



SUMMIT VIEW CHURCH

YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES

A STUDY IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE



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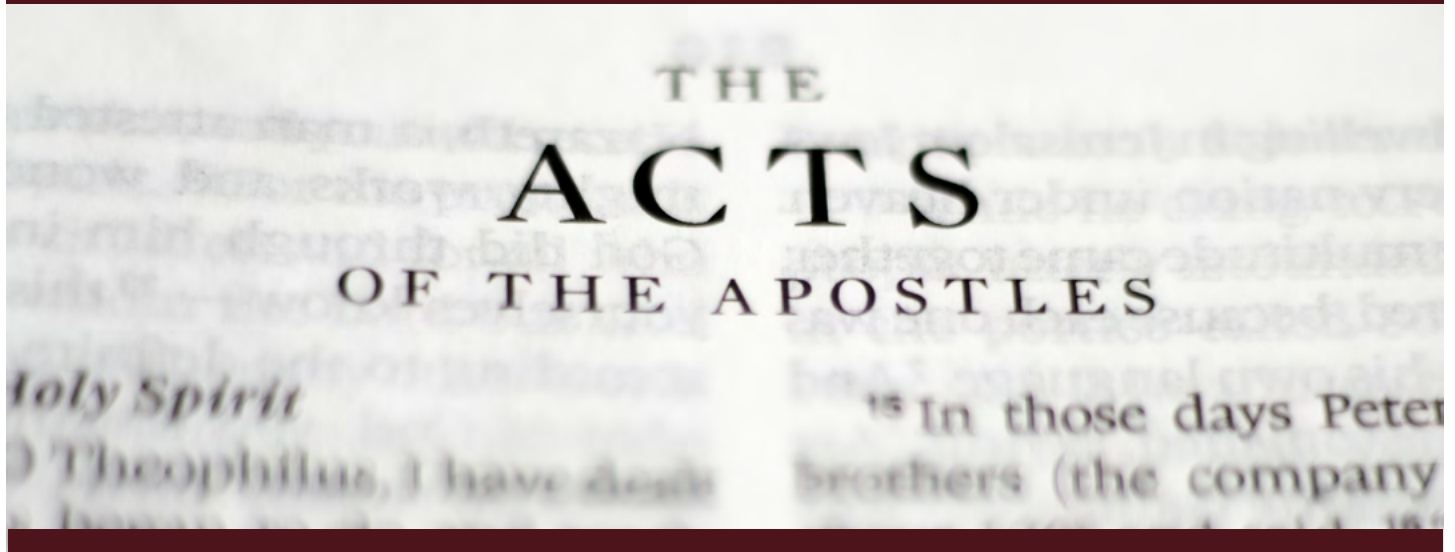
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WELCOME TO ACTS PART 3

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will **be my witnesses** in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. Acts 1:8*



HOW DID WE GET HERE?

This is the question we often ask, trying to figure out how exactly we arrived at our current situation. It seeks to discern the series of events that caused our present circumstances to unfold. It is a question we will seek to answer through this study, that we might all understand how the Gospel message, known by only a handful of Jews in Jerusalem over 2000 years ago, made its way across the world, all the way to us, here in the Pacific Northwest.

Acts picks up where the Gospels left off. In the Gospels we see Jesus' earthly ministry executed by our Savior Himself; in the book of Acts we find this ministry continued by His people and ultimately by us today. Within Acts is the story of the Church's birth, from seedlings to its rapid growth, expansion, and the ultimate advancement of the Gospel message. Without Acts, we would know very little about how God's people took up the Great Commission to where we are today.

In the book of Acts we encounter the beginning of Church history—with no mature believers, brand new systems just being figured out, and all the while, souls being saved. Throughout the text, one theme rises above the rest: Jesus' call, for all of us, to be a witness to who He is, what He's done, and to take that message, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to the ends of the Earth.

AUTHOR

While the author does not directly identify himself in the text, it is almost certain that the author of Acts is the same as the Gospel of Luke. Besides the prevalence of this perspective passed down throughout Church history and Tradition, there are also similar prefaces between Luke and Acts as seen in Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1. We can also assume that the author of Acts would have been an eyewitness to some of the events recorded within the book, based upon the shift of tone in the letter when documenting the events in Acts 16, 20, and 27.

The authorship has been widely attributed to Luke as early as AD 180, where Irenaeus names Luke as the author; Tradition has firmly held this view ever since. Luke is known in the New Testament as the physician, friend, colleague, and travel companion of Paul as noted in Colossians 4:4, Philemon 24, and 2 Timothy 4:11.

DATE

Due to the contents within the book, it is most likely that Luke wrote this before AD 70 as there are no references to Nero or the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. The book's abrupt conclusion suggests that it was finished while Paul was still under house arrest in Rome circa AD 62.

REASON FOR WRITING

Luke's intention for the Gospel of Luke, found within Luke 1:3-4, applies also to the book of Acts: to give an "orderly" account of the early church after Christ's resurrection. Luke sought to give certainty and confidence to his readers that the events recorded truly happened as recorded. He sought to document the expansion of the early church and the work of the Holy Spirit in the people of God, highlighting and emphasizing the global scale of the Gospel, while also edifying believers. By reading the book of Acts we can see how the foundation of the Church was laid, how believers were empowered by the Holy Spirit, and the work of the Church to build and expand the Kingdom of God.

The book of Acts records the spread of the Gospel from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.





Map Courtesy of ESV.ORG – Bible Study

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

I.	The Foundation: The Church and Its Mission	1:1–2:13
II.	The Witness in Jerusalem	2:14–5:42
III.	The Witness beyond Jerusalem	6:1–12:25
IV.	The Witness in Cyprus and Southern Galatia	13:1–14:28
V.	The Jerusalem Council	15:1–35
VI.	The Witness in Greece	15:36–18:22
VII.	The Witness in Ephesus	18:23–21:16
VIII.	The Arrest in Jerusalem	21:17–23:35
IX.	The Witness in Caesarea	24:1–26:32
X.	The Witness in Rome	27:1–28:31

KEY THEMES

1. POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The book of Acts highlights the work of the Holy Spirit in the newly founded community of believers. We see the Holy Spirit empower the followers of Jesus to proclaim the Gospel, bring new life to those who heard it proclaimed, and ultimately form a new people with a new identity marked by knowing and loving God and others.

2. CENTRALITY OF THE MISSION

Acts establishes the mission of God as central and fundamental to the Church. We are given a depiction of all the early Christian leaders engaged in mission to ensure the Gospel went out to the ends of the earth. We also learn that the mission of God continued beyond the cross of Christ, given to His people to carry forth, both to the early believers and to us today.

3. THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

While all of Scripture ultimately points to Jesus and the Gospel, within the book of Acts, it is found on every page. Throughout Acts, we find ten unique sermons, presented from various perspectives and persons, all outlining a clear Gospel message; the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus is at the center of the preaching in Acts. This is the message Jesus commissioned His believers to share, and primary story arc of the book of Acts centers around its spread.

4. INCLUSION OF THE GENTILES

Luke takes great lengths throughout the book of Acts to help us understand that non-Jews were now to be included in the people of God. As the narrative follows the missionaries further out from Jerusalem, we clearly see that salvation has nothing to do with ethnicity or social status, but simply faith in Christ's sufficiency alone.

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

Name of Resource	Link to Resource
Forgotten God by Francis Chan (<i>book</i>)	https://amzn.to/3BNb2I7
Before You Share Your Faith by Matt Smethurst (<i>book</i>)	https://amzn.to/3WdwvM4 https://amzn.to/3WdwvM4
Evangelism: How the Whole Church Speaks of Jesus by Mack Stiles (<i>book</i>)	https://amzn.to/3YuFMB7
Knowing Faith – Series of Acts (<i>podcast</i>)	https://www.trainingthechurch.com/episodes/category/Acts
Bible Project – Acts 1–12 (<i>video</i>)	https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/acts-1-12/
Knowing the Bible: Acts (<i>study</i>)	https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/knowning-bible-acts/
Exalting Jesus in Acts (<i>commentary</i>)	https://a.co/d/bVkgzil

SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION BY MONTH

When you memorize Scripture, not only do you reflect on the Word of God in that time and moment, you also store it away for the Holy Spirit to bring it to your attention when you need it most. Paul encourages us in Colossians 3:2 to set our minds on the things above, and Scripture memorization allows us to do just that. Over the next two months as we study Acts, we invite you to join us in committing to memorize the following verses:

MONTH 1:

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and **you will be my witnesses** in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:8*

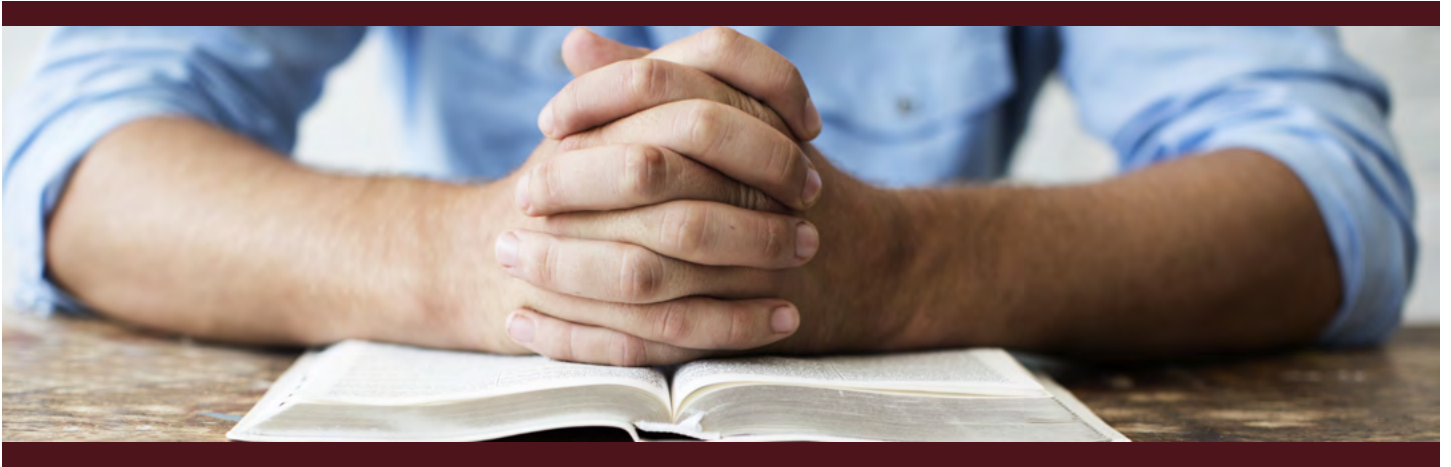
And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’ Acts 2:21

MONTH 2:

And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Acts 2:42

But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.” Acts 4:19–20

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE



This guide has been specifically and prayerfully created with you in mind. It is designed to complement your personal time with God, Sunday service engagement, and Life Group gatherings. Each week also includes unique content for students and our SV Kids; if you are a parent, we encourage you to go through this discipleship guide together as a family!

This resource is designed to function as a guide, not a straitjacket. You may not get through every question with your Life Group. This Discipleship Guide is designed to support your personal growth and spiritual community — not replace them. We also encourage you to find and incorporate supplementary resources throughout our study. Our desire is that this Guide might be used to facilitate a firmer grasp of Scripture, a stronger connection to Christ, and a hunger for spiritual growth.

BIBLE READING PLAN

Engagement with the Bible is one of the greatest sources of spiritual growth. During our Acts series, we have put together a suggested reading guide that will help you further understand the passage we are studying each week. Our plan is for delight not duty. We pray it is a helpful guide that points you to Christ each and every day.

LIFE GROUPS

The Life Group Questions are designed to generate conversation with those in your community also engaging with Acts. If you are not currently in a Life Group, we would highly recommend you join one! We were never meant to do life alone, and we don't want you to miss what God has for you in this season.

Learn more at www.summitview.net/groups.

SV KIDS

Here at Summit View, we are passionate about the spiritual development of all ages. Each week's study concludes with age-appropriate prompts from SV Kids for family discussion.

These sections have been specifically prepared for families and are designed to help parents build family discipleship time. Learning about family discipleship and keeping it as a regular part of your family's rhythm can be challenging; one way to begin is with intentional family Bible reading time.

Each week there is a Session Starter followed by a Big Ideas teaching section, wrapping up with a Things to Think About section for going deeper with your older kids, or inquiring minds.

We've included questions for you to ask your kids (and the answers for your convenience) along with reading excerpts, and helpful Tips for Parents in suggestion boxes.

You do not have to use every question. Just like with the study guide, pick the ones that would work best for you and your family. Our hope is that by participating in this study, a vibrant family discipleship can take root and grow into the rhythm of family life.

YOUTH

Additionally, our Youth Pastoral Team has prepared a Bible Reading Plan for student participation, as well as questions for our Middle School and High School students to engage during their weekly small group discussions.





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following people contributed to the development and creation of this Discipleship Guide.

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YOUTH

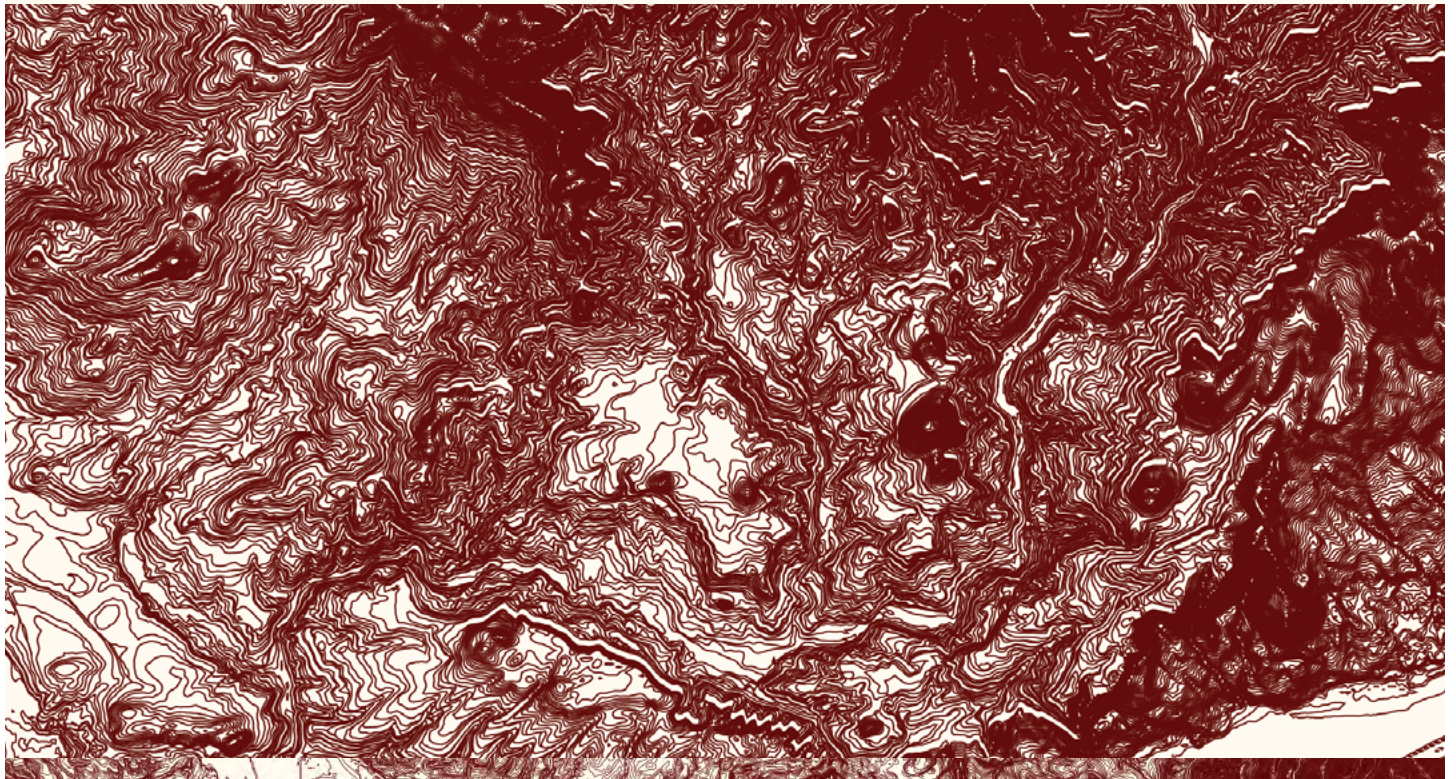
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MAIN IDEA

The early church expected great things, and attempted great things, for God.

MEMORY VERSES

But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will. Acts 15:11 (ESV)

At the very beginning of Acts, Jesus told His disciples that they would be His witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judaea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Thus far in our study (Acts 1-12), the disciples have engaged the first three geographic regions. At the beginning of Acts 13, Paul and Barnabas are officially commissioned by God and the church to set forth on a journey to advance the Gospel by venturing into uncharted territories, defying cultural barriers, and clashing with hostile forces. By the end of the chapter, entire regions were changed and impacted by the Gospel message.

BIBLE READING



Acts 13

The early church expected great things, and attempted great things, for God.



Ephesians 2:4-10

God has created us to do good works that He has prepared for us to do.



1 Corinthians 12:4-13

God has given many diverse gifts to His people for the building up of the Church.



Romans 12:1-8

God has empowered each person who follows Him with a gift to be used to serve and build up the Church.



Ephesians 4:17-5:2

The Gospel transformation in our individual lives is seen most clearly in the church community.



Acts 19:8-20

When Gospel communities follow Jesus with their lives, the culture around them begins to be challenged and shaped by the Gospel.

PRAYER & MEDITATION PROMPTS

- Read and recite this month's memory verse (Acts 15:11). Consider the first half of the verse, reminding yourself that your salvation is something you have only by the grace of God. Ask God to help you rest in that.
- As you read the daily readings passages, ask God to show you what your gifts are and how you can use them to serve Him.



CONNECTED TO:

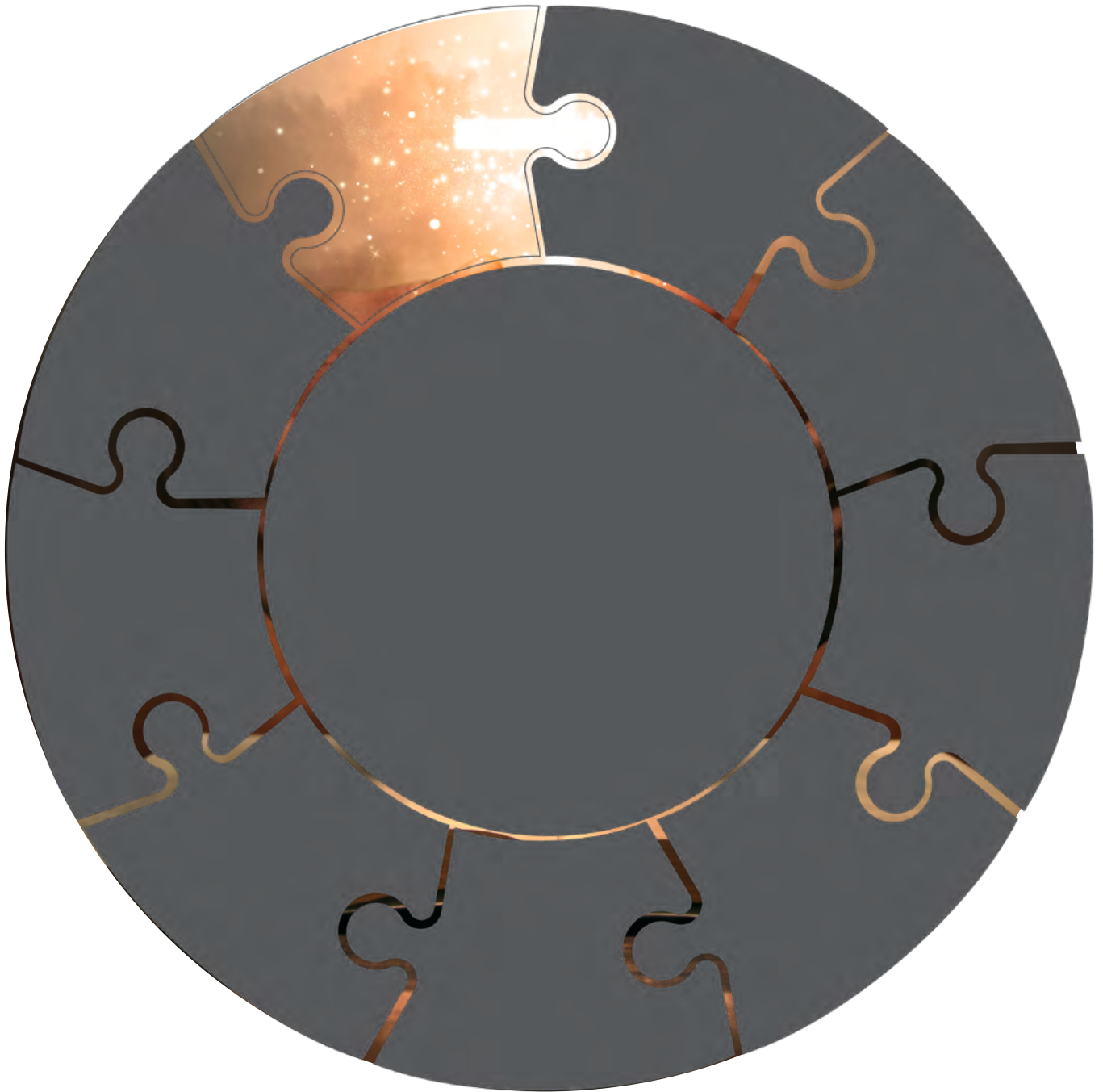
- CHRIST
- COMMUNITY
- CALLING
- OUTREACH
- CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION
- NATIONS

The latter portion of the Book of Acts primarily focuses on the spread of the Gospel to new territories. This theme of advancing the Gospel into uncharted areas remains relevant and vibrant within the Church today. At Summit View, our vision and mission extend far beyond the greater Vancouver area. We embrace a global vision because our God is a global God. We believe that God is leading Summit View Church to equip and empower believers to establish the Church where it does not yet exist. Our goal is to create opportunities that embody Christ's love and to reach those who are distant from Him.

Over the next eleven weeks of our study, we are dedicating ourselves to prayer for eleven distinct regions. We will be praying specifically for the following:

- God to send church planters and missionaries to these areas.
- God's provision for those who embark on these Gospel initiatives.
- The unreached people within each region.
- The worship of God's name to be established in these regions.
- The meeting of people's needs within these regions.
- The spiritual formation of disciples within these regions.

By focusing our prayers on these aspects, we align ourselves with God's heart for the world. We recognize that the work of the Church extends far beyond our local community, and we are committed to participating in God's global mission to bring salvation to all nations.



CONNECTED TO THE NATIONS: NEIGHBORHOOD

Pray that the worship of God's name would be established where you live.



LIFE GROUP & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

GETTING STARTED:

Have you ever attempted to do something great for God? What happened? What did you learn from the experience?

QUESTION ONE:

Four times the Holy Spirit is mentioned in Acts 13. Under what circumstances did the Holy Spirit present Himself? What was the outcome of that presentation?

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FOLLOW-UP: Have you encountered any of these aspects in your walk with Christ?

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QUESTION TWO:

Elymas is called a false prophet in verse 6; what specifics make him a false prophet? There are many false prophets today. Read Matthew 7:15-20 where Jesus details ways to recognize a false prophet. What are they?

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QUESTION THREE:

In verse 9 we see Saul's name changed to Paul. The name Saul is Hebrew and Paul is Roman. Why do you think his name was recorded as changed at this point in Scripture?

HINT: It is not due to a "new identity" in Christ, but due to where Paul is now headed to preach.

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QUESTION FOUR:

When Paul went to the synagogue (verses 14-23), he showed his deep understanding and knowledge of the Old Testament. He detailed how God prepared the nation of Israel for the coming Messiah. Why would he use this approach with the people there?

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FOLLOW UP: Outline the events that Paul told the people. Are you familiar with the Old Testament enough to explain the stories in it?

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QUESTION FIVE:

Read Verse 22. What stands out to you about David?

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QUESTION SIX:

Reflect on what Paul said Jesus the Christ, the promised Messiah, offers (verses 38-39). What stands out to you?

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QUESTION SEVEN:

At the next Sabbath, nearly the whole city turned out to hear Paul and Barnabas. How did the Jews react and why? How did the Gentiles react and why?

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QUESTION EIGHT:

What was Paul's response to opposition? Compare Acts 13:50-51 with Jesus' instructions to the 72 disciples in Luke 10:1-12. What did Jesus mean? Reflect on what that means for us in the 21st century.

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APPLICATION

The role of the Holy Spirit is active and real in the Book of Acts. Lives were changed in an instant and cultures were impacted. The Holy Spirit of Acts is the Holy Spirit of now! The Holy Spirit is a person who calls to us to be in relationship with Him. When we don't work on that relationship it hinders the Holy Spirit's ability to guide and direct us. In the Greek, Scripture tells us this relationship needs to be a continuing action; spend some intentional time with the Holy Spirit today. He greatly desires that time with you!



SVC KIDS



KEY VERSE

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”. Acts 1:8 (ESV)

GETTING STARTED:

Throughout Acts, we’ve seen the followers of Jesus increase and multiply. The early Church began in Jerusalem, but, because of persecution, the followers of Jesus spread through the country and to neighboring countries. All the while, the believers told others the Good News of Jesus.

In this passage, Paul and Barnabas began their first missionary journey to advance the Gospel (Good News). By the end, the entire region was changed and impacted by the Gospel message.



1. BARNABAS AND PAUL FACED OPPOSITION

Read Acts 13:1-5 aloud.

Paul and Barnabas were officially commissioned by God and the church to tell others about Jesus! They were sent out on their first missionary journey to advance the Gospel by going to new places, meeting new people, and overcoming big challenges.

Read Acts 13:6-12 aloud.

Question: Who summoned Barnabas and Paul?

Answer: The proconsul, Sergius Paulus, was a Roman authority, who asked Barnabas and Paul to come because he wanted to hear the word of God.

Question: How was Paul able to make Elymas the magician go blind? Why did he do that?

Answer: Paul was able to make Elymas blind through the power of the Holy Spirit! He did that because Elymas was against Jesus and was trying to make people turn away from the Gospel.

Question: After seeing that, what did the proconsul do?

Answer: He believed! He was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

While Barnabas and Paul shared about Jesus, many people were against them and tried to turn people away from them so they wouldn't learn about and believe in Jesus and be saved. In this story (and many others in the Bible!), we see that when God has a plan, He cannot be stopped! The good news about Jesus continued to spread, even when bad people tried to hold it back.

2. GOD'S PLAN WILL ALWAYS WIN

Read Acts 13:26, 38, & 39 aloud.

Question: Who can receive the free gift of salvation?

Answer: Everyone!

Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For it is by grace you have been saved. Through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not of works, so that no one can boast." Just like the author of Acts 13 says, anyone who believes that Jesus died and rose again to save us from our sins can be saved and join the family of God.

Barnabas and Saul faced many hard things when sharing about Jesus, but that didn't stop them from doing the work that they were called by the Holy Spirit to do!

NOTES

[illegible]

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Along their journey, Barnabas and Paul had to deal with a lot of hard things, but they didn't let that make them sad or discouraged. They knew that sharing the good news about Jesus was worth anything they could face! They also knew that when God had a plan, he would make it happen, even if hard things happened to them. Acts 13:52 says, "...and the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit." Doing God's work can be hard, but the disciples knew that it was more than worth all the hard work.

CONNECTED TO NATIONS

Barnabas and Paul were in Antioch with other prophets and teachers when the Holy Spirit called them and set them apart to spread the news about Jesus to the Gentiles. The group fasted and laid hands on Barnabas and Paul, praying for them and sent them off to share the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection with the Gentiles. While the apostles were speaking and telling others about Jesus, the Jews didn't want to hear about it—they even left the synagogue where Barnabas and Saul were teaching! But the Gentiles heard and believed and wanted to learn more.

The Jews were God's chosen people, but now the Gentiles had heard the Good News and were also able to join the family of God. As believers, our job is to share the good news about Jesus with everyone!

SVC YOUTH

MAIN IDEA

The early Church expected great things, and attempted great things, for God.



The Gospel is moving out to new people! It was already amazing earlier in Acts, when we saw the Jews accepting Jesus as Lord, but now the good news of who Jesus is has been spreading throughout both Jewish and Gentile communities.

This section of Scripture looks at Barnabus and Saul/Paul travelling around the Jewish synagogues within the Roman Empire. Paul spoke boldly about who Jesus is and the people responded! Even though the disciples experienced pushback, they walked away with the joy and satisfaction of seeing people saved!

QUESTION ONE:

Read Acts 13:1-3. In this passage, we see three actions that helped the disciples hear from the Holy Spirit: worshipping the Lord, praying, and fasting. Why do you think these things helped the disciples hear the Holy Spirit?

Follow up: Have you ever heard the Holy Spirit say something to you?

Follow up: Have you ever tried fasting? Do you think it would impact your ability to hear from the Holy Spirit?

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QUESTION TWO:

Read Acts 13:4-12. Sergius Paulus was a proconsul (or governor) in the Roman Empire. Even though he wasn't Jewish, he heard about what Barnabus and Saul were teaching and wanted to know more. But there was a Jewish magician (Bar-Jesus/Elymas) who didn't want Sergius to hear about Jesus. Why do you think Elymas wanted to stop Sergius from believing in Jesus?

Follow up: What was God's response to Elymas' attempt at turning away the Gospel (hint: verse 11)? Do you think this was fair?

Follow up: The proconsul believed because of what he saw. Do you think you would believe it, too, if you saw the same thing?

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QUESTION THREE:

Read Acts 13:13-52. In this passage, Paul gives a quick history of the ways that Jesus fulfilled God's promises to His people. In your life, answered prayers and fulfilled promises become the story that you can tell others about who Jesus is. What prayers or promises have you seen God answer in your life?

Follow Up: Do you like to listen to other people's "Jesus stories" about what God has done in their lives?

Follow Up: What gets in the way of you telling your Jesus stories to others?

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BIBLE READING

The Bible is more than just a chain of events strung together one-by-one; it is a collection of intricately interwoven stories that work together to show us new truths about God. To gain a deeper understanding of Acts 13, spend a little time throughout your week reading these additional passages:

- ☐ **Acts 13**
The early church expected great things, and attempted great things, for God.
- ☐ **Ephesians 2:4-10**
God has created us to do good works that He has prepared for us to do.
- ☐ **Acts 19:8-20**
When Gospel communities follow Jesus with their lives, the culture around them begins to be challenged and shaped by the Gospel.



PRAYER

As we saw in this section of Acts the Lord does amazing things through unexpected people in unexpected places. Pray that the Lord would use you to join in the amazing work that He is already doing. Pray that you would have the eyes to see and ears to hear who the Lord would want you to talk to about Jesus. Pray that the Lord would foster a heart within you that expects Him to use you to share the Gospel.

ACTION STEP

Over and over in the Scriptures, we see God working through sinful, ordinary people to make huge changes for the kingdom of God. God wants to use every one of us to further His kingdom and share His name. How can you take a step of faith to make a difference for the kingdom of God this week? Think about the people in your life that need to hear about God's love and forgiveness—those you know really well, those you barely know at all—ask God who He's calling you to step out in faith to engage. After receiving guidance from the Holy Spirit, make a plan of action to reach out to that person—be sure to rely on the Holy Spirit and Scripture as you engage with them, leading with a word of encouragement.

NOTES

[illegible]

MAIN IDEA

Despite suffering, persecution, setbacks, and mixed responses, the Gospel spread to the Gentiles.

MEMORY VERSES

But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will. Acts 15:11 (ESV)

Stories that highlight those with “dogged determination” grip our attention and inspire us. Dogged determination refers to a relentless and unwavering commitment to achieving a goal or overcoming an obstacle. It is characterized by persistent effort, resilience, and an unwillingness to give up in the face of challenges or setbacks. In Acts 14, Paul and Barnabus display the characteristics of this dogged determination; they are so captivated by the Gospel message they are willing to endure anything to see others be captivated by Christ as well.

BIBLE READING

☐ **Acts 14**

Despite suffering, persecution, setbacks, and mixed responses, the Gospel spread to the Gentiles.

☐ **Luke 24:36-49**

Jesus was opposed, even to the point of death, for the Gospel He preached. Yet God used that opposition to accomplish His mission.

☐ **Philippians 1:12-26**

Opposition to the Gospel advances its influence.

☐ **Acts 1:8 | Acts 7:54-8:3 | Acts 8:4-5**

God's people were opposed, even to the point of death, for the Gospel they preached, yet God used their sufferings to accomplish His mission.

☐ **1 Peter 5:6-11**

God is sovereign over all things and cares for His people who suffer in His name.

☐ **1 Corinthians 12-13 | Galatians 3:23-29 | Colossians 3:5-11**

Through faith in Christ, we are brought into the diverse, multi-ethnic family of God in which there is no favoritism

PRAYER & MEDITATION PROMPTS

- Read and recite this month's memory verse (Acts 15:11). Consider the second half of the verse, reminding yourself that, just as you have been saved by grace, so have all others who have put their faith in Jesus. Ask God to give you grace to love those who make you uncomfortable.
- As you read the daily reading passages, take time to imagine being the people in the story, or being the people to whom these passages were written. Feel the depth of that call to be bold. Pray that the Holy Spirit would give you boldness as you bring the Gospel to a world that stands in opposition to it.



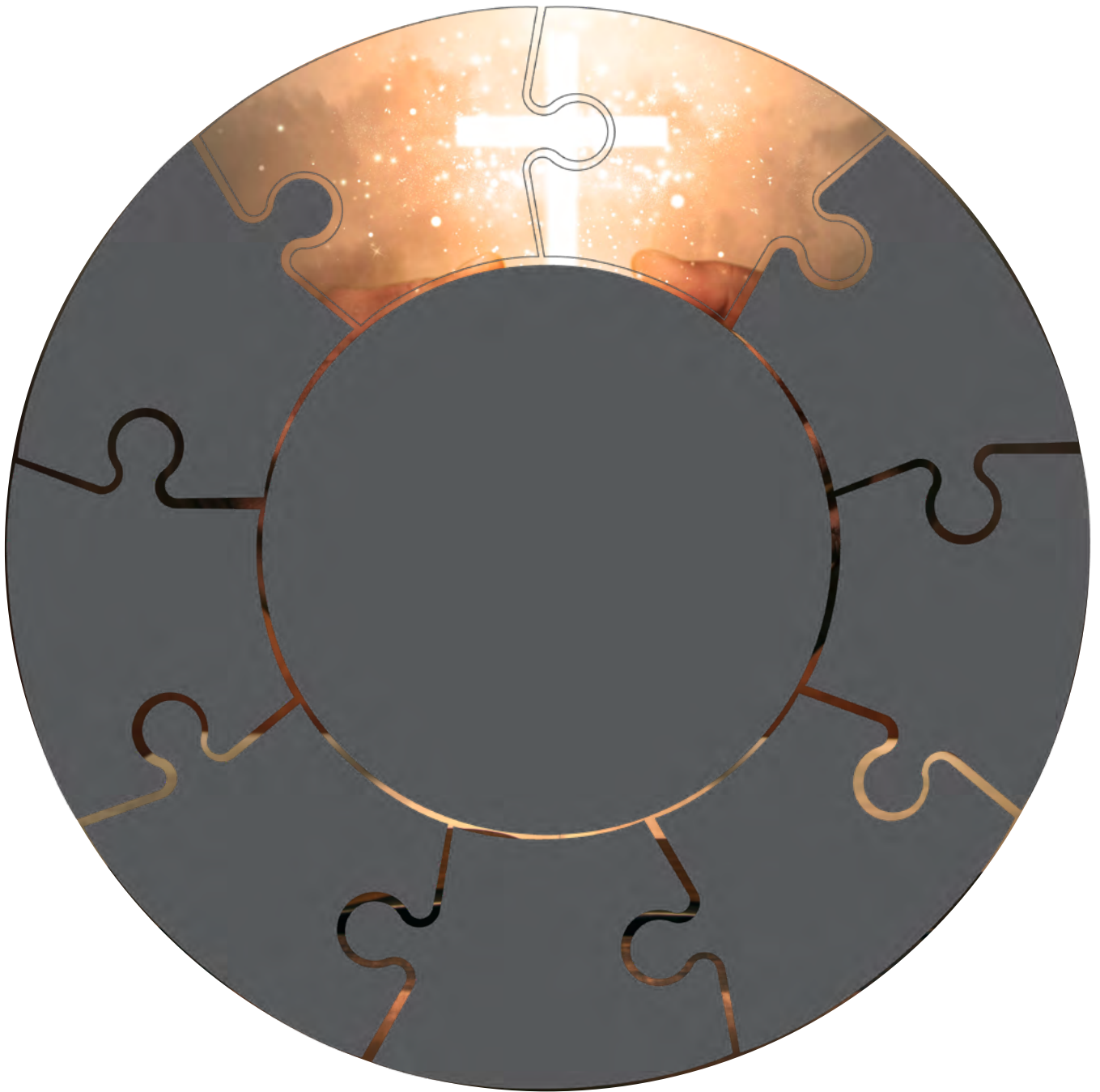
CONNECTED TO:

- CHRIST
- COMMUNITY
- CALLING
- OUTREACH
- CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION
- NATIONS

Over the next eleven weeks of our study, we are dedicating ourselves to prayer for eleven distinct regions. We will be praying specifically for the following:

- God to send church planters and missionaries to these areas.
- God's provision for those who embark on these Gospel initiatives.
- The unreached people within each region.
- The worship of God's name to be established in these regions.
- The meeting of people's needs within these regions.
- The spiritual formation of disciples within these regions.

By focusing our prayers on these aspects, we align ourselves with God's heart for the world. We recognize that the work of the Church extends far beyond our local community, and we are committed to participating in God's global mission to bring salvation to all nations.



CONNECTED TO THE NATIONS: LOCAL CITY

Ask God that the needs of the people would be met within your city.



LIFE GROUP & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

GETTING STARTED:

Name someone who you think has shown “dogged determination” to reach a goal or overcome an obstacle.

QUESTION ONE:

Who did Paul and Barnabas rely on in verse 3?

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QUESTION TWO:

Contrast the two major effects the preaching of the Gospel had in Acts 14?

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Follow Up: Should we expect opposition when we present the Gospel? Does opposition or persecution hinder or discourage you from presenting it? How can you overcome this?

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QUESTION THREE:

According to verses 11-13, what did the people of Lystra claim when they saw the miracle? What does this tell you about their religion?

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QUESTION FOUR:

What “witness” (evidence) did God give about Himself in verse 17? Why did God give this witness and what does this teach us?

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QUESTION FIVE:

Consider the statement in verse 22, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.” Is this your perception in your walk of faith?

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Follow Up: Check out what Jesus said in John 15:18-21 and John 16:33. If someone were to look at your life, would they understand that the way to the kingdom of God includes suffering for the kingdom of God? Why or why not?

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QUESTION SIX:

In verse 23, what two disciplines are featured in the new church’s life?

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Follow Up: Could this be a key to the new church’s rapid growth? And to Paul’s ability to bring others to Christ when he preached the Gospel?

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QUESTION SEVEN:

When Paul and Barnabas arrived in Antioch “they began to report all the things God had done for them.” Consider what God has done for you. Spend time in thankfulness and praise for the grace and provision the Creator of the Universe has bestowed on you.

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QUESTION EIGHT:

We often define spiritual success and failure by our results. We sometimes think opposition or struggle is a sign that we are moving in the wrong direction. But God had not called Paul and Barnabas to be universally successful; He had called them to be faithful. In what ways is God calling you to be faithful to Him and His mission? What could faithfulness to Him look like as you go about your week?

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APPLICATION

History has shown that the greatest growth in Christianity is during times of suffering and persecution. Following Christ as a faithful witness can come at great cost. While we may not be beaten, stoned, or jailed for our beliefs, many in the world are. Pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ who are suffering great tribulation and persecution because they follow Jesus.





KEY VERSE

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”. Acts 1:8 (ESV)

GETTING STARTED:

Have you ever read a story and become worried about what will happen to one of the characters? We might feel very connected to them and to what they are doing. We want to cheer them on when they are successful. Other times, what catches our attention in a story and makes us interested, is when the characters truly believe in what they are doing and saying—so much that they are willing to give up everything for their cause. In Acts 14, we see just that in Paul and Barnabas; they are so captivated by the Gospel message they are willing to endure whatever they must to see others be captivated by Jesus as well.

1. THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT JESUS CONTINUED TO SPREAD!

Read Acts 14:1-7 aloud.

Question: What happened when Paul and Barnabas shared the Good News of Jesus in Iconium?

Answer: The unbelieving Jews poisoned peoples' minds against Paul and Barnabas. The people of the city were divided—some sided with the Jews and some with Paul and Barnabas.

Some Jews and some Greeks believed the Good News, but other Jews who didn't believe worked together to try and turn people away from the Gospel. These people tried to hurt Paul and Barnabas, but fortunately Paul and Barnabas learned of this plan ahead of time, so they left the city and continued on their missionary journey. Those people tried to stop Paul and Barnabas from speaking about Jesus, but Paul and Barnabas just continued to tell people the Good News in other towns!

2. THE MAN WHO WAS CRIPPLED

Read Acts 14:8-18

Question: There was a man who was crippled; how was he able to walk again?

Answer: The man listened to Paul speaking. Paul looked at him, saw he believed, and said, "Stand upright on your feet!" The man sprang up and began walking.

Question: Who did the crowds think Paul and Barnabas were?

Answer: The people thought they were gods. They thought Barnabas was Zeus and Paul was Hermes.

Question: How did Paul and Barnabas respond?

Answer: They told the crowds that were just men. They told the people of the one, true God.

While lots of people might think that the best thing that happened to the man (who was crippled) was being able to walk for the first time ever, something even better happened! He heard about Jesus and believed! That means he would get to spend forever in heaven with Jesus one day, which is even better than getting to walk!

3. PEOPLE QUICKLY TURNED AGAINST PAUL

Read Acts 14:19-23 aloud.

Question: What happened to Paul in these verses?

Answer: The people of the city stoned him and left him for dead.

Paul was preaching about Jesus and the people listening had a choice—to believe or not. The people who didn't believe what Paul said, got mad and tried to kill him by throwing stones at him! The people left, thinking he was dead, but God had different plans for Paul! Once he had been taken outside of the city, Paul got up and walked right back into the city! God wasn't done using Paul to advance the Gospel, despite the best efforts of those who were against Jesus' message. Paul and Barnabas were disciples who made disciples!

TIPS FOR PARENTS: *Paul was most likely stoned because he was the primary speaker, so Barnabas was not seen as a big threat like Paul was.*

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

2 Corinthians 4:8-9 says, “We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed: perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.”

Paul was literally struck down, but God can heal and use any situation for His good and to advance His kingdom.

Paul's whole story is about how God can take bad things and turn them into something good! Go back and read Acts 7:54-60. We see that Stephen is being stoned to death and Saul (soon to be Paul) is standing there watching it happen! After God changed Saul's life, he is stoned for telling people about Jesus, just like Stephen was.

CONNECTED TO NATIONS



After Paul had been stoned, he and Barnabas still continued their missionary journey! Telling others about Jesus can be so many things—hard, scary, easy, maybe even a little embarrassing—sometimes we might feel nervous or worried. We must remember that we can be bold in our faith, sharing the Good News because nothing is able to stop God’s plan.

MAIN IDEA

Despite suffering, persecution, setbacks, and mixed responses, the Gospel spread to the Gentiles.



What is resilience? Resilience is the ability to withstand and persevere through difficulties. In Acts 14, we will see Paul and Barnabus' resilience put to the test. With so many reasons to give up, we see them stay firmly planted in their mission to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles. We will see, despite all odds, that God strengthens them as they strengthen others.

QUESTION ONE:

Read Acts 14:1-7. Paul and Barnabus were constantly “speaking boldly for the Lord”. Speaking boldly about something means we understand that it may be shocking or stir up different feelings in others, but we believe in it and say it anyway. Paul and Barnabus made people so mad that they almost got killed! Are you willing to experience rejection for the sake of telling people about Jesus?

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Follow up: On a scale of 1-10, how strong is your faith? Why?

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Follow up: What is something that you can do to make your faith stronger?

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QUESTION TWO:

Read Acts 14:8-18. In Lystra, the people saw the miracles Paul and Barnabus were performing and thought that they were gods! However, the disciples knew that it wasn't their power, but God's, and they begged the people to turn to Him. It can be so easy for us to forget that all good things are from God and try to give ourselves glory. What do you think would have happened if Paul and Barnabus let the people believe that they were Zeus and Hermes?

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Follow up: Why do you think God wants glory and honor for Himself?

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Follow up: What would it look like in your life to give God the glory for your successes?

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QUESTION THREE:

Read Acts 14:19-28. Remember the angry folks from verses 1-7 who wanted to kill Paul? Well, here they are again. After they stoned Paul, thinking he was dead, he got right back up again to preach the Gospel! Even more amazing than that, he went back to their home turf to encourage and strengthen the believers there! As long as there was still breath in his lungs, he was going to preach Jesus' name. What made Paul so brave?

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Follow Up: When hard times come, do you turn away from God or towards Him?

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BIBLE READING

The Bible is more than just a chain of events strung together one-by-one; it is a collection of intricately interwoven stories that work together to show us new truths about God. To gain a deeper understanding of Acts 14, spend a little time throughout your week reading these additional passages:

- ☐ **Acts 14**
Despite suffering, persecution, setbacks, and mixed responses, the Gospel spread to the Gentiles.
- ☐ **Luke 24:36-49**
Jesus was opposed, even to the point of death, for the Gospel he preached, yet God used that opposition to accomplish His mission.
- ☐ **Philippians 1:12-26**
Opposition to the Gospel advances its influence.

PRAYER

First, take some time to reflect on the resistance we experience to following Jesus in our culture right now. Second, take some time to recognize the people around the world who face persecution for their faith.

Pray that the Gospel would continue to be shared around the world even though there is resistance and persecution to fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. Pray for those who are facing persecution to have boldness and that they would be encouraged by the Spirit to keep pressing on. Last, pray for everyone who is facing persecution to know the unity of the body of Christ and to know they are not forgotten or overlooked.

ACTION STEP

God never promises that following Him will be easy. What He does promise is that He will be with us every step of the way, caring for us and protecting us. Think of a time that you or someone you know faced troubles for a belief that they had. Not so fun, was it? This happens all around the world, in varying degrees, to those who follow Christ. Here in America, we don't face persecution at the same level that believers in other nations may experience. Though our persecutions can be very difficult and painful, we need to remember our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world and how extreme their persecution may be. Spend 5-10 minutes praying for those who are persecuted for the sake of the Gospel around the world. Pray for them to have faith, to stay strong in Christ, and to remember His peace and comfort through the difficulty and tragedies that they will experience. After this, make a reminder on your phone, or use sticky notes around your home to remind you to pray for the nations.

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MAIN IDEA

We are all saved through the grace of Jesus.

MEMORY VERSES

And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.” Acts 18:9-10 (ESV)

Thus far in Acts, the Gospel went out to neighboring regions, cultures, and ethnicities. Questions arose around what exactly one must do to be a part of the covenant community of faith; questions such as “what must one do to be saved?” and “how must we now live?” were continually coming to the surface. The answers were found within the Jerusalem Council. The decisions made there had massive implications for how many of us now worship and experience God! The event that transpired in Acts 15 played a crucial role in shaping the early church’s identity, mission, and unity. The robust discussion amongst church leaders set a precedent for future discussion on matters of doctrine and practice. The decisions that were made prompted Paul to return to the mission field to bring the Gospel to new places and faces.

BIBLE READING

☐ **Acts 15-16**

We are all saved through the grace of Jesus.

☐ **Psalm 22:22-31 | Luke 24:44-49**

God's plan has always been for His people to preach the Gospel to the whole world.

☐ **Ephesians 2:1-10**

We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus.

☐ **Galatians 3:1-12**

God has saved both Jews and Gentiles through faith in Jesus.

☐ **Romans 4**

People have always been saved through faith, rather than through keeping the law.

☐ **Acts 15-16**

We are all saved through the grace of Jesus.

PRAYER & MEDITATION PROMPTS

- Read and recite this month's memory verse (Acts 18:9-10). Consider God's presence with His people as they suffer. Think back to other passages in Acts, and throughout the scripture, where God was present with His people as they endured suffering. Consider your own life and how you have experienced His presence with you. Thank Him for being steady and present at all times.
- As you read the daily Bible passages, take time to appreciate God for His kindness in saving us and adopting us into His family.



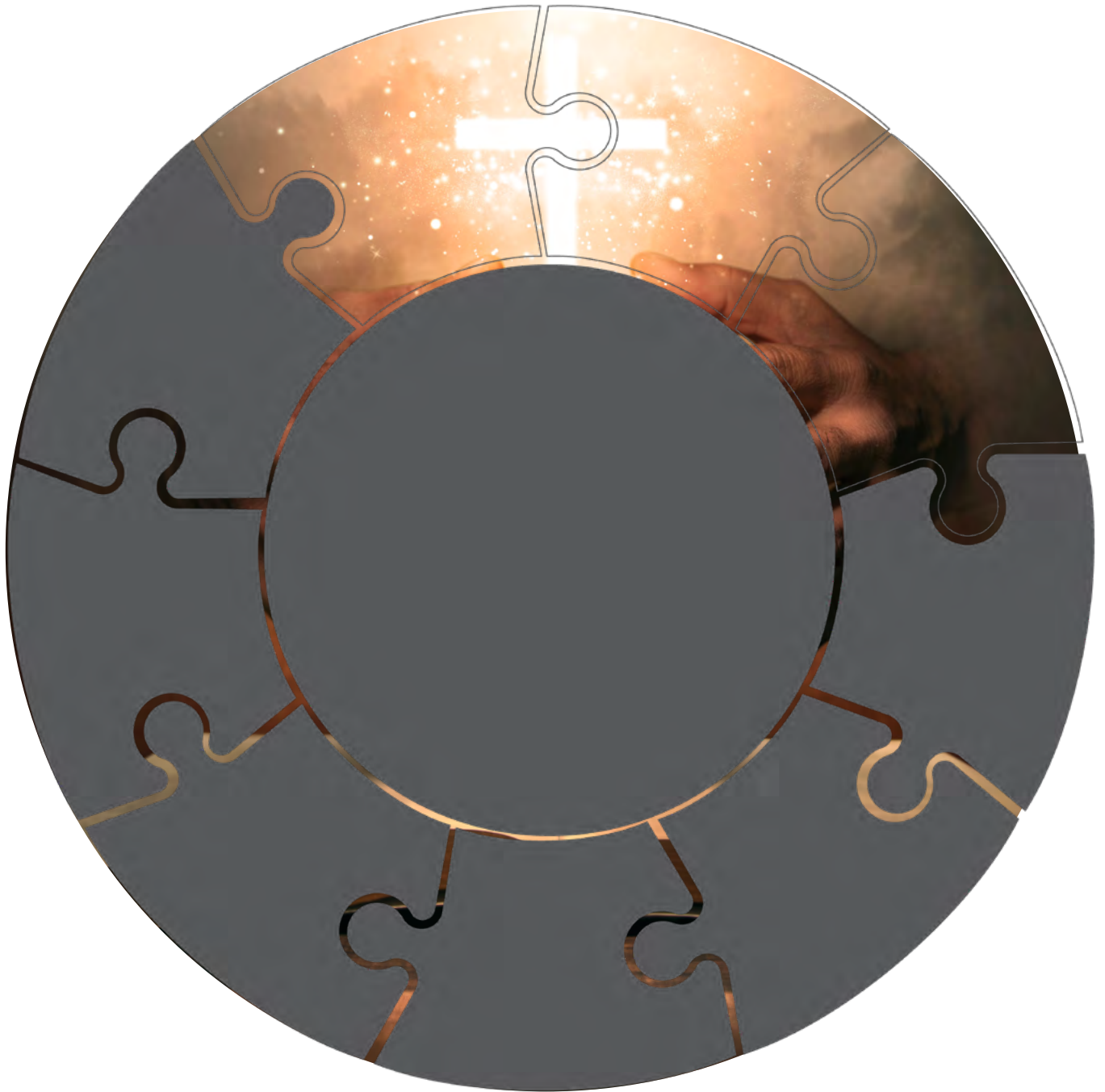
CONNECTED TO:

- CHRIST
- COMMUNITY
- CALLING
- OUTREACH
- CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION
- NATIONS

Over the next eleven weeks of our study, we are dedicating ourselves to prayer for eleven distinct regions. We will be praying specifically for the following:

- God to send church planters and missionaries to these areas.
- God's provision for those who embark on these Gospel initiatives.
- The unreached people within each region.
- The worship of God's name to be established in these regions.
- The meeting of people's needs within these regions.
- The spiritual formation of disciples within these regions.

By focusing our prayers on these aspects, we align ourselves with God's heart for the world. We recognize that the work of the Church extends far beyond our local community, and we are committed to participating in God's global mission to bring salvation to all nations.



CONNECTED TO THE NATIONS: CLARK COUNTY

Seek God's favor on behalf of those who have the desire to plant churches in the county, asking for boldness, blessing, and open doors.



LIFE GROUP & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

GETTING STARTED:

If you were a member of Congress, would you be able to walk across the aisle and come to an agreement with a member of the other party to achieve consensus?

QUESTION ONE:

Read Acts 15. In the first part of this week's passage two major issues arise in the new church. What are they (verse 5)? Read Genesis 17:14 to understand the first issue. In Jerusalem, a second issue arose that the believing Pharisees defended. Look at Deuteronomy 26:16-19 to understand the second major issue.

Follow Up: Explain why these were such important issues to the believing Jews.

QUESTION TWO:

What were Peter's main points? What is the key verse in Peter's speech?

Follow Up: Explain the "yoke that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear".

QUESTION THREE:

After Peter, Paul, and Barnabas spoke, how did they support Peter's message?



QUESTION FOUR:

Who was James (Mark 6:3)? What did James use to validate on his stance with the Gentiles (verses 15-20)?

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Follow Up: Reflect on verse 19; what desire was expressed?

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QUESTION FIVE:

In the letter to Antioch in verse 29, what was the resolution concerning circumcision?

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Follow Up: Make a list of the things the Gentiles, who lived among the believing Jews, were to abstain from. How would these things be an affront to their Jewish brothers and sisters? To understand abstaining from blood read Leviticus 17:10-11.

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QUESTION SIX:

How were these decisions reached (verse 28)?

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QUESTION SEVEN:

Read Acts 16. List what we learn about Timothy in Acts 16:1-3. What was Paul’s reasoning for circumcising Timothy? Remember, Paul always went to the Jews first when he entered a city.

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Follow Up: What effect did the work of Paul, Silas, and Timothy have on churches?

QUESTION EIGHT:

Focusing on verses 6-12, how many times and how did the Lord influence Paul and his companions as to where they traveled and ministered? What does this teach us about the Lord's involvement in the lives of His children and in the growth of His church?

QUESTION NINE:

The Acts narrative sets out a clear pattern of Gospel preached, and Gospel received, by faith. What combination of events came together for Lydia to accept Christ as her Savior in verse 14?

Follow Up: What combination of events came together for you to accept Christ as your Savior?

QUESTION TEN:

Christianity was perceived as being subversive to Roman culture, whose members worshiped Roman gods (verses 20-24). In what ways is Christianity perceived to be a threat to our society's culture today?



APPLICATION

Scripture is given by God so that each generation can learn, remember, and put into practice its paradigms. Paul's response to tribulation inspired the jailer to ask him about salvation. Life will not always be easy, even when we are focused on the mission of God. But the valleys of life often advance God's mission further than the mountaintop experiences.



SVC KIDS



KEY VERSE

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”. Acts 1:8 (ESV)

GETTING STARTED:

Before you start, find an object that is heavy such as a bag of flour, a kettle bell or weight, or a thick, hardcover book. If possible, find something for each family member so that everyone can participate together.

Have everyone (that is physically able) do 10 squats while holding the heavy item. Then do it again empty handed.

Ask your family, “Was is easier to do the squats with or without our heavy items?” Say, “Yes! Without! Those items were a burden. Today we will learn how the early church needed to be reminded that people can come to Jesus without the burden of the Law. We are saved not by anything we can do, but by what Jesus did for us.”

1. THE DISPUTE

Read Acts 15:1-6 aloud.

Question: How did the believers feel when Paul and Barnabas told them about the Gentiles believing in Jesus?

Answer: Very glad.

Question: What did some people say that the Gentiles needed to do if they believed in Jesus?

Answer: Obey the law of Moses.

Question: How did Paul and Barnabas feel about this?

Answer: They disagreed with it.

Instead of continuing to fight about whether or not Gentile believers had to obey the Law, Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem to settle this debate once and for all. Paul and Barnabas knew the truth that we are rescued from sin only by God's gift of grace. It's not about what we do, but it is about what God has given us through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

2. THE RESOLUTION

Read Acts 15:7-12 aloud.

Question: Who was talking to the council in this passage?

Answer: Peter

Question: What did God give to both the Jews and the Gentiles who believed in Jesus?

Answer: The Holy Spirit.

Question: How are we saved (rescued from sin)?

Answer: Through the free gift (of grace) from Jesus.

Peter explained to the council that making the Gentiles obey the law of Moses would be like putting a yoke or a burden on them. Remember the heavy lifting activity? Following all of the Old Testament laws was not only a burden, but it became unnecessary when Jesus died for us and rose again. Jesus did all the "heavy lifting" for us when He was the ultimate sacrifice for our sins.



THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

What is the Gospel? The Gospel is the Good News:

- First, the bad news: every one of us are rotten sinners. We cannot live a good life all by ourselves; we just don't have what it takes.
- Now, the good news: God loves us no matter what! He loves us even though we are rotten people, even though we are sinners. God could just leave us in our sins, destined to spend all of forever separated from Him. But God sent His Son, Jesus.
- The Gospel, put simply, is that Jesus died for our sins and rose again. Because of this, we can be forgiven and live in heaven someday.

The Gospel is the ultimate save—100%—nothing needs to be added to it. When we add to it, it is no longer the true Gospel. Receiving Jesus as our Rescuer means that we walk in freedom and do not have to earn our rescue from sin. It is a gift!



CONNECTED TO NATIONS

Millions of people all over the world believe in religions that are burdensome. They have lists and lists of things they must do in order to be right with their “god” or to enter their “heaven.” These people are spiritually lost. Spend some time praying for those around the world that have never heard the truth of the Gospel and that they would accept the freedom that comes from Jesus.



MAIN IDEA

*We are all saved
through the grace
of Jesus.*



It's so easy for us to want to add things to the Gospel. It can't really be as simple as "believe in Jesus", can it? We have to do other stuff to really be saved, right? In this section of Scripture, we see that what we do and how we act can impact the course of our lives, but salvation for our souls depends on Jesus alone. This message is not only important for the Jews and Gentiles in these stories but for us, too! When we ask how we can be saved, there really is only one answer: through the grace of Jesus

QUESTION ONE:

Read Acts 15:1-21. In this passage, we see that there were Jews who believed that the Gentiles wouldn't actually be saved from their sins unless they took on certain Jewish customs. But Peter told them that it was Jesus alone who saves! He assured them that this was true because the Gentiles who believed in Jesus had the same Holy Spirit within them as the apostles. Why is it important to believe that faith in Jesus is the only thing that saves us?

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Follow up: If we could earn our way to heaven by doing the "right things", what would that mean about what Jesus did on the cross?

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QUESTION TWO:

Read Acts 15:22-35. The Gentile believers were nervous that there were going to be extra steps they had to take to actually be saved. When the apostles and elders settled on the fact that this was not true, they wanted to reassure these believers of their salvation. So, they sent the Gentiles a letter. The letter stated that Jesus was the only thing that brought salvation but there were still right and wrong ways to live their lives. What things are the Gentiles told to avoid?

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Follow up: If they did those things, would it mean they weren't saved? What would it say about their hearts?

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Follow up: If we know we are saved because of what Jesus did, does it matter what we do in our lives?

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QUESTION THREE:

Read Acts 16. Paul had a plan to go to preach in Asia, but God wanted him to go to Macedonia and he listened. While in Macedonia, they got into trouble and were thrown into jail for preaching and casting out demons. But when God broke open the prison doors, they stayed rather than escaping! Why do you think Paul and the other disciples didn't run away at their first chance?

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Follow Up: When the jailer found Paul and Silas still in their cells, why did he ask them about salvation?

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Follow Up: For the disciples, the reward of seeing the jailer converted and a new church beginning was worth the pain of a beating and a night in jail. What hard thing are you going through right now? How do you think God wants to use it in the future?

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BIBLE READING

The Bible is more than just a chain of events strung together one-by-one; it is a collection of intricately interwoven stories that work together to show us new truths about God. To gain a deeper understanding of Acts 15-16, spend a little time throughout your week reading these additional passages:

- ☐ **Acts 15-16**
We are all saved through the grace of Jesus.
- ☐ **Psalm 22:22-31 | Luke 24:44-49**
God's plan has always been for His people to preach the Gospel to the whole world.
- ☐ **Ephesians 2:1-10**
We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus.



PRAYER

This week our prayer is about thankfulness. Thank Jesus that He is for everyone. Thank Jesus that His death on the cross was something that really did make up for the sins of the world. Thank Jesus for how He loves us even when we aren't perfect and fall short. Pray that the Lord would allow that truth to sink in and that you would fully live in that truth this week.

ACTION STEP

Following Jesus is for everyone—hallelujah! In this week's reading, we learn that even those who are not of Jewish decent have the right to follow Jesus and come to Him as they are. That means that unless you come from Jewish heritage, we're talking about YOU! Take a moment to reflect on what this means for the world. Christianity is open to all—not for a select few who are born into it or jump through certain religious hoops—but for all of us, end of sentence. Jesus calls to us to come as we are and to follow Him. Take a moment to thank God for this and reflect on His goodness. Then, find 3 people to tell this truth to! God calls us to come as we are and follow Him—He loves you! Examples of how to share this truth are on social media, through texts to friends, or live and in-person at school, sports, or home activities.

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This image shows a full page of a worksheet designed for handwriting practice. It features 20 evenly spaced, horizontal dashed lines that run across the entire width of the page. The background is plain white, providing a clear space for writing. There are no margins, text, or other markings present.



MAIN IDEA

The Gospel message turns the world upside down.

MEMORY VERSES

And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.” Acts 18:9-10 (ESV)

Part of what made the early church so effective in its Gospel witness to the world was their ability to be culturally aware and to engage with people where they were. Contextualization is the word used to describe this. Simply put, it means using language and communicating in a way that enables the message to be presented in a relatable manner, increasing its relevance and impact. Gospel communicators must understand what’s going on at large to be able to speak in a way that resonates with the surrounding audience; be respectful, sensitive, adaptable and flexible; and bridge building to the truth. In Acts 17-18, Paul and Silas used this skill to engage with the intellectuals, those many would consider immoral, and lost, to bring them to a point of salvation. In such, turning their world upside down.

BIBLE READING

☐ **Acts 17-18**

The Gospel message turns the world upside down.

☐ **Acts 9:20-31**

God transforms our lives to bring about transformation in others.

☐ **Acts 9:11-16 | Philippians 1:12-26**

God transforms the lives of those who follow Him by His grace.

☐ **Acts 9:20-31 | 1 Corinthians 15:1-11**

We should praise God for transforming the lives of others and using them to proclaim the Gospel to those around them.

☐ **Galatians 1:11-24**

We should glorify God when, by His grace, He brings people to Himself who once stood opposed to Him.

☐ **Acts 17-18**

The Gospel message turns the world upside down.

PRAYER & MEDITATION PROMPTS

- Read and recite this Month's memory verse (Acts 18:9-10). Think back to other passages we saw in Acts, or throughout the scripture, where God protected His people. Consider your own life and how you have experienced His protection. Take some time to thank and praise God for his love, care, and protection of His people and over you specifically.
- As you read the daily reading passages, imagine what it might look like for Clark County to be transformed by the gospel? How might that impact your home, school, workplace, etc? Pray that God would bring about transformation in our county, and that we might see this gospel transformation take root in our community as we proclaim the gospel with boldness.



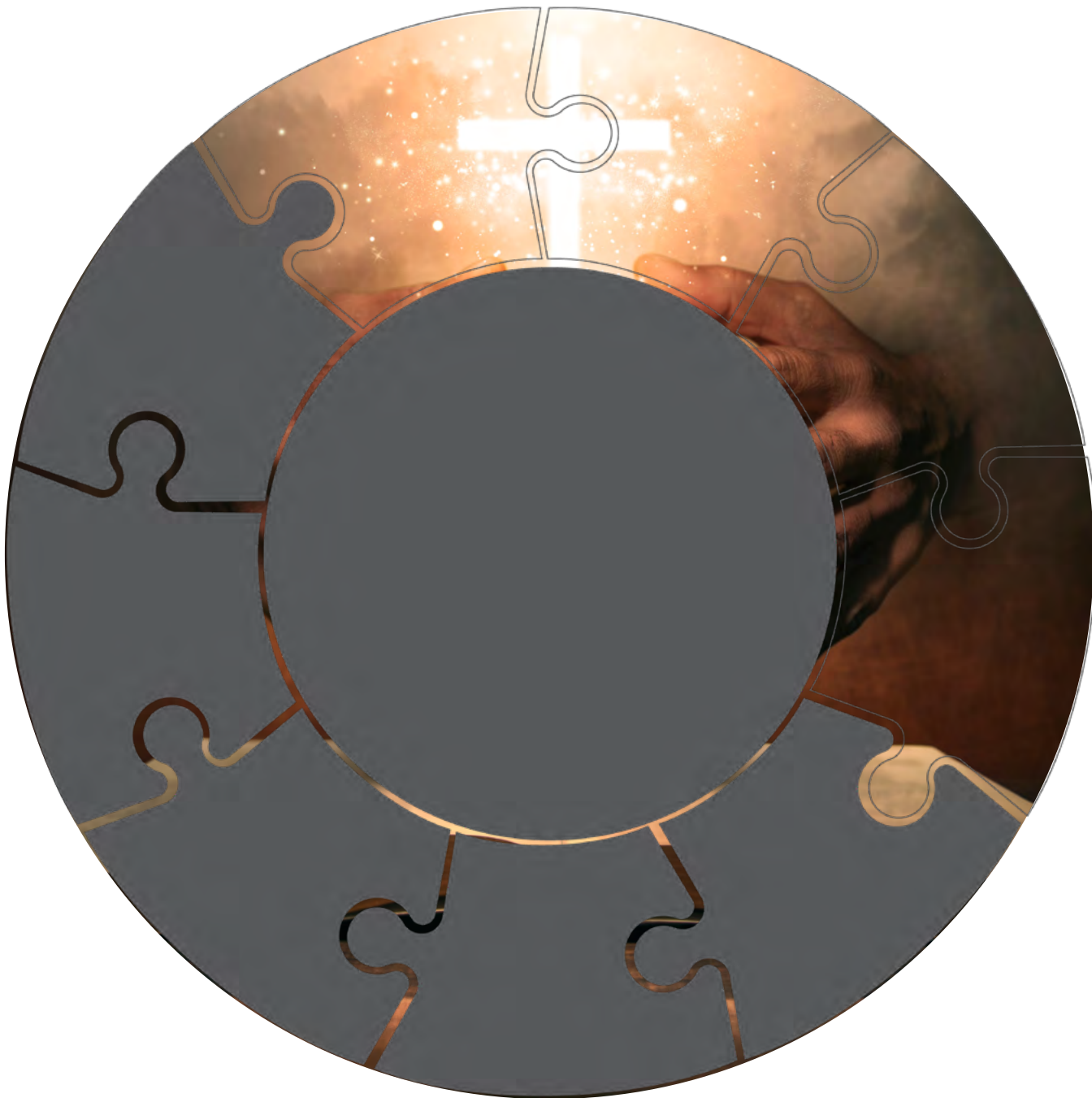
CONNECTED TO:

- CHRIST
- COMMUNITY
- CALLING
- OUTREACH
- CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION
- NATIONS

Over the next eleven weeks of our study, we are dedicating ourselves to prayer for eleven distinct regions. We will be praying specifically for the following:

- God to send church planters and missionaries to these areas.
- God's provision for those who embark on these Gospel initiatives.
- The unreached people within each region.
- The worship of God's name to be established in these regions.
- The meeting of people's needs within these regions.
- The spiritual formation of disciples within these regions.

By focusing our prayers on these aspects, we align ourselves with God's heart for the world. We recognize that the work of the Church extends far beyond our local community, and we are committed to participating in God's global mission to bring salvation to all nations.



CONNECTED TO THE NATIONS: WASHINGTON STATE

Washington State – Ask the Lord that his church would expand in our state, reaching people who haven't heard the good news of the gospel and are living in spiritual darkness.



LIFE GROUP & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

GETTING STARTED:

Unconditional love and “meet someone where they’re are” is beautifully biblical. The next thing is to invite that person further in (as opposed to affirming inertia). In your current contexts, how can you meet someone where they are and what does that individual specifically need to understand about Jesus?

QUESTION ONE:

Skim verses 9-17. What characterizes someone who “turns the world upside down” (17:6)?

QUESTION TWO:

Unethical opposition stemming from jealousy wasn’t new (Acts 5:17, 13:45, and 17:5). What were these Jews jealous of?

Follow Up: Does their behavior strike you as extreme? Familiar? How did they devolve to this point?

QUESTION THREE:

When your thinking gets challenged, what would make it easier to search out wisdom in God’s Word sooner (Acts 17:11)?



QUESTION FOUR:

In Athens, Paul's sensitivity to idolatry led him to action that has had widespread eternal impact (Acts 17:16-31). When you see worship being offered to things that aren't God, how easily does your spirit get provoked?

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Follow Up: How can you grow more sensitive to the ways our culture does this?

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QUESTION FIVE:

Paul knew the educated audience at Mars Hill was used to philosophizing without taking action (17:21). In his address to this demographic, what were his main emphases?

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Follow Up: What can you take from his approach to use in your own Gospel conversations?

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QUESTION SIX:

What do you observe about Christian community in 18:23-28?

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APPLICATION

Considering Acts 18:23, how can you strengthen disciples this week? Pray through your ideas, and then take five minutes right now to kickstart one of them.

SVC KIDS



KEY VERSE

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”. Acts 1:8 (ESV)

GETTING STARTED:

Last week in Acts 15-16 we learned that some people thought the Gentile believers needed to follow the law of Moses to be saved, but Paul and Peter both explained that the Gospel is simply about Jesus. Jesus did all the work for us! Today we see different reactions people had to the Gospel as Paul traveled on one of his missionary journeys.



1. Paul and the Philosophers

Read Acts 17:16-21 aloud.

Question: Why was Paul distressed (upset) when he got to Athens?

Answer: Paul saw the city was full of idols

Question: What was Paul doing in Athens?

Answer: Paul was preaching the Good News about Jesus

Question: How did the groups of philosophers react to what Paul was saying?

Answer: They debated with him and called him a “babbler.” They brought him to their meeting to hear more of what he had to say.

Philosophers are people who like to discuss their thoughts and ideas about the world. Acts 17:21 tells us that everyone in Athens was a philosopher. They spent all their time discussing different ideas and opinions. When Paul arrived and preached about Jesus, they didn’t understand what he was talking about. However, they loved hearing whatever the latest “trend” was in philosophy, so they invited Paul to share more.

2. The Unknown God

Read Acts 17:22-25, 30-34 aloud.

Question: What inscription did Paul find on one of the altars in Athens?

Answer: “TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.”

Question: Who did Paul proclaim was the “Unknown God”?

Answer: God

Question: Paul said that God commands all people to do what?

Answer: God commands all people to repent.

In this section of Scripture, we see Paul changing how he shared the Gospel so that the people of Athens could better understand the Good News about Jesus and the resurrection. The people of Athens were so religious, they filled their city with idols. They even had an altar titled “UNKNOWN GOD” so that they wouldn’t leave any gods out. Paul recognized this and used it to help the people understand his message. This “unknown god” that they worshipped was, in fact, the one and only God! He is real, not an idol that needs to be taken care of. Instead, He is the one that takes care of us and all of creation.



THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Why do you think some people sneered when Paul mentioned resurrection?

TIPS FOR PARENTS: Sometimes people can feel offended by the Gospel. Even though it is the truth, some people don't accept it and instead either make fun of it or get angry about it. When we share the Good News of Jesus, it's important to remember that we shouldn't take it personally if people reject us because of Jesus. Instead, we should pray for God to change their hearts and continue to share the Gospel.



CONNECTED TO NATIONS

Just as Paul traveled to different countries to share the Good News of Jesus, there are many missionaries today living and preaching in countries all over the world. Spend some time praying for the missionaries of the world who are continuing the work of being witnesses to the end of the earth.

MAIN IDEA

*The Gospel message
turns the world
upside down.*



Throughout Acts, we see two main reactions to the Gospel: joy and rage. For those who believed, they were eager to shake off the chains of their lives before Jesus and step into something new. But for those who didn't believe, the Gospel attempted to shake up everything that they knew. The way the world used to work is no longer true, and that can be hard to accept. We can learn from Paul and his missions in Acts that it is not always going to be easy to preach Jesus as king, but the work is worth it!

QUESTION ONE:

Read Acts 17:1-15. Paul wanted everyone to believe that Jesus was Messiah. He was willing to go to great lengths to show skeptics that Jesus fulfilled all prophecies that were laid out in Scripture. Many people heard and believed, but some rejected his explanations. Why do you think preaching Jesus as king made some of the Jews so mad?

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Follow up: There were two groups there: those who believed Paul and those who didn't. But both groups came from the same synagogue, town, and community. After Paul left, what do you think happened to those relationships?

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Follow up: Have you ever had difficulty in a friendship because that person looked down on your faith in Jesus?

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QUESTION TWO:

Read Acts 17:16-34. In this passage, Paul displayed what is known as “contextualization”. The Gospel is the same no matter what, but people will understand it better in terms they know. The Athenians were all about knowledge, philosophy, and reasoning, so that is how he spoke to them about Jesus. If spreading the Gospel is our goal, why is it important to understand other cultures?

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Follow up: Have you ever met someone that thought your faith in Jesus was ridiculous?

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Follow up: Evangelism (witnessing about Jesus) is easiest when you actually know the person you’re talking to. Do you allow yourself to have friendships with non-Christians or do you write them off?

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QUESTION THREE:

Read Acts 18. You may have heard the term “making disciples who make disciples” before. This chapter is a great example of that! At the beginning, we saw Paul meet Aquila and Priscilla and stay with them. By the end, Aquila and Priscilla learned so much about who Jesus was that they were able to explain it to Apollos, who then also went out preaching in Jesus’ name. Are you consistently learning more and more about Jesus?

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Follow Up: Who is someone in your life from whom you can learn more about Jesus?

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Follow Up: Who is someone in your life that you could teach about Jesus?

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Follow Up: Is there anything about Jesus that you don’t know well enough to teach to others?

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BIBLE READING

The Bible is more than just a chain of events strung together one-by-one; it is a collection of intricately interwoven stories that work together to show us new truths about God. To gain a deeper understanding of Acts 17-18, spend a little time throughout your week reading these additional passages:

- ☐ **Acts 17-18**
The Gospel message turns the world upside down.
- ☐ **Acts 9:20-31**
God transforms our lives to bring about transformation in others.
- ☐ **Acts 9:11-16 | Philippians 1:12-26**
God transforms the lives of those who follow Him by His grace.



PRAYER

This week pray that the Gospel would spread throughout the world. Pray that you would have eyes to see the people that are on the outside and that you would have a sensitive heart for those people. Pray that you would know how to weave your testimony with Jesus into your everyday conversations throughout the week and for the boldness to do it.

ACTION STEP

Think of someone who may sometimes feel like an outsider around school, church, or your extra curriculars. God wants to reach them too, and the way He wants to reach them is through us! He gives us the words and power to speak life and love into others, to draw them closer to Him. How can you open yourself this week to be used by God to communicate His Gospel? Spend some time praying and asking God to show you how He can use you to reach someone on the outskirts this week. Then, do it! If you get stuck, or want to do more, start by writing out your testimony (the story of how you came to know God) in a simple way, and then keep your eyes out for who you can share it with. Find a way to work it into whatever conversations you have this week!

NOTES

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This image shows a full page of a worksheet designed for handwriting practice. It features 20 evenly spaced, horizontal dashed lines across the entire width of the page. The background is plain white, and there are no margins, text, or other markings present.



MAIN IDEA

The Gospel confronts and destroys the idols in our lives and communities.

MEMORY VERSES

And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.” Acts 18:9-10 (ESV)

At Summit View Church, our mission is to equip and empower the body of Christ to lead and impact every sphere of life with Gospel-Centered living. What this means is that when we come into a relationship with Jesus Christ, all aspects of our lives are radically changed to look more like Jesus and our relationships, decisions, and ways of life are altered. If a whole church of people did that, could you imagine the impact?! In Acts 19, we see what happens when a church does just this; they have a massive impact on their city. The community of faith has a cultural impact, not by its demands on others to live as they do, but by simply living so faithfully the culture is impacted by their presence.

BIBLE READING



Acts 19

The Gospel confronts and destroys the idols in our lives and communities.



1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

God has called us to turn to Him from the idols we once served



1 Corinthians 8:1-6

We are called to turn away from the false gods of our world to serve the one true and trinitarian God.



Isaiah 42:9-20

Serving false gods is foolish.



2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1

God calls us to abstain from intimate partnerships in our lives and ministries with those who serve idols.



Acts 19

The Gospel confronts and destroys the idols in our lives and communities.

PRAYER & MEDITATION PROMPTS

- Read and recite this month's memory verse (Acts 18:9-10). As you read, consider that, in a time when Paul felt like the only one following God, God reminded him that many people were still faithful followers. Take some time to ask God to give you eyes to see the greater picture of the Church—that there are many in our communities and around the world who faithfully serve Him.
- As you read the daily reading passages, ask God to reveal the idols that may be present in your own life. Ask Him to lead you to walk in and fully experience the freedom He has already given you through faith in Jesus.





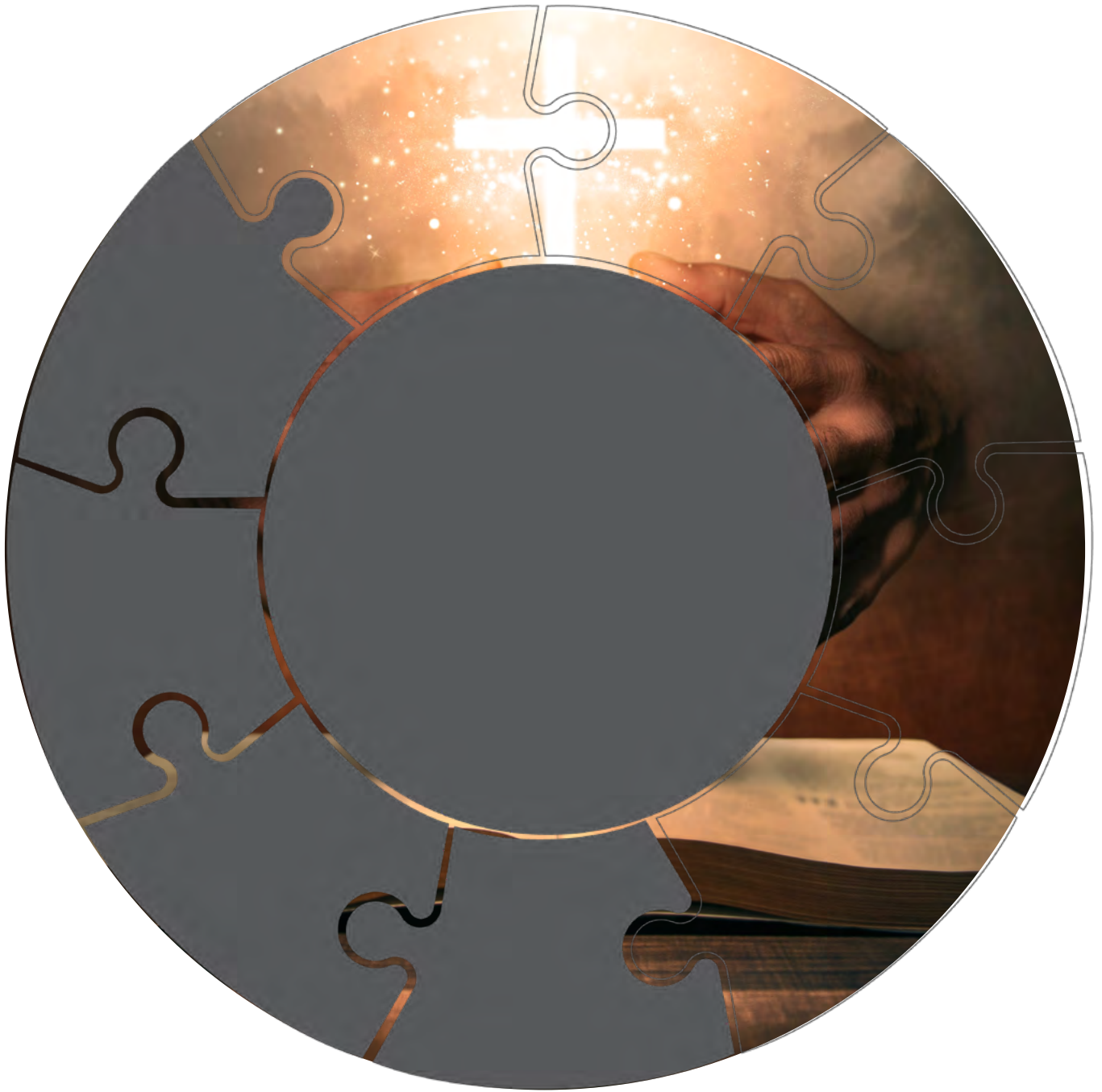
CONNECTED TO:

- CHRIST
- COMMUNITY
- CALLING
- OUTREACH
- CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION
- NATIONS

Over the next eleven weeks of our study, we are dedicating ourselves to prayer for eleven distinct regions. We will be praying specifically for the following:

- God to send church planters and missionaries to these areas.
- God's provision for those who embark on these Gospel initiatives.
- The unreached people within each region.
- The worship of God's name to be established in these regions.
- The meeting of people's needs within these regions.
- The spiritual formation of disciples within these regions.

By focusing our prayers on these aspects, we align ourselves with God's heart for the world. We recognize that the work of the Church extends far beyond our local community, and we are committed to participating in God's global mission to bring salvation to all nations.



CONNECTED TO THE NATIONS: PACIFIC NORTHWEST

Pray boldly that the widely unchurched are of the Pacific Northwest would be transformed into a region overflowing with the grace of God and that his name would be proclaimed as great!



LIFE GROUP & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

GETTING STARTED:

How good do you think your listening skills are? Do you take time to really listen to what someone else is saying? Do you formulate your answers based on what they have said?

QUESTION ONE:

Paul traveled to Ephesus and met some disciples, but who were they disciples of? Focus on Paul's gentle questioning of what they knew and understood before filling in their gaps of knowledge. What information does he give them?

QUESTION TWO:

Consider Acts 19:8-10. Where did Paul first go to teach? Who did he teach? How did he teach? What did he teach? Why did he leave? Who went with him when he left? Where did he go next? Who did he teach? What was the result of his teaching?

QUESTION THREE:

Ephesus was a first-century center for occult activity, including the seven sons of a Jewish high priest. What is ironic about them mentioning Jesus and Paul? Who did the evil spirits know? Why did fear fall on "all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus"? Whose name was magnified?

Follow Up: Are there people today who falsely claim to act in Jesus' name? What are some ways we can recognize them?

QUESTION FOUR:

How do you see “the Way” creating a disturbance in today’s society?

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QUESTION FIVE:

Demetrius was a silversmith that made idols of Artemis (Diana). The Ephesian temple to her was considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. What was Demetrius’ main focus (verses 24-25)?

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QUESTION SIX:

Explain why Demetrius was upset with Paul and objecting to his teachings in verses 26 & 27. What was his major charge?

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Follow Up: What idols does our culture worship that cause conflict with followers of Christ?

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QUESTION SEVEN:

The town clerk in verse 40 said there was “no real cause for the assembly.” Why does he say this (verse 37)? What is the two-part charge he outlines, in which he declares the Christians innocent?

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QUESTION EIGHT:

What was the result of the spread of the Gospel during the 3 years Paul was in Ephesus?

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APPLICATION

We’ve heard and received the Good News of the grace of our salvation. We are sealed and led by the Holy Spirit. We deeply desire for others to know the saving grace of Jesus Christ. But not everyone feels as we feel or responds as we did. As a matter of fact, they are not happy with us and are not afraid to attack our faith. Are you honestly willing to court unpopularity in order to serve and speak the Gospel? Do you stop or “keep on keeping on”? Pray for the Holy Spirit to strengthen and protect you as you share the message of hope to a hurting world.

SVC KIDS



KEY VERSE

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”. Acts 1:8 (ESV)

GETTING STARTED:

In Acts 19 Paul was on his third missionary journey. We will see once again that people react to Paul and the message of the Gospel in different ways. On this part of Paul's journey, he was in Ephesus. If you have maps in the back of your Bible, see if you can locate the one that shows Paul's journeys and find the city of Ephesus.



1. MIRACLES AND MAYHEM

Read Acts 19:11-20 aloud.

Question: Who performed the miracles of healing illness and casting out demons (vs. 11)?

Answer: God.

Question: What happened when the seven sons of Sceva tried to drive out evil spirits by their own power?

Answer: They were overpowered and beaten.

Question: How did the believers respond after this?

Answer: They confessed their evil deeds and burned their sorcery scrolls.

God did extraordinary miracles through Paul to show that the message he was preaching was true. Some people wanted that same power for themselves. They thought that they could use the name of Jesus like some kind of magic spell. Unfortunately for them, that's not how that works, and they suffered for it. As a result, though, many of the believers repented of the sorcery they practiced.

2. MONEY AND MAJESTY

Read Acts 19:23-28 aloud.

Question: Why was Demetrius trying to get everyone mad at Paul?

Answer: He didn't want to lose his business of making shrines/idols.

Question: How did the men react to what Demetrius said?

Answer: They were furious.

Question: Can God ever lose any of His majesty?

Answer: No



THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

In Acts 19:9 and 23, Luke mentions “The Way”. Why do you think early Christianity was called that? For help, read John 14:6.





CONNECTED TO CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

Just like in Acts 19, we can be a part of changing the culture where we live. We can do this by serving God and loving others. This week, think about the things that you do for yourself, like watching tv, playing games, reading your favorite book, etc. Give up some of the time you spend doing things for yourself and spend that time doing something for someone else. You can do things like help an elderly neighbor with some yard work or house cleaning; make a meal and take it to someone in need; visit a nursing or retirement home and play a game or read a book with someone; or spend some time donating toys to kids in need. Be sure to tell whoever you are helping about Jesus!

MAIN IDEA

The Gospel confronts and destroys the idols in our lives and communities.



Worship is the act of adoring something and making it the most important, above all things. When we give our worship to anything other than God, that makes that thing an idol. An idol can be anything: money, popularity, sports, friends, cool clothes, the most likes, etc. When we make these things the most important, we sell ourselves short. However, much power those things have, Jesus has more! It's impossible for us to truly follow Jesus and continue worshipping the idols in our lives.

QUESTION ONE:

Read Acts 19:1-10. In Acts 16, we saw the Holy Spirit tell Paul not to go to Asia. (This is not referencing Asia like we know it today, but a Roman province called Asia in modern-day Turkey.) In chapter 19, we see that ALL the residents of Asia have heard the Gospel! Why do you think God had Paul wait before coming back to preach in Asia?

Follow up: Paul listened and waited, trading what was good for something even better! Have you ever been in a season of waiting?

Follow up: Is it hard for you to entrust your future to God's hands?

QUESTION TWO:

Read Acts 19:11-20. The Jews tried to copy Paul's tactics to expel demons, but it didn't work! Faith in the Lord isn't a math equation (i.e., "If I do this, then this will happen"). Jesus' name has power, but He wants us to really know Him, not just say His name. Knowing this, why did the evil spirit say that he knew Jesus and recognized Paul, but didn't know these people?

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Follow up: When people saw how powerful Jesus' name was, they left behind all the old ways they had tried to seek power. According to verses 18-19, what were the things they were doing?

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Follow up: In verse 19, we see that people had spent years and a ton of money on lesser forms of power. Do you think it was hard for people to just throw all of that away? Why do you think they did it anyway?

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QUESTION THREE:

Read Acts 19:21-41. The hardest time to give up an idol is when it directly benefits us in this world. The statues the craftsmen were making of the god Artemis made them rich. When more and more people were turning to Jesus and away from Artemis, their wealth was threatened. The people got so riled up about this, they basically began a riot. Why do you think they felt so strongly?

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Follow Up: What is something that makes you, or people like you, feel good but is actually something you should walk away from?

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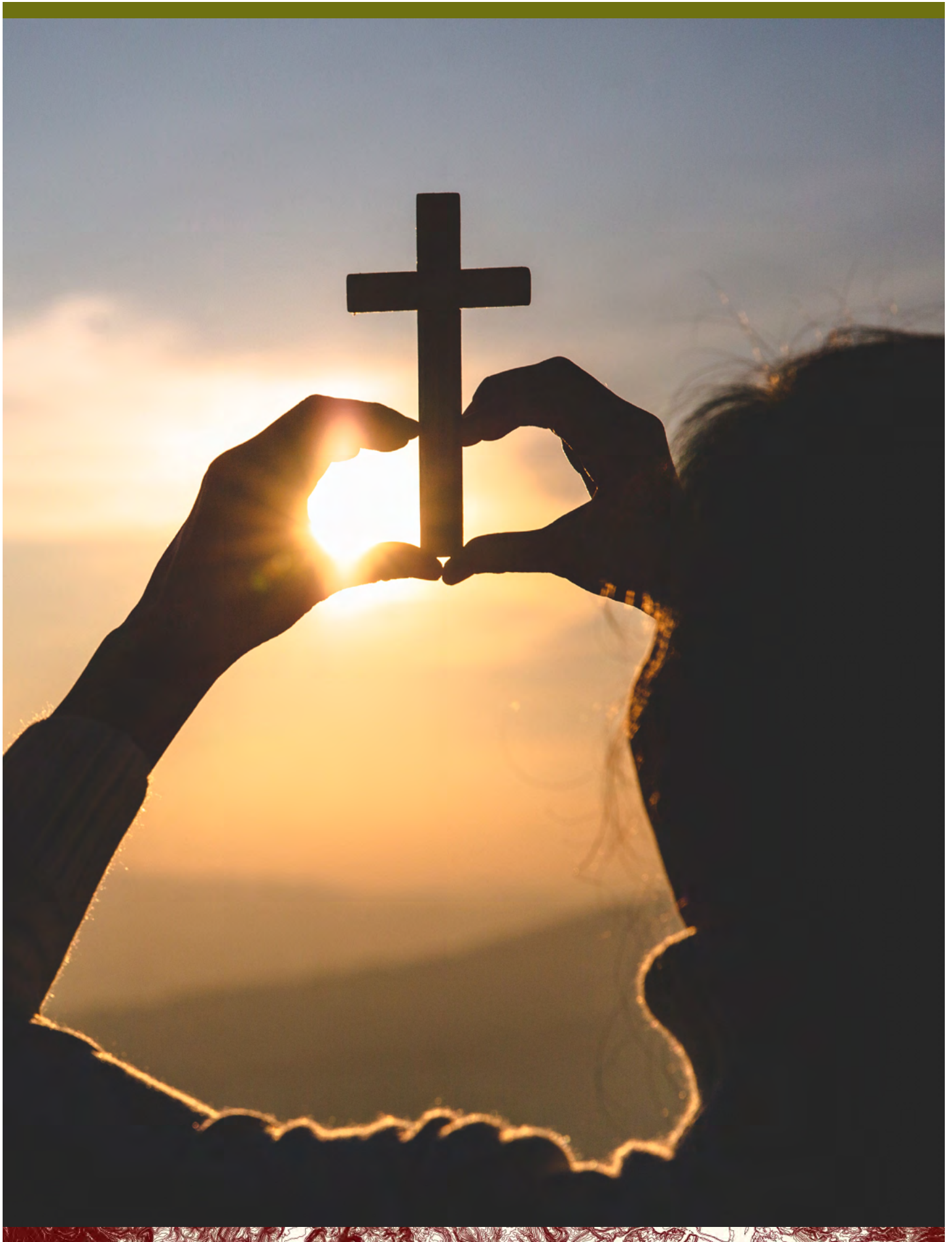
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BIBLE READING

The Bible is more than just a chain of events strung together one-by-one; it is a collection of intricately interwoven stories that work together to show us new truths about God. To gain a deeper understanding of Acts 19, spend a little time throughout your week reading these additional passages:

- ☐ **Acts 19**
The Gospel confronts and destroys the idols in our lives and communities.
- ☐ **1 Thessalonians 1:1-10**
God has called us to turn to Him from the idols we once served
- ☐ **1 Corinthians 8:1-6**
We are called to turn away from the false gods of our world to serve the one true and trinitarian God.



PRAYER

This week, pray for your community. Pray that God would use you to impact every group of people that you encounter, and that Jesus would be evident through your words and actions. Pray that the people who are in your community would be transformed by the love of Jesus and that any barriers, or things that get in the way of them getting to Christ, would be eliminated.

ACTION STEP

With God, all things are possible! As you pray beyond today, remember your friends, your schoolmates, teachers, coaches, parents, etc. Then, gather together with a friend or family member who shares your faith in God and make a plan of how you can serve your community this week. Perhaps you could mow the lawn of an elderly neighbor or write them a kind note of encouragement and bring them some garden flowers. Be creative—and keep your head up and ears open as God brings opportunities your way to serve those around you. Let's be the hands and feet of Jesus together!

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MAIN IDEA

The church has a Good Shepherd in Jesus Christ, and it has been entrusted to His under-shepherds.

MEMORY VERSES

And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.” Acts 18:9-10 (ESV)

Final addresses serve as a powerful platform to bring closure, opportunity to reflect, impart wisdom, inspire, leave a lasting impact, and deepen connections. After spending three years with the church in Ephesus, it was time for Paul to move on to his next place of ministry, but not before cementing the importance of teaching and leading well. In Paul’s impassioned plea to the Ephesian’s elders, he charged the leaders to care deeply for the church and to lead well. He called on them to be vigilant and watchful. He warned of false teachings and of threats from within and from outside the church. Paul used himself as an example of hard work, humility, and sacrificial service. All of this was done because Paul wanted to remind them of who the church ultimately belongs to, and what was required to establish it. Acts 20 provides for us a beautiful picture of who spiritual leaders are to be and what they are to do.

BIBLE READING

☐ **Acts 20**

The Church has a Good Shepherd in Jesus Christ and it has been entrusted to His under-shepherds.

☐ **John 10:1-18**

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who cares for, protects, and sacrifices for His people.

☐ **1 Peter 5:1-11**

God calls elders to be shepherds who lead the Church, by living under the authority of Christ, and as examples of His character.

☐ **1 Timothy 3:1-7 | 1 Timothy 6:3-10**

Leaders in the church must have character that looks like that of Jesus.

☐ **John 21:15-17**

God calls elders to care for His people as He would.

☐ **Hebrews 13:7-19**

God calls His church to imitate, submit to, and pray for their elders.

PRAYER & MEDITATION PROMPTS

- Read and recite this month's memory verse (Acts 18:9-10).
- As you read the daily reading passages, ask God to protect, care for, and give wisdom to the elders and leaders in the church so that they might lead with humility and Christlike character.



CONNECTED TO:

- CHRIST
- COMMUNITY
- CALLING
- OUTREACH
- CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION
- NATIONS

Over the next eleven weeks of our study, we are dedicating ourselves to prayer for eleven distinct regions. We will be praying specifically for the following:

- God to send church planters and missionaries to these areas.
- God's provision for those who embark on these Gospel initiatives.
- The unreached people within each region.
- The worship of God's name to be established in these regions.
- The meeting of people's needs within these regions.
- The spiritual formation of disciples within these regions.

By focusing our prayers on these aspects, we align ourselves with God's heart for the world. We recognize that the work of the Church extends far beyond our local community, and we are committed to participating in God's global mission to bring salvation to all nations.



CONNECTED TO THE NATIONS: WEST COAST

West Coast – Pray that God would provide richly for those who are embarking on gospel initiatives throughout the west coast.



LIFE GROUP & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

GETTING STARTED:

In Acts 20, we are reminded of what Paul gave of himself to the Ephesian church. Considering all that he gave, what is more difficult for you - to give your time, your money, or your “heart” (emotional and relational energy)?

QUESTION ONE:

Right “after the uproar [aimed at him] ceased,” what does Paul do in 20:1-2? What thoughts does this example bring to mind?

QUESTION TWO:

Even though Paul anticipated a 20-mile walk in the morning, he lingered all night to dialogue with a little-known group in the first recorded Christian worship service, fully distinct from Jewish tradition. Describe the ‘when’, ‘why’, and ‘where’ of this gathering. (Acts 20:7-12).

QUESTION THREE :

What threats and temptations did Paul warn the Ephesians about in 20:28-35?

Follow Up: Do you see those things threatening our church?



QUESTION FOUR:

We're told of several things that made Paul cry. What are they (Acts 20:30-31, Acts 20:37, Philippians 3:18, and 2 Corinthians 2:4 & 7:9)?

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QUESTION FIVE:

Using only Acts 20:17-38, describe Paul's understanding of God, the church, and unsaved people.

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QUESTION SIX:

Summarize the reasons Paul gives for his trustworthiness as a leader in Acts 20:18-35.

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Follow Up: What do you look for in a leader?

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QUESTION SEVEN:

How do you want to emulate Paul's heart toward those in whom you can invest?

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APPLICATION

How might your current relationships change if you fully embraced Acts 20:20's approach of "not shrinking back from declaring to [them] anything that was profitable?" Ask God to make you willing to do this even when it feels too risky. Ask His Holy Spirit for the ability to follow through. If you could use a sense of camaraderie, read David's thoughts in Psalm 40:9-10, God's warning to Ezekiel in Ezekiel 33:7-9, or Paul's coaching to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:16.

SVC KIDS



KEY VERSE

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”. Acts 1:8 (ESV)

GETTING STARTED:

Paul continued on his third missionary journey. God did extraordinary miracles through Paul to show that the message he was preaching was true.

1. PAUL'S FAREWELL JOURNEYS

Read Acts 20:1-3, 6 aloud.

Question: What two places did Paul visit next?

Answer: Macedonia and Greece.

Question: What did he do there?

Answer: He gave them much encouragement.

Question: Paul was going to set sail for Syria but changed his plans. Why?

Answer: There was a plot to kill him.

Paul left Ephesus and visited Macedonia and Greece. Paul was on a farewell journey making one more visit to the churches he had helped “plant” or start. His main purpose was to encourage the people in the churches to be bold witnesses.

2. EUTYCHUS RAISED FROM THE DEAD

Read Acts 20:7-12 aloud.

Question: Paul preached a sermon late into the night. What happened to a young man who was there?

Answer: The young man, Eutychus, was sitting at a window, fell asleep, and fell out the window. The window was very high (it was on the third floor!) and Eutychus died.

Question: What happened next?

Answer: Paul went down, took Eutychus in his arms, and God brought him back to life.

3. PAUL SPEAKS TO THE EPHESIAN LEADERS

Read Acts 20:17-27 aloud.

Question: What did Paul say awaited him in Jerusalem (vs. 22-23)?

Answer: Prison and hardship.

Question: How did Paul know?

Answer: The Holy Spirit told him.

Question: Paul was not worried about pain or death, but he did want to finish. What did Paul want to finish (vs. 24b)?

Answer: He wanted to finish the ministry Jesus sent him to do — to tell others the Good News of Jesus.

Paul wanted to be in Jerusalem for Pentecost. So instead of sailing to Ephesus, he asked the Ephesian church leaders to meet him at Miletus. The Holy Spirit had told Paul that prison and hardship awaited him in Jerusalem. Paul was not worried about pain or death, but he did want to finish the ministry Jesus sent him to do — to tell others the Good News of Jesus.

4. GUARD THE CHURCH:

Read Acts 20:28-38 aloud.

Question: Paul began by comparing the church to what animal?

Answer: A flock of sheep.

Question: What did he tell the Ephesian church leaders to do?

Answer: Pay careful attention to themselves and the church, and to care for the people of the church.

Question: What did Paul say would come after he left?

Answer: Fierce wolves would come, harming the flock.

In his time with the Ephesian church leaders, Paul told them to be alert — to pay careful attention to themselves and the church (the flock), and to care for the people of the church. Paul said that false teachers (fierce wolves) would come after he left. The false teachers would come in and try to draw church people away by telling them wrong things about Jesus.

At the end of his time with the Ephesian church leaders, Paul knelt and prayed with them. They all cried and hugged Paul, knowing that they would not see him again. Then they walked to the ship together.





THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Paul compared the church to a flock of sheep. Remember, the church has a Good Shepherd in Jesus, and it has been entrusted to His under-shepherds — the church elders and pastors.

SVC YOUTH

MAIN IDEA

The church has a Good Shepherd in Jesus Christ, and it has been entrusted to His under-shepherds.



Paul spent three years teaching and encouraging the Ephesian church. He was more than just their teacher; he had become their friend. It's hard to say goodbye to a friend, but Paul knew that he had done a good job in teaching them everything about Jesus and was ready to go teach and encourage others. He left the Ephesians with the words they needed to continue ministry once he went away.

QUESTION ONE:

Read Acts 20:1-16. In this passage, we see a story about a young boy named Eutychus, who fell asleep during a sermon, fell out a window, and died! But that wasn't the end; God chose to use Paul and bring Eutychus back to life. Why do you think God saved Eutychus?

Follow up: How do you think Eutychus felt when he woke up?

Follow up: Have you ever felt like you blew it in your faith or that God is done with you?



Follow up: When we “fall asleep” and miss what God has for us, what are some ways we can get back on track? Who can help us?

QUESTION TWO:

Read Acts 20:17-38. Paul was saying goodbye to the Ephesians and giving them instructions about how to lead the church after he left. His instructions also came with a warning: that following Jesus and preaching His name would bring hardship into their lives. Why do you think Paul thought it was important to tell them this before he left?

Follow up: In verses 22-24, Paul said he knew bad things would happen to him as he preached Jesus’ name. What were those things?

Follow up: How does it make you feel to know that you will run into hard things because you are a Christian? What gives you hope?



QUESTION THREE:

In this passage, Paul talked about shepherding and “caring for the flock”. Jesus was shepherding Paul, Paul was shepherding the Ephesians, and the Ephesians were supposed to shepherd their church. What does a shepherd do for their sheep that the disciples should do for their church?

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Follow up: Who is shepherding you? Who can you shepherd?

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Follow up: Are Christians supposed to live out their faith on their own or in a community? Why?

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BIBLE READING

The Bible is more than just a chain of events strung together one-by-one; it is a collection of intricately interwoven stories that work together to show us new truths about God. To gain a deeper understanding of Acts 20, spend a little time throughout your week reading these additional passages:

- ☐ **Acts 20**
The Church has a Good Shepherd in Jesus Christ and has been entrusted to His under-shepherds.
- ☐ **1 Peter 5:1-11**
God calls elders to be shepherds who lead the Church, by living under the authority of Christ, and as examples of His character.
- ☐ **Hebrews 13:7-19**
God calls His church to imitate, submit to, and pray for their elders.

PRAYER & ACTION STEP

The role of leadership is an important one both in the church and outside of the church. No matter who we are, each one of us has leaders that we must follow. At the end of the day, our ultimate leader is Jesus! We, as followers or as leaders, must remember that we serve the ultimate leader in Jesus who is our perfect role model. As we read about the risk of false teachers and threats from within and outside of the church walls, let's remember to continue to pray for our leaders. Spend 5-10 minutes thanking God for the way He has blessed us through the different leaders in our lives, as well as praying for those leaders who are in difficult leadership situations. Remember to pray for the leaders of our church as well, prayers to keep God's hand of protection, and counsel over them, and for them to be encouraged to follow Jesus closely, as He calls us to. The enemy doesn't like to see God's kingdom furthered here on earth so he will do whatever he can to try to get in the way. But through God, our all-powerful king, nothing can get by Him that He doesn't allow. This is our opportunity to partner with Him in prayer for His will to be done for His glory. After a time of prayer, consider sending a Godly encouragement to a leader in your life. Perhaps they have specific prayer requests that you can be praying for, or ways they're needing a lift. Lift one another up in Godly encouragement. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

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MAIN IDEA

Paul boldly proclaimed and defended his faith regardless of his audience.

MEMORY VERSES

And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.” Acts 18:9-10 (ESV)

We’re quickly concluding Paul’s third and final missionary journey as we read through Acts. In this week’s passage, Paul was enroute back to Jerusalem where he rapidly went from being the Gospel proclaimer advancing the Gospel to the world, to playing defense. Paul was warned of the trouble ahead, yet this did not persuade him to change his course of action in any way. The journey Paul was on would eventually lead him to Rome—equivalent to the ends of the earth in their day. Paul remained committed to the mission at hand, defending himself against all the accusations lobbied against him. The speeches Paul made throughout the rest of Acts were no longer missionary speeches, but defense speeches. Amid defending himself, he presented himself as a messenger of the Gospel and pleaded with people to respond. Throughout Acts 21-23, Paul faced opposition from both the Jewish religious leaders, who rejected the Gospel, and the Roman authorities seeking to maintain order. Yet Paul’s unwavering faith and bold testimony continued to shine through.

BIBLE READING

☐ **Acts 21-23**

Paul boldly proclaimed and defended his faith regardless of the audience.

☐ **Acts 4:1-31**

Walking with Jesus emboldens His followers.

☐ **Luke 3:7-20**

The Holy Spirit empowered John to speak and act boldly as he proclaimed the kingdom of God despite its offensive nature to those in power.

☐ **Luke 4:16-30**

The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus to boldly proclaim the Gospel despite its offensive nature to those around Him.

☐ **Luke 3:15-16 | Luke 12:4-12 | Luke 24:44-49**

Jesus promised to empower those who follow Him with the Holy Spirit that we might speak boldly despite opposition from those in power.

☐ **1 Timothy 1:6-14**

We have been given the Spirit to empower us to proclaim the Gospel boldly despite persecution and suffering.

PRAYER & MEDITATION PROMPTS

- Read and recite this month's memory verse (Acts 18:9-10). Consider God's command to keep on speaking the Gospel despite persecution. Think of one person that you can share the Gospel with this week and tell them! Tell them about who Jesus is and what He has done.



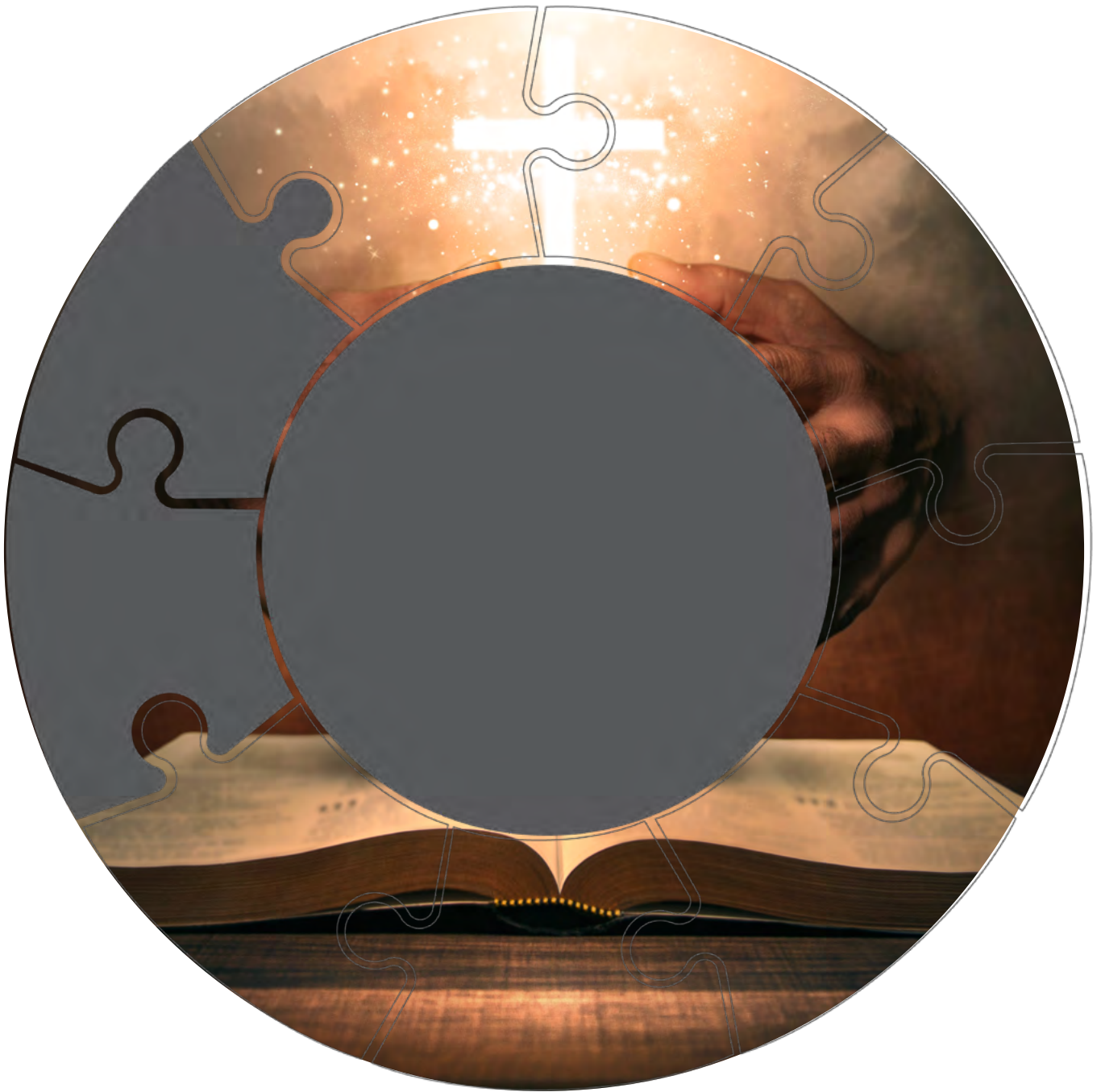
CONNECTED TO:

- CHRIST
- COMMUNITY
- CALLING
- OUTREACH
- CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION
- NATIONS

Over the next eleven weeks of our study, we are dedicating ourselves to prayer for eleven distinct regions. We will be praying specifically for the following:

- God to send church planters and missionaries to these areas.
- God's provision for those who embark on these Gospel initiatives.
- The unreached people within each region.
- The worship of God's name to be established in these regions.
- The meeting of people's needs within these regions.
- The spiritual formation of disciples within these regions.

By focusing our prayers on these aspects, we align ourselves with God's heart for the world. We recognize that the work of the Church extends far beyond our local community, and we are committed to participating in God's global mission to bring salvation to all nations.



CONNECTED TO THE NATIONS: UNITED STATES

West Coast – Pray that God would provide richly for those who are embarking on Gospel initiatives throughout the west coast.



LIFE GROUP & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

GETTING STARTED:

Bold faith requires deep awareness of our purpose. With your Life Group or another believer, practice describing aloud your purpose as a Christian.

QUESTION ONE:

Jesus freed His people from having to follow Jewish law. In Acts 21:20-26, why did Paul agree to honor the Law anyway? See Romans 14:10-15:2 and 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.

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Follow Up: Which areas of weakness in other Christians do you find most challenging to accommodate?

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Follow Up: Are there areas where you struggle and long to feel freedom from your conscience?

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QUESTION TWO:

How did the crowd respond to Paul's address in Acts 21:40-22:24? Why did they respond that way?

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QUESTION THREE:

Why did God have Paul experience so much hatred, accusation, physical danger from enemies, and even disagreement and discouragement from friends? Look anywhere in Scripture for answers.

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Follow Up: How does this speak to you in your current situation?

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QUESTION FOUR:

We may inwardly cheer when Paul loses his cool and goes off on the high priest in Acts 23:1-5, but what can you take from his example after the group pointed out his sin?

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QUESTION FIVE:

In yet another time of intensity, God spoke directly to Paul (Acts 23:11), reminding Paul that He was present and at work in Paul's suffering. What situation requires your courage and obedience? How is God providing for you in it?

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APPLICATION

Paul knew his time was short and was going to keep getting harder, yet he gave no hint of “shrinking back from declaring to [them] anything that was profitable.” Using a concordance, internet search, or other word study tool, look up Scriptures where Paul talks about perseverance or endurance. Which passages capture your curiosity or hope? Why?

Have you seen a believer persevere without hypocrisy, as Paul does in these chapters? Pray for them. Pray to be like them.

SVC KIDS



KEY VERSE

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”. Acts 1:8 (ESV)

GETTING STARTED:

This week’s study is different than the rest. It covers three chapters in the book of Acts that tell an exciting story full of intrigue and God’s amazing work behind the scenes to move His plan forward. While you sit back and enjoy the following story, notice how, just like Jesus said in our key verse, nothing can stop God’s plan!

1. WARNINGS!

Read Acts: 21:8-16 aloud.

While Paul and his group stayed with Philip, a prophet named Agabus came to Paul with a message. He took Paul's belt and bound his feet and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'This is how the Jews in Jerusalem will bind Paul and give him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" The group urged Paul not to go to Jerusalem. Paul told them that he was ready to be put into jail or even to die in Jerusalem for the name of Jesus.

2. PAUL CONDUCTS A CEREMONY

Read Acts 17:26 aloud.

When they arrived in Jerusalem, Paul was received gladly by James and the church leaders. Paul told them all the things that God had done among the Gentiles. When they heard it, they glorified God. The church leaders warned Paul about the rumors that were being spread about Paul and his ministry. They suggested that he publicly show his respect for the Jewish law through a ceremony. As the ceremony did not go against God's laws, Paul agreed to do it.

3. PAUL ARRESTED IN THE TEMPLE

Read Acts 21:27-36 aloud.

The ceremony lasted seven days and took place in the temple, behind a wall where Gentiles were not allowed. Near the end of the ceremony, a crowd saw Paul in the temple. As Paul was known to often be with Gentiles, they jumped to the wrong conclusion that since he was in the temple, so were Gentiles (which was forbidden). A crowd gathered. They grabbed Paul, dragged him out of the temple, and wanted to kill him. A Roman tribune, or chief captain, and his soldiers heard the commotion and approached the people. They arrested Paul and ordered him to be bound with chains. The chief captain, Claudius, asked what was going on, but so many people in the crowd shouted different things, Claudius ordered that Paul be brought to the barracks.

Read Acts 21:37-22:29 aloud.

Before Paul was taken to the barracks, he told Claudius that he was Jew and asked to speak to the crowd. Paul explained who he was to the crowd: he had been a rabbi, taught by a leading rabbi, and like them, zealous for God. He explained how, as a rabbi, he had imprisoned, beaten, and killed those who followed Jesus. He told them of his incredible encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. He told them of his transformation and how he was to be a witness telling everyone all that God had done for him—even to the

Gentiles. The crowd listened until he got to the “Gentile” part. The crowd began to riot again so Claudius had Paul brought to the barracks. When Paul realized that they were going to torture him, he told them he was a Roman citizen. They stopped, for it was against the law for a Roman citizen to be tortured.

4. PAUL BEFORE THE RELIGIOUS COUNCIL

Read Acts 22:30-23:11 aloud.

Paul was brought before the Jewish religious council. The Romans gave this religious council permission to decide on and punish any who were accused of going against Jewish law. Paul addressed the council in a way that got the council arguing amongst themselves. The council became violent, so Claudius had his soldiers rush down and take Paul back to the barracks! That night, the Lord told Paul to take courage. He told Paul he would be going to Rome.

5. A PLOT TO KILL PAUL

Read Acts 23:12-35 aloud.

A group of forty Jews made a plan to kill Paul. They went to the Jewish religious council and told them to have the chief captain bring Paul from the barracks as though they were going to question him further. The plan was for the group of men to kill Paul when he was brought in, but Paul’s nephew heard of the plan and told Paul, and then Claudius.

Claudius knew he had to get Paul out of Jerusalem. That night he sent some soldiers to go with Paul to the governor in Caesarea with a letter explaining all that had happened. The governor told Paul he would give him a hearing and secured Paul in his palace.





THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Our key verse tells us that by the witness of Jesus' followers, the good news about Jesus would be spread throughout the city, country, nearby countries, and the world.

The Bible has many examples of how man can do nothing to stop God once He sets a plan in motion! We have seen this power throughout Acts—the followers of Jesus that were following God's plan were successful no matter how many trials, hardships, or obstacles they faced (including all the times they got thrown in jail).

So far in the book of Acts, we've seen the Good News about Jesus being spread throughout the city. Then, because of persecution, believers were scattered to the nearby countries (to Judea and Samaria)! The believers scattered, but they continued to tell people the good news about Jesus, and more people believed—both Jew and Gentile!

The journey Paul was on led him to Rome, which is equivalent to the ends of the earth, just like Jesus said in our key verse. Nothing can stop God's plan!

MAIN IDEA

*Paul boldly proclaimed
and defended his
faith regardless of
his audience.*



Have you ever had to tell someone the truth, but you really didn't want to? When we know what consequences are waiting for us, it makes it difficult to step out and say what we need to say. In Acts 21-23, Paul was in Jerusalem, aware of what would happen to him there if he continued preaching the name of Jesus. But did this stop him? No! Paul was willing to walk into anything, including death, if people would hear the Gospel.

QUESTION ONE:

Read Acts 21. Paul had been warned what would happen to him if he were to go to Jerusalem but went anyway. Then what happened? Exactly what he was warned of. This episode was confusing and scary. How would you have felt if you were Paul?

Follow up: Have you ever felt the need to defend yourself when people thought something incorrect about you?

Follow up: Why do you think Paul was still brave enough to speak?

QUESTION TWO:

Read Acts 22. Paul had the Jews attention until he got to the word “Gentiles”. Why do you think that set the Jews off so much?

Follow up: The Roman tribunal were going to take things into their own hands and beat Paul to figure out why everyone was so mad at him. Why did they stop?

Follow up: Why do you think the Romans gathered the Jewish priests and council?

QUESTION THREE:

Read Acts 23. Paul had a knack for saying things that riled people up. But here’s the truth: the Gospel is controversial. It is still controversial in our culture, even though it may have looked different for Paul. Everyone was angry because Jesus was turning their world upside down and forcing them to confront the things that they had believed were true their whole lives. Do you have any thoughts that hold you back from believing Jesus is real?

Follow up: Jesus Himself came to let Paul know, “This is not the end for you. You still have more to endure for my name” (vs. 11 paraphrased). Do you think this was encouraging or discouraging for Paul?





BIBLE READING

The Bible is more than just a chain of events strung together one-by-one; it is a collection of intricately interwoven stories that work together to show us new truths about God. To gain a deeper understanding of Acts 21-23, spend a little time throughout your week reading these additional passages:

- ☐ **Acts 21-23**
Paul boldly proclaimed and defended his faith regardless of the audience.
- ☐ **Acts 4:1-31**
Walking with Jesus emboldens His followers.
- ☐ **Luke 3:7-20**
The Holy Spirit empowered John to speak and act boldly as he proclaimed the kingdom of God despite its offensive nature to those in power.



PRAYER

Throughout the week make it your prayer that you would stand firm in your faith. Pray that the Lord would remind you of ways that He has provided for you, the ways that He has revealed Himself to you, and truths from Scripture about who He is so that you will be able to answer anyone who asks about your faith.

ACTION STEP

Defending our faith and standing firm in our beliefs is something that each one of us will have to do at some point if we continue to follow Jesus. But never fear; this is something that we are capable of! God gives us all the tools and encouragement that we need to be able to stand up for our faith. Spend some time reading Josuha 1:9, and Ephesians 4:1-5:20 & 6:10-19. These passages teach us how God equips us and why it is so important to arm ourselves with His promises. He tells us He is with us every step of the way. Just like God gives the words to His people in the Scriptures, He gives words to us to defend Him and proclaim His glory. Read through these passages and allow them to give you assurance and encouragement to fill up your faith toolbox.

NOTES

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MAIN IDEA

Paul stood on the truth during his trials.

MEMORY VERSES

So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man. Acts 24:16 (ESV)

Everyone loves a good courtroom scene. The conflict, tension, problem solving, and moral dilemmas challenge us to wrestle with ethical questions. Power dynamics and the characters’ navigation of it all bring us intrigue. And the various twists and turns as the defense pleads their case and the prosecutors lay out the charges catch us off guard; we find ourselves sitting on the edge of our seats, waiting and wondering what the verdict will be. In Acts 24-25, Paul stood before Roman governors Felix and Festus trying to defend the Gospel—what landed him in court in the first place—and to remain free. Despite the false accusations and the apparent “deck stacked against him”, Paul put on display what a faithful witness for Christ can, and should, look like in the face of stress and adversity, knowing that God controls it all.

BIBLE READING

☐ **Acts 24-25**

Paul stood on the truth during his trials.

☐ **Luke 3:7-20**

The Holy Spirit empowered John to speak and act boldly as he proclaimed the kingdom of God despite its offense to those in power.

☐ **Luke 20:1-20**

The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus to boldly proclaim the Gospel despite its offensive nature to those in power.

☐ **Luke 3:15-16 | Luke 12:4-12 | Luke 24:44-49**

Jesus promised to empower those who follow Him with the Holy Spirit and the ability to speak boldly despite opposition from those in power.

☐ **Acts 6:8-7:60**

The Holy Spirit empowered Stephen to speak boldly and proclaim the Gospel to those in power, despite opposition.

☐ **Acts 24-25**

Paul stood on the truth during his trials.

PRAYER & MEDITATION PROMPTS

- Read and recite this month's memory verse (Acts 24:16).
- As you read the daily reading passages, consider also our memory verse. Ask the Lord to grow you in your knowledge of the truth, that you would be able to boldly proclaim it with a clear conscience, knowing that what you speak is from Him and His word.



CONNECTED TO:

- CHRIST
- COMMUNITY
- CALLING
- OUTREACH
- CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION
- NATIONS

Over the next eleven weeks of our study, we are dedicating ourselves to prayer for eleven distinct regions. We will be praying specifically for the following:

- God to send church planters and missionaries to these areas.
- God's provision for those who embark on these Gospel initiatives.
- The unreached people within each region.
- The worship of God's name to be established in these regions.
- The meeting of people's needs within these regions.
- The spiritual formation of disciples within these regions.

By focusing our prayers on these aspects, we align ourselves with God's heart for the world. We recognize that the work of the Church extends far beyond our local community, and we are committed to participating in God's global mission to bring salvation to all nations.



CONNECTED TO THE NATIONS: NORTH AMERICA

Take some time to ask that those who have not heard the Gospel would have a radical encounter with the risen Christ.



LIFE GROUP & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

GETTING STARTED:

Bold faith requires deep awareness of our purpose. With your Life Group or another believer, practice describing aloud your purpose as a Christian.

QUESTION ONE:

Satan, the “prince of this world,” often uses politics to oppose Christians. If you are discussing these questions with other believers, review last week’s study of Christian liberty, and then take time right now to thank our Lord for His call to honor each other’s consciences and pursue Christian unity (Ephesians 4:3).

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Follow Up: Then, taking care to center your discussion on Scripture, describe what you find in Acts 16:35-25:28 about Paul’s submission to, opposition to, and strategic use of, politics. In Paul’s world and mission, how did politics and the Gospel interplay with one another?

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QUESTION TWO:

Acts 23:16 could be a thesis statement for these chapters. What were Paul’s requirements for a clear conscience toward God and men? What are yours?

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QUESTION THREE:

Why do people delay making decisions about their relationship with God?

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QUESTION FOUR:

Roman culture valued justice and fair legal processes. When Paul stood up for himself to the legal authorities, what precedent was he setting?

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QUESTION FIVE:

Describe parallels you’ve observed between Paul’s trials and Jesus’.

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QUESTION SIX:

By now, you’ve read many of the testimonies Paul gave before various audiences. Skim over them again; what commonalities repeat most frequently in his speeches? What do you think he got most excited about when he thought of Jesus?

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APPLICATION

At this point in history, Rome was considered “the end of the earth.” Reread Acts 1:8. Consider all the attempts to silence Paul and the rest of the Church. Marvel that God’s purposes were not only unstoppable, but now, in chapter 25, they were nearing completion. Do you trust that Paul’s unstoppable God is the same God whose Spirit seals you? Do you trust that suffering can’t touch your spiritual, eternal safety of being God’s child, headed for His home?

“There are no ‘ifs’ in God’s world, and no places safer than any other places. The center of His will is our only safety – let us pray that we may always know it!” – Corrie ten Boom

KEY VERSE

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”. Acts 1:8 (ESV)

GETTING STARTED:

Last week, we learned that when Paul got to Jerusalem, he met with the church leaders. The church leaders warned Paul about the rumors that were being spread about him and his ministry. They suggested that he publicly show his respect for the Jewish law by participating in a ceremony.

The ceremony took place in the temple. Near the end of the ceremony, a crowd saw Paul in the temple. As Paul was known to often be with Gentiles, they jumped to the wrong conclusion that since he was in the temple, so were Gentiles (which was forbidden). An angry crowd gathered. They grabbed Paul, dragged him out of the temple, and wanted to kill him. A Roman tribune, or chief captain, and his soldiers heard the commotion and arrested Paul. Paul told them he was a Roman citizen.

Paul was brought before the Jewish religious council. They also became violent, so the chief captain had his soldiers rush down and take Paul back to the barracks! Then the chief captain heard of a plot to kill Paul; he knew he had to get Paul out of Jerusalem. That night he sent some soldiers to go with Paul to the governor in Caesarea with a letter explaining all that had happened. The governor told Paul he would give him a hearing and secured Paul in his palace.

1. PAUL BEFORE FELIX AT CAESAREA

Read Acts 24:1-21 aloud.

The high priest, some elders, and a spokesman (similar to a lawyer) came to Caesarea to lay their charges against Paul in front of the governor, Festus. The charges were: Paul stirred up riots, was a leader of an illegal religion, and violated the temple. Paul answered the charges laid against him. He had only been in Jerusalem for a week, which was not enough time to lay the groundwork to create a riot. Paul pointed out that the accusers in the crowd during the riot could not be found to collaborate or prove this charge against him. He also disproved the charge of violating the temple. In fact, he was in the temple to take part in a Jewish religious ceremony. As for the charge of leading an illegal religion, Paul pointed out that his faith was rooted in the Old Testament scriptures, and he followed the same God as the Jewish people.

Read Acts 24:22-27 aloud.

Question: Did Felix make a decision on the case?

Answer: No, he put them off.

Question: Did Felix let Paul go?

Answer: No, he was kept in custody.

Question: How long was Paul in custody while Felix was governor?

Answer: Two years.

While Paul was in custody, he could have some liberty. This meant that he was not put into prison. Paul was allowed to be in parts of the palace while chained to a soldier. During this time, Felix and his wife met with Paul often. Paul shared the Good News of Jesus, as well as spoke on righteousness, self-control, and the coming judgement. Did Felix repent? No, though he was troubled by what Paul said, he put Paul off, as well as any atonement for his wrongdoings. Two years later, Felix was replaced by Festus.

2. PAUL BEFORE FESTUS AT CAESAREA

Read Acts 25:1-12 aloud.

Question: After taking his new position, Festus went to Jerusalem and met with the religious leaders. What did they want and why?

Answer: They explained the case against Paul to Festus and asked him to bring Paul to Jerusalem. They told Festus they wanted the trial in Jerusalem, but really, they wanted to kill Paul along the way (when he was being transferred from Caesarea to Jerusalem).

Question: What was Festus' answer to the religious leaders' request?

Answer: Festus stated Paul would stay in Caesarea, but he did invite them to come to Caesarea and bring their charges before him.

Question: Days later, when the religious leaders arrived, Paul was brought before Festus. What happened next (vs. 7)?

Answer: The religious leaders brought many serious charges against Paul, but they could not prove any of them.

When Paul again defended himself, Festus asked him if he wanted to have a trial in Jerusalem. Paul knew that he would not have a fair trial in Jerusalem. He also knew he would not be safe in Jerusalem as there were many plots to kill him. Paul was a Roman, so he appealed to Caesar, meaning Paul asked for a trial in the court of the Roman Emperor. Festus agreed to Paul's request.

3. PAUL BEFORE AGRIPPA AND BERNICE AT CAESAREA

Read Acts 25:13-27 aloud.

Question: Who was Agrippa?

Answer: Agrippa was the King of Judea and visited Caesarea with his sister, Bernice.

Question: What did Festus say surprised him about the charges brought against Paul?

Answer: Festus had expected that the charges against Paul would include great evils, but they brought no such charges.

Question: According to Festus, what did the charges include?

Answer: The religious leaders had "certain points of dispute with him about their own religion, about a certain Jesus, who was dead, and whom Paul asserted to be alive" (Acts 25:19).

Festus went on to explain how Paul appealed for the decision of the emperor and that he was holding him until Festus could send Paul to Rome. King Agrippa told Festus that he would like to hear what Paul had to say for himself. The next day, Paul was brought before King Agrippa and Bernice.





THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Read Psalms 37:7 aloud.

Question: Why should we trust God when we start to think “This is not fair!”?

Answer: If we believe that God is a good God, and that the Good News is true, then we understand that God knows all, and He has a plan and purpose for our lives. God will always take care of us.

Paul was falsely accused, yet his trust in God remained firm and unshaken. As believers, we can stay grounded in the truth of the Gospel when we are treated unfairly. Psalm 37:7 says, *“Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices.”*

MAIN IDEA

Paul stood on the truth during his trials.



The idea of being arrested and spending time in jail for something you didn't do sounds terrifying! That's where we find Paul in Acts 24-25. Though it may seem like an injustice, Paul still uses the situation to preach Jesus' name. In the face of all the hardships, lies, and accusations, he simply said what he knew to be true. In fact, we see that his circumstances provide him a unique opportunity to preach the Gospel to the Jewish high priests and the Roman governors.

QUESTION ONE:

Read Acts 24. The Jews were doing their best to flatter and persuade Felix into believing them, but Paul just spoke the truth. What the Jews were saying sounded good, but ultimately didn't stand up to the facts. List the things the Jews accused Paul of, then list Paul's defense against those things.

Follow up: Felix kept Paul in jail for two years! What is the good reason he did this? (Hint: Verse 24) What is the bad reason he did it? (Hint: Verse 26)



QUESTION TWO:

Read Acts 25:1-12. Festus became the new Roman governor of the area. In verse 9, why do you think he wanted to do the Jews a favor?

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Follow up: Paul knew that his best chance at getting a fair trial—one that wouldn’t end in his death—would be a trial in Caesarea, not Jerusalem. Why?

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QUESTION THREE:

Read Acts 25:13-27. Paul was about to have the attention of the most politically powerful person in the world! Jesus had already told him that he would need to prepare to give his account. But this can still be pretty intimidating. How do you think Paul felt leading up to talking to the king?

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Follow up: Would you be nervous or excited to talk to a powerful person about Jesus?

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BIBLE READING

The Bible is more than just a chain of events strung together one-by-one; it is a collection of intricately interwoven stories that work together to show us new truths about God. To gain a deeper understanding of Acts 24-25, spend a little time throughout your week reading these additional passages:

- ☐ **Acts 24-25**
Paul stood on the truth during his trials.
- ☐ **Luke 3:7-20**
The Holy Spirit empowered John to speak and act boldly as he proclaimed the kingdom of God despite its offense to those in power.
- ☐ **Luke 20:1-20**
The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus to boldly proclaim the Gospel despite its offensive nature to those in power.



PRAYER

This week the prayer prompt is short and meant to be easily memorized and repeatable so you can use it at any time during the week. It comes from Psalm 25:5.

It says, "Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long."

Pray this throughout your day—when you wake up, when you are with your friends, while you run errands. Allow it to guide you through the day and “wait” upon what the Lord has for you.

ACTION STEP

In tough times, our character is what is most put to the test. How will we respond when we are in trouble? How will we respond when something doesn't go our way? How will we respond when someone hurts us? Though the Bible was written centuries ago, it is still a living, breathing text that applies to our everyday lives. In these circumstances, the Bible tells us how to respond: trust in God, seek his wisdom, stand firm on your faith. Just like Paul when his entire life was up for debate against the wrath of the Romans. While not every trial we face will have to do with defending our faith (or our lives) in a courtroom, we can take the principles with us into everyday life. Who we are under pressure shows us who we really are at the base of our character. To be faithful Christ followers, we must prioritize following Christ's example of morality and steadfastness. Turn the other cheek. Love those who hurt you. Do unto others as you'd have them do to you.

Grab a pen and paper, or your notes app, and spend some time journaling about the times you felt put to the test and how you responded. What could you have done better? What would God have had you do? What did you do well? What is something helpful that you can reflect on next time you're undergoing trials? Be honest with yourself and with God. Ask God to help you see how He sees. Close the time with a prayer for help and reflection with God.

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MAIN IDEA

Paul leveraged his personal testimony to compellingly invite others to faith in Jesus.

MEMORY VERSES

So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man. Acts 24:16 (ESV)

How well do you know your story? If you were given the opportunity to present your story, would you be able to concisely summarize how God brought you to where you are now? Would you be able to do so in a way that connects with others with the hope of seeing them saved? In Acts 26, we find Paul’s third and final defense speech—a summary of why & how he found himself in his current position; and we get the opportunity to, once again, read Paul’s story of conversion. While repetition in our culture may lead us to tune out or yawn, Paul could not wait to tell his story and share what God had done in his life. He knew that moment before King Agrippa was because God had led him there and he took full advantage of it. Paul’s trials were happening due to his faithfulness to the calling and mission that Jesus gave him, Paul was simply being a faithful witness to God. All of us should be able to share Paul’s sentiment when he stated,

“I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am” (Acts 26:29).

BIBLE READING

- ☐ **Acts 26**
Paul leveraged his personal testimony to compellingly invite others to faith.
- ☐ **Mark 2:1-12**
The right response to the work of Jesus is to glorify God and tell others about Him.
- ☐ **John 20:1-18**
The right response to the work of Jesus is to glorify God and tell others about Him.
- ☐ **Mark 5:1-20**
Jesus wants us to tell those around us how much He has done for us and the mercy He has shown us.
- ☐ **Philippians 1:12-26**
God transforms our lives to bring about transformation in others.
- ☐ **Acts 26**
Paul leveraged his personal testimony to compellingly invite others to faith.

PRAYER & MEDITATION PROMPTS

- Read and recite this month's memory verse (Acts 24:16). Consider what it means to "have a clear conscience before God and man." Ask that He would increase this kind of integrity in you.
- As you read the daily reading passages, consider how God's transformative work in you could be a bridge to sharing the Gospel. Write out your story and how God has changed you so that you can be prepared to share it with those around you who need the Gospel.



CONNECTED TO:

- CHRIST
- COMMUNITY
- CALLING
- OUTREACH
- CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION
- NATIONS

Over the next eleven weeks of our study, we are dedicating ourselves to prayer for eleven distinct regions. We will be praying specifically for the following:

- God to send church planters and missionaries to these areas.
- God's provision for those who embark on these Gospel initiatives.
- The unreached people within each region.
- The worship of God's name to be established in these regions.
- The meeting of people's needs within these regions.
- The spiritual formation of disciples within these regions.

By focusing our prayers on these aspects, we align ourselves with God's heart for the world. We recognize that the work of the Church extends far beyond our local community, and we are committed to participating in God's global mission to bring salvation to all nations.



CONNECTED TO THE NATIONS: WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Pray that people's hearts would be stirred to become church planters and missionaries to share the Gospel with those who have not heard it.



LIFE GROUP & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

GETTING STARTED:

What characteristics or traits do you feel define you? What do you want people to notice about you as they get to know you?

QUESTION ONE:

Why might God have arranged for Paul to stand before Agrippa? Go back and check out Acts 9:15-16.

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QUESTION TWO:

According to Paul, what did the Jews accusing him already know about him (verse 4-5)? Are you able to explain why this is important?

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QUESTION THREE:

Why does Paul say he is standing trial (verse 6)? Who made the promise and to whom was the promise made? What did Paul mean when he said, “for the hope of the promise made by God” (Acts 13:32-39)?

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QUESTION FOUR:

What hostile things did Paul do to the believers?

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QUESTION FIVE:

What happened to Paul to radically change his course? What was the cosmic plot twist that changed Pauls’ direction in life?

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Follow Up: Look up what a “goad” is and consider why Jesus said it.

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QUESTION SIX:

Paul summed up his mission assignment in Acts 26:16-18. What did Jesus appoint him to do? What was Jesus going to do for him? What was the result to be?

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QUESTION SEVEN:

Why did the Jews seize him and try to put him to death?

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QUESTION EIGHT:

What did the Prophets and Moses say was going to take place? Read Isaiah 53:3-6.

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QUESTION NINE:

Was Paul doing anything that King Agrippa considered worthy of death or imprisonment?

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APPLICATION

The passage in Acts 26 reveals the power of a good Gospel testimony. As believers, we should not underestimate the power of our personal narrative in sharing the Gospel. Telling others of God's saving grace in our lives connects them to the Gospel in a powerful way.

Paul's conversion and your conversion were not accidents; they were the culmination of God's saving plan for each of us, which He purposed before the foundation of the world.

Paul's testimony should influence every Christian to pray that God would use our life circumstances to show people their need for Jesus Christ and to draw them to repentance. Pray today for those you love who have not yet committed to following Jesus. Pray for your friends and neighbors.



KEY VERSE

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”. Acts 1:8 (ESV)

GETTING STARTED:

Read Acts 25:23-27 aloud for a review of the lessons from the last several weeks.

This passage takes place in Caesarea, a city in Judea. Judea was a Jewish country that was ruled by the Roman Empire. Judea still had a king (King Agrippa), who, in turn, answered to the Roman Emperor. The Romans allowed the Jewish people to practice their religion. The Romans also gave the Jewish religious council permission to judge and punish Jews accused of breaking Jewish law. Caesarea, though a city in the Jewish nation of Judea, was also a major city for the Roman Empire, and had a Roman governor (Festus).

1. PAUL'S DEFENSE BEFORE AGRIPPA

Read Acts 26:1-18 aloud.

Question: Agrippa gave Paul permission to speak for himself. Why was Paul glad that King Agrippa was listening to his defense?

Answer: Because King Agrippa was a Jew and familiar with the customs of the Jews.

Question: How did Paul describe himself in Acts 26:4-5 & 9-11?

Answer: He was a Jew living in Jerusalem. He was a religious leader, who had punished, persecuted, and imprisoned people who believed in Jesus.

Paul's address to Agrippa was his longest speech in the book of Acts. After describing who he was, Paul told King Agrippa of his amazing encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. He told of his transformation from a religious leader who persecuted Jesus-followers to becoming a Jesus follower himself—one committed to telling others the Good News about Jesus.

Read Acts 26:19-32 aloud.

Question: What reason(s) did Paul give for why the Jews grabbed him in the temple and tried to kill him?

Answer: Because he declared to people in Damascus, Jerusalem, throughout Judea, and also to the Gentiles that they should repent and turn to God.

Question: When Festus told Paul that he was out of his mind, what was Paul's response?

Answer: Paul said he was not out of his mind. He said that he was speaking true words and that the king knew about these things.

Question: Then, Agrippa asked Paul, "Would you persuade me to be a Christian?" What was Paul's answer?

Answer: Paul said, "I hope that not only you, but all who hear me might become such as I am [a Jesus-follower], except I hope they are not wearing chains as I am." (Acts 26:29)

After that, the king and his sister, the governor, and all those with them left the room. They said to one another, "*This man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment.*" And Agrippa said to Festus, "*This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.*"



THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

After reading that Paul would have been set free if he hadn't already appealed to Caesar, we might question what God was doing. Paul could have been set free at the end of this chapter! He could have gone back to telling others about Jesus!

But Paul never stopped telling others about Jesus—he did so before the religious council, during his visits with Felix and his wife, and his appearances before King Agrippa, his sister, Festus, and many others.

God had a plan and Paul wasn't going to disobey God. Remember, in Acts 23:11, God told Paul that he would testify in Rome just as he did in Jerusalem.

God's plans aren't always easy, but He always has a purpose, and nothing takes Him by surprise. Paul was going to be obedient no matter the cost for he knew that the promise would be fulfilled through Christ alone.

MAIN IDEA

Paul leveraged his personal testimony to compellingly invite others to faith.



When we hear the word testimony, we may think of a courtroom. Someone up on a stand telling their version of what happened. Growing up in church, it may bring to mind your “Jesus story”, the story of what happened when you came to faith. Our testimony is the most powerful weapon we can use against those who oppose Jesus! People can argue with us all day long about the truth, but no one can tell you what you have or haven’t experienced. Paul gets to tell his story in Acts 26 (and it’s a good one)!

QUESTION ONE:

Read Acts 26:1-11. The Jews are accusing Paul of being against God’s law. This part of Paul’s story shows how much he really cared about God’s law, but also that he knew when he made mistakes. What were the things Paul did to Christians before meeting Jesus?

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Follow up: Paul basically said, “See? I used to be just like these Jews who are accusing me.” Are you set in your ways, or are you open to changing your opinion when you get new information?

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Follow up: Knowing who we were before we met Jesus is one of the most important parts of our stories. Who were you before you met Jesus?

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Follow up: If you came to faith when you were really young, who do you think you would be now if you never had?

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QUESTION TWO:

Read Acts 26:12-23. Paul told his story but made it personal to the people he was talking to. He was saying, “This is how I met Jesus, and he told me to declare it to people like you so that you can believe in him also!” Do you think God has placed someone in your life right now that He wants to hear about Jesus using you?

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Follow up: In verse 19, it says that Paul was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. Is it easier to obey God or obey man? Which is more important?

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Follow up: One of the most controversial parts of Paul’s testimony is that belief in Jesus is for everyone, not just the Jews. Is there a group of people that you think just wouldn’t be interested in Jesus no matter what? Does that mean you shouldn’t tell those people about Him?

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QUESTION THREE:

Read Acts 26:24-32. Paul knew that the previous two years had not been for nothing. In verse 29, he said he would spend any amount of time helping people believe in Jesus. How much time do you spend telling people about Jesus?

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Follow up: Are you willing to have hard conversations with people about Jesus? What conversations scare you?

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Follow up: In verse 32, Agrippa said that Paul could have been free a long time ago, but because he asked to bring his trial all the way up to Caesar, he would stay imprisoned. Why do you think God orchestrated it that way? How could Paul's imprisonment have been better than his freedom?

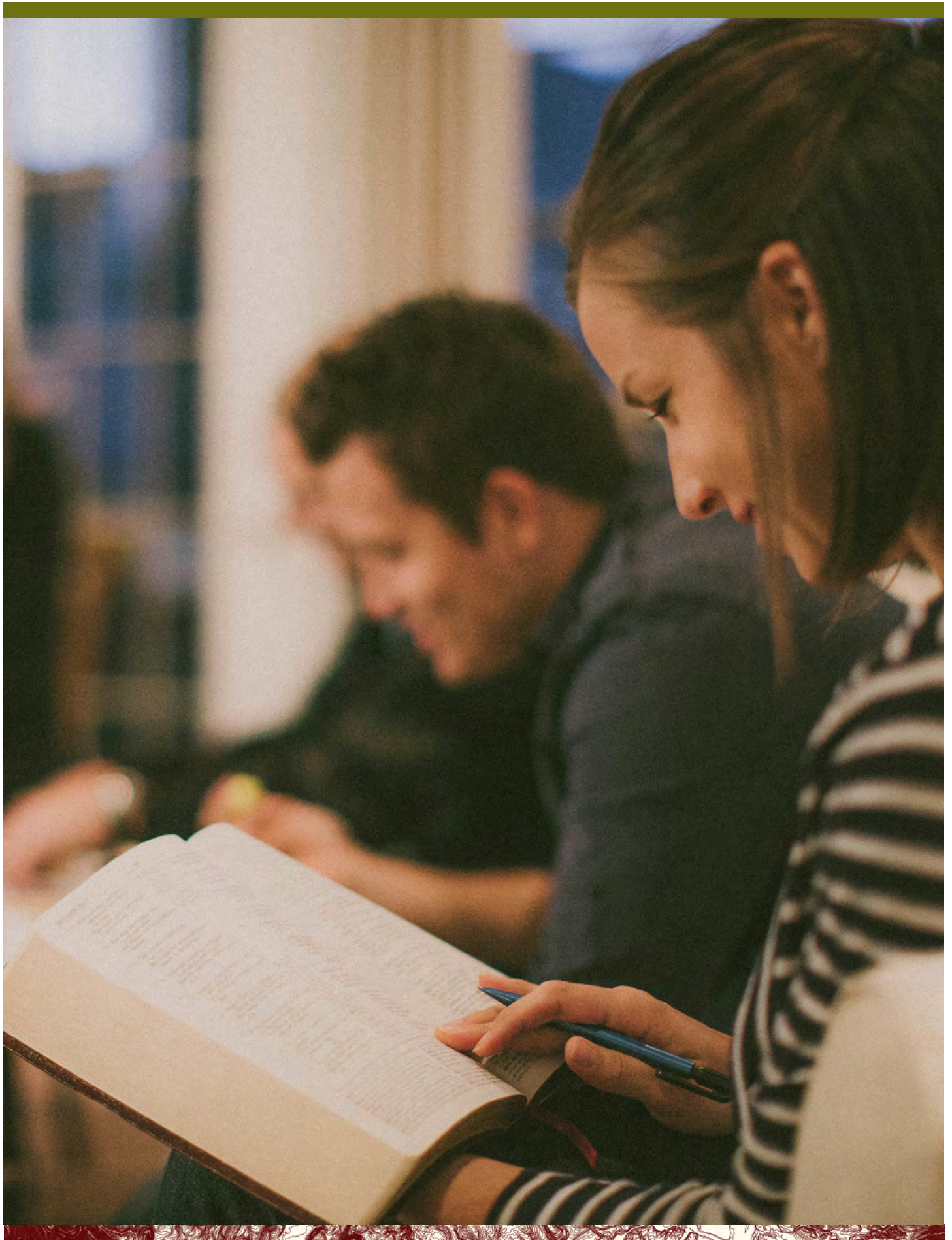
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BIBLE READING

The Bible is more than just a chain of events strung together one-by-one; it is a collection of intricately interwoven stories that work together to show us new truths about God. To gain a deeper understanding of Acts 26, spend a little time throughout your week reading these additional passages:

- ☐ **Acts 26**
Paul leveraged his personal testimony to compellingly invite others to faith.
- ☐ **Mark 2:1-12**
The right response to the work of Jesus is to glorify God and tell others about Him.
- ☐ **John 20:1-18**
The right response to the work of Jesus is to glorify God and tell others about Him.

PRAYER

This week thank the Lord in prayer for how He has saved you. Even if you think you don't have an exciting story, it still required the death and resurrection of Jesus and can be used to draw more people to know the Lord. Also, pray that the Lord would continue to grow your ability to weave your testimony into your conversations.

ACTION STEP

In our reading this week, Paul utilized his testimony as his means of sharing the Gospel. When we put our faith in Jesus, He changes our whole lives for the better. That is a story worth telling! Spend some time writing out your testimony. Who were you before Jesus? How did He break through to you? Who has He called you to be now that you have chosen to follow Him? What do you hope for others who haven't yet experienced this? Answer these questions as you tell your story. Have fun!

[illegible]

MAIN IDEA

Storms will come, but God remains in control.

MEMORY VERSES

So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man. Acts 24:16 (ESV)

Every day, people embark on sea voyages for work or leisure, traversing vast distances and encountering the unknown. However, during the early days of the church, the sea held great peril and uncertainty. In Acts 27, Paul was on a life-changing journey from Israel to Rome—a distant destination that symbolized the farthest reaches of the known world. As the ship set sail, a storm loomed, foreshadowing the challenges that lay ahead for Paul. Would he survive the tempestuous seas that he had been sent upon? This passage invites us to brace ourselves for a gripping tale of courage, resilience, and divine providence as Paul navigated, not only the physical dangers of the storm, but also the spiritual and personal trials that awaited him in Rome. Acts 27 reminds us that, regardless of whether we’re heading into a storm, in the midst of one, or coming out of one, we’re to look to God for comfort.



BIBLE READING

☐ **Acts 27**

Storms will come, but God remains in control.

☐ **Luke 12:4-12**

God cares for and empowers His people to proclaim the Gospel despite persecution.

☐ **Daniel 3:1-30**

God cares for His people and powerfully makes Himself known through their persecution.

☐ **Matthew 8:23-27 | Colossians 1:15-18**

Jesus is Sovereign over all creation.

☐ **Acts 1:8 | Acts 7:54-8:5**

God's people were opposed to the death for the Gospel they preached, but God used their sufferings to accomplish His mission.

☐ **Acts 27**

Storms will come, but God remains in control.

PRAYER & MEDITATION PROMPTS

- Read and recite this month's memory verse (Acts 24:16). Consider what it means to "take pains" in order to live with a clear conscience before God and man. What did that look like for Paul? Ask God to show you what that looks like for you.
- As you read the daily reading passages, think of an example of how you have seen God's sovereignty on display in your own life. Tell that story to yourself each day. Tell that story to someone else each day.





CONNECTED TO:

- CHRIST
- COMMUNITY
- CALLING
- OUTREACH
- CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION
- NATIONS

Over the next eleven weeks of our study, we are dedicating ourselves to prayer for eleven distinct regions. We will be praying specifically for the following:

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- The meeting of people's needs within these regions.
- The spiritual formation of disciples within these regions.

By focusing our prayers on these aspects, we align ourselves with God's heart for the world. We recognize that the work of the Church extends far beyond our local community, and we are committed to participating in God's global mission to bring salvation to all nations.



CONNECTED TO THE NATIONS: WHOLE WORLD

Pray for those who have no access to the Gospel – and ask the Holy Spirit to break your heart for the lost. Would you consider going or supporting someone to go?

LIFE GROUP & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

GETTING STARTED:

Have you ever experienced a dramatic weather occurrence?

QUESTION ONE:

The storm and the strong winds were central to Acts 27. What time of year was the Jewish fast over? Why would this be a difficult time to sail? What was the temperament of the storm, (vs. 15-20)?

QUESTION TWO:

Julius, the centurion, was a key character in this story. How did he treat Paul when they landed in Sidon? Who influenced the centurion to continue the journey? Why did the soldiers plan to kill the prisoners? What would have happened to the soldiers if the prisoners escaped? What relationship had the centurion developed with Paul by the end of the chapter?



QUESTION THREE:

What demonstrated that the sailors were starting to show signs of despair, (vs. 16-20)?
How long had the storm been raging at that point?

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Follow Up: As a passenger how would you start to feel at this point of the voyage?
Would it be similar to the reaction captured in verse 20?

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QUESTION FOUR:

How did Paul encourage the passengers and ship's crew in verses 21-26? What revelation
had Paul received and how did he receive it?

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QUESTION FIVE:

In verse 24, Paul said that God intended for him to stand before Caesar. Then why did
God allow Paul to have such a difficult journey? Think about how his attitude would
have affected others on the boat.

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QUESTION SIX:

How long had they been sailing and battling the storm (vs. 27 & 33)? How did Paul encourage the group (vs, 33-36)? How many people were on the ship? Are you surprised by the number?

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QUESTION SEVEN:

The soldiers plotted to kill the prisoners to make sure none of them escaped, but the centurion intervened because he wanted to bring Paul “safely through”. Have you had someone come along side of you to help you make it “safely through”?

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APPLICATION

A remarkable picture of God's sovereignty and power is seen throughout Acts 27. God does not promise a life free from trials and suffering, but nothing will stop or hinder His purposes for His people. For the cause of the Gospel, Paul endured much. Yet he pressed on because of what God had promised him.

Reflect on situations in your life where, looking back, you can now see God's hand in the middle of the storm. Remembering those circumstances encourages us when we go through present and future trials; it gives us confidence that God is always present and aware and will bring us through. What would it mean for your life today to live like you truly believed that all God's promises are true? In your situation, are you praying for the peace that only God can provide?



KEY VERSE

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”. Acts 1:8 (ESV)

GETTING STARTED:

After being brought before the religious council in Jerusalem for false charges and sent to Caesarea due to plots to kill him, Paul defended himself first to the Roman governor, Felix, then to Festus, who succeeded Felix as governor. During that time, Paul never stopped telling others about Jesus—he did so before the religious council, during his visits with Felix and his wife, and his appearances before King Agrippa, his sister, Festus, and many others.

Last week, after defending himself to King Agrippa, all who were in the room said to one another, *“This man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment.”* And Agrippa said to Festus, *“This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”*

We know that God had a plan. In Acts 23:11, God told Paul that he would testify in Rome just as he did in Jerusalem.

1. SAILING FOR ROME

Read Acts 27:1-12 aloud.

Question: It took longer to get to Rome than expected. Why? What season was approaching?

Answer: Their journey took longer than planned because the winds were not with them. Winter was approaching.

Question: What did Paul advise?

Answer: Paul advised them not to continue until after winter. There would be a loss of lives and cargo if they went on.

Question: The centurion (Roman commander) was in charge. What did the centurion decide?

Answer: To sail a little further to a place that would be more suitable to spend the winter.

Earlier, Paul had mentioned that he wanted to go to Rome (Acts 19:21). Paul wanted to go there because everywhere he went, he could see the influence Rome had. Paul wanted to take the Good News to the place that had so much impact and power. Paul probably did not imagine that he would be going to Rome as a prisoner, but he was willing to follow God's plan for his life. Remember when Paul's friends warned him about the dangers of going to Jerusalem? Paul told them he was not worried about pain or death, but he did want to finish the ministry Jesus sent him to do—to tell others the Good News of Jesus (Acts 20:24).

2. THE STORM AT SEA

Read Acts 27:13-38 aloud.

Question: They set sail again, but it wasn't long before they got caught in a storm. It did not look like they would survive, but Paul gave them hope. What did Paul say?

Answer: Paul told them to take heart. He said that an angel of God had appeared to him and told him to not be afraid, that Paul was going to reach Rome, and that all who sailed with him would be safe.

Question: After fourteen nights in the storm, the sailors detected that they were near land, and some tried to escape the ship. Why?

Answer: The sailors thought they were going to run into the rocks, so they lowered a small boat into the water to escape the ship.

Question: What was Paul's warning? What did the soldiers do?

Answer: Paul said that unless the men stayed in the ship, they would not be saved. The soldiers cut the rope to the small boat and let it go.

Question: What did Paul do next?

Answer: He encouraged them to eat to give them strength. He reminded them that God promised they would be safe. Then he gave thanks to God.

It was not a small group of people sailing on the ship. The passengers included: Paul and friends, the sailors, the other prisoners, and the soldiers. There were 276 people altogether!

3. THE SHIPWRECK

Read Acts 27:39-44 aloud.

Question: When they got close to land, the soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners. Why?

Answer: The ship was breaking apart. The soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners so they wouldn't escape. Soldiers were responsible for the prisoners in their charge. If a prisoner escaped, the soldier(s) in charge of him would be killed.

Question: Who stopped them?

Answer: The centurion.

Question: Did everyone make it safely to the land?

Answer: Yes, just as God promised.

The ship got stuck before they reached land, and the boat broke apart. The centurion ordered any who could swim to jump in and swim for land; the rest were to take planks or pieces of the ship and float toward land. And, just as God promised, all were brought safely to the land.





THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

In Acts 27:10, Paul advised the centurion and ship's captain not to continue their journey until after winter. This was not based on a message from God (as in Acts 27:21-26). The Greek word Paul used in verse 10 is translated as “perceived” as in “perceived based on experience.” Paul had already been in three shipwrecks (2 Corinthians 11:25)!

It's important for us to remember that storms (trials and hardships) will come, but God remains in control. Acts 27 reminds us that no matter what—if we're heading into a storm, in the midst of one, or coming out of a storm, we're to look to God for comfort.



MAIN IDEA

*Storms will come,
but God remains
in control.*



In Acts 27, we see Paul and a whole ship's worth of people brush closely with death. But God was in control the whole time. Whenever things seemed hopeless, God gave them encouragement. When it seemed like they were trapped, he gave them an escape. Even when things don't look good from our perspective, remember that God already knows the whole story!

QUESTION ONE:

Read Acts 27:1-12. In the beginning of their journey to Rome, the sea was rough, and they struggled to find a safe place to stay. But Jesus told Paul that he was meant to go tell those in Rome about Him, so they pushed on. When you hit resistance in your life, do you push through or shy away?

Follow up: Paul warned the centurion that it might not be a good idea to keep going in this way, but he didn't listen. Have you ever taken things into your own hands, and it ended up being a mistake?



Follow up: Even in the hard stuff and the mistakes, God knows how things are going to turn out. Is it hard for you to trust God when things don't look like they're going to go well?

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QUESTION TWO:

Read Acts 27:13-38. Things were looking pretty bleak for Paul and everyone on the ship. But God sent an angel to Paul to give them encouragement. Even though they were still struggling, they were encouraged. Why is hope important?

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Follow up: Paul told the centurion that his men needed to stay on the ship to live. Why do you think that was?

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Follow up: God asked Paul and everyone aboard to trust Him. Rather than panicking, they brought it back to the basics and just had a meal together to strengthen themselves. When things in your life seem crazy, what is something that you can still thank God for?

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QUESTION THREE:

Read Acts 27:39-44. There were so many times that the people on the journey thought that they would die! But God was in control the whole time. Why did the soldiers want to kill the prisoners? Why did the centurion tell them not to?

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Follow up: Sometimes you have to know when it is time to jump ship instead of being destroyed. Has there ever been a time in your life when you knew you had to walk away from what was happening or you would get hurt?

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Follow up: In the end, God made sure all 276 ended up on shore safely. Do you trust that God will pull you through the hard times? Do you thank Him once you're through the storm?

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BIBLE READING

The Bible is more than just a chain of events strung together one-by-one; it is a collection of intricately interwoven stories that work together to show us new truths about God. To gain a deeper understanding of Acts 27, spend a little time throughout your week reading these additional passages:

- ☐ **Acts 27**
Storms will come, but God remains in control.
- ☐ **Luke 12:4-12**
God cares for and empowers His people to proclaim the Gospel despite persecution.
- ☐ **Daniel 3:1-30**
God cares for His people and powerfully makes Himself known through their persecution.



PRAYER

In this week's chapter of Acts, Paul was in a literal storm. Pray that you would remain firm in the Lord even as there are storms in your life because of the who God is. We are told, in 1 Peter 5, to cast all our anxieties on the Lord because He cares for us. So cast your anxieties or "storms" before the Lord and let Him know what is in your heart.

ACTION STEP

Just like Paul in this week's scripture, storms will come for us, too. Sometimes, they will knock us off our feet. As we have discussed over the past few weeks, God calls us to stand firm in Him when we are under trials. Reflect back on the journaling you did during week 28. Reread what you wrote to give you hope and encouragement for the next time you go through a storm. Then, reread the testimony that you wrote last week. What can you learn from these two reflections? What conclusions can you draw by comparing them? How has God sustained you through storms before? What truths can you rest in when storms come again? Reflect on these questions. Write it out if it helps you. Finish by thanking God for the truth of who He is.

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MAIN IDEA

The enduring mission that was ignited in Jerusalem years ago remains alive in the present day.

MEMORY VERSES

So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man. Acts 24:16 (ESV)

The Book of Acts captures for us a captivating journey spanning more than thirty years of church history. What started with a small band of disciples in Jerusalem grew into a global movement that transcended borders and cultures. The Gospel message, once confined to Jerusalem, gradually extended its reach, permeating numerous regions and territories. From the heart of Judea to the distant lands of Samaria, Syria, Cilicia, Macedonia, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Asia Minor, Cyprus, Greece, Turkey, and even Italy, the Gospel relentlessly pushed forward, igniting hearts and transforming lives. Throughout Acts, we encounter significant events: the appointment of church leaders, the sacrifice of martyrs, relentless opposition, countless baptisms and salvations, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The early church steadfastly embraced the mission entrusted to them by Jesus, leaving an indelible mark on the world. As Acts draws to a close, we're left with the image of the Apostle Paul, undeterred by house arrest, teaching people about Jesus with boldness and without hinderance. May the same be said about us.

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BIBLE READING

☐ **Acts 28**

The enduring mission ignited in Jerusalem years ago remains alive to the present day.

☐ **Acts 1:6-26**

The Church has been commissioned and gifted by Jesus to be His witnesses globally.

☐ **Isaiah 52:6-10 | Isaiah 53:1-6**

God always intended His message of salvation, through the suffering of Jesus, to be preached to the whole world.

☐ **Isaiah 52:6-10 | Romans 10:8-15**

We need to proclaim the Good News of Jesus to those around us.

☐ **Luke 24:36-49 | Acts 1:8**

Through Jesus, God is fulfilling all His promises contained in scripture — and we get to be part of that!

PRAYER & MEDITATION PROMPTS

- Read and recite this month's memory verse (Acts 24:16). Ask God to make you the kind of person who resembles Jesus at all times, in all places, regardless of the cost.
- As you read the daily reading passages, ask God to impress upon your heart the needs of those who do not yet know Him. Ask Him to use you to continue the mission that He has given us to make disciples.



CONNECTED TO:

- CHRIST
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- NATIONS

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By focusing our prayers on these aspects, we align ourselves with God's heart for the world. We recognize that the work of the Church extends far beyond our local community, and we are committed to participating in God's global mission to bring salvation to all nations.



CONNECTED TO THE NATIONS: CONTINUATION

Take time to thank God for His great patience as He desires everyone to hear the good news that Christ is the risen Savior we are all looking for. Ask that His kingdom will continue to expand and lives would be transformed.



LIFE GROUP & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

GETTING STARTED:

The detours in our life can make us hyper-focused on ourselves and our own problems. What aspects of your life detours and challenges make it hardest for you to believe that God could help someone else believe in Jesus through it?

QUESTION ONE:

Paul wanted to preach the Gospel in Rome, but his detour took him to Malta. How did God use Paul on Malta, verses 1-10?

Follow Up: What new opportunities has a detour in your life given you to serve others or introduce someone to Jesus? In what ways can you prepare your heart for the divine detours of your life?

QUESTION TWO:

Based upon what we've studied thus far, how would you describe Paul's journey to Rome?



QUESTION THREE:

In Acts 28:14-15 we see “brothers” coming to meet with Paul. Thinking back over what we have learned about the growth of Christianity in Acts, how were there Christians in Rome before Paul got there? What was Paul’s response when he met with them?

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QUESTION FOUR:

Things did not get easier for Paul when he arrived in Rome. How was he treated according to verses 16 & 20?

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QUESTION FIVE:

Following his usual pattern, Paul met with the Jews in the city. What did he tell them about the Romans’ perspective of his case? What reason did he give for coming to Rome?

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Follow Up: Paul again speaks of “the hope of Israel”; what is the hope?

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QUESTION SIX:

What had the Jews heard about Paul? Why were they interested in listening to him (vs. 20-22)? What kind of reputation did the Church have in that area?

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QUESTION SEVEN:

Paul quoted Isaiah 6:9-10. Jesus explained this passage in Matthew 13:10-17. What do these passages mean?

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QUESTION EIGHT:

In what ways was Paul doing exactly what God called him to do in Rome? Would you say that Paul's mission to Rome was a success or a failure? Why?

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APPLICATION

In our age of social media, we may feel small and insignificant, without influence. But in God's view, every single person is important to the mission of God. You have a role to play in continuing the story of Acts in your own home, your place of school or work, your city, and/or perhaps even internationally.

Remember what you have learned in this study: God has a promise and a purpose for your life; there is no circumstance that can separate you from Him and no detour that can derail His mission. Acts is not over—it is still being written through you!



KEY VERSE

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:8 (ESV)

GETTING STARTED:

Earlier, Paul had said that he wanted to go to Rome (Acts 19:21). Paul wanted to go there because everywhere he went, he could see the influence of Rome. Paul wanted to take the Good News to the place that had so much impact and power. Paul probably did not imagine that he would be going to Rome as a prisoner!

Even so, Paul was willing to follow God’s plan for his life. Remember when Paul’s friends warned him about the dangers of going to Jerusalem? Paul told them he was not worried about pain or death, but he did want to finish the ministry Jesus sent him to do—to tell others the Good News of Jesus (Acts 20:24).

Last week, we learned that as Paul was going to Rome aboard a ship full of soldiers and other prisoners, they got caught in a storm so severe that even the ship’s crew thought they were going to die. But Paul told them that an angel of God appeared to him and told him to not be afraid, that Paul was going to arrive in Rome, and that all who sailed with him would be safe. The ship did wreck, but just as God promised, all were brought safely to land.

1. AFTER THE SHIPWRECK

Read Acts 28:1-10 aloud.

Question: When everyone on the ship made it to land, the people who lived there welcomed them and kindly built a fire for them. As Paul helped gather more sticks for the fire, what happened?

Answer: A snake jumped out and bit Paul's hand.

Question: The people thought Paul was going to die. He did not die; why do you think he didn't?

TIPS FOR PARENTS: *Answers will vary. Remind kids of God's promise to Paul that he would go to Rome.*

Question: Who was Publius? What was wrong with his dad?

Answer: The island's chief was a man named Publius. His dad was very sick.

Question: What did Paul do? What happened next?

Answer: Paul visited the sick man, put his hands on the man, prayed, and the man was healed. Other people on the island who were also sick came to Paul and were healed. When it was time for them to sail again, the people from the island gave them what they needed (since they lost everything but the clothes on their backs in the shipwreck).

Paul and his friends, the sailors, the other prisoners, and the soldiers all made it safely to land. The people who lived there welcomed them—all 276 of them! When Paul was bitten by a snake, the people discussed with one another that though Paul had somehow escaped from drowning, their goddess, Justice, would not allow him to live. But, when Paul did not die, they thought he was a god. The passage does not specifically tell us what Paul said in response but knowing him and how he always took every opportunity to tell others about Jesus, he probably explained that he was not a god. He probably shared about the one, true God and told them he escaped drowning because of Him.

2. PAUL IN ROME

Read Acts 28:11-31 aloud.

Question: When Paul got to Rome, was he put into prison? How long was Paul in Rome?

Answer: No, he was allowed to stay by himself with a soldier to guard him. Paul was in Rome for two years.

Paul finally made it to Rome! While in Rome, Paul was allowed to stay in a house with a soldier guarding him. He met with other Jesus-followers, the Jewish leaders, and other Jewish people. He welcomed all who came to him and told them the Good News of Jesus. Some were convinced by what Paul said, but others disbelieved. Paul was a disciple who made more disciples.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

The Book of Acts begins with the commission to the disciples: *“You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”* (Acts 1:8). This mission, that began in Jerusalem centuries ago, is still going day.

What started with a small band of disciples in Jerusalem grew into a worldwide movement. This Good News message, once limited to Jerusalem, gradually grew to reach different areas and different people groups (Jews and Gentiles). Along the way, it changed lives.

The spread of the Good News about Jesus was not from the apostles’ power, but through the Holy Spirit. Ordinary people did extraordinary things because the Holy Spirit was in their lives.

When we are bold in our faith and share the Good News of Jesus’ death and resurrection, things happen! Sometimes, people believe the Good News and are saved! Other times, they might laugh at us or call us names. The apostles knew that Jesus was real, and they wanted to share that with everyone. No matter what! They were committed to teaching everyone about Jesus, even if that meant persecution, beatings, imprisonment, or death.

Throughout Acts, the followers of Jesus continued to tell others the Good News using the Holy Spirit’s power. Wherever they went, they made disciples. We need the Holy Spirit’s power if we are to be disciples who make disciples..

MAIN IDEA

The enduring mission that was ignited in Jerusalem years ago remains alive in the present day.



As we come to the end of the book of Acts and Paul's transition into Rome, we get a view of how far the Gospel has come! At the beginning of the book, Jesus had just died and resurrected! From a small group of people mourning their friend and teacher to an established Church growing all throughout the Roman empire, we see the faithfulness of God and the disciples through it all. Jesus' instructions were clear: go and be my witnesses. And the church obeyed. It was because of these obedient disciples that we know the name of Jesus today!

QUESTION ONE:

Read Acts 28:1-10. It seems like Paul can't catch a break. First shipwrecked, and then snake bitten. But God didn't allow Paul to be affected or die from the snakebite. Why?

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Follow up: Paul healed Publius' father, which sparked the interest of the whole island! This is an example of how actions can speak louder than words. Do you think the residents of Malta believed in Jesus because of what Paul did?

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Follow up: How can you show gratitude to the people that have helped you throughout your life?

QUESTION TWO:

Read Acts 28:11-16. Paul was finally in Rome, where he was meant to go. But let's not forget that he was still technically in Roman custody! Why did seeing other Christians in Rome give Paul courage?

QUESTION THREE:

Read Acts 28:17-30. The Jews in Rome hadn't heard about Paul yet, but they still wanted to hear what he had to say. Why?

Follow up: Paul said that the prophet Isaiah already prophesied about those who wouldn't believe when the truth came. Do you think that changed some of the disbelievers' minds about Jesus?

Follow up: Even though it cost Paul to be in Rome and preach the Gospel, he counted it all worth it and stayed for two years! How much are you willing to "spend" to let people know about Jesus? This could mean time, money, reputation, etc.



BIBLE READING

The Bible is more than just a chain of events strung together one-by-one; it is a collection of intricately interwoven stories that work together to show us new truths about God. To gain a deeper understanding of Acts 28, spend a little time throughout your week reading these additional passages:

- ☐ **Acts 28**
The enduring mission ignited in Jerusalem years ago remains alive to the present day.
- ☐ **Isaiah 52:6-10 | Romans 10:8-15**
We need to proclaim the Good News of Jesus to those around us.
- ☐ **Luke 24:36-49 | Acts 1:8**
Through Jesus, God is fulfilling all His promises contained in scripture—and we get to be part of that!

PRAYER

The same Spirit that worked through the entire Book of Acts is alive in us today. As we conclude Acts, make it your prayer that the Spirit of God would continue to do amazing things through you. Pray that you would be sensitive to how God wants to move through you to spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth, and be open to whatever He has for you.

ACTION STEP

Two weeks ago, we spent time writing out our testimonies to remind us of how God has been so faithful to save us from our brokenness, carrying us through the storms of life. The Book of Acts is all about sharing the Gospel; it's about taking the truths we've come to know about who God is and what He calls us to, and sharing these with everyone we know. With the close of our study of Acts, the final action step is to do just that. Share your faith! Find someone in the Dutch Bro's line, near your locker, at the gas station, your teammate, your mom, your friend's friend, etc. Choose one sentence from your testimony that can spark the beginning of the conversation. Weave this line into the conversations that you are already having!

For example, if those around you are talking about being worried you could say, "yeah, I feel worried about that, too. But I know that when I pray to God for peace, He will help me feel better and worry less!". Any opener to the Gospel is a good opener. Just get started, and God will give you the words for the rest. Open yourself up to being used by God and He will use you. Have fun!

This image shows a full page of a handwriting practice worksheet. It consists of multiple sets of three horizontal dashed lines spaced evenly down the page, providing a guide for letter height and placement. The background is plain white, and there are no other markings or text present.



This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal dashed lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a guide for handwriting practice. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.



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