

Grasping
GOD'S WORD

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When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues

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as the Spirit enabled them. ⁵ Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ Then how is it that each of us

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hears them in his own native language?

...¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"¹³

Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd:

"Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen

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carefully to what I say. ¹⁵ These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. ¹⁸ Even on my servants, both men and women, I

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will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. ¹⁹ I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. ²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. ²¹ And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' (Acts 2:1-8, 12-21, NIV)

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When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come upon you and you take them to heart wherever the LORD your God disperses you among the nations,² and when you and your children return to the LORD your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today,³ then the LORD your God will restore your

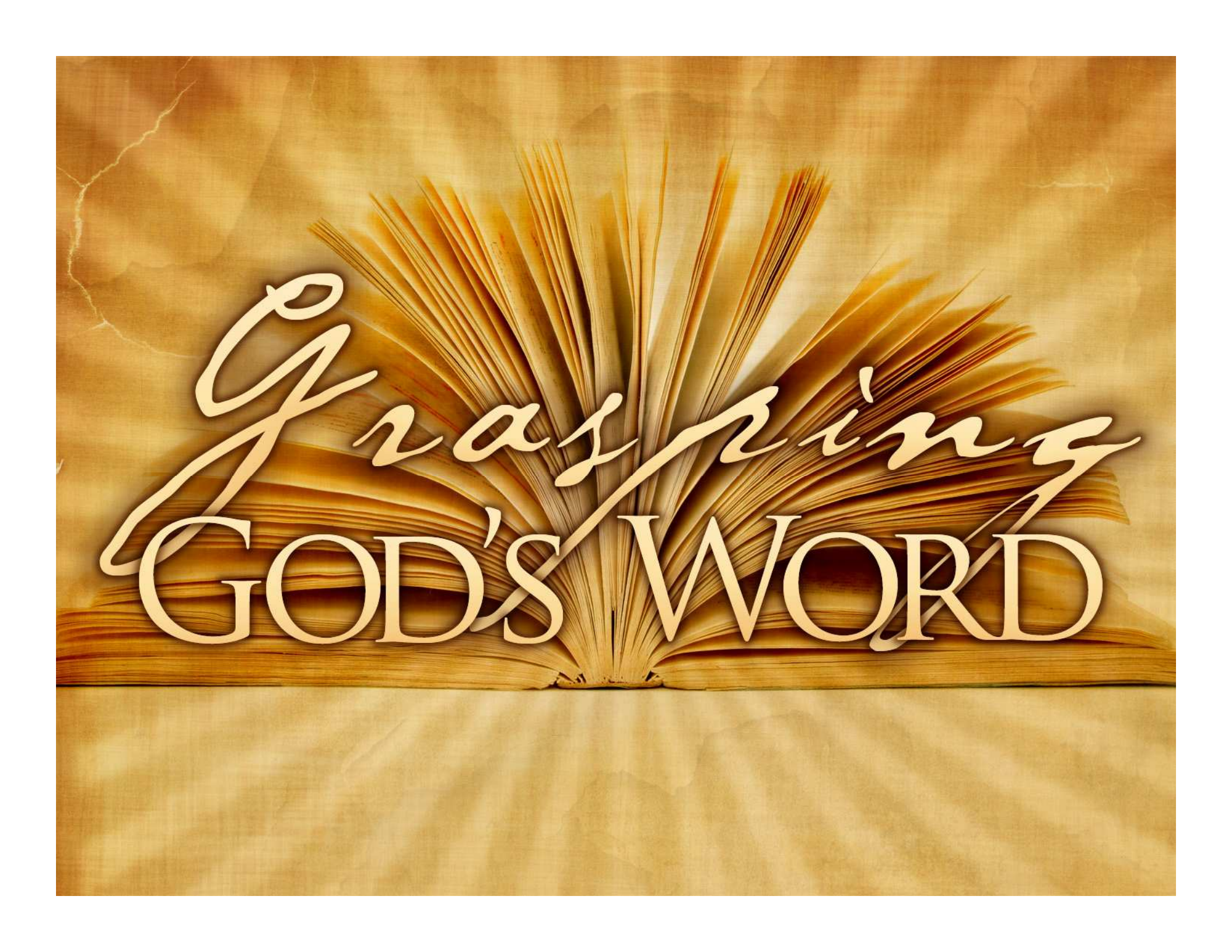
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fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you. ⁴ Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the LORD your God will gather you and bring you back. ⁵ He will bring you to the land that belonged to your fathers, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and

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numerous than your fathers. (Deut. 30:1-5, NIV)

[the LORD] said, "Listen to my words:
"When a prophet of the LORD is among
you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I
speak to him in dreams. (Num. 12:6, NIV)



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Unit 4

The Interpretive Journey New Testament

- 14. Letters
- 15. Gospels
- 16. Acts
- 17. Revelation

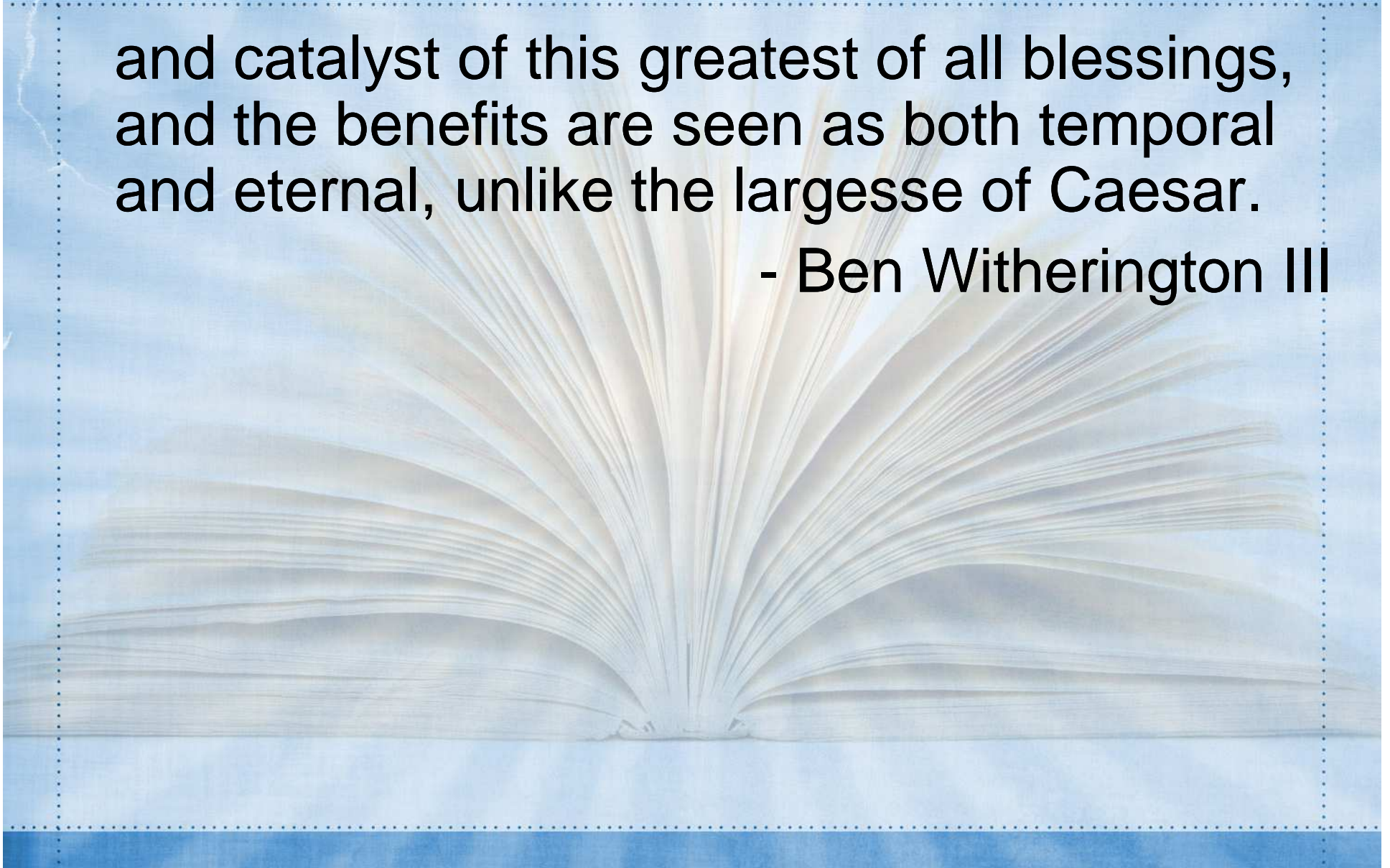
NT – Acts

Luke sees the coming of Christ as not just another epoch of history but the beginning of the eschatological age when the dominion of God breaks into human history, and the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost as the means by which this age can be properly proclaimed and inaugurated as the age of salvation for all peoples, as “a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for the glory to your people Israel” (Luke 2:32). Not the emperor but Christ is depicted as the means

NT – Acts

and catalyst of this greatest of all blessings,
and the benefits are seen as both temporal
and eternal, unlike the largesse of Caesar.

- Ben Witherington III



NT – Acts

- Introduction

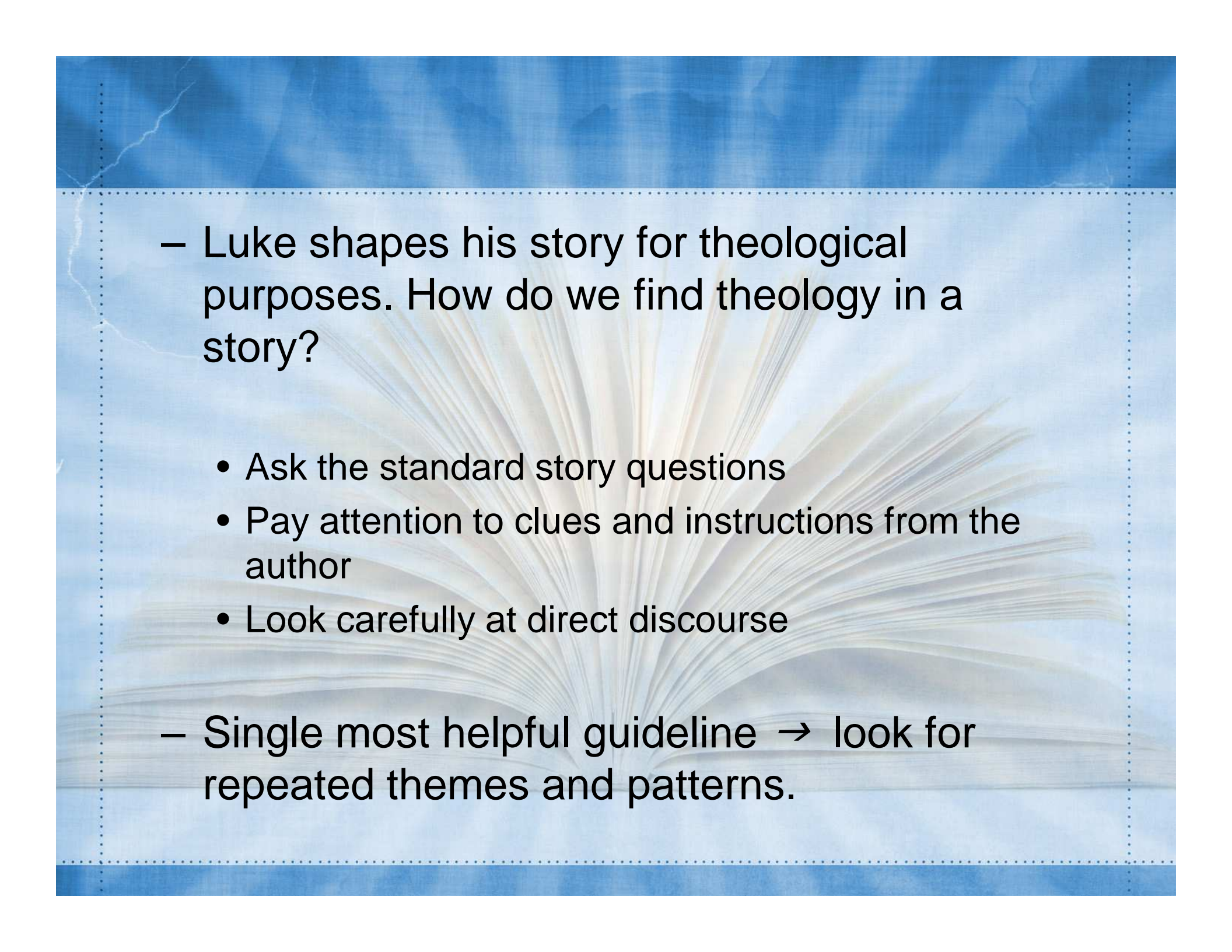
- Four versions of the life and ministry of Jesus, one story of the birth and growth of the early church
- Title?
 - “The continuing acts of Jesus by his Spirit through the apostles and other early Christian leaders”
 - “Acts” for short
- Acts presents unique interpretive challenges
 - *Normative* – the church in every age should imitate the early church
 - *Descriptive* – early church valuable and inspiring, but not necessarily binding on us

Acts: a sequel to Luke

- Luke produced a single work in two parts: Luke-Acts.
- Luke intended to link these two books together
 - Compare Luke 1:1-4 with Acts 1:1-2
 - Thematic and structural parallels between the two books
 - Definite overlap between the ending of Luke and the beginning of Acts
- What Jesus began to do during his earthly ministry he now continues to do through his Spirit-empowered followers.

What kind of book is Acts?

- Acts is a story that focuses on key church leaders.
- Acts is *theological history*.
 - As a *historian* Luke composes a reliable record of what happened in the move of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome.
 - As a *theologian*, Luke tells the story for the purpose of advancing the Christian faith.
 - Both historian and theologian?



– Luke shapes his story for theological purposes. How do we find theology in a story?

- Ask the standard story questions
- Pay attention to clues and instructions from the author
- Look carefully at direct discourse

– Single most helpful guideline → look for repeated themes and patterns.

Why did Luke write Acts?

“Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.”

– Luke 1:1-4

- Acts as a comprehensive discipleship manual?
- Luke shows believers that what God promised in the OT and fulfilled in Jesus, he now continues to work out through his church.



- Luke's purposes/themes:

- Holy Spirit God's sovereignty
- Church Prayer
- Suffering Gentiles
- Witness

How is Acts organized?

Acts 1:8 holds the key to understanding how Luke organizes his story of the triumphant expansion of the gospel from Jerusalem (heart of Israel) to Rome (heart of the empire).

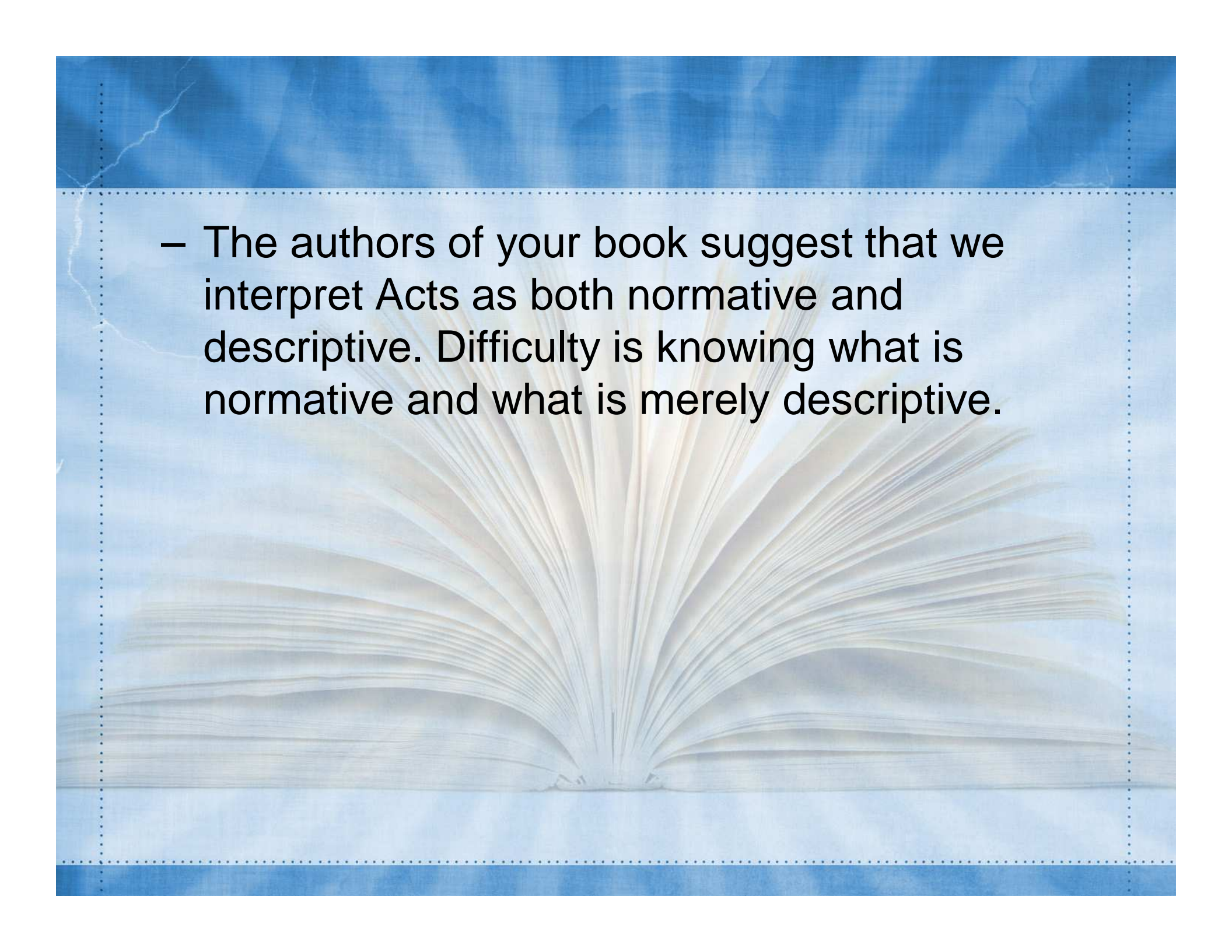
Acts 1-6	“in Jerusalem”	Peter
Acts 7-12	“in Judea and Samaria”	
Acts 13-28	“to the ends of the earth”	Paul

In the very last verse of Acts, we find Paul in a Roman prison, but the gospel of Jesus Christ marches on ... “without hindrance” (last word in the Greek text).

Grasping the message of Acts

- We read Acts in the much the same way that we read the Gospels
- One major interpretive challenge:

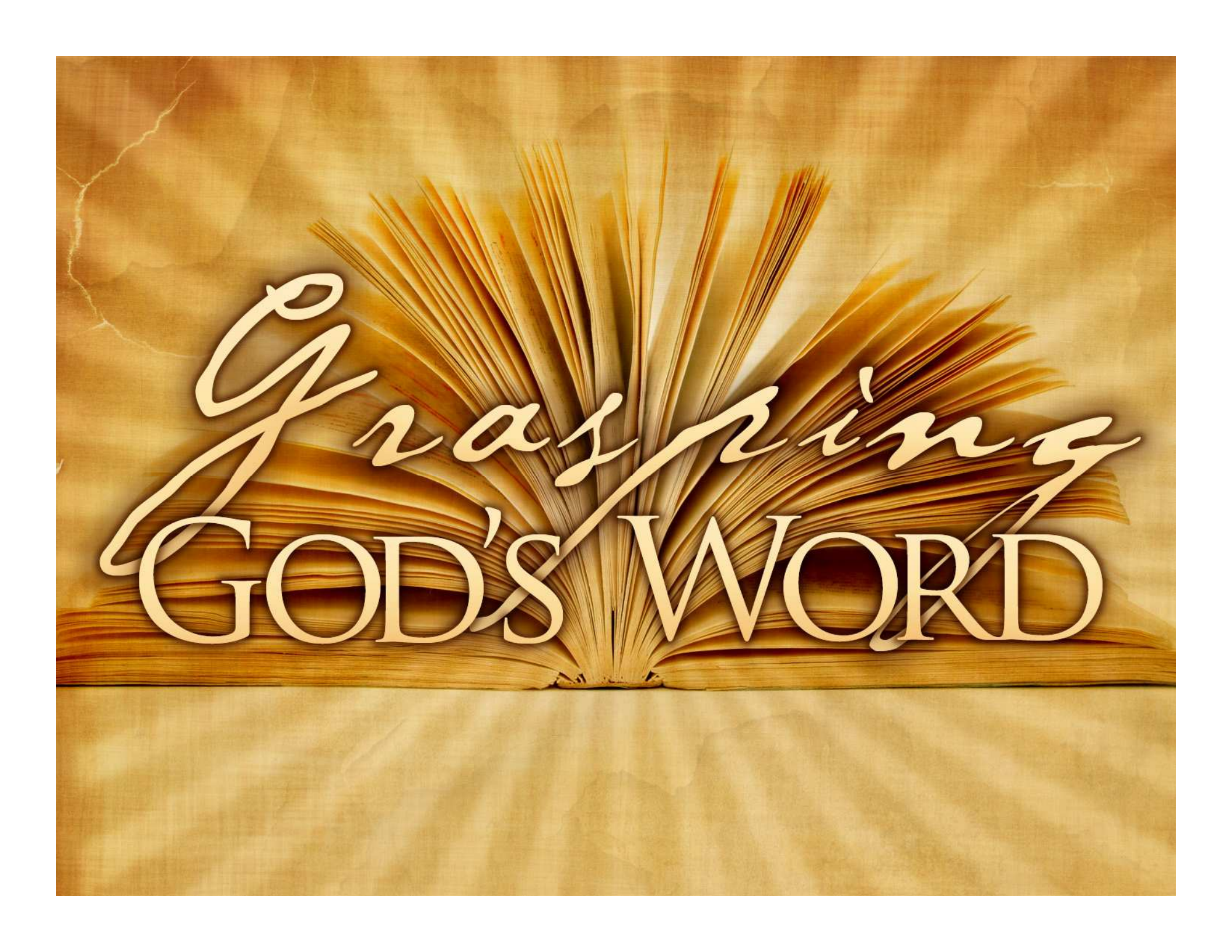
Normative	Descriptive
<i>Acts is normative so that the church in every age should imitate the experiences and practices of the early church.</i>	<i>Acts is merely descriptive of what was valuable and inspiring in the early church, but not necessarily binding on us today.</i>

- 
- An open book is shown from a top-down perspective, with its pages fanning out in a semi-circle. The book is centered in the lower half of the frame. The background is a light blue, textured surface, possibly a book cover or endpaper, with a darker blue horizontal band at the top. A white lightning bolt is visible in the upper left corner. The entire scene is framed by a dotted line border.
- The authors of your book suggest that we interpret Acts as both normative and descriptive. Difficulty is knowing what is normative and what is merely descriptive.

The background of the slide features a blurred image of an open book with its pages fanned out, set against a light blue sky with a faint lightning bolt on the left side. The entire scene is framed by a dotted white border.

– Guidelines for discerning what is normative.

- Look for what Luke intended to communicate.
- Look for positive and negative examples in the characters of the story.
- Read individual episodes in light of the overall story.
- Look to other parts of Acts for clarification.
- Look for repeated patterns and themes.



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