wisdom*

The biblical concept of wisdom includes the ideas of 'thinking things that are true and doing things that are good.' Only God can cause someone to be wise. In fact, it is implied in the New Testament that when someone has wisdom, he has insight into the will of God.

'laid their hands on...them'

The act of laying on of hands (on a person's head) came from the Jewish community. It symbolized not only the giving of responsibility, but, what is more important, the imparting of strength and the community's blessing. To clarify, you may add 'on the heads of each' to show where the hands were placed. That action indicated that the Twelve were appointing the men to do this work and that God would enable them to do it. If 'laying on of hands' is too confusing for your audience, you might consider using a phrase which shows that they were officially 'sent out,' 'dedicated,' or 'appointed' by the leaders for this specific task.

Story Crafting

'...The believers...rapidly multiplied.'

'More and more people believed in Jesus' would be one way to simplify this phrase.

'rumblings of discontent'

Always look for ways to simplify idiomatic phrases. Here you could say, 'All was not well... people were complaining.'

Message from God

'Word of God' is a figure of speech that might not be understood if translated literally into another language, so we have simplified the phrase and kept its meaning by saying 'message from God.'

'believed great things about God'

Instead of using a 'Christian' phrase like 'full of faith' to describe Stephen, we have reworded it to describe in simple terms what 'faith' is: believing great things about God.

Stephen and Philip

In order to make this story easier to retell, the list of men who were selected is omitted. Stephen and Philip are named because they will appear again in later stories: Stephen in Acts 7 and Philip in Acts 8 and 21.

'(most of whom spoke Greek)'

This is implied information, based on the names of the men chosen, that would have been known to a reader of that day.

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same words or phrases you have been using throughout the story set for **believers, closest followers/the Twelve, God's Spirit, belief/believe, Jerusalem and religious leaders.**

Express **filled with God's Spirit** in the same way that you did in *Peter before the Religious Leaders*.

In Acts 6:7, use the same word for **spoken** that you used in *Peter's Sermon* and *Peter before the Religious Leaders*.

Worldview

'Greek language...Hebrew language'

Some listeners think that Jesus and people of the early church all spoke English! This is one place to show that Christianity is not just an American import!

'laid their hands on...them'

If laying hands on someone's head is offensive in the culture, you may simply describe the purpose for this action or use a term in the language that conveys the concept of the purpose for this ritual.

CHURCH FORMATION ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Local lay leadership

Recognizable structure

Rapid spread of the gospel

Stephen is Arrested and Stoned

Acts 6:8-13; 7:1-60; 8:1-4

Based on NLT (1996)

Acts 6:8-12

Stephen (*one of the seven men appointed to serve the church**) was full of God's...power, and was performing amazing miracles*... among the people. ...One day some *religious men*...started to debate with him....*But*, none of them was able to stand against the wisdom* and God's Spirit* by which Stephen spoke. So they persuaded *others* to lie about Stephen, saying, "We heard him *dishonor our religious law*, and even God." Naturally, this *upset*... the *religious leaders**. So, they arrested Stephen....

Acts 6:12-13; 7:1-52

Before the religious leaders, some lying witnesses accused Stephen of speaking against the place of worship and against their religious law.*

Then the *head religious leader* asked Stephen, "Are these accusations true?" *Stephen, given a chance to speak, went on to recount all that had happened to the descendants of Abraham through the years and how God had led them, protected them, and blessed* them. But he also told how God's people had turned away from God to worship* idols. Then he said to the people, "You stubborn people! ...Must you forever resist God's Spirit? ...Your ancestors did, and so do you! Name one spokesman* your ancestors didn't persecute! They even killed the ones who predicted the coming of the...Promised One/Savior*, Jesus whom you betrayed and murdered."*

Acts 7:54-56

The *religious leaders* were infuriated by Stephen's accusation, and they shook their fists in rage. But Stephen, full of God's Spirit, gazed steadily *toward heaven** and...*said*, "Look, I see...*Jesus* standing in the place of honor at God's right hand!"

Acts 7:57-60

Then *the religious leaders* put their hands over their ears...*they drowned* out his voice with their shouts, and they rushed at him. They dragged him out of the city and began to *throw stones* at him. ...As they stoned him, Stephen prayed, "...*Jesus, please welcome me to be with you.*" And he fell on his knees, shouting, "*Jesus, don't charge them with this sin*!*" And with that, he died.

Acts 8:1, 3

...A great wave of persecution began that day, sweeping over the church in Jerusalem...all the believers* except *the Twelve** fled into the *surrounding regions*. *Paul, one of the official witnesses giving his approval at the killing of Stephen, began going everywhere to destroy the church.* He went from house to house, dragging out both men and women to throw them into jail.

Acts 8:4

But the believers who had fled Jerusalem went everywhere *telling* the Good News about Jesus.

Words/Phrases to Consider

Bless*

We use the term 'bless' when God helps, does good to or favors someone or something.

'resist God's Spirit'

The phrase 'resist the Holy Spirit' may be rendered also as, 'refused to listen to God's Spirit' or 'would not obey God's Spirit.' The Jewish teachers of religion believed that God's Spirit spoke through Moses and the other prophets. That is why Stephen told his listeners that they were actively opposing God by continually disobeying what God's Spirit had revealed to them through the Scriptures.

Story Crafting

'(one of the seven men appointed to serve the church)'

This phrase is added for transition and to identify Stephen.

'dishonor our religious law'

When the people said Stephen was blaspheming Moses, they were referring to Stephen not following their religious law--Stephen 'dishonored [the] religious law.' We have expressed that in this story for our listeners who may not know Moses. 'Blasphemy' refers to dishonoring or insulting God or something sacred, so we have simplified the term in this story.

Acts 7:2-50

Stephen's story of the Old Testament in this passage is incredible but very difficult for retelling. For this story, we have summarized it in italics.

'...I see...Jesus standing in the place of honor...'

'I see the heavens opened' may be too confusing for your audience. You may choose to say simply, '...I see... Jesus standing in the place of honor...'
We have used 'Jesus' here in place of 'Son of man' because your listeners probably have not been introduced to that title for Jesus.

'throw stones at'

'Stoned' refers to people throwing rocks at someone with the goal of killing them. We have rendered this 'throw stones at' for ease in understanding. You may need to explain this in the story if this is not done in your culture. It will reoccur in *Paul Meets Jesus* and *Paul & Barnabas Mistaken for Gods*.

'...Jesus, please welcome me to be with you.'

'Receive my spirit' also may be a confusing phrase. This is an acceptable alternate expression.

'Jesus, don't charge them with this sin!'

CEV phrases this as, 'Lord, don't blame them for what they have done.'

'...A great wave of persecution began that day, sweeping over the church in Jerusalem...'

Remember to be aware of English idioms that may not translate, e.g. 'wave of' and 'sweeping over.'

Paul

Paul is known as both Paul and Saul in the book of Acts. You may choose to call him Paul throughout your Acts stories, as we did, to avoid confusion, or you may choose to introduce him as, 'Saul, also known as Paul.'

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same words or phrases you have been using throughout the story set for **church, miracles, wisdom, God's Spirit, religious leaders, witness, place of worship, worship, spokesman, Promised One/Savior, full of (filled with) God's Spirit, heaven, sin, Jerusalem, believers** and **closest followers/the Twelve**.

Refer to previous stories to note how you translated **descendants of Abraham** and **turned from**. Be consistent with the terms you have chosen.

Express the idea of Jesus' place of honor at God's right hand in the same way that you did in the *God's Spirit* story.

Make sure to mention that Paul was there as a witness. This makes Paul's conversion story even more compelling.

CHURCH FORMATION ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Boldness in persecution

Abundant evangelism

Importance of knowing God's Word

African

CFT Version

Acts 8:26-39

Based on the NLT (1996)

Transition (Based on Acts 8:1-25)

After Stephen was killed, those who believed* in Jesus went everywhere telling people the wonderful news about Jesus. God's Spirit* gave some of these believers* specific instructions about where to go. One of these believers was named Philip....

Acts 8:26

...An angel* from God said to him, "Go south down the desert road that begins at Jerusalem...."

Acts 8:27-28

So he did, and he met the treasurer of an African nation...who was now returning to his homeland after worshiping* in Jerusalem. Seated in his carriage, he was reading aloud from the book of the spokesman* Isaiah.

Acts 8:29-32

God's Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and walk along beside the carriage." Philip ran over and heard the man reading...so he asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

The man replied, "How can I, when there is no one to instruct me?" And he begged Philip to come up into the carriage and sit with him. *This is what he was reading:*

"He was led like a sheep to the slaughter. And as a lamb is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth."

Acts 8:34-35

The African man asked Philip, "Was the spokesman talking about himself or someone else?" So Philip began with this same message from God's spokesman and then used many other spokesmen and messages to tell him the Good News about Jesus.

Acts 8:36-40

As they rode along, they came to some water, and the African man said, "Look! There's some water! Why can't I be baptized*?" "You can," Philip answered, "if you truly believe...." And the African man replied, "I believe that Jesus...is the Son of God!"

The African man ordered the carriage to stop, and they went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, God's Spirit took Philip away to another town...Afterwards, the African man...went on his way rejoicing.

Words/Phrases to Consider

'carriage'

A carriage also could be referred to as a 'wagon' or some vehicle pulled by horses or oxen. Someone probably was leading the wagon, and probably there was room for at least one other person to sit since the African man asked Philip to sit with him.

'Son of God'

The phrase 'Son of God' refers to the special relationship between God and Jesus. It needs to be understood that he was not the result of a physical union of God with woman.

Story Crafting

This story was chosen because of its beautiful connection to the Isaiah 53 story and its model of a response to Jesus followed by immediate obedience of baptism. (See *Promise* in the initial S-T4T story set.)

'African'

We have chosen to simplify the term 'Ethiopian eunuch' to 'African' for ease of remembering and retelling, and because many of the hearers of these stories will not have heard of the country of Ethiopia. If the audience recognizes Ethiopia as a present-day country, you can include the country name; if not, you could substitute 'a country in Africa' or 'another country.'

'[Philip told] him the Good News about Jesus'

You may want to ask during the discussion time, 'What do you think was the Good News about Jesus that Philip shared?'

"'You can," Philip answered, "if you truly believe..." And the African man replied, "I believe that Jesus...is the Son of God!"'"

We have chosen to include v. 37 from the NLT 2004 even though it is not in the earliest manuscripts: "You can," Philip answered, "if you believe with all your heart." And the eunuch replied, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." It does include information the other verses in the text seem to imply. You may choose to leave this portion out of the story, or you may chose to treat this verse as implicit information, in which case you may want to render this part of the story as: 'Philip told the African he could be baptized if he truly believed. The man said that he did believe that Jesus is the Son of God, so....'

Worldview

Acts 8:32

If your audience is not familiar with sheep or the butchering and shearing of them, you may need to make these statements more general, such as: 'He was killed just like an animal, and he didn't say a word.'

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same words or phrases you have been using throughout the story set for **belief/believe, God's Spirit, believers, angel, Jerusalem, worship(ing), spokesman and baptize(d)**.

This story works best when the audience has heard the Isaiah 53 story (*Promise*) from the initial S-T4T story set so that they understand the reference to Isaiah. If your audience has not heard the Isaiah 53 story, you may want to avoid the name 'Isaiah' and omit the exact quotation from Isaiah so you do not confuse your audience.

We have included Acts 8:37 to connect with the other stories which emphasize the need for belief in Jesus in order to become his follower.

CHURCH FORMATION ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Abundant gospel sowing

Scriptural authority

Immediate baptism

The guidance of God's Spirit

Paul Meets Jesus

Acts 9:1-15

Based on NLT (1996)

Transition (Based on Acts 8:1, 3)

While believers* in Jesus were going everywhere speaking about him, Paul (the religious leader* who was a witness at Stephen's stoning) was also traveling everywhere trying to destroy the church*.

Acts 9:1-2

...He was uttering threats...and was eager to destroy the believers.... He headed for another city in order to...arrest believers there and... bring them...back to Jerusalem in chains.

Acts 9:3-6

As he was nearing the city...a bright light from heaven* suddenly beamed down upon him! He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Paul! Paul! Why are you persecuting me?"

"Who are you...?" Paul asked.

And the voice replied, "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting! Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you are to do."

Acts 9:7-9

The men with Paul stood speechless with surprise, for they heard the sound of someone's voice, but they saw no one! As Paul picked himself up off the ground, he found that he was blind. So his companions led him by the hand to the city. He remained there blind for three days....

Acts 9:10-12

Now there was a believer in the city named Ananias. Jesus spoke to him in a vision*, calling, "Ananias!" "Yes, Master*!" he replied.

Jesus said, "Go over to...a certain house. When you arrive, ask for Paul.... He is praying to me right now. I have shown him a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and laying his hands on him so that he can see again."

Acts 9:13, 15

"But Master," exclaimed Ananias, "I've heard about the terrible things this man has done to the believers in Jerusalem!"

But Jesus said, "Go and do what I say. For I have chosen Paul to take my message to foreigners and to kings, as well as to the descendants of Abraham."

Words/Phrases to Consider

‘persecuting’

‘Persecute’ means ‘to cause harm to,’ ‘to cause to suffer’ or ‘to be cruel to.’

Vision*

‘Vision’ refers to a supernatural experience in which a divine revelation is given to a person while awake; ‘dream’ is what God causes a person to see while asleep. If your language has only one word for ‘vision’ and ‘dream,’ you may want to specify whether the person was awake or asleep when he received the message from God.

‘foreigners and kings’

This phrase comes from the CEV. ‘Foreigners’ is an easy way to describe ‘Gentiles.’ You also may use ‘not descendants of Abraham.’

Story Crafting

It helps a story to flow if you can connect it to what already has happened with the characters up to this point; thus, for this story from chapter 9, verses from chapter 8 were added. This was further amplified since Paul was mentioned so briefly in the previous story.

Lord

In this story, all references to ‘Lord’ refer to Jesus, so we have used Jesus’ name in most instances. You also may choose to substitute ‘Master’ for some of the references to ‘Lord,’ as we did.

‘Why are you persecuting me?’

This is a rhetorical question that has the following implied meaning: ‘It is as though you are persecuting me by persecuting my followers.’ If your language

needs the clarification, you may need to give the implied meaning.

‘Who are you...?’

This was said with the Greek word usually translated ‘Lord.’ Paul realized that he was addressing deity, so be sure that this question is stated in a polite way in your target language.

‘vision of a man named Ananias’

If it is awkward to talk about this vision in third person, you may say, ‘vision of you, Ananias...’

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same words or phrases you have been using throughout the story set for **believers, religious leader, witness, church, Jerusalem** and **heaven**.

In *Stephen Is Arrested and Stoned*, we introduced **Paul**. We have chosen not to begin using the name Saul and later change it to Paul, as this could be confusing for oral communicators. Whatever you choose to do, you will need to be consistent throughout the story set.

Use the same term for **stoning** that you used in *Stephen Is Arrested and Stoned*.

In *Peter’s Sermon* you were introduced to the term **Master**. You will want to use the same term here that you chose in *Peter’s Sermon*.

Continue to use the same term you have been using throughout the story set for **descendants of Abraham**.

CHURCH FORMATION ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Obedience

God’s plan for the church

Dreams and visions

Man of peace

Ananias Obeys God

Acts 9:17-31

Based on NLT (1996)

Acts 9:17-18

So (*just as God told him*) Ananias went and found *Paul*. He laid his hands on him and said, "...Brother *Paul*...Jesus, who appeared to you on the road, has sent me so that you may get your sight back and be filled with *God's Spirit*." Instantly something like scales fell from *Paul's* eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized*.

Acts 9:19-21

...*Paul* stayed with the believers* in *the city* for a few days. ...Immediately he began *speaking* about Jesus...saying, "He is indeed the Son of God!" All who heard him were amazed. "Isn't this the same man who persecuted *the believers*... in Jerusalem?" they asked....

Acts 9:22-25

Paul's speaking became more and more powerful...*Paul insisted that Jesus was indeed the Promised Savior**. After a while the *religious leaders** decided to kill him. But *Paul* was told... that they were watching for him day and night at the city gate so they could murder him. So during the night, some of the other believers let him down in a large basket through an opening in the city wall.

Acts 9:26-27

When *Paul* arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to meet with the believers, but they were all afraid of him. They thought he was only pretending to be a believer! Then Barnabas brought him to *the Twelve** and told them how *Paul* had seen *Jesus* on the way to *the other city*. Barnabas also told them what *Jesus* had said to *Paul* and how he boldly *spoke* in the name of *Jesus* in *that city*.

Acts 9:28-30

Then *the Twelve* accepted *Paul*, and after that he was constantly with them in Jerusalem, *speaking* boldly in the name of *Jesus*. *Some men he debated with*...plotted to murder him. So, when the believers heard about it...they...sent him away to his hometown....

Acts 9:31

The church* then had peace throughout *the region*, and it grew in strength and numbers....

Words/Phrases to Consider

'scales'

This describes something like fish scales or flakes of skin. You could say, 'Instantly...he regained his sight.'

'spoke in the name of Jesus'

If this phrase is difficult for your hearers, you may phrase it like the CEV: 'told everyone about Jesus.'

Story Crafting

'(just as God told him)'

This phrase connects to the previous story.

Barnabas

Barnabas is mentioned abruptly in this story. You may need to use some sort of appositional reference to help the audience, e.g. 'Barnabas, who had donated his field to the church in an earlier story...' (see *The Lying Couple*).

Brother is a courteous way to address Paul, and it means that Ananias saw him as a fellow-believer in Jesus. Use a culturally appropriate courteous form of address for fellow believers or fellow members of a group.

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same words or phrases you have been using throughout the story set for **God's Spirit, baptize, believers, persecute, Jerusalem, Promised One/Savior, religious leaders, closest followers/the Twelve, preach/teach** and **church**.

Express **filled with God's Spirit** and in the **name of Jesus** in the same way that you have been expressing these in the previous stories.

In *African* we introduced the phrase **Son of God**. Use the same phrase here, being careful to use words that make it clear this phrase refers to the special relationship between God and Jesus.

Continue to use the same words you have been using throughout the story set for **speaking** and **spoke**.

CHURCH FORMATION ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Abundant evangelism

Boldness in persecution

Intentional planting of multiplying churches

Peter and Cornelius

Acts 10:1-23; 11:14

Based on NLT (1996)

Transition (Based on Acts 9)

While God was preparing Paul to bring the Good News about Jesus to those who were not the descendants of Abraham, he was also preparing these 'foreigners' to believe* in Jesus and receive His Spirit*.

Acts 10:1-6

...There was an...army officer named Cornelius, who was not one of the descendants of Abraham. But nevertheless he was a...man who tried to please God and...regularly prayed to him. One afternoon...he had a vision* in which he saw an angel* of God coming toward him. "Cornelius!" the angel said.

Cornelius stared at him in terror. "What is it, sir?" he asked the angel.

And the angel replied, "God has heard your prayers and seen your gifts to the poor! Now send some men...to find a man named...Peter. He is staying...in another city in a house near the shore. Ask him to come and visit you."

Acts 10:7-8

As soon as the angel was gone, Cornelius called some personal attendants. He told them what had happened and sent them off to find Peter.

Acts 10:9-16

The next day as Cornelius's messengers were nearing the city, Peter went up to the flat roof to pray. It was about noon, and he was hungry.

But while lunch was being prepared, he had a vision. He saw the sky open, and something like a large sheet was let down by its four corners. In the sheet were all sorts of animals, reptiles, and birds (all animals that were forbidden by his religious laws). Then a voice said to him, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat them."

"Never, Master*," Peter declared. "I have never in all my life eaten anything forbidden by our religious laws."

God said, "If God says something is acceptable, don't say it isn't." The same vision was repeated three times. Then the sheet was pulled up again to heaven*.

Acts 10:17, 19-22

Peter was very confused. What could the vision mean? Just then the men sent by Cornelius found Peter's house and stood outside at the gate. Meanwhile, as Peter was wondering about the vision, the Spirit of God said to him, "Three men have come looking for you. Go down and go with them without hesitation. All is well, for I have sent them." So Peter met them and asked why they had come.

They said, "We were sent by Cornelius...to invite you to his house to give him a message about how to be saved" (Acts 11:14).

Acts 10:23

...The next day Peter and some other believers* traveled with them to the city where Cornelius lived.

Words/Phrases to Consider

'He saw the sky open'

In Greek, and also other languages, there is one word that may refer either to 'heaven,' God's special dwelling place or to the 'sky.' Either meaning fits here. If the national language Bible translation uses the word 'sky,' you could say that Peter saw an opening in the clouds or in the sky.

Story Crafting

'who was not one of the descendants of Abraham'

Because Rome has not been introduced in this story set, we have described Cornelius as a man 'who was not one of the descendants of Abraham' in order to set him apart as someone who was not originally a member of 'God's people.' Without that, Peter's vision does not make sense to the audience.

'tried to please God and... regularly prayed to him.'

Because 'devout' and 'God-fearing' may not translate easily, we have simplified these phrases.

'sir'

This word does not refer to deity, although Cornelius does recognize that this messenger comes from God. You may use a polite term of address in your language or leave this out completely.

Peter

We have simplified Simon Peter's name to 'Peter' to prevent confusion.

In this story Peter is staying with a tanner or leather worker, a man considered unclean because of his profession. Depending on your audience, you may want to include this in your story to show inclusion of all people in His plan (Acts 10:6).

'(all animals that were forbidden by his religious laws)'

This is stated in v. 14 but may be added here to explain the significance of the vision.

'Go down and go with them without hesitation. All is well, for I have sent them.'

Be sure to put phrases like this in more natural English, e.g. 'Hurry down and go with them. Don't worry, I sent them' (CEV).

'to give him a message about how to be saved'

This is included in the story because it can be implied from Acts 11:14 and adds clarity to the reason that Cornelius sent for Peter and the reason that Peter went to see him.

We have avoided using too many place names in this story in order to make it easier to remember.

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same words or phrases you have been using throughout the story set for **believe, Spirit/ God's Spirit, vision, angel, heaven, save(d)** and **believers**.

Continue to use the same term you have been using to describe Gentiles, i.e. **not descendants of Abraham**.

Use the same term for **Master** that you used in *Peter's Sermon* and *Paul Meets Jesus*.

If you have found that you need to expound upon from what people are being saved, be sure you are consistently using this in each reference to **save/saved/ saving**.

CHURCH FORMATION ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Man of peace

Home cell churches

Rapid reproduction

Visions/dreams

The work of God's Spirit

The gospel for ALL people

Peter Meets Cornelius

Acts 10:24-48; 11:1-4, 18
Based on NLT (1996)

Acts 10:24-27

Peter, Cornelius' men, and the believers accompanying the group arrived at the house of Cornelius the following day. Cornelius was waiting for him and had called together his relatives and close friends to meet Peter.*

As Peter entered his home, Cornelius fell to the floor before him in worship*. But Peter pulled him up and said, "Stand up! I'm a human being like you!" So Cornelius got up, and they talked together and went inside where the others were....

Acts 10:28-33

Peter told them, "You know it is against *my religious laws* for me to come into a...home of *someone not of Abraham's descendants* like this. But God has shown me that I should never think of anyone as impure. So I came as soon as I was sent for. Now tell me why you sent for me."

Cornelius replied, "Four days ago I was praying in my house.... Suddenly, a man in dazzling clothes was standing in front of me. He told me, 'Cornelius, your prayers have been heard....' *As he instructed* I sent for you at once.... Now here we are, waiting...to hear the message *God* has given you."

Acts 10:34-43, 44, 46-48

Then Peter replied, "I see very clearly that God doesn't show partiality. In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right." *Peter went on to tell them the Good News of Jesus, how all who believe* in Jesus would have their sins* forgiven*.*

Even as Peter was saying these things, *God's Spirit* filled those* who...heard the message. *...They praised God...and were baptized* (to show they had turned from their sins and turned to God through their belief* in Jesus).*

Afterward Cornelius asked *Peter* to stay with them for several days.

Acts 11:1-4, 18

Soon the news reached *the Twelve** and other believers...that *those not from Abraham's descendants* had received the *message from God*. But when Peter arrived back in Jerusalem, some of the...believers criticized him. "You entered the home of *someone who is not of Abraham's descendants* and even ate with them!" they said. Then Peter told them exactly what had happened.

When the others heard *Peter's explanation*, all their objections were answered and they began praising God. They said, "God has...given *to everyone* the privilege of turning from sin and receiving eternal life*."

Words/Phrases to Consider

'impure'

You also can translate this as 'not acceptable to God' if your culture does not have a concept of ritual impurity.

'fear him'

Some translations say 'worship him.'

'message from God'

The original 'Word of God' refers to God's message and can be translated as such if 'Word of God' is not a common figure of speech in your language.

Eternal Life*

'Eternal life' in the New Testament has two aspects: life that never ends and a quality of life beginning when someone allows God to rule his life. Some options for conveying the two-fold meaning of this phrase include 'real life that never ends' and 'new life that never ends.' Or, if your language does not have a noun for 'life,' 1) 'really live unendingly because of him' or 2) 'he will cause such people to never come to the end of real living.'

Story Crafting

'a man in dazzling clothes'

This refers to an angel. You can make that explicit here if necessary.

Within many of the Acts narratives are non-narrative messages. Peter actually gives many messages in Acts. These portions can be difficult to retell in a story. In this case, Acts 10:36-43, the message was summarized in one line.

'(to show they had turned from their sins and turned to God through their belief in Jesus)'

We have chosen to include that Cornelius and his family were baptized 'to show they had turned from their sins and turned to God through their belief in Jesus' so that we can reinforce the reason for baptism.

In crafting a story, you have to make decisions about use of repetition. In this passage, Acts 11:5-17, the vision is repeated, but this story was crafted without repeating the vision.

'the Twelve'

Although Peter is not with 'the Twelve' when the term is used in this story, therefore making it only 'eleven' closest followers of Jesus, we can use the term 'the Twelve' as a kind of title if it is not confusing to the audience. If it is confusing to the audience, then you can choose to use another title, such as, 'closest followers of Jesus' or whatever name you have been using for this group of people. Whatever term you choose to use, it is best to be consistent throughout the story set so that you avoid confusion with your listeners.

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same words or phrases you have been using throughout the story set for **believers, worship, belief/believe, sins, forgiven, God's Spirit, praised, baptized, turned from...turned to..., closest followers/the Twelve and Jerusalem.**

Continue to use the terms **descendants of Abraham** and **not of the descendants of Abraham** consistently throughout the story set. You will want to be consistent with the terms you used in the initial S-T4T story set. You may choose to use whatever terms you like that set these two groups apart.

CHURCH FORMATION ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Man of peace

Remaining in community/culture

Dreams/visions

The Antioch Church*

Acts 11:19-30

Based on NLT (1996)

Acts 11:19-21

Meanwhile, the believers* who had fled from Jerusalem during the persecution after Stephen's death *were traveling...far and wide....* They *spoke about Jesus*, but only to the *descendants of Abraham*. However, some of the believers who went to a *place called Antioch... also told those who were not descendants of Abraham there about...Jesus*. *God's power* was upon them, and large numbers of these *people believed* the message about Jesus*.

Acts 11:22-24

When the church* at Jerusalem heard what had happened, they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw this proof of God's favor (*on the believers at Antioch*), he was filled with joy, and he encouraged the believers to stay true to *Jesus*. Barnabas was a good man, full of *God's Spirit** and strong in *belief*. And large numbers of people *became believers in Jesus*.

Acts 11:25-26

Then Barnabas went...to find *Paul*. When he found him, he brought him back to Antioch. Both of them stayed there with the church for a full year, teaching great numbers of people. (It was here at Antioch that the believers were first called Christians.)

Acts 11:27-30

During this time, some *spokesmen** traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch. *As God's Spirit directed*, one of them...*predicted...*that a great famine was coming upon the entire Roman *Empire....* So the believers in Antioch decided to send relief to the brothers and sisters in *and around Jerusalem*, everyone giving as much as they could.

...Then, Barnabas and Paul took their gifts to...the church in Jerusalem.

Words/Phrases to Consider

'God's power'

This means that God was helping them very much and showing his strength through his help to them.

'proof of God's favor'

This is equivalent to 'God had been good to the people' or 'God had blessed the people.' Please see the Glossary for 'bless.'

'Christian'

In many societies today, this word carries much baggage and actually does not carry the same meaning that it did in Acts. In Acts, this term denoted a true believer and follower of Jesus, not just a cultural follower or someone 'born into' a Christian family.

Story Crafting

There are many place names that are left out of this story for ease of retelling and remembering.

Some people have found the order of Acts 11:22-24 confusing and difficult to retell. It is fine to reorder these sentences in such a way that the story flows more naturally. For example, you could say something like, 'They sent Barnabas to Antioch. Barnabas was a good man, full of God's Spirit, and strong in belief. When he arrived and saw...'

'(on the believers at Antioch)'

Phrases like this may be added for clarity. We know from the previous verses to whom God was showing favor.

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same words or phrases you have been using throughout the story set for **believers, Jerusalem, persecution, belief/believe, church, God's Spirit and spokesman.**

Continue to use the same word that you have been using throughout the story set for **spoke.**

Continue to be consistent in your use of terms to describe **descendants of Abraham and not descendants of Abraham.**

In *God's Spirit*, you were introduced to the term 'brother' in reference to close friends. Use the same or similar term here for **brothers and sisters.**

Worldview

'brothers and sisters'

These terms may be understood as blood relatives in some cultures, so as you did in *God's Spirit*, make sure that whatever words you use here refer to close friends.

CHURCH FORMATION ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Healthy churches

Giving of offerings

Leadership/mentoring

Gospel for everyone

Abundant gospel sowing

God Frees Peter from Jail

Acts 12:1-17

Based on NLT (1996)

Acts 12:1-5

About that time (*in Jerusalem*) the king began to persecute some believers* in the church*. He had *one of the Twelve**...killed with a sword. When *the king* saw how much this pleased the *religious leaders**, he arrested Peter during a *religious festival* and *put him in prison*.... *The king wanted to put Peter on public trial* after the *festival was over*. ...While Peter was in prison, the church prayed very earnestly for him.

Acts 12:6-8

The night before Peter was to be placed on trial, he was asleep, chained between two soldiers.... Suddenly, there was a bright light in the cell, and an angel*...stood before Peter. The angel...*awakened* him and said, "Quick! Get up!" And the chains fell off his wrists. Then the angel told him, "Get dressed...and follow me"....

Acts 12:9-11

So Peter left the cell, following the angel. ... *Peter thought all of this...was not* really happening. They passed *all the guards* and came to the iron gate to the street...*the gate*

swung open...all by itself. As they...started walking down the street...the angel suddenly disappeared.

Then, Peter finally realized what had happened. "It's really true!" he said to himself. "God has sent his angel and saved me...!"

Acts 12:12-15

...Then Peter went to a house where many *believers* were gathered *praying*. He knocked at the door...and a servant girl...came to open it. When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed that, instead of opening the door, she ran back inside and told everyone, "Peter is standing at the door!"

"You're out of your mind," they said....

Acts 12:16-17

Meanwhile, Peter continued knocking. When they finally went...and opened the door, they were amazed. *Peter...told them what had happened* and how *God* had led him out of jail. "Tell *the others* what happened," he said. And then he went to another place.

Story Crafting

'You're out of your mind'

This is an idiom that literally means 'you're crazy' and may need to be translated differently if a literal translation into the language does not make sense to the hearer.

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same words or phrases you have been using throughout the story set for **Jerusalem, persecute, believers, church, closest followers/the Twelve, religious leaders, religious festival and angel.**

CHURCH FORMATION ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Extraordinary prayer

Boldness in persecution

Paul & Barnabas Mistaken for Gods

Acts 14:8-23

Based on NLT (1996)

Transition (Based on Acts 13)

After Peter was freed from jail, the Good News continued to spread, and many people became believers*. Barnabas and Paul... finished their task to bring famine support to Jerusalem, and they returned to Antioch... One day as the leaders of the Antioch church* were worshipping* God and fasting*, God's Spirit* said, "Appoint Barnabas and Paul for the special work I have for them." So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way. Paul and Barnabas traveled throughout the area we now call Turkey, telling people the Good News about Jesus. Many people became believers, but there were many 'troublemakers' who were jealous of Paul. They tried to turn the people against Paul and his message.

Acts 14:8-10

While they were in a town called Lystra, Paul and Barnabas met a man with crippled feet. He had been that way from birth, so he had never walked. He was sitting and listening as Paul was speaking... Looking straight at him, Paul... realized he had belief* to be healed. So Paul called to him in a loud voice, "Stand up!" And the man jumped to his feet and started walking.

Acts 14:11-13

When the... crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in their local dialect, "These men are gods in human form!" ...The crowd brought bulls and wreaths of flowers, and they prepared to offer sacrifices to them....

Acts 14:14-15, 18

But when Barnabas and Paul understood what was happening, they tore their clothing in dismay and ran out among the people, shouting, "Friends, why are you doing this? We are... human beings—just like you! We have come to bring you the Good News that you should turn from these worthless things and turn to the living God, who made the sky and the earth, the sea, and everything in them... But even with these words, Paul and Barnabas could scarcely restrain the people from sacrificing to them.

Acts 14:19-20

Then some troublemakers arrived from some other places Paul and Barnabas had visited and convinced the crowds to kill Paul by throwing stones at him... then they dragged him out of the city, thinking he was dead. But as the believers gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he left with Barnabas for the next city.

Acts 14:21-23

After proclaiming the Good News in the next city... Paul and Barnabas returned to the cities they had visited. There, they strengthened the believers. They encouraged them to continue in their belief, reminding them that we must suffer many hardships before God will rule over us forever. Paul and Barnabas also appointed leaders in every church... With prayer and fasting, they entrusted the leaders to the care of Jesus, in whom they had believed*.

Words/Phrases to Consider

Fasting*

Fasting refers to going without food in order to worship God or as part of one's worship to God. Although many religions practice this, you may find that the word refers only to fasting for a particular god or in a particular religion. If that is the case, you may need to explain the concept in the story rather than use a specific term.

'gods'

If there is a different term that refers only to the one true God, do not use that term here. Use a term that refers to lesser gods.

Story Crafting

Transition

This story's transition includes Paul and Barnabas' commissioning from the Antioch church. The commissioning story by itself is very short. You may make it a separate story if you would like.

'tore their clothing in dismay'

If the idea of tearing clothing is distracting to the audience because it is not done in their culture to show dismay, you could just say, 'they were dismayed and ran out.'

'worthless things'

These refer to the false gods and idols that the people were worshiping. 'Worthless' refers to the fact that these things are not helpful to them. You may need to make this phrase more specific and say something like, 'turn away from the things you are now worshiping which don't help you at all.'

'proclaiming'

We have chosen to use the word 'proclaiming' in place of 'preaching' in the last paragraph of the story because it more closely resembles what the original word in the text means.

'we must suffer many hardships before God will rule over us forever'

This statement refers to the fact that often believers will be persecuted in this world. However, be sure that your audience does not think that it is necessary that we suffer in order for us to enter God's kingdom.

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same words or phrases you have been using throughout the story set for **believers, Jerusalem, church, worship(ing), God's Spirit, belief/believe** and **turn from... turn to...**

Use the same word you have been using throughout the story set for **speaking** in order to avoid using churchy or religious terms such as 'preaching.'

Use the same term for **throwing stones** or 'stoning' that you used in *Paul Meets Jesus* and *Stephen Is Arrested and Stoned*.

Worldview

'prepared to offer sacrifices to them'

The idea of sacrifice might be problematic in your language or culture. If people are offended at the idea of killing an animal for these men, or if they do not really understand that killing an animal was a form of worship, you can change this phrase to 'prepared to worship them like a god.'

CHURCH FORMATION ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Worship

Healthy churches

Boldness in the face of persecution

Abundant gospel sowing

Prayer/fasting

Identifiable leadership

Paul's Vision*

Acts 14:26-28; 15:36-41; 16:5-15

Based on NLT (1996)

Transition (Based on Acts 14)

Paul and others continued to travel and tell about Jesus through the power of God's Spirit.*

Acts 14:26-28

Finally, they returned...to Antioch...where their journey had begun and where they had been *entrusted* to...God for the work they had now completed. *When they arrived* in Antioch, they called the church* together and reported about their trip, telling all that God had done.... And they stayed there with the believers* in Antioch for a long time.

Acts 15:36-40

After some time Paul said to Barnabas, "Let's return to each city where we previously *spoke the Good News about Jesus* and see how the new believers are getting along." Barnabas agreed....*however, Barnabas and Paul disagreed strongly over who should join them on the trip.* Their disagreement over this was so sharp that they separated.... Paul chose Silas, and the believers sent them off, entrusting them to *God's care*.

Acts 15:41; 16:5

So, *Paul and Silas traveled from city to city, teaching the people in the churches.* ...The churches were strengthened in their *belief** and grew daily in numbers.

Acts 16:6-7

...Then God's Spirit...told them not to go into... Asia at that time. They tried to go another direction, but again God's Spirit who was sent by Jesus did not let them go.

Acts 16:9-12

That night Paul had a vision*. He saw a man... pleading with him. *The man said, "Come over here and help us."* So *Paul and Silas left...at once...They concluded* that God was calling *them to proclaim* the Good News there.

Paul and Silas traveled until they reached Philippi, a major city...they stayed there several days.

Acts 16:13-15

On the *day of worship* they went a little way outside the city to a riverbank, where *they thought* some people met to pray...*There they found* some women who had come together. One of them was *a woman named Lydia...She was a merchant...and worshiper* of God.* As she listened...*God caused her to be receptive,* and she accepted what Paul was saying. *Lydia was baptized* along with other members of her household.... "If you consider me a believer (NIV)," she said, "come and stay at my home."* *Paul and Silas accepted.*

Words/Phrases to Consider

‘God’s Spirit who was sent by Jesus’

The original wording of the verse is ‘the Spirit of Jesus.’ It is thought that perhaps Paul and Silas had a special revelation from Jesus or from a prophecy expressed specifically ‘in the name of Jesus.’ Translator’s helps say that it is an acceptable rendering to say, ‘God’s Spirit who was sent by Jesus.’

‘day of worship’

This is used in place of ‘Sabbath,’ as ‘Sabbath’ is not a term familiar to many.

‘household’

Referring to Lydia in v. 15, this word might include everyone who lived in Lydia’s household, including servants. (She may not have had a family since she is identified as the head of her household.)

Story Crafting

‘Good News about Jesus’

We added ‘about Jesus’ to be sure that the audience understands what ‘good news’ the men are sharing.

‘God’s care’

Because the term ‘grace’ may not be understood by non-believers, we have changed it to ‘God’s care,’ which is one acceptable rendering of the term ‘grace’ in this context.

Acts 16:9-12

This passage has been changed from first person to third person for easier telling.

‘God caused her to be receptive’

The term ‘opened her heart’ is idiomatic and may not be readily understood in the target language. This phrase can replace that.

‘baptized’

In this story, the text does not give as detailed an explanation of baptism as we have seen in previous stories. Therefore, you may choose to amplify the reason they were baptized to reinforce the summarized passage and the teachings you have had already on baptism. You could say something like, ‘They were baptized to show that they had turned from their sins and believed in Jesus....’

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same words or phrases you have been using throughout the story set for **God’s Spirit, believers, church, belief, vision, worship(er)** and **baptize**.

Use the same words you have used in previous stories for **speaking** and **proclaim**.

Worldview

Some cultures may see Lydia’s invitation to Paul and Silas as inappropriate. If so, you will want to word this in the story in such a way that shows Lydia was performing within her cultural norms of hospitality.

CHURCH FORMATION ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Rapid reproduction

Churches planting churches

Man of peace

Interpersonal relationships between church planters

The Philippian Jailer

CFT Version

Acts 16:16-35, 40; 17:1

Based on NLT (2004)

Acts 16:16-17

One day as *Paul and Silas* were going down to the place of prayer, *they met a slave girl who was possessed* by an evil spirit**. She was a fortune-teller who earned a lot of money for her masters. She followed...*Paul and Silas* shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, and they have come to tell you how to be saved."

Acts 16:18

This went on day after day until Paul got so *tired of it* that he turned and spoke to the *evil spirit* within her. "I command you in the name of Jesus...to come out of her," he said. And instantly it left her.

Acts 16:19-21

Her masters' hopes of wealth were now shattered, so they grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them before the authorities at the marketplace. "The whole city is in an uproar because of these *men!*" they shouted. "They are teaching the people to do things that are against *our* customs."

Acts 16:22-24

A mob quickly formed.... *Paul and Silas* were severely beaten, and then they were thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to make sure they didn't escape. So *the jailer*...put them into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in the stocks.

Acts 16:25-28

Around midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing...to God, and the other prisoners were listening. Suddenly, there was a great earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off! The jailer woke up to see the prison doors wide open. He assumed the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword to kill himself. But Paul shouted to him, "*Stop! Don't kill yourself! We are all here!*"

Acts 16:29-30

...The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down *trembling* before Paul and Silas. *Then* he brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Acts 16:31-34

They replied, "Believe* *in*...Jesus and you will be saved, along with *everyone in your household*." Then they *told the message about Jesus* to him and all who lived in his household. That same hour the jailer washed their wounds, and he and everyone in his household were immediately baptized*. *The jailer fed them at his house and they all* rejoiced because they all believed in God.

Acts 16:35, 40; 17:1

The next morning the city officials *released Paul and Silas*. *When Paul and Silas left the prison, they returned to the home of Lydia*... *There they met with the group of believers* that met at Lydia's house* and encouraged them once more.... *Then they left to go to another city*.

Words/Phrases to Consider

Possessed*

In some cultures, spirit possession is a good thing and is sought actively. If this is true in the culture in which you work, you will need to make sure the audience understands that this was an evil spirit.

Evil Spirit*

Please see the Glossary for a full discussion.

'Most High God'

This refers to the position of God, that is, 'the highest God' (indirectly a reference to 'the God in heaven') or 'the God who is higher than all other gods,' that is to say, 'the most important God.' Here the reference would certainly seem to be to 'God who is greater than all others.'

'stocks'

If your culture does not have an understanding of 'stocks,' you may substitute 'chains' or say that they were locked up so they could not escape.

Story Crafting

This passage includes information about Paul and his Roman citizenship. It's interesting, but can make the story too lengthy. You may include it if the theme will be touched on again in later stories (Paul in Rome, etc.).

'Sirs'

This is a polite term of address for men. Use whatever term is most appropriate in your language.

'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'

The jailer asked how he could be saved, probably both for physical escape and moral and spiritual change. If your language's word for 'saved' implies both physical and spiritual salvation, it's even better. If the word could imply only physical salvation, you can amplify how to be saved to something like, '...to be saved so that God will not punish me for my sins.'

'baptized'

You may amplify the reason they were baptized to reinforce the summarized passage and the teachings you have already had on baptism.

'household'

The term 'household' in reference to the jailer probably refers to his family.

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same words or phrases you have been using throughout the story set for **saved**, **believe**, **baptize** and **believers**.

Be sure to use the same terminology for **name of Jesus** as you have in previous stories.

If you have found that you need to expound upon from what people are being saved, be sure you are consistently using this in each reference to **save/saved/saving**.

CHURCH FORMATION ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Rapid reproduction

Family based conversion

Man of peace

Signs and wonders

Paul in Athens

Acts 17:15-34

Based on NLT (1996)

Acts 17:(15) 16-17

One time, while Paul was waiting for *some other believers** (Silas and Timothy) in a city named Athens, he was deeply troubled by all the idols he saw everywhere in the city. *He spoke daily with the people there in the places of worship* and the city square.*

Acts 17:18

...When he told them about Jesus and his coming back to life after being killed, they said, "...*What strange ideas.*" ..."*He's pushing some foreign religion.*"

Acts 17:19-21

Then they took him to the *special meeting place in the city where they discussed new ideas.* ...*They said,* "You are saying some rather startling things, and we want to know what it's all about." (*For the people of Athens spent a lot of time discussing the latest ideas.*)

Acts 17:22-23

So Paul...addressed them... "Men of Athens, I notice that you are very religious, for as I was walking along I saw your many altars. And one of them had this inscription on it—"To an Unknown God.' You have been worshipping* him without knowing who he is, and now I wish to tell you about him.

Acts 17:24-25, 27-31

"He is the God who made the world and everything in it. ...He doesn't live in man-made *places of worship,* and human hands can't serve his needs.... He himself gives life...and... satisfies every need there is. His purpose in all of this was that the nations should seek after God...though he is not far from any one of us. ...As one of your...poets says, 'We are his offspring.'

"And since this is true, we shouldn't think of God as an idol designed by craftsmen from gold or silver or stone. *We were ignorant before,* but now *God* commands everyone everywhere to turn away from idols and turn to him. *God will judge the world by Jesus,* and he proved to everyone who this is by raising him from the dead."

Acts 17:32-34

When they heard...*about Jesus being raised from the dead,* some laughed, but others said, "We want to hear more about this later."

...*And* some joined him and became believers....

Words/Phrases to Consider

'city square'

This literally means 'marketplace' and can be translated as such if it avoids confusion.

'altars'

These altars refer to pagan altars which are shrines or places where offerings are put for fetishes. When you find a word for this, you should have the audience describe what it looks like and what people do here in order to test that you have found the correct word.

Story Crafting

'coming back to life after being killed'

Since the term 'resurrection' has not been introduced to your audience, we have simplified the term for better understanding.

'special meeting place in the city where they discussed new ideas'

The Areopagus was the meeting place for the council of philosophers who met to discuss and judge the latest lectures that were being given in Athens. We have taken out the foreign name 'Areopagus' and replaced it with 'special meeting place in the city where they discussed new ideas.' If your people group has a similar meeting place or system, then you may use the word they use to describe this.

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same words or phrases you have been using throughout the story set for **believers, place of worship, worship** and **turn from...turn to...**

CHURCH FORMATION ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Use of redemptive analogies

Cross-cultural witness

God is the one true God

Return

CFT Version

**Acts 17:1-10; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10;
2:17-18; 3:2-8; 4:16-18; 5:27**

Based on the NLT (1996)

Acts 17:1-5

Before Paul went to Athens, he and Silas were traveling throughout the area near Philippi. One day they came to the city of Thessalonica. There, Paul told many people, who were descendants of Abraham, about Jesus. He said, "This Jesus I'm telling you about is the Promised Savior." Many people believed* his words.... But the descendants of Abraham were jealous, so they gathered some worthless fellows from the streets to form a mob and start a riot. They attacked the home of a believer* in Jesus, searching for Paul and Silas so they could drag them out to the crowd.*

Acts 17:6-7

Not finding them there, they dragged out... some of the other believers instead and took them before the city authorities. "Paul and Silas have caused trouble all over the world... and now they are here disturbing our city," they shouted. "One of these men here has allowed Paul and Silas to stay in his home."

Acts 17:8-10

Although the city was thrown into turmoil by these reports...the city authorities finally released...these believers....

For their protection, that very night the believers sent Paul and Silas away....

1 Thessalonians 2:17-18; 3:2, 6-8; 1:1

But Paul never forgot about the believers in Thessalonica. In fact, he tried again and again to visit them, but he wasn't able. So later, Paul sent a friend named Timothy to

encourage the believers in Thessalonica. When Timothy returned to Paul and gave a report, Paul was overjoyed to learn that these believers were continuing to follow Jesus in spite of persecution. So, he decided to write a letter to the believers in Thessalonica....a letter from himself, Silas and Timothy. He said....

1 Thessalonians 1:2

"We always thank God for all of you and pray for you constantly."

1 Thessalonians 1:6-7, 9-10

"...You received the message about Jesus with joy from God's Spirit in spite of the severe suffering it brought you.... As a result, you... became an example to all the believers in the area. These believers speak of...how you turned away from idols to serve the true and living God. And they speak of how you are looking forward to the coming of God's Son from heaven*—Jesus, whom God raised from the dead...."*

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; 5:27

"And when Jesus comes back, he himself will come down from heaven with a loud shout.... First, all the believers who have died will rise.... Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be taken up in the clouds to meet Jesus in the air. We will be with him forever. So...encourage each other with these words. ...And read this letter to all the other believers...."

Story Crafting

This story is an example of how a 'teaching' from the Epistles may be presented in a story form. This story links the teaching from 1 Thessalonians with a corresponding narrative from the book of Acts.

Much of the end of the story has been summarized in order to make it easier for the audience to remember and retell in story form.

'taken up in the clouds'

Be sure that the audience does not think that we will be living in the clouds. We simply will be meeting Jesus in the air as he comes down from heaven, and after that we will no longer be separated from him, i.e. 'We will be with him forever.' In other parts of the Bible, including in *Promise of God's Spirit*, the imagery of clouds is used when the Messiah ('Promised Savior') comes back; however, we do not want to confuse the audience with this imagery if it conveys the wrong idea.

In order to avoid a misunderstanding of the motive behind the believers sending Paul and Silas away, we have included the phrase 'for their own protection.'

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same words or phrases you have been using throughout the story set for **Promised Savior, belief/believe, believer, God's Spirit, turned (away) from... and heaven.**

Continue to use the same words or phrases you have been using throughout the story set for **descendants of Abraham.**

CHURCH FORMATION ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Boldness in the face of persecution

Leaders encouraging/mentoring other leaders

Worship of the one true God

Priscilla and Aquila

Acts 18:1-11; 18-28

Based on NLT (2004)

Transition

Paul did not spend much time in Athens before he moved on.

Acts 18:1-3

So Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he met a descendant of Abraham* named Aquila,...who had recently arrived from the capital of the kingdom, Rome, with his wife, Priscilla. They had left...when the king deported all of Abraham's descendants from Rome. Paul lived and worked with them, because they were tentmakers just like him.

Acts 18:4-8

...Paul went to Abraham's descendants' place of prayer*, trying to convince them...that Jesus was the Promised Savior*. But when they opposed and insulted him, Paul shook the dust from his clothes to show them that God was angry with them, and said, "Your blood is upon your own heads—I am innocent. From now on I will go speak to those who are not descendants of Abraham."...As Paul shared about Jesus, many people in Corinth...became believers,* and were baptized*.

Acts 18:9-11

One night Jesus spoke to Paul in a vision* and told him, "Don't be afraid! Speak out! Don't be silent! For I am with you, and no one will attack and harm you, for many people in this city belong to me." So Paul stayed there for the next year and a half, teaching the message from God.

Acts 18:12-17

But later, some of Abraham's descendants came together against Paul and brought him before the governor for judgment. They accused Paul of "persuading people to worship God in ways that are contrary to our law."

But just as Paul started to make his defense, the governor turned to Paul's accusers and said, "Listen, Abraham's descendants, if this were a case involving some wrongdoing or a serious crime, I would have a reason to accept your case. But since it is merely a question of words and names and your religious law, take care of it yourselves. I refuse to judge such matters." And he threw them out of the courtroom.

The crowd then grabbed...the leader of the place of prayer, and beat him right there in the courtroom. But the governor paid no attention. Paul stayed in Corinth for some time after that, then said good-bye to the brothers and sisters and went to a nearby town...

Words/Phrases to Consider

Please see the glossary for information on the following terms:

Baptism*

Abraham's descendants*

Followers/Believers*

Place of prayer* may replace Synagogue

Vision*

Promised Savior*

Story Crafting

Several names have been omitted from the first few verses, and Rome is used in place of Italy in order to simplify the story. We've also added the information that Rome was the capital of the kingdom, because Rome appears several times in this story set.

Telling/teaching the message from God, speaking

The word 'preach' used in the original text means that he strongly urged or warned them. You may choose to use a word that also includes the connotation of warning or urging. Throughout this story set, we have changed the word 'preach' to a word with less religious connotation. Most of the time, we have replaced 'preach' with 'speak' or 'tell' (which often is actually a more literal translation); but where we have used a different word, we have noted why. In this case, 'teaching' is the word used in the NLT.

Message from God

'Word of God' is a figure of speech that may not be understood if translated literally into another language, so we have simplified the phrase, made it more specific for those who may not understand what the message was about, and retained its meaning by saying 'message from God (about Jesus).'

Lord

In this story, all references to 'Lord' refer to Jesus, so we have used Jesus' name, as 'Lord' may be an unfamiliar term to someone with little biblical background. We have chosen not to use "master" as a substitute for "Lord" because here it seems to be used more as a name for Jesus.

Intra-Story Cohesion

This story is meant to be the first in an "Acts, Part 2" story set in which the first story set (Church Formation Set) ends with Paul in Athens and the Return stories. If you use this set immediately after the Church Formation Set, you may choose to omit the Return story from the first set and use it at the end of this set. We have kept terms and phrases consistent throughout both story sets, and although you may choose different terms, be sure to keep your terms consistent throughout the two sets.

If you are considering a story or stories from the Epistle to the Corinthian Church, then you will want to include this story for the necessary background narrative to the Epistle.

Worldview

Shook the dust from his clothes is an idiomatic phrase that means that Paul was trying to show them that God was angry with them. You may add the phrase that we included in italics, or you may simply delete this phrase if it causes more confusion.

Your blood is upon your own heads is an idiomatic expression that means that the people themselves are responsible for the punishment they will receive from God. If this phrase is not understood in your culture, you may need to say 'You are responsible for'

Brothers and sisters is a phrase that refers to fellow believers. If your audience's culture or background does not allow for the use of kinship terminology here, you may need to refer to fellow believers simply as 'fellow believers,' or by another appropriate title.

CHURCH FORMATION ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Abundant evangelism, Home meetings, Gospel for all peoples

Apollos

Acts 18:18-27, Romans 16:3, 1 Corinthians

3:1-4:21; 16:19, 2 Timothy 4:19

Based on NLT (2004)

Acts 18:18-23

Later, Paul, Priscilla, and Aquila traveled to Ephesus, and Paul spoke the message from God. Priscilla and Aquila stayed in Ephesus while Paul continued traveling to visit and strengthen the believers.*

Acts 18:24-26

Meanwhile, a descendant of Abraham* named Apollos, an eloquent speaker who knew the Scriptures* well, had arrived in Ephesus...He had been taught the way of Jesus, and he taught others about Jesus with an enthusiastic spirit and with accuracy. However, he knew only about John's baptism*. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him preaching boldly in Abraham's descendants' place of prayer,* they took him aside and explained the way of God even more accurately.

Acts 18:27

Apollos had been thinking about going to Corinth, and the brothers and sisters in Ephesus encouraged him to go. They wrote to the believers at Corinth, asking them to welcome him. When he arrived there, he proved to be of great benefit to those who, by God's grace*, had believed.

Romans 16:3, 1 Corinthians 3:1-4:21; 16:19, 2 Timothy 4:19

Paul and Apollos continued to work in various parts of the region. Later, Paul wrote a letter to the church in Corinth. He warned them that they were not to be prideful about whom they followed. He told them "Apollos and I are only servants of God who helped you believe. I planted the seed and Apollos watered it. But God is the One who made it grow." Paul also kept contact with his friends, Priscilla and Aquila and greeted them whenever he wrote letters to their area.*

Words/Phrases to Consider

Please see the glossary for a full explanation of these words.

Believers*

Grace*

Church*

(John's) Baptism*

John's baptism was different than the baptism that believers underwent to show that they now followed Jesus. John's baptism showed that the people had repented of their sins and were brought into a new spiritual condition. (Matt. 3:6, Mark 1:4-5, Luke 3:3, Acts 1:22, 10:37, 13:24, 18:25, 19:3-4). After Pentecost, baptism became the symbol not only of a person's confession and repentance of sins, but of his/her new spiritual relationship with Jesus. If you do not want to introduce the term "John's baptism," you could simply say "he did not fully understand the way to God through Jesus," or you could add 'John's baptism of *repentance*.'

Story Crafting

Lord

In this story, all references to 'Lord' refer to Jesus, so we have used Jesus' name, as 'Lord' may be an unfamiliar term to someone with little biblical background.

Way of God/Way of Jesus

If this phrase translated literally is not easily understood, you might include additional implicit information such as "the way that God has shown (that people should take)."

This is an example of how to include Epistle material into stories from the book of Acts. As you include more stories from the Epistles, the audience can refer back to these stories as narrative 'hooks' upon which they can hang the Epistles.

Intra-Story Cohesion

This story, as crafted above, is best understood by an audience who has heard the story of Jesus' baptism by John.

WORLDVIEW

Brothers and sisters is a phrase that refers to fellow believers. If your audience's culture or background does not allow for the use of kinship terminology here, you may need to refer to fellow believers simply as 'fellow believers,' or by another appropriate title.

CHURCH FORMATION ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

The church as the family of God, Correcting false teaching, Follow up with new churches

Baptism in Jesus' Name

Acts 19:1-10

Based on NLT (2004)

Acts 19:1-7

While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the interior regions until he reached Ephesus *again*, where he found several believers*. “Did you receive *God’s Spirit** when you *became believers?*” he asked them.

“No,” they replied, “we haven’t even heard *about God’s Spirit.*”

“Then what baptism* did you experience?” he asked.

And they replied, “The baptism of John.”

Paul said, “John’s baptism *was only to show that you had turned from your sins* and turned towards God.* But John himself told the people to believe in the one who would come later, meaning Jesus.” As soon as *these believers whom Paul had found in Ephesus* heard this, they were baptized in *Jesus’ name.* Then when Paul laid his hands on them, *God’s Spirit filled* them, and they spoke in *other languages* and *proclaimed God’s message.* There were about twelve men in all.

Acts 19:8-10

Then Paul went to *Abraham’s descendants* place of prayer** and preached boldly for the next three months...But some became stubborn, rejecting his message and publicly speaking against the *Way of Jesus.* So Paul left the *place of prayer* and took the believers with him. Then he held daily discussions at *a large lecture hall.* This went on for the next two years, so that people throughout the province of Asia—both *Abraham’s descendants* and *others*—heard the *message about Jesus.*

Words/Phrases to Consider

Please see the glossary for more information on the following terms:

God's Spirit*

Followers/Believers*

Baptism* (For John's Baptism*, please see *Apollos*) Remember that baptism in Acts includes the act of God's Spirit coming to dwell in the believer. Paul makes that clear to the believers by contrasting this new baptism with John's and then by the act of baptizing them with this 'new' baptism which includes the indwelling of God's Spirit.

Abraham's descendants*

Place of Prayer*

Sin*

Story Crafting

Turned from their sins and turned towards God is the phrase used to describe the repentance that is shown when someone is baptized. Be sure that your audience understands the figure of speech of turning from something and then turning to something.

God's Spirit filled them is used in place of "God's Spirit came on them" to better describe what actually happens.

They spoke in other languages

Translator's Handbook states that speaking in other tongues does not necessarily constitute speaking foreign languages, but "speaking in a strange manner by using unknown or unrecognized sounds."

Proclaimed God's message

Many texts translate this phrase as 'prophesied.' However, 'prophesied' in the Bible has more than just the connotation of foretelling. Literally it means to proclaim God's message, so we have used that phrase here.

The way of Jesus

In most texts it is simply stated as 'the Way.' TEV has expanded this to read 'the way of the Lord.'

a large hall is the simplified phrase for the place where they met.

Intra-Story Cohesion

John's baptism **was only to show that you had turned from your sins and turned towards God** is the same expression for repentance that stories in previous story sets have used. Be sure that you are using similar expressions each time you describe such concepts and ceremonies to help your audience remember and understand the concepts, and connect them with previous stories.

Worldview

Laid hands on them...

In this case, laying on of hands was symbolic of spiritual blessing flowing from one person to another. You may need to make this explicit in the story if your audience does not understand this concept.

Some may think that a re-baptism takes place here, but these people had never been properly baptized as followers of Jesus.

CHURCH FORMATION ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Leadership/mentoring, Baptism, Indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Gospel for all peoples

□ On the Name of Jesus

Acts 19:11-22

Based on NLT (2004)

Acts 19:11-12

During this time, God gave Paul the power to perform unusual miracles*. When *pieces of cloth* that had merely touched his skin were placed on sick people, they were healed of their diseases, and evil spirits* were expelled.

Acts 19:13-16

A group of *Abraham's descendants** was traveling from town to town casting out evil spirits.* They tried to use the name of...Jesus in their incantation, saying, "I command you in the name of Jesus, whom Paul *proclaims*, to come out!"... But one time when they tried it, the evil spirit replied, "I know Jesus, and I know Paul, but who are you?" Then the man with the evil spirit leaped on them, overpowered them, and attacked them with such violence that they fled from the house, naked and battered.

Acts 19:17-20

The story of what happened spread quickly all through Ephesus, to *Abraham's descendants* and *others* alike. A solemn fear descended on the city, and the name of...Jesus was greatly honored. Many who became believers confessed their sinful* practices. A number of them who had been practicing sorcery brought their incantation books and burned them at a public bonfire. The value of the books was several million dollars. So the message about *Jesus* spread widely and had a powerful effect.

Acts 19:21-22

Afterward Paul felt compelled by the Spirit* to go over to Macedonia and *Corinth* before going to Jerusalem. "And after that," he said, "I must go on to Rome, *the capital of the kingdom!*" He sent his two assistants, *one of them* Timothy....., ahead to Macedonia while he stayed a while longer in *Ephesus*.

Words/Phrases to Consider

Please see the glossary for information on the following terms:

Miracles*

Spirit* (referring to God's Spirit/Holy Spirit)

Believers*

Religious leader*

Sin*

Evil Spirits*

Story Crafting

Incantation refers to a magical formula.

Proclaims is used in place of "preach" in this story.

Sorcery refers to magic. If it seems difficult to find one word to adequately translate 'magic,' you may use a descriptive phrase such as 'hurt (or heal) people by using dark words' or "cause harm by using secret object." (Translator's Handbook)

The name of Jesus

This phrase, translated literally, may not carry the full, intended meaning. You may choose to say something along the lines of

- 1) 'by the name/authority of Jesus'
- 2) 'by the authority that Jesus has given me'
- 3) 'by the power which is in the name of Jesus'

Achaia/Greece/Corinth

Achaia is the area we now know as Greece. Corinth is the church in that location. Use place names that are already familiar from other stories if possible.

Rome, *the capital of the kingdom*

We have used the location name of Rome because it returns in later stories; however, we have described it as "the capital of the kingdom" to make it easier to remember. If it is easier for your audience, you may just delete "Rome" and simply use the description.

Timothy

Only Timothy's name is included because he returns in other stories.

Lord

In this story, all references to 'Lord' refer to Jesus, so we have used Jesus' name, as 'Lord' may be an unfamiliar term to someone with little biblical background.

Intra-Story Cohesion

Ephesus, Macedonia, Corinth, Jerusalem

These locations have been mentioned in previous stories. Use the same name or description of each location in each story. You may need to be sure your audience realizes that Paul is still in Ephesus when this story occurs.

Worldview

It would be a good idea to have an understanding of your audience's view on evil spirits. What practices in your culture are considered sorcery? Is this considered a bad or good thing in the culture?

Several million dollars should be changed to an equivalent amount in local currency.

CHURCH FORMATION ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

The work of the Holy Spirit, Respect for God and the Holy Spirit, Integrity in ministry, Following the leading of the Holy Spirit

Trouble in Ephesus

Acts 19:23-41

Based on NLT (2004)

Transition (Acts 19:21-22)

Timothy had gone on to Macedonia, but before Paul left Ephesus, some trouble started that detained him.

Acts 19:23-27

About that time, serious trouble developed in Ephesus concerning the Way of Jesus. It began with...a silversmith who had a large business manufacturing silver shrines of...*the city's goddess of fertility*. He kept many craftsmen busy. He called them together, along with others employed in similar trades, and addressed them as follows:

"Gentlemen, you know that our wealth comes from this business. But as you have seen and heard, this man Paul has persuaded many people that handmade gods aren't really gods at all. And he's done this not only here in Ephesus but throughout the entire province! Of course, I'm not just talking about the loss of public respect for our business. I'm also concerned that the temple of the great goddess...will lose its influence and that...this magnificent goddess worshiped throughout the province of Asia and all around the world—will be robbed of her great prestige!"

Acts 19:28-31

At this their anger boiled, and they began shouting, "Great is *our goddess!*" Soon the whole city was filled with confusion. Everyone rushed to the *place where the people in the city gathered*, dragging along...Paul's traveling companions. Paul wanted to go in, too, but the believers* wouldn't let him. Some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, also sent a message to him, begging him not to risk his life by entering the *gathering place*.

Acts 19:32

Inside, the people were all shouting, some one thing and some another. Everything was in confusion. In fact, most of them didn't even know why they were there...

Acts 19:35-41

At last the mayor was able to quiet them down enough to speak. "Citizens of Ephesus," he said. "Everyone knows that Ephesus is the official guardian of the temple of *our great goddess*, whose image fell down to us from *the sky*. Since this is an undeniable fact, you should stay calm and not do anything rash. You have brought these men here, but they have stolen nothing from the temple and have not spoken against our goddess. "If...the craftsmen have a case against them, the courts are in session and the officials can hear the case at once. Let them make formal charges. And if there are complaints about other matters, they can be settled in a legal assembly. I am afraid we are in danger of being charged with rioting by the Roman government, since there is no cause for all this commotion. And if Rome demands an explanation, we won't know what to say. Then he dismissed them, and they dispersed.

Words/Phrases to Consider

Believers*

Story Crafting

The Way of Jesus

In most texts it is simply stated as ‘the Way.’ We have expanded the phrase to include the implicit information that it refers to “the Way of Jesus” or “the Way shown by Jesus.”

The sky

This is the way we’ve translated “heaven,” which in this context means “the sky” or “from the gods.” We have not used “heaven” because we don’t want people to think that this goddess came from the heaven where the Creator God lives.

The temple in this story refers to the place where Artemis, the goddess of fertility, was worshipped. Use an appropriate word in your culture for the worship place.

Gods/goddesses

Some languages have a word for a god which is not the “creator/almighty God”. For example, English differentiates the all-powerful, sovereign God from a “lesser” god by the use of a capital letter. The word for the “lesser” god should be used when talking about the special god of Ephesus. When talking about the Creator God (Yahweh), use a term that is recognized as a title for the all-powerful, creator, sovereign God so that there are no misunderstandings about which god is being referred to.

Roman government

If you have used the name of the kingdom of Rome in previous stories, you can probably use “Roman government.” If you have not, you may want to say something like “central/main government.”

She was the goddess of fertility is the way that we referred to “Artemis,” the special goddess of the Ephesians. We have left out her name for ease of retelling, and included the fact that she was the goddess of fertility. You may include that information if you think your audience would benefit from knowing this.

their anger boiled

This is an idiomatic expression that may not translate exactly. Look for a phrase that means ‘got very angry.’

Several names in this story have been left out for ease of retelling.

the place where the people in the city gathered/gathering place

The amphitheatre or theatre, in the days of this story, were places used for public events or town meetings.

Paul wanted to go in

The NEB says “Paul wanted to appear before the assembly.” This helps explain a bit more why it might be dangerous for him inside with the angry group.

Tried to explain the situation

This Jewish leader was likely speaking in defense of the Jews, not necessarily in defense of Paul.

Mayor

Some translations say city clerk. Use an appropriate title for an important city official who gives decrees in a public assembly.

Intra-Story Cohesion

Refer to the Roman government in the same way that you have in previous stories. Your audience will best understand these stories if they have an idea of the political situation of the day.

Worldview

Most audiences will understand the mob mentality of the citizens of Ephesus, and that the government could get angry with them for rioting. If they do not, you may need to explain in the story that rioting was illegal and punishable by the Roman government.

CHURCH FORMATION ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Persecution and issues surrounding it, especially the economics and emotions associated with idolatry

Eutychus

Acts 20:1-12

Based on NLT (2004)

Acts 20:1-6

When the uproar was over, Paul sent for the believers* and encouraged them. Then he said good-bye and left for Macedonia. While there, he encouraged the believers in all the towns he passed through. Then he traveled down to *Corinth*, where he stayed for three months. He was preparing to sail back *to another area...* when he discovered a plot by some of *Abraham's descendants** against his life, so he decided to return *by a different route.*

Several men, *from the cities where he had visited, including Timothy*, were traveling with Paul.... They went on ahead and waited for *Paul and his companion*. Sometime later, *Paul and his companion* boarded a ship...and five days later joined *the others in a city* where *they* stayed a week.

Acts 20:7-12

On the first day of the week, *they* gathered with the local believers to share in *a meal together, remembering how Jesus had sacrificed his life for them**. Paul was *speaking* to them, and since he was leaving the next day, he kept talking until midnight. The upstairs room where *they* met was lighted with many flickering lamps. As Paul spoke on and on, a young man,...sitting on the windowsill, became very drowsy. Finally, he fell sound asleep and dropped three stories to his death below. Paul went down, bent over him, and took him into his arms. "Don't worry," he said, "he's alive!" Then they all went back upstairs *and* shared in the *special meal Jesus told them to have to remember how Jesus sacrificed his life for the sins of all men*, and ate together. Paul continued talking to them until dawn, and then he left. Meanwhile, the young man was taken home unhurt, and everyone was greatly relieved.

Words/Phrases to Consider

Believers*

We have referred to Jesus' followers as "followers" until Pentecost, at which time we have changed to "believers" to emphasize the importance of faith when someone chooses to follow Jesus."

Abraham's descendants*

Remembering how Jesus had sacrificed his life for them Lord's Supper* Different translations say different things, but most commentators agree that the Lord's Supper occurred here.

Story Crafting

We've used location names that we've used in previous stories, and several location, religious festival, and personal names have been left out for ease of retelling.

We've chosen to include Paul waiting in Ephesus until after the religious festival to show that Paul respected the tradition from which he came.

For story purposes, you may change the "we" to "Paul," "Paul and his companion," or "Paul and Luke." We have chosen to omit Luke's name because he does not appear again in this story set; however, you may include his name if you wish.

Speaking is the way we have chosen to translate 'preaching,' (See note in *Priscilla and Aquila*)

Intra-story Cohesion

Use the same location names and glossary words that you used in previous stories.

CHURCH PLANTING ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Fellowship with other believers, Lord's Supper, Teaching for believers, Signs and wonders

Goodbye in Ephesus

Acts 20:13-38

Based on NLT (2004)

Acts 20:2, 13-15

Paul and his companions continued to travel throughout Asia. Sometimes Paul traveled alone, but would meet up with the others as they went from place to place encouraging the groups of believers.*

Acts 20:16-17

Paul had decided to sail on past Ephesus, for he... was hurrying to get to Jerusalem, if possible, in time for *a religious festival of the descendants of Abraham**. But when *he came near Ephesus*,...he sent a message to the *leaders of the church** at Ephesus, asking them to come and meet him.

Acts 20:18-21

When they arrived he declared, “You know that from the day I set foot in the province of Asia until now I have done *Jesus’* work humbly and with many tears. I have endured the trials that came to me...*publicly and in your homes, I gave one message for all people: the necessity of turning from sin** and turning to God, and of *believing** in...Jesus.

Acts 20:22-24

“And now I am *drawn by...God’s Spirit** to go to Jerusalem...*and the Spirit* tells me in city after city that jail and suffering lie ahead. But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by...Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about *how God has shown his love for us by accepting us as his people through Jesus and forgiving our sin.* (the wonderful grace* of God.)

Acts 20:25-32

“And now I know that...you...will *never* see me again...So guard yourselves and God’s people,... His church...*God’s Spirit has given you this task as leaders of the church. You must teach and lead the believers, because...I know that false teachers,...will come in among you after I leave, not sparing the group.* Even some men from your own group will *tell lies...in order to persuade people to follow them.* Watch out! Remember the three years I was with you...And now I entrust you to God *knowing that the message about God’s goodness to you in his plan of salvation through Jesus will take care of you and cause you to become strong.*”

Acts 20:33-35

“*In the three years I was with you...I have never coveted anyone’s silver or gold or fine clothes. You know that I have worked to supply my own needs and even the needs of those who were with me... You should remember the words of...Jesus: ‘If a person gives to someone else, he is happier than if he just receives from someone.’*”

Acts 20:36-38

When he had finished speaking, he...prayed with them. They all cried as they embraced and kissed him good-bye. They were sad most of all because he had said that they would never see him again. Then they escorted him down to the ship.

Words and Phrases to Consider

Please see the glossary for information on the following terms:

Believers*

Descendants of Abraham*

Church*

Sin*

Believe*

God's Spirit*

Grace* in this context refers to God's love for us in his plan of salvation through Jesus, so we have unpacked this meaning in the story.

Story Crafting

Paul's message has been condensed for re-tellability. There are points in his message that pertain to church formations: faithfulness in sharing the gospel, meeting publicly and in homes, clarity in the truth that he had taught (turning from sin and turning to God – God's grace), God's Spirit in directing the leadership of the church, being on guard against false teaching, and self support and giving.

Festival of the descendants of Abraham (Festival of Pentecost)

It is not necessary to name the festival unless you plan to connect the festivals throughout your stories. This festival came in celebration of the harvest. It is during this festival that the disciples were gathered awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit after Jesus' ascension.

Leaders

Be sure to remain consistent in what you call the church leaders. You may choose to call them older leaders or church leaders. The term actually comes from Judaism. At this time in the early church, the name was not used in a technical sense to describe church organization. You may choose to use a word that is used in your culture for "religious leader," but be sure that this word is general enough that it can refer to more than just that religion's leadership.

Good News in this story is explained, but if the meaning or 'kind' of Good News is not explained in the story, you may want to include an explanation such as "the Good News about Jesus."

....In order **to persuade people to follow them** is used in place of the hard to understand idiom "draw a following."

Group is used in place of 'flock,' since your audience may not understand the allusion to sheep and shepherds.

We have translated "build you up" as **cause you to become strong** because 'building up' is an idiom that may not translate literally in all languages.

If a person gives to someone else, he is happier than if he just receives from someone. This is the way we have rendered "It is more blessed to give than to receive," because this sentence may be difficult for people to understand.

The term "Lord" has been omitted from this story because it often has a connotation that is not accurate in reference to the Bible. Where it refers to "Jesus" we have simply said "Jesus."

turn from...turn to...

Idioms often do not translate well into another language. For example, you may need to work with your story crafter to determine wording that communicates better to your hearers the meaning of the idioms 'turn from' and 'turn to.'

Intra-Story Cohesion

Be sure to use the same location names and same key words as in previous stories.

Worldview

They all cried as they embraced and kissed him good-bye may be a culturally inappropriate thing to do among men in your culture. If this is the case, you may consider omitting this section, or simply state that they were sad to see him go.

CHURCH PLANTING ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Lay leadership, Sound teaching, giving, MAWL (model, assist, watch, and leave)

Paul goes to Jerusalem

Acts 21:1-15

Based on NLT (2004)

Acts 21:1-3

After saying farewell to the...*church* leaders in Ephesus, Paul and his companions sailed away... finally stopping in the city where the ship was to unload its cargo.*

Acts 21:4-6

They went ashore, found the local believers, and stayed with them a week. These believers were guided by God's Spirit* to tell Paul that he should not go on to Jerusalem. When they returned to the ship at the end of the week, the entire church group, including women and children, left the city and came down to the shore with them. There they knelt, prayed, and said their farewells. Then they went aboard, and the local believers returned home.*

Acts 21:7-8

...Paul and his companions sailed on and then made another stop at...the home of Philip, a speaker of the good news about Jesus and one of the seven men who had been chosen to distribute food...

Acts 21:10-12

Several days later, while Paul was at Philip's house, a man named Agabus gave Paul a special message from God...*He came over, took Paul's belt, and bound his own feet and hands with it. Then he said, "God's Spirit declares, 'So shall the owner of this belt be bound by the religious leaders* in Jerusalem and turned over to the government leaders.'" When they heard this, they and the local believers all begged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.*

Acts 21:13-15

But he said, "Why all this weeping? You are breaking my heart! I am ready not only to be jailed at Jerusalem but even to die for the sake of...Jesus." When it was clear that they couldn't persuade him, they gave up and said, "God's will be done." After this Paul and his companions packed their things and left for Jerusalem.

Words/Phrases to Consider

Please see the glossary for information on the following terms:

Church*

God's Spirit*

Believers*

Religious Leaders*

Story Crafting

guided by God's Spirit to tell

Some translations use "prophesied" here. Others say "prompted by the Holy Spirit" or "through the Spirit."

speaker of the good news

Some translations call Philip an evangelist. In New Testament usage, an 'evangelist' was one who preached the Good News. We are using the term 'speak' for 'preach' because of the religious connotations that 'preach' carries.

Luke, the writer of Acts and Paul's companion, makes himself known in this passage through the use of the pronoun "we." Throughout this passage, the plural forms have been changed to third person (they / them / their) to aid in storytelling.

v. 1-3 *finally stopping in the city where...*

In storytelling, it may not be necessary to name every port. If you want to cover Paul's journeys by using maps, remember that reading maps is a learned skill, just as reading is a learned skill.

Religious leaders/government leaders (Jews/Gentiles)

We've simplified this to religious leaders and government leaders. It's best to keep it simple unless your group has a good understanding of the political situation of the day.

You are breaking my heart

This is an idiom that may not translate literally into another language. A more usual expression would be "you are causing me to suffer so much."

God's will be done

We have replaced "the Lord's" with God's because in this context, "Lord" refers to God, and the word "Lord" may not be easily understood by the audience.

Intra-story Cohesion

Include the same location names as you have in previous stories. Philip is mentioned first in the story "Seven Men Chosen to Serve."

If your audience has heard all the Acts stories, they will probably understand the political situation of the day, and thus understand that religious leaders and government leaders were different.

CHURCH PLANTING ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Extraordinary prayer, Bold response to persecution, Spiritual gifts

Trouble in Jerusalem

Acts 21:17-40

Based on NLT (2004)

Transition

Even though he was warned of problems in Jerusalem, Paul felt God's Spirit leading him to go on to Jerusalem, so he set off with a group of believers*.*

Acts 21:17-19

When *they* arrived, the brothers and sisters in Jerusalem welcomed *them* warmly. *Then* Paul went...to meet with James, and all the *leaders* of the Jerusalem church* were present. After greeting them, Paul gave a detailed account of the things God had accomplished among *those who are not Abraham's descendants** through his ministry.

Acts 21:20-21

After hearing this, they praised God. And then they said, "You know, dear brother, how many thousands of *Abraham's descendants* have also believed, and they all follow the *religious laws* very seriously. But *Abraham's descendants who are* believers here in Jerusalem have been told that you are teaching all of *Abraham's descendants* who live *outside of our nation* to turn their backs on...*our* customs..."

Acts 21:23-26

In order to help avoid rumors, the leaders asked Paul to go with some of Abraham's descendants to their place of worship to complete some ritual purification ceremonies as was their custom. Paul agreed.* But those believers who were not Abraham's descendants were not held to these same rituals.

So Paul went to the place of worship the next day with the other men to complete the seven day ritual.

Acts 21:26-32

Just before the seven days ended, some of Abraham's descendants...saw Paul in the place of worship and roused a mob against him. They grabbed him, yelling,...*"This is the man who preaches against our people everywhere and tells everybody to disobey our religious laws. He speaks against the place of worship—and even defiles this holy place by bringing in those who are not Abraham's descendants."* (Earlier in the city they had seen Paul with someone not from Abraham's descendants, and the people assumed that Paul had brought him into the place of worship, although he had not.)...The whole city was rocked by these accusations, and a great riot followed. Paul was grabbed and dragged out of the *place of worship*, and immediately the gates were closed behind him. As they were trying to kill him, word reached the commander of the Roman regiment that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. He immediately called out his soldiers... and ran down among the crowd. When the mob saw the commander and the troops coming, they stopped beating Paul.

Acts 21:33-36

Then the commander arrested him and ordered him bound with...chains. He asked the crowd who he was and what he had done. Some shouted one thing and some another. Since he couldn't find out the truth in all the uproar and confusion, he ordered that Paul be taken to the fortress. As Paul reached the stairs, the mob grew so violent the soldiers had to lift him to their shoulders to protect him. And the crowd followed behind, shouting, "Kill him, kill him!"

Words/Phrases to Consider

Please see the glossary for information on the following terms:

God's Spirit*

Believers*

Church*

Abraham's descendants*

Place of worship*

Story Crafting

In this story, Luke is writing in the 1st person plural. For storytelling purposes, this has been changed to a third person narrative.

Leaders is the way that we have translated "elders," since it is an easier term to understand.

The **fortress** was the headquarters of the Roman army in Jerusalem. The Roman soldiers stayed there. Use a term in your language that would have an equivalent meaning.

We have omitted 'law of Moses' and the specific rituals in order not to confuse an audience that may not have a deep biblical background. We have used a more general term **religious laws**.

Purification ceremonies

This phrase will be readily understood in many areas, but, the biblical passage also contains phrases about keeping vows, so depending on your listeners, you could describe the religious ceremonies with other descriptions from the same passage.

We have omitted the specific things that those who were not Abraham's descendants were asked to abstain from to avoid distracting from the main theme that we want the listeners to understand from the story.

Commander

This word originally referred to a person in charge of 1000 men. When translating, you can look for the language's equivalent.

Intra-story cohesion

Use the same names or phrases you have been using throughout the story set for key words, location, and people's names. If you have chosen to introduce the Romans as the governing power of that time, you may include "Roman regiment." If not, you may refer to this group as "government."

Your audience will best understand this story if they understand that Abraham's descendants were bound by religious laws and customs.

Worldview

Brothers and sisters is the way that the early church referred to fellow believers. If your audience would not understand calling non-blood relatives by the title "brother and sister" you can simply say "believers."

Most cultures understand the idea of defiling a holy place by bringing in something not "pure" according to their religious tradition. However, if your audience does not understand this concept or have a similar concept in their culture, you may need to explain in the story that it was unacceptable in this culture to bring someone not from their people group into the place of worship.

CHURCH PLANTING ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Persecution, healthy churches, Giving testimony to the church of what God is doing in missions

Paul's Testimony in Jerusalem

Acts 21:37 - 22:29

Based on NLT (2004)

Transition from Acts 21:36-40

Paul was arrested; but, before he was locked up, he was allowed to address the crowd. Although they had been in a violent uproar, they quieted as Paul began to speak.

Acts 22:1-5

“Brothers and esteemed fathers,” Paul said, “listen to me as I offer my defense.” When they heard him speaking in their own language, the silence was even greater. Then Paul said, “I am a descendant of Abraham*,...and I was brought up and educated here in Jerusalem...I was carefully trained in our *religious* laws and customs. I became very zealous to honor God in everything I did, just like all of you today. And I persecuted the followers of the Way/Jesus, hounding some to death, arresting both men and women and throwing them in prison...*I even went to another city in order to bring the believers* from there to Jerusalem to put them in jail.*

Acts 22:6-10

As I was on the road, approaching *the city* about noon, a very bright light from *the sky* suddenly shone down around me, I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Paul, Paul, why are you persecuting me?’

‘Who are you...?’ I asked.

And the voice replied, ‘I am Jesus...the one you are persecuting.’...

I asked, ‘What should I do...?’

And Jesus told me, ‘Get up and go into *the city*, and there you will be told everything you are to do.’

Acts 22:11-16

“I was blinded by the intense light and had to be led by the hand...*In the city, a man named Ananias* came and stood beside me and said, ‘Brother,...regain your sight.’ And that very moment I could see him! “Then he told me, ‘...God...has chosen you...and...you are to be his witness, telling everyone what you have seen and heard. What are you waiting for? Get up and be baptized.* Have your sins* washed away by calling on the name of the *Master,* Jesus.*”

Acts 22:17-18, 21

*In Jerusalem, while praying...*I saw a vision* of Jesus saying to me, ‘Hurry! Leave Jerusalem, for the people here won’t accept your testimony about me...Go, for I will send you far away to *those who are not Abraham’s descendants!*”

Acts 22:22 -29

The crowd listened until Paul said that word. Then they all began to shout, “Away with such a fellow! He isn’t fit to live!”...The commander brought Paul inside and ordered him lashed with whips to make him confess his crime. When they tied Paul down to lash him, Paul said to the officer standing there, “Is it legal for you to whip a Roman citizen?...The soldiers who were about to interrogate Paul quickly withdrew when they heard he was a Roman citizen, and the commander was frightened because he had ordered him bound and whipped.

Words/Phrases to Consider

Please see the glossary for information on the following terms:

Abraham's descendants*

Believers*

Baptized*

Sin*

Vision*

Story Crafting

The Biblical portions chosen here were selected to give emphasis to how Paul gave testimony of his conversion. We have placed less emphasis on the politics involved with his Roman citizenry.

We have left out the name of "Damascus," as we did in the original CFT set.

The sky... is often translated "heaven" in English translations, but is the same Greek word as "sky." In this context, this word probably simply refers to the sky, rather than the place where God lives.

Lord

In this story, all references to 'Lord' refer to Jesus, so we have used Jesus' name in most instances. You also may choose to substitute 'Master' for some of the references to 'Lord,' as we did.

Persecute means 'to cause harm to,' 'to cause to suffer' or 'to be cruel to.'

Why are you persecuting me?

This is a rhetorical question that has the following implied meaning: 'It is as though you are persecuting me by persecuting my followers.' If your language needs the clarification, you may need to give the implied meaning.

Who are you...?

This was said with the Greek word usually translated 'Lord.' Paul realized that he was addressing deity, so be sure that this question is stated in a polite way in your target language.

The God of our ancestors was shortened simply to "God," to avoid confusion or any idea that this God was a different one than the one we have been talking about. However, if using "God of our ancestors" is helpful to show that Paul worshipped the same God as they did, you may include it.

INTRASTORY COHESION

The story of Paul's conversion is also told in "Paul Meets Jesus" and "Ananias Obeys God." Use the same key words and phrases that you used in those stories.

In *Stephen Is Arrested and Stoned*, we introduced Paul. We have chosen not to begin using the name Saul and later change it to Paul, as this could be confusing for oral communicators. Whatever you choose to do, you will need to be consistent throughout the story set.

The Way

We've used the phrase "way of Jesus" in earlier stories. Here, this term was an actual title that Christians of that day were given. If this phrase translated literally is not easily understood, you might include additional implicit information as you did in previous stories such as "the way that God has shown" (that people should take).

Worldview

Brothers and Esteemed Fathers

This is a formal address referring to addressing those in the group who are of Paul's age and older. When storying across languages and cultures, look for an appropriate form of address.

During this time, it was illegal to punish a Roman citizen without first having a trial, and that is why the soldiers stopped what they were doing when they heard that Paul was a Roman citizen. You may need to make this implicit information explicit in your story.

CHURCH PLANTING ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Giving testimony of conversion, Reactions to persecution

Paul Before the High Council

Acts 22:29-23:11

Based on NLT (2004)

Transition:

After learning that Paul, as a Roman citizen, should not have received the treatment he did, the soldiers withdrew and the commander was frightened.

Acts 22:30

The next day the commander ordered the leading *religious leaders** into session with Abraham's *descendants* high court*. He wanted to find out what the trouble was all about, so he released Paul to have him stand before them.

Acts 23:1-5

Gazing intently at the high *court*, Paul began:

"Brothers, I have always lived before God with a clear conscience!"

Instantly...the *chief religious leader* commanded those close to Paul to slap him on the mouth. But Paul said to him, "God will slap you, you corrupt hypocrite! What kind of judge are you to break the law yourself by ordering me struck like that?"

Those standing near Paul said to him, "Do you dare to insult God's *chief religious leader*?"

"I'm sorry, brothers. I didn't realize he was the *chief religious leader*," Paul replied, "for the Scriptures* say, 'You must not speak evil of any of your rulers.'"

Acts 23:6-10

Paul realized that some members of the high court were from one group, and some were from the opposing group, so he shouted, "...I am on trial because my hope is in the resurrection of the dead!"

This divided the *court*—the *two groups against each other*—for one group says there is no resurrection or angels* or spirits, but the *other group believes* in all of these. So there was a great uproar. Some of the teachers of religious law who were *with Paul's group* jumped up and began to argue forcefully. "We see nothing wrong with him," they shouted. "Perhaps a spirit or an angel spoke to him." As the conflict grew more violent, the *Roman* commander was afraid they would tear Paul apart. So he ordered his soldiers to go and rescue him by force and take him back to the fortress.

Acts 23:11

That night *Jesus* appeared to Paul and said, "Be encouraged, Paul. Just as you have been a witness to me here in Jerusalem, you must preach the Good News in Rome as well."

Words/Phrases to Consider

Please see the glossary for information on the following terms:

Religious leaders*

Abraham's descendants*

Scripture*

Angel*

Fortress

Conscience

This term refers to a person's basic beliefs about their behavior and values. Some languages have a special idiom for this, and in some languages it is simply equivalent to "heart."

Hypocrite/whitewashed wall

This is an idiomatic expression that may stand for hypocrite, or someone who looks different on the outside (or pretends to be a certain way) than what he really is on the inside. Look for a word or idiom understandable to your listeners.

Story Crafting

This story is not really a "stand-alone" story. It is rather one of several stories that show the different situations in which Paul is persecuted in the final parts of his journeys. As you craft, you may still choose to omit some proper names; however, you may have to give a description of the words like Pharisees and Sadducees to help people understand the situation in which Paul finds himself.

Lord

In this story, the reference to 'Lord' refers to Jesus, so we have used Jesus' name, as 'Lord' may be an unfamiliar term to someone with little biblical background.

High Court is the way that we have rendered "High Council/Sanhedrin." This was the highest legal, legislative, and judicial body among the Jews.

Some members of the high court were from one group, and some were from the opposing group is the way that we have described the Pharisees and Sadducees, because remembering the titles of these two groups may be too complicated for your audience. You may use their titles if you find it is more helpful in distinguishing the two groups. Your audience should understand from the story that Paul's outburst that he believes in the resurrection of the dead is the very thing that divided these two groups, and Paul successfully created a diversion in using that statement in the meeting that ultimately led to him being rescued from it.

Pharisees

The dominant religious party, usually from the common people. They believed that people who have died would rise again some day. In previous stories, they are often simply referred to as "religious leaders," but in this story, you must distinguish between the two parties of religious leaders in some way.

Sadducees

Usually from the upper class. They did not believe that people who died would rise again. They also did not believe that Satan or angels existed.

Angels or spirits

The word 'spirits' here refers to the spirits unlike angels (who are also spirits). Therefore, you can use the same word you have been using for 'evil spirits,' or you can use a generic phrase like 'other spirits' to differentiate them from the angels.

Intra-story Cohesion

Use the same words or phrases you have been using throughout the story set for key words.

World View

Some cultural issues to explore with this story would be the political and religious systems of your country and how they work together. Ask: Do the religious and civil governments function separately? Who makes decisions related to religious matters? What is considered a religious matter? A civil matter? You could also explore the culture's views on resurrection of the dead. Do your listeners believe this is possible? Have they heard of it before? Is it possible in their religion? Finding the answers to questions such as these will help you know how your listeners will understand this story in their own context.

Brothers, in this context, is a term of respect and an attempt by Paul to focus on his similarities with the group. Use an appropriate title in your language and culture.

CHURCH PLANTING ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Boldness in persecution, Understanding the culture you are a part of, Guidance from the Lord for direction

The Plan to Kill Paul/Escape to Caesarea

Acts 23:12-32

Based on NLT (2004)

Transition

After the uproar with the religious leaders*, Paul was confined to the fortress and Jesus assured Paul that He was going to continue to be a witness in new cities.

Acts 23:12-15

The next morning a group of Abraham's descendants* got together and made a vow not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. There were more than forty of them in the conspiracy. They went to the leading religious leaders and told them, "We have made a vow to eat nothing until we have killed Paul. So you and the high court should ask the commander to bring Paul back to the court again. Pretend you want to examine his case more fully. We will kill him on the way."

Acts 23:16-22

But Paul's nephew—his sister's son—heard of their plan and went to the fortress and told Paul. Paul called for one of the Roman officers and said, "Take this young man to the commander. He has something important to tell him." So the officer did, explaining, "Paul, the prisoner, called me over and asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you." The commander...asked, "What is it you want to

tell me?"

Paul's nephew told him, "Some of Abraham's descendants are going to ask you to bring Paul before the high court tomorrow, pretending they want to get some more information. But don't do it! There are more than forty men hiding along the way ready to ambush him. They have vowed not to eat or drink anything until they have killed him. They are ready now, just waiting for your consent."

"Don't let anyone know you told me this," the commander warned the young man.

Acts 23:23-35

Then the commander called two of his officers and ordered, "Get 200 soldiers ready to leave.... at nine o'clock tonight. Also take 200 spearmen and 70 mounted troops. Provide horses for Paul to ride, and get him safely to Governor Felix." Then he wrote a letter to the governor (Felix) describing all that had happened with Paul. The commander assured the governor that he did not think that the charges merited death or imprisonment, but that it was a religious matter of Abraham's descendants. He sent him to keep him from being killed.

So that night, as ordered, the soldiers took Paul on the long journey to where the governor was. The governor had him locked in prison in that town until his accusers could arrive.

Words/Phrases to Consider

See the glossary for a full explanation of the following words

Religious leaders*

Abraham's descendants*

High Court

This is the way we have rendered the "High Council/Sanhedrin" (see previous story)

Story Crafting

Made a vow is a simpler way of saying that the men 'bound themselves with an oath.' These vows were probably similar to a vow that said something like "So may God do to us, and more also, if we eat or drink anything until we have killed Paul."

Paul's nephew, his sister's son

In some languages, words describing familial relationships can be quite complicated. Find a term that most closely matches "sister's son."

200 soldiers, 200 spearmen, 70 mounted troops

You may choose to omit the exact number of troops, or say "470 troops." You simply want to show that the commander was willing to go to great lengths to protect Paul.

Letter to the governor

You may choose to give the contents of the letter, or you may simplify it for re-telling purposes.

City names (Caesarea, Antipatris)

These names were omitted for re-telling purposes, but you may want to indicate that it was a long journey in that time period. The trip to Antipatris during the night was 40 miles. Caesarea was 64 miles from Jerusalem.

Intra-story Cohesion

Use the same words or phrases you have been using throughout the story set for important words.

Worldview

Like the previous story, this story provides an opportunity to explore the political culture of the day, and compare and contrast it to the political culture of your audience.

CHURCH PLANTING ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Persecution, Importance of family relationships during persecution

Paul Appears Before Felix

Acts-24:1-27

Based on NLT (2004)

Transition

Paul was held in prison by Felix, the governor, until his accusers arrived.

Acts 24:1

Five days later...the *chief religious leader** arrived with some of *Abraham's descendants** leaders and a lawyer...to present their case against Paul to the governor. When Paul was called in, *the charges were presented.*

Acts 24:2-9

The lawyer stepped forward to present the charges. He politely addressed the governor, apologizing for the trouble. He then accused Paul of being a troublemaker, starting riots, and trying to desecrate Abraham's descendants' place of worship. The other descendants of Abraham who were there declared that everything the lawyer said was true.*

Acts 24:10-13

The governor then motioned for Paul to speak. Paul said, "I know, sir, that you have been a judge of *our people's* affairs for many years, so I gladly present my defense before you. You can quickly discover that I arrived in Jerusalem....to worship at the *place of worship*. My accusers never found me arguing with anyone *there*, nor stirring up a riot ...These men cannot prove the things they accuse me of doing.

Acts 24:14-16

"But I admit that I follow the *Way of Jesus*...I worship...God..., and I firmly believe *our Scriptures.** *I wait expectantly for God in the same way as they*...Because of this, I always try to maintain a clear conscience before God and all people.

Acts 24:17-20

"After several years away, I returned to Jerusalem to help...my people and to *worship* God. My accusers saw me in the *place of worship* as I was completing a purification ceremony. There was no crowd around me and no rioting...Ask these men here what crime *Abraham's descendants'* high court found me guilty of..."

Acts 24:22-23

At that point Felix, who was quite familiar with the *Way of Jesus*...*delayed the case*...He ordered an officer to keep Paul in custody but to give him some freedom and allow his friends to visit him and take care of his needs.

Acts 24:24-26

A few days later Felix came back with his wife.... Sending for Paul, they listened as he told them about *belief** in the *promised savior** Jesus. As he reasoned with them about *how to have a right relationship* with God*, self-control and the coming *day when God would judge everyone*, Felix became frightened. "Go away for now," he replied. "When it is more convenient, I'll call for you again." He also hoped that Paul would bribe him, so he sent for him quite often and talked with him.

Acts 24:27

After two years went by in this way, Felix was succeeded by...Festus. And because Felix wanted to gain favor with *Abraham's descendants*, he left Paul in prison.

Words/Phrases to Consider

Conscience is a word that represents someone's most basic concerns about behavior and values. (Translator's Handbook) A 'clear conscience' means that he has no doubts before God about his life and decisions. You may need to unpack this meaning for your audience.

The Way may need to be specified as 'the Way that leads to Jesus,' or 'the Way of God/Jesus.'

Self-control is the ability to say no to one's desires. If your audience does not understand the term "self-control," you may unpack the meaning for them by saying "saying no to one's desires."

Please see the glossary for a full explanation of these words

Religious leader*

Abraham's descendants*

Place of Worship*

Scripture*

Belief*

Promised savior* is the word used here to replace the term "Christ," which may be an unfamiliar term to your audience.

Right relationship*

Story Crafting

Scriptures is used to replace "law and prophets," which is a specific phrase used for Jewish Scriptures, but which may not be understood by your audience.

Paul's defense

Paul's defense was shortened somewhat since monologues are hard to repeat.

Sir is a respectful address in Paul's culture. Use a title that is equivalent in your culture.

The God of our ancestors was shortened to "God" to avoid confusion of people thinking that Paul was worshipping a different God than the others. However, if using "God of our ancestors" is helpful to show that Paul was one of them, you should include it.

To help...my people and worship God

Paul had arrived in Jerusalem with money to aid his people and to offer sacrifices, but the line was simplified for easier understanding.

Coming day when God would judge everyone is the way we rendered "coming day of judgment." Your audience may not be familiar with this biblical concept, so we have unpacked the phrase to show what will happen on that day.

Intra-story cohesion

Use the same words or phrases you have been using throughout the story set for the key words.

Worldview

There are many worldview issues that could be explored in conjunction with this story. Ask questions such as, "Do you believe in a final judgment? What do you expect it to be like? Is there such a thing as house arrest in your country? Who would be placed under house arrest? What would they be allowed to do? Is it legal to bribe in your country? Who gets bribes? Who gives bribes?" These are not questions you would ask after sharing the story in a house fellowship setting, but rather questions to explore with a cultural informant before using this story in a house fellowship setting or sharing this story with others.

CHURCH PLANTING ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Boldness in persecution, Patience in sharing, Taking every opportunity to share

Paul Before Festus & Agrippa

Acts 24:27-26:32

Based on the NLT (2004)

Acts 24:27; 25:6-12

...Two years went by *with Paul imprisoned under Felix*. Then, Felix was succeeded by...Festus... Soon after Festus assumed his position, he took his seat in court and ordered that Paul be brought in. When Paul arrived, *the leaders of Abraham's descendants** from Jerusalem gathered around and made many serious accusations they couldn't prove. Paul denied the charges...*and told Festus...* "If I have done something worthy of death, I don't refuse to die. But if I am innocent, no one has a right to turn me over to these men to kill me. I appeal to *the emperor!*"

Festus conferred with his advisers and then replied, "Very well! You have appealed to *the emperor*, and to *the emperor* you will go!"

Acts 25:13-22

A few days later *Abraham's descendants' king* arrived...*to greet Festus*. During *his* stay, Festus discussed Paul's case with the king...*Festus told him*, "...the accusations made against him weren't any of the crimes I expected. Instead, it was something about their religion and a dead man named Jesus, who Paul insists is alive. I was at a loss to know how to investigate these things..."

"I'd like to hear the man myself," *the king* said...

Acts 26:1, 6, 9-23

Paul was given an opportunity to defend himself before the King... "I am on trial because of my hope in the fulfillment of God's promise made

to our ancestors...I used to...do everything I could to oppose the very name of Jesus...*I had many followers of Jesus beaten and imprisoned*. "One day, however, *Jesus spoke to me and my life changed*. *Jesus told me*, 'I am sending you to *those who are not Abraham's descendants...* so they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan* to God. Then they will receive forgiveness* for their sins* and be given a place among God's people, who are set apart by *belief** in me.' And so, King..., I obeyed that vision* from heaven*...I teach nothing except what *God's spokesmen** and Moses said would happen—that the *promised savior** would suffer and be the first to rise from the dead, and in this way announce God's light to *Abraham's descendants and others alike*."

Acts 26:24-29

Suddenly, Festus shouted, "Paul, you are insane. Too much study has made you crazy!"

But Paul replied, "I am not insane, Most Excellent Festus. What I am saying is the sober truth...King..., do you believe *God's spokesmen?* I know you do—"

The King interrupted him. "Do you think you can persuade me to become a *believer** in Jesus so quickly?"

Acts 26:30-32

Then *they* left...As they went out, they talked it over and agreed, "This man hasn't done anything to deserve death or imprisonment." And *the king* said to Festus, "He could have been set free if he hadn't appealed to *the emperor*."

Words/Phrases to Consider

Please see the glossary for more information on the following terms:

Abraham's descendants*

Satan*

Forgiveness*

Sins*

Belief*

Vision*

Heaven*

Spokesmen*

Promised Savior*

Believer*

Story Crafting

Emperor is the way that we have rendered "Caesar." This story's political climate may be complicated for your audience. The Emperor ruled the entire Roman empire, but Abraham's descendants were allowed to have their own king (hence the "king" in this story) who ruled with a limited authority. Governors were Romans who occupied the level in between emperor and king. You may use whatever terms are necessary to differentiate the three levels of government found in this story. If needed, you may use a general term such as 'highest official in the land' for 'Caesar.'

This story has been condensed from 2 chapters. Many place names have been omitted. Paul's full testimony was not included since it was told in chapter 23. This story's goal is to show that Paul wanted everyone to know of his hope in Jesus, even the leaders who were judging him.

Most excellent Festus is a title of respect for a man in authority. Use an appropriate cultural title here.

Because the King was one of Abraham's descendants, like Paul, he would have known about God's spokesmen (the prophets). That is why Paul appealed to his knowledge of this.

Intra-story Cohesion

Use the same words or phrases you have been using throughout the story set for the key words.

Your audience will best understand this story if they have a biblical background that includes knowledge of Moses. If they do not, you may want to omit this name.

CHURCH PLANTING ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Persecution, Giving testimony consistently, Obedience

Storm at Sea- Shipwreck

Acts 27:1-44

Based on NLT (2004)

Acts 27:1-2, 4-12

When the time came...*Paul, several other prisoners, and some of Paul's friends*, set sail for Rome, where the emperor was. Some time into the journey, the travel became rough...the wind was against them and they...struggled along the coast...The weather became dangerous for sea travel...,and Paul spoke to the ship's officers about it. "Men," he said, "I believe there is trouble ahead if we go on—shipwreck, loss of cargo, and danger to our lives as well." But the captain and most of the ship's crew wanted to go on instead of stopping as Paul suggested.

Acts 27:13-14, 17-26

...*The crew* thought they could make it...but the weather changed abruptly, and a wind of typhoon strength burst across the island and blew them out to sea...The terrible storm raged for many days, blotting out the sun and the stars, until at last all hope was gone. No one had eaten for a long time. Finally, Paul called the crew together and said, "Men, you should have listened to me in the first place... But take courage! None of you will lose your lives, even though the ship will go down. For last night an angel* of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me, and he said, 'Don't be afraid, Paul, for you will surely stand trial before the emperor! What's more, God in his goodness has granted safety to everyone sailing with you.' So take courage! For I believe God. It will be just as he said. But we will be shipwrecked on an island."

Acts 27:27, 29-31, 33-38

On the fourteenth night of the storm,...they were afraid they would soon be driven against the rocks along the shore...The sailors tried to abandon the ship...But Paul said to the commanding officer and the soldiers, "You will all die unless the sailors stay aboard..."

Just as day was dawning, Paul urged everyone to eat. "You have been so worried that you haven't touched food for two weeks," he said. "Please eat something now for your own good. For not a hair of your heads will perish." Then he took some bread, gave thanks to God before them all, and broke off a piece and ate it. Then everyone was encouraged and began to eat...

Acts 27:39-44

When morning dawned, they...*decided to let the ship run aground. When that happened, the ship began to break apart.* The soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners to make sure they didn't swim ashore and escape. But the commanding officer wanted to spare Paul, so he didn't let them carry out their plan. Then he ordered all who could swim to jump overboard first and make for land. The others held onto planks or debris from the broken ship. So everyone escaped safely to shore.

Words/Phrases to Consider

Please see the glossary for more information on the following term:

Angel*

Story Crafting

This story was written in the first person, plural, but for a told story, it has been changed to a third person narrative.

Many of the sailing details were omitted. Remember your audience when deciding which details to omit and which to include. If your audience is a sea-faring people, you may choose to include more sailing details.

Rome has been substituted for "Italy," because the audience should be familiar with this location name by now.

For not a hair of your heads will perish is an idiom which may not mean the same thing in another language when translated literally. Use an appropriate phrase for your audience when telling this story.

Worldview

If your audience has never lived near the sea, you may have to explain some of the sea terminology within the story.

CHURCH PLANTING ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Boldness in persecution, Keeping the faith in hard circumstances, Trusting God in what he promises

Paul on the Island of Malta

Acts 28:1-10

Based on NLT(2004)

Acts 28:1-2

Once *Paul and the others* were safe on shore, *they* learned that *they* were on *an island*. The people of the island were very kind to *them*. It was cold and rainy, so they built a fire on the shore to welcome *the shipwrecked sailors and prisoners*.

Acts 28:3-6

As Paul gathered an armful of sticks and was laying them on the fire, a poisonous snake, driven out by the heat, bit him on the hand. The people of the island saw it hanging from his hand and said to each other, "A murderer, no doubt! Though he escaped the sea, justice will not permit him to live." But Paul shook off the snake into the fire and was unharmed. The people waited for him to swell up or suddenly drop dead. But when they had waited a long time and saw that he wasn't harmed, they changed their minds and decided he was a god.

Acts 28:6-7-10

Near the shore where *they* landed was an estate belonging to...the chief official of the island. He welcomed *them* and treated *them* kindly for three days. As it happened, *the chief official's* father was ill with fever and dysentery. Paul went in and prayed for him, and laying his hands on him, he healed him. Then all the other sick people on the island came and were healed. As a result *they* were showered with honors, and when the time came to sail, people supplied *Paul and the others* with everything *they* would need for the trip.

Words and Phrases to Consider

god

Some languages have a word for a god which is not the “creator/almighty God”. For example, English differentiates the all-powerful, sovereign God from a “lesser” god by the use of a capital letter. The word or phrase for the “lesser” god should be used when talking about what the people considered Paul in this story.

Story Crafting

This story is written in first person, but is changed to third person for story-telling purposes.

Names of the location and chief official have been omitted for easier re-telling.

The word **healed** may be translated “caused him to be well,” “caused the disease to disappear,” or “caused the fever and dysentery to leave him.”¹

Worldview

In the worldview of the people in this story, just to be bitten by a snake was considered to be an indication of divine punishment, so to be protected from the bite of the snake was considered to be an indication of divine protection. You may want to make this explicit for the audience.

Laying his hands on him

This act was often done to impart healing on someone. You may specify that Paul laid his hands on the man’s head, if necessary in your language. (Be aware that some in some cultures, laying hands on the head would be offensive, so in those cultures it would be more appropriate to not specify the part of the body on which Paul laid his hands.

CHURCH PLANTING ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Man of peace, Prayer for healing, Signs and wonders

Paul in Rome

Acts 28:11-31

Based on NLT (2004)

Acts 28:11-16

It was three months after the shipwreck that *Paul and the others* set sail on another ship that had *been on* the island...*They made several stops along the way, even stopping for a week to visit some believers**. *They finally arrived in Rome*. The brothers and sisters in Rome had heard *they* were coming, and *went* to meet *them*...When Paul saw them, he was encouraged and thanked God. When *Paul* arrived in Rome, *he* was permitted to have his own private lodging, though he was guarded by a soldier.

Acts 28:17-22

Three days after Paul's arrival, he called together the local leaders of *Abraham's descendants**. He said to them, "Brothers, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Roman government, even though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our ancestors. The Romans tried me and wanted to release me, because they found no cause for the death sentence. But when *the leaders of Abraham's descendants* protested the decision, I felt it necessary to appeal to *the emperor*, even though I had no desire to press charges against my own people. I asked you to come here today so we could get acquainted and so I could explain to you that I am bound with this chain because I believe that the hope of *Abraham's descendants*—the *Promised Savior**—has already come." They replied, "We have had no letters from *your area* or reports against you from anyone who has come here. But we want to hear what you believe, for the only thing we know about this movement, [*the Way of Jesus*], is that it is denounced everywhere."

Acts 28:23-27

So a time was set, and on that day a large number of people came to Paul's lodging. He explained and testified about the Kingdom of God/*how to have a relationship with God** and tried to persuade them about Jesus from the Scriptures.* Using the law of Moses and the books of *God's spokesmen**, he spoke to them from morning until evening. Some were persuaded by the things he said, but others did not believe. And after they had argued back and forth among themselves, they left with this final word from Paul: "*God's Spirit** was right when he said to your ancestors through *God's spokesman* Isaiah..., 'Go and say to this people: When you hear what I say, you will not understand... For the hearts of these people are hardened, and their ears cannot hear, and they have closed their eyes..., and they cannot turn to me and let me heal them.'"

Acts 28:28-31

So I want you to know that this salvation* from God has also been offered to *those not a part of Abraham's descendants*, and they will accept it." For the next two years, Paul lived in Rome at his own expense. He welcomed all who visited him, boldly proclaiming the Kingdom of God/*how to have a relationship with God* and teaching about the *Master** Jesus, *the Promised savior*. And no one tried to stop him.

Words/Phrases to Consider

Please see the glossary for more information on the following terms:

Believers*

Abraham's descendants*

Promised Savior*

Relationship*

Scriptures*

Spokesman*

God's Spirit*

Salvation*

Master*

Story Crafting

This story is written in first person, but has been changed to third person for story-telling.

Brothers and sisters refers to fellow believers. Use an appropriate title for your audience.

Kingdom of God/relationship with God/allowing God to rule

The "kingdom of God" refers to the activity of God's ruling, but it especially refers to the relationship between God and his people. Use the phrase that will be best understood by your audience.

Isaiah 6:9-10 is the passage being quoted by Paul. This was shortened for easier retelling.

Hearts of these people are hardened is an idiomatic expression that describes people who choose not to listen. Use an appropriate idiomatic expression for your audience.

Intra-story Cohesion

Continue to use the same words and phrases you have been using throughout the story set for key words.

The hope of Abraham's descendants' nation refers to the fact that Abraham's descendants were waiting for the Messiah/promised savior to come. Your audience will best understand this part of the story if they have knowledge of that part of Israel's history. If they do not have such knowledge, you may say 'the promise from God of a savior.'

Your audience will best understand this story if they have an understanding of the Old Testament spokesmen (prophets) and of Moses. If they do not know Moses, you may choose to omit that name from this story.

CHURCH PLANTING ELEMENTS TO DISCUSS

Ministering in difficult circumstances, Boldness, Use of Scripture