



INTO THE FOREST: EXPLORING THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

by Loveday Alexander

Your character has a problem which they must solve. The story is the journey they go on to sort out the problem presented. On the way they may learn something new about themselves; they'll certainly be faced with a series of obstacles they'll have to overcome; there will likely be a moment near the end when all hope seems lost, and this will almost certainly be followed by a last-minute resurrection of hope, a final battle against the odds, and victory snatched from the jaws of defeat. Yorke, *Into the Woods* (Penguin 2013), p.4

SESSION ONE: TUESDAY JULY 7, 9.15 am

- Into the forest: stories and structure
- Acts — the movie! What happens in Acts?
- ACT ONE: chapters 1-7. Peter and Pentecost (Acts 1.1—2.17)
- ACT TWO: chapters 8-9: Persecution and Paul (Acts 8.1-4; 9.1-31)

SESSION TWO: WEDNESDAY JULY 8, 9.15 am

- ACT THREE: chapters 10-15: Conversion and conflict
- Peter meets Cornelius (Acts 10.1—11.18)
- Paul in Pisidia (Acts 13.46-47)
- The Apostolic Council (Acts 15.1-35)

SESSION THREE: THURSDAY JULY 9, 9.15 am

- ACT FOUR: chapters 16-20: Paul the missionary (Acts 20.13-38)
- ACT FIVE: chapters 21-26: Paul the prisoner (Acts 26.1-32)
- EPILOGUE: chapters 27-28: And so we came to Rome (Acts 28.14-31)

ACTS – THE MOVIE!! WHAT HAPPENS IN ACTS?

- TITLE? What would you call it? What would you put on the poster?
- CAST? Who's the hero? What are the star parts? Who would play them?
- GENRE? What kind of film is it? Road movie? Thriller? Documentary? Or fantasy?
- LOCATIONS? Where is it set?
- COSTUMES? Historical drama? Togas and sandals? Realistic/contemporary?
- PLOT? How does it end? Happy ending — or a bit low-key? What's the high point of the movie? What are the big scenes? Cliff-hangers?
- How do the characters change? What do they learn?

All suggestions gratefully received! Add your Post-It notes to the noticeboard — or email loveday.alexander@btinternet.com

THE FIVE-ACT STRUCTURE (Yorke 2013, p.55)

ACT ONE: The heroes are introduced in the ordinary world, and receive the call to adventure.

ACT TWO: They are reluctant at first / refuse the call, but are encouraged by a mentor to cross the threshold and enter the special world where ...

ACT THREE: they encounter tests, allies, and enemies. They approach the inmost cave, crossing a second threshold, where they take possession of their reward.

ACT FOUR: They are pursued on the road back to the ordinary world, undergoing a spiritual death before ...

ACT FIVE: they cross the third threshold, experience a resurrection and are transformed by the experience. They return with the elixir, a boon or treasure to benefit the ordinary world.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

- Justo Gonzalez, *Acts: Gospel of the Spirit* (Orbis 2001)
- Luke Timothy Johnson, *Scripture and Discernment* (Abingdon 1996)
- Luke Timothy Johnson, *Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church* (Eerdmans 2011)
- Phil Moore, *Straight to the Heart of Acts* (Monarch 2010)
- Anthony Robinson & Robert Wall, *Called to be Church: The Book of Acts for a New Day* (Eerdmans 2006)
- Tom Wright, *The Challenge of Acts* (SPCK 2024)
- John Yorke, *Into the Woods: How stories work and why we tell them* (Penguin 2013)
- **Commentaries:** there are excellent scholarly commentaries such as L.T.Johnson (Sacra Pagina 1992), Ben Witherington (Eerdmans 1998), and Carl Holladay (NTL 2016). Steve Walton is working on Acts in the *Word Biblical Commentary* series (Zondervan: vol.1 2024; vol.2 expected 2027). For a shorter commentary, I recommend Beverly Gaventa, *Acts* (Abingdon 2003). But the older classic commentaries like F.F. Bruce or William Barclay are always good value (and still available through second-hand outlets).
- **Loveday Alexander, *Acts: The People's Bible* (Bible Reading Fellowship).** My own commentary in the BRF People's Bible series is designed for daily Bible reading. Unfortunately it is now only available as an e-book or download from BRF (though you can find pre-loved copies on Amazon and Abebooks.com). Here's the link: https://www.brfresources.org.uk/products/peoples-bible-commentary-a-bible-commentary-for-every-day?_pos=2&_sid=4550a25b2&_ss=r

