**301 GSE Expanse Student Notes – One a day**

**Acts 16:5 - So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily. (NASB)**

This is the fourth summary verse in the book of Acts, as Luke unfolds the story he drives us to this key point. You notice the fifth and sixth summary verses explore how the Word of God expands; this fourth one focuses on new churches.

***As a region leader, as you seek Jesus Christ for a church a day in your region, you are going to be wrestling with system building; team building. All of this is to help move you to a church a day in a trans denominational context***.

Our desired outcomes from this training are:

1. To position you on a journey to pursue ‘one a day’ and share this back with our VUSA network.

2. Show how we can pursue ‘one a day’ together.

3. Show how a team can work on this – a GSE team formation.

4. All things have a season – learning to recognize these seasons – the beginning and ending of one a day seasons or movement ahead from nothing to one a day.

5. Understand and engage the GSE Regional Pathway.

To help us achieve these outcomes, we look at four topics:

1. Acts – we explore the six panels of Acts, looking at the six summary verses and the concepts behind these summaries by Luke. These ideas lead to a church a day in the fourth panel – Acts 16:5. How can we glean from these thoughts to help us today?

2. What is my response? When I look at the face of God, I need to generate an appropriate response to Him and for Him. How can I best relate and explore this in my life and time?

3. Complex adaptive systems – this is what scientists are calling this newest field of science. In this field, scientists look at ‘the face of God,’ and record what they see and hear. These expressions are fractal thinking, the role chaos theory plays in church planting, anti-fragile thinking, the role systems play in our work as well as how complex adaptive systems help understand true multiplication.

4. GSE regional pathway – we explore this one page pathway in some detail.

**Here we go:**

**1. The six panels in the book of Acts:**

The six panels are:

1. The earliest days of the church in Jerusalem – Acts 1:1-

6:7.

1. Critical events in the lives of three key individuals – Acts 6:8-9:31.
2. Advances of the gospel in Palestine-Syria – Acts 9:32-

12:24.

1. First missionary journey and Jerusalem counsel – Acts 12:25-16:5.
2. Outreach through two missionary journeys – Acts 16:6-19:20.
3. To Jerusalem and to Rome – Acts 19:21-28:31.

Longenecker continues, “Laying out the structure of Acts in this way highlights not only the parallelism that exists between Luke’s second volume and his first but also the parallelism built into Acts in its portrayal of the ministry of Peter in Chapters 1-12 and that of Paul in chapters 13-28.” (Expositor’s, p. 234)

Each of the six panels of Acts covers about five years. I find it interesting that though F. F. Bruce calls Acts 16:5 “perhaps the most crucial phase of Luke’s narrative is now concluded with a characteristic report of progress.” (Expositor’s, p 234), it is even more interesting to me how this book flows.

**1) Acts 6:7** – “The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.” (NASB)

Focus: The words used for “spreading and increase” are *auxano* and *plethuno*, with the focus being on the “number of disciples.”

Why the growth occurred, as evidences in Acts 1:1-6:7:

\*Missional ecclesiology: The mission of Jesus is held high in the life of His followers—perhaps we can say a missional ecclesiology is held high in the early church.

\*They created movement because they spoke about Jesus boldly.

\*Important Mid Adopter Move: In Acts 6, he made wise decisions so that prayer and the

Scripture were not compromised with a key result: God grew disciples.

Let’s talk – what do you see:

**2) Acts 9:31** – “So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.” (NASB)

Focus: The word used is *plethuno* and its focus is on “churches” that grew rapidly — “the church increased” in the region.

Why did growth occur, as evidenced in Acts 6:8-9:31:

\*Missional ecclesiology: God sent persecution and Stephen’s death – Acts 8:1-3; Philip’s ministry, where he speaks Jesus boldly (Stephen’s death had to have a deep impression on Philip as he spoke—why not speak boldly?); Saul was saved and spoke boldly in several places.

\*Luke focuses us directly onto “church.”

\*They spoke Jesus boldly wherever they went.

Results: Churches were planted. Church expansion begins to happen in more than just one place or occasionally, as in Jerusalem.

Let’s talk – what do you see:

**3) Acts 12:24** – “But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied.” (NASB)

Focus: Words used to describe what happened as *plethuno* and *auxano*, and the Word of God is expanding in the region.

Why growth occurred, as evidenced by Acts 9:32-12:24:

\*Missional ecclesiology birthed in one local church at Antioch: The Antiochian Church’s birth is key, as it is presented as the great “sending” church – 11:19-20; they sent apostolic missionaries; birthed church-based mission.

Gentiles hear the gospel – Acts 9 previewed this with Saul’s **conversion**

\*They spoke Jesus boldly wherever they were—they were open to change—Gentiles in the church!

Results: Word of God spreads broadly; churches planted.

Let’s talk – what do you see:

**4) Acts 16:5** – “So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.” (NASB)

Focus: words used are *stereo* and *periseuo* – now in the multiply and abundance realm – 25 years after Jesus’s death we have a church-a-day in Asia Minor!

Why growth occurred, as evidenced in Acts 12:25-16:5:

\*First missionary journey – Acts 13:1 ff – the great sodalic effort with regional focus producing intentional church planting.

\*Acts 13:1-2 – fasting and ministering to the Lord; sodalic focus and flow.

\*Opposition and Jerusalem Counsel! – 15:1ff; modalic and sodalic cooperation/embracing.

\*Speak Jesus boldly.

Results: A church-a-day is planted in Asia Minor; what we see from here is going back to Acts 6:7 terms and doing it again in other regions—it works!

Let’s talk – what do you see:

**5) Acts 19:20** – “So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.” (NASB)

Focus: words used are *auxano* and *ischuo* – the word of God was growing mightily and prevailing.

Why growth occurred, as evidenced in Acts 16:6-19:20:

\*Second missionary journey – Acts 15:36 through here:

1. Intentional leadership development; sodalic work – feet on the ground

\*Speak Jesus boldly

Results: Word of God grew and spread!

Let’s talk – what do you see:

**6) Acts 28:28-31** – “Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also listen.” [ When he had spoken these words, the Jews departed, having a great dispute among themselves.]

And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.” (NASB)

Focus: word used to say ‘all openness’ is *parresia* – boldly

* the word spoken boldly! Why did it work?

\*Intentional hands on work with one-a-day focus!

\*Spoke Jesus boldly

\*Did this intentionally!

What is Luke so powerfully saying to us? Perhaps, I may summarize in two thoughts. If we are desirous of one-a-day movements in the USA, may we focus on two things:

1. Holding the mission of Jesus very highly!
2. Speak about Jesus very boldly!

Let’s talk – what do you see:

**2) When I look into the face of God – I need to have response:**

We are looking deeply into God’s face:

Examples:

Exodus 3:

Isaiah 6:

Matthew 17:

Revelation 1:

What are you seeing?

What is He requiring of you?

**3) Complex Adaptive Systems: When people/scientists ‘stare’ into the face of God – the universe – what are they saying and seeing?**

***(Why in the world are we looking at this? What I hope is your take away is this: God is all about multiplication, in every expression of His creative power. Church planting is no different. I hope this exploration creates a greater hunger to explore God’s multiplicative nature as expressed in human life and kind – thus the need for this in the church starting world!)***

***\*When we explore the multiplicative side of God in regional movements, we see these traits listed here. When we engage the addition/adding churches in regional contexts, we see these traits much less or not at all. Reasons: it is easier to ‘control’ (humanly) the feedback in the system thus we only see addition and not multiplication as an expression.***

**1. Framing our conversation and take - aways on CAS:**

1. GSE or any focus toward multiplication is very simply chaos. Over time we work to form order via system development and leadership.

2. Chaos is hard – why is it there? God made it that way!

3. Power and influence of one - Feedback – this is what we can do in human expression – note how feedback fits.

4. Interaction together is important. Do not give up.

Complex Adaptive Systems and Complexity seem to be somewhat synonymous. Chaos and Fractal are two other expressions that are subsets or expressions of Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS).

Definition: In building fences around CAS/Complexity:

1. System contains a collection of many interacting objects or ‘agents.’ These objects or agents’ behavior is affected by memory or ‘feedback.’

2. System is open – it can be influenced by its environment. It can interact with what is around it.

3. System appears to be ‘alive’.

4. System exhibits emergent phenomena which are generally surprising and may be extreme. Anything can happen and happens in absence of any central controller.

5. System shows complicated mix of ordered and disordered behavior. (Johnson, pp 13-15)

Complexity is the science of all sciences. (Johnson, p. 16)

Complex systems have incredible ability to generate change in its own behavior – (Johnson, p. 20)

“Simple bits interacting in a simple way may lead to a rich variety of realistic outcomes – and that is the essence of Complexity.” (Johnson, p. 17)

Examples of the concept:

1. Driving and get in a traffic jam on a large highway – get through the traffic jam and there is not a visible reason for it – no accident etc.

2. 2008 financial crash – why did it crash? Market crashes rarely if ever come from one reason.

There is a natural tendency for something that is ordered to become disordered as time goes by. In contrast, something that is disordered is highly unlikely to order itself without any additional help (Johnson, p. 25). Complex systems can move from order to disorder and then back again. How does the order return? Feedback. GSE is like this.

Illustration: One regional leader in W Pa had 2 GSE processed churches started among a heroine audience – tough crowd. The 2 churches went away because either they went back on heroine and thus disappeared, moved or something. 12+ months later, many of them were back in the area and open to get together so they are now in a church context. From order to disorder, and even back again. Very frustrating cycle but common in our network.

**2. Framing our conversation and take aways on Systems:**

1. Note the 3 keys to systems – so we can build them well.

2. When facing chaos, patient system building is key – staying connected via network is key.

Quick look at system development – especially since this is primarily what we are doing as regional leaders – building systems in our region to move new churches into formation – system development examples:

-GSE Training

-Coaching

-Communication

-Discipleship

From Donella H Meadows’ book, **Thinking in Systems**;

Definition of a system: “A system isn’t just any old collection of things. A system is an interconnected set of elements that is coherently organized in a way that achieves something. If you look at this definition closely for a minute, you can see that a system must consist of three kinds of things: *elements*, *interconnections* and a *function* or *purpose*.” P. 11

Ex: Football: *elements are*: players, coaches, field; *interconnections*: rules of game, coaches’ strategy etc; *function/purpose*: win game, have fun, get exercise etc.

Is there anything not a system? Yes – many – sand strewn across a road etc.

Systems can be nested within systems p. 15

We use systems because they work well; they can work well p. 75

Why do they work well?

1. Resilience – resilient systems are very dynamic;

2. Self-organization – ability to make own system more complex

-to add just a few simple organizing principles can lead to wildly diverse self-organized structure

3. Hierarchy – submission; in hierarchy systems, the relationships within each subsystem are denser and stronger than relationships between subsystems. P. 76-83

Good system traits:

-Available:

-Redundant:

-Recoverable:

-Scalable:

-Flexible:

-Maintainable/tenable:

**3. Framing our conversation and take aways on Chaos:**

1. You may be surprised by what ‘works’ in your regional work – listening to others in network can be very helpful.

2. A control freak will struggle in beginning a regional focus. Don’t control, its God’s job.

3. Choose chaos - it is ok to have a ‘different’ viewpoint on risk and risk taking.

4. Small beginnings are key and they are a choice. The power and influence of one and how God uses one.

Chaos (also called Chaos Theory):

Basic Definitions:

“The scientific term “chaos” refers to an underlying interconnectedness that exists in apparently random events. Chaos sciences focuses on hidden patterns, nuance, the ‘sensitivity’ of things, and the “rules” for how the unpredictable leads to the new.” (Briggs/Peat, Seven life lessons of chaos, p. 2)

“Chaos brings us closer to appreciating the world the way artists have appreciated it for thousands of years.” (p. 6)

“The ideal of ‘being in control’ is so much a part of our behavior that it has become an obsession, even an addiction. . .Chaos theory demonstrates why such a dream is an illusion. Chaotic systems lie beyond all our attempts to predict, manipulate, and control them. Chaos suggests that instead of resisting life’s uncertainties, we should embrace them.” (p. 8)

“So it turns out that chaos is nature’s creativity.” (p. 19)

“Because of their willingness, even outright eagerness, to enter a chaotic state, people who engage in creative enterprises have a different attitude about mistakes, change, and failure than contemporary society.” (p. 24)

“Chaos theory teaches that when our psychological perspective shifts – through moments of amplification and bifurcation – our degrees of freedom expand and we experience being and truth. We are then creative. And our true self lies there… Mental illness occurs when images of the self become rigid and closed, restricting an open creative response to the world.” (p. 29)

Make sure to see this connection to these four thoughts:

1. Chaos is not disorder but is the transition between disorder and order; to allow disorder, and then chaos as a fruit is the key transition we need to achieve order and this needs possible shepherding.

2. All begins with choice; but some choices can produce chaos, how open to chaos are we?

3. Feedback is a key influence factor and one to keep in mind.

4. Is it a small beginning? Chaos is foundation to small beginnings – they typically call it the ‘butterfly effect.’

Butterfly Power:

Chinese proverb: power of a butterfly’s wings can be felt on the other side of the world.

-Linear and nonlinear systems – nonlinear systems allow a very small influence to have a huge impact!

Chaos theory depends on nonlinear systems – so the butterfly rules! (p. 34)

“Butterfly power underlies just how deeply influential ordinary individuals can be in society.” (p. 49)

\*THIS IS SO HUGE I CANNOT EMPHASIZE ENOUGH!

One can do so much! That God’s economy seems to be ‘one’ is so profound (Luke 15 for example).

**4. Framing our conversation and take aways on Fractals:**

1. We believe that GSE is a possible fractal expression. We want this to encourage you.

We use GSE to start churches; we use GSE to form a GSE regional team; we use GSE to form a GSE National Field Team – overlooking the entire movement.

If you understand GSE, you understand our whole movement.

Fractals:

Fractals are amazing and wondrous and all around us!

Definition: In a complex adaptive system, as chaos is engaged, there is an expression in space and time, in nature, that has a pattern. This pattern is call a fractal. This pattern is the heart of multiplication expressed in space and time. This also applies to new churches.

“Fractal” is the name given by scientists to the patterns of chaos that we see in the heavens, feel on earth, and find in the very veins and nerves of our bodies.” (Briggs and Peat, p. 100)

“Mandelbrot arrived at the surprising conclusion that the coastline of Britain must be infinite. We might add that not only is the coastline infinite, but because it is continuously being eroded, it is an infinity that is constantly changing. Mandelbrot also discovered that every coastline, form the smallest desert island to the Americans themselves, has the length of infinity.” (p. 102)

“The Mandelbrot set has been called ‘the most complex object in mathematics.” (p. 116)

“Creative people, and we are all creative, need a great deal of time (as measured on the clock) in which they are simply ‘doing mothing.’ To the outside world, they appear to be daydreaming or simply fooling around. But inside they are connecting to the time of the work, to its subtle rhythms and fractal structures.” (p. 140)

“The activity of a collective chaotic system, composed of interacting feedback among its many scales of “arts,” is sometimes referred by to the poetic name “strange attractor.” When scientists say that a system has an “attractor,” they mean that if they plot the system’s changes, or behavior, in mathematical space, the plot shows that the system is repeating a pattern. The system is “attracted” to that pattern of behavior, scientists say. In other words, if they perturb the system by knocking it away from the behavior, it tends to return to it fairly quickly.” (p. 64)

Fractals are: Clouds, trees, bushes, rain drops, human veins, heart, lungs etc.

Fractals are why multiplication happens in nature.

\*Fractals carry these traits:

1. Does it show self-similarity across scale; show infinite design?

2. Does it show iteration (multiplication); show rough vs smooth, engage chaos?

3. Does it exalt the strange attractor?

4. Does it possibly show that a small input produces big impact across scale?

Q: What ways are you seeing fractal expression in your region on GSE?

Describe the fractal work in your region:

**4) GSE Regional Pathway:**

Please see the PDF on the classroom page.

Q: Where are you at on the GSE Regional Pathway?

What is happening where you are at?