

6. In 13:6b–8, Luke introduces Elymas (Bar-Jesus) and Sergius Paulus, an important Roman official. What do we learn about these two men in these verses?

Elymas (Bar-Jesus):

Sergius Paulus:

7. “Filled with the Holy Spirit,” Paul responds to Elymas’s opposition (13:9–11).
- With what does he charge Elymas?
 - What does he declare as his punishment?
 - How does this physical punishment reflect Elymas’s spiritual state? (Consider Jn. 3:19 and Acts 9:1–19.)
8. After seeing his attendant miraculously struck blind, Sergius Paulus “believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord” (13:12). What role do miracles play in the preaching of the word? (2:22; 14:3; Heb. 2:3–4)
9. In Pisidian Antioch Paul and Barnabas head to the synagogue, as they did earlier in Salamis. This becomes their pattern as they begin their ministry in each new town. During the Sabbath service Paul is asked to speak. Who is clearly the main actor in the events Paul describes in 13:17–22, and on whose behalf does he act?
10. What is the climax of God’s work on behalf of his people? (13:23)
11. Paul emphasizes the connection between Jesus and his ancestor David.
- What does he say about David? (13:22)
 - What does the connection to David suggest about Jesus? (Jn. 6:38, 14:31a)
12. What does Paul want his listeners to know about Jesus’ death? (13:28a)
13. How did God overturn the human verdict? (13:30)
14. What has God made possible through the death and resurrection of Jesus? (13:23, 26)
15. God was the moving force in the Old Testament events Paul narrates in 13:17–22. God was the moving force in bringing about salvation through Jesus (13:23). And God, through his Spirit, is the moving force in the young church in Acts (13:2, 4, 9). How do you see God still at work in the world today to bring himself glory?

Power to Witness in Word and Deed – Part 2

The Book of Acts

Acts 13:32-52

Read Acts 13:32-52.

1. The rulers of the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch invited Paul and Barnabas to give the congregation a “message of encouragement” (v. 15). What is the heart of Paul’s message? (vv. 32-33a)

 2. Many Jews longed to see God fulfill his promises made to the Old Testament fathers.¹
 - a. What did God specifically promise King David? (2 Sam. 7:12, 15-16)

 - b. How has God fulfilled his promise? (vv. 33-37; 2:25-36)

 - c. What blessings does this greater king bring?
 - v. 38

 - v. 39

 - v. 47.

 - v. 48
- 📖* Is. 53:11; 1 Pet. 1:3-5
3. Paul says, “through [Jesus] everyone who believes is justified” (v. 39). What do you think it means to be justified? (vv. 38-39) Feel free to use a dictionary to help you understand this word better.

 4. Why should forgiveness and justification be good news for Paul’s Jewish listeners? (Gal. 3:10; Jas. 2:10)

Why should forgiveness and justification be good news for everyone? (Titus 3:3-7)

What are some practical ways this forgiveness and justification affect your daily life?

¹📖* Luke 2:25-32, 36-38; 7:20; 24:19-21

*The 📖 symbol indicates verses for further study.

5. What somber warning does Paul give to his listeners? (vv. 40-41)

6. What evidence do you see of the Spirit's work as a result of Paul's preaching? (vv. 42-44)

7. In spite of the warning (v. 40), some of the Jews respond to the popularity of Paul's message with jealousy. What are the results of their jealousy? (vv. 45, 46b, 50)

8. Paul feels deep anguish over the Jewish people's rejection of Jesus (Rom. 9:2-4). Yet what is clear to him about God's calling for his ministry? (vv. 46-47; Acts 9:15; Gal. 1:15-16, 2:7-9)

9. How do the Gentiles respond? (vv. 48-49)

10. How do Paul and Barnabas respond to the persecution they experience in Pisidian Antioch? (vv. 51-52; Lk. 9:1-5)

11. The truth of the gospel is not determined by the response of those who hear it, nor does the burden of saving people rest on the messengers of the good news. How does this encourage you to share the good news of Jesus confidently with others?

12. Throughout Acts we never see the good news preached the same way twice. Though the substance is the same, the Spirit is actively at work in the messenger and customizes the message for specific audiences. How has God caught your attention with some aspect of the good news recently? (Maybe it was an illustration or word picture, a verse of Scripture, a teaching or a testimony that brought it to life afresh.)

Power to Witness in Word and Deed - Part 2

The Book of Acts

Acts 14

Read Acts 14:1–7.

1. Paul and Barnabas have just finished preaching in Pisidian Antioch and have come to the city of Iconium. What pattern do you see repeated here? (vv. 1–2a; for a hint, see 13:14, 45)

2. Why do Paul and Barnabas stay a long time in this city? (vv. 1–3)

3. Read Acts 13:32–33a, 38–39 to get an idea of the message that Paul likely preached in Iconium.
 - a. What is the heart of this message?

 - b. Why is it appropriately called the “message of [God’s] grace” (v. 3)?

4. How do “miraculous signs and wonders” authenticate this message? (v. 3; 2:22; Jn. 3:2)

5. Some still refuse to believe. What do they do? (vv. 2, 4–5; 📖* Peek ahead to verse 19.)

6. Paul and Barnabas flee to the small and unimportant pagan cities of Lystra and Derbe, and the rural area around them. How do they show that the offer of eternal life extends to these Gentiles? (v. 7)

Read Acts 14:8–18.

7. Skim Acts 3 to read about Peter’s first healing, which is similar to Paul’s first recorded miracle here in chapter 14. Even though these two audiences are completely different, God authenticates the messengers in a very similar way.
 - a. How does he do this? (3:2, 6; 14:8–10)

 - b. How do the people respond? (3:11–12; 14:11–13)

 - c. What do they call the people to do? (3:19; 14:15)

*The 📖 symbol indicates verses for further study.

8. Why are Paul and Barnabas so strongly against the praise of the crowd? (v. 15; 12:21–23; Deut. 4:23–24)

9. Review verses 15–17.

a. How does Paul describe God to this pagan audience?

b. How does Paul describe God’s kindness to them?

c. What kindness did God show *you* even before you believed in Jesus?

Read Acts 14:19–28.

10. What causes the fervor of the crowd to suddenly change? (vv. 18–19a)

What is the result of this change? (v. 19b)

11. What do Paul and Barnabas do in spite of this incident in Lystra? (vv. 20–22)

Why is their response amazing?

12. Why do you think Paul tells the new disciples they “must go through many hardships” (v. 22)? (📖 Jn. 15:18–16:4)

13. What do Paul and Barnabas do to ensure that these young churches thrive? (vv. 22–23)

14. How does Luke summarize Paul and Barnabas’s first missionary journey? (vv. 26–27)

15. What range of responses to the gospel do you see in this chapter that you can also expect when you share the good news?

How can this encourage you to persevere in the ministry God has called you to?

Power to Witness in Word and Deed – Part 2

The Book of Acts

Acts 15:1–21

Read Acts 15:1–21.

1. What are the “men [who] came down from Judea”¹ telling the believers in Syrian Antioch? (v. 1)

What would doing this mean for the Gentile believers? (v. 5)

Why is this a problem? (13:38–39; *Gal. 5:2–3)

2. Why is circumcision so important to the Jewish believers? (Gen. 17:1–14)
3. What is at the heart of Paul and Barnabas’ “sharp dispute and debate” (v. 2a) with the men from Judea? (Gal. 2:15–16, 21; Rom. 3:21–24;  Eph. 2:4–9)
4. Read about Paul’s testimony in Philippians 3:2–9. Why do you think Paul is so passionate about resolving this debate? (Phil. 3:8–9)
5. What does the leadership of the Antioch church do in response to this dispute? (vv. 2b–3a)
6. What news do Paul and Barnabas share as they make their way to Jerusalem, and how is it received? (vv. 3–4)

How do some Pharisees who had become believers in the church at Jerusalem respond to this same news? (v. 5)

7. What three works of God does Peter point out to the council of apostles and elders? ( Acts 10; 11:1–18)
 - v. 7
 - v. 8
 - v. 9

¹ “Because [these men] could not accept conversion without circumcision as adequate, they had organized themselves into a pressure group, whom we often term ‘Judaizers’ or ‘the circumcision party’. They were not opposed to the Gentile mission, but were determined that it must come under the umbrella of the Jewish church, and that Gentile believers must submit not only to baptism in the name of Jesus, but, like Jewish proselytes, to both circumcision and law-observance as well.” Stott, John R. W. *The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of Acts* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1990), 242.

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

8. How does Peter describe the requirement that is being demanded of the Gentile believers? (v. 10)

Why is this requirement unacceptable? (vv. 10–11;  Gal. 3:6–14)

9. What testimony do Barnabas and Paul give that silences the assembly? (v. 12)

10. Lastly, James, the brother of Jesus and leader among the elders at Jerusalem, addresses the council and confirms Peter's testimony.

a. How does James summarize Peter's testimony? (vv. 13–14)

b. James then quotes a 750-year-old prophecy from the Old Testament book of Amos. How does this prophecy confirm the inclusion of Gentiles into God's holy people? (vv. 16–18)

11. It is critical for the church to settle this issue for the sake of the purity of the gospel. Why else is it critical? (1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:3–6;  Eph. 2:11–22)

12. What guidelines does James now set forth for living as one people of God, brothers and sisters in Christ? For the Jewish believers (v. 19)

For the Gentile believers (vv. 20–21)

13. As Jewish and Gentile believers alike are compelled to give up their wrongful attitudes and offensive practices, what now enables them to enjoy full fellowship with one another? (Rom. 12:10; Gal. 5:6)

How is this essential for their witness in the world? (Jn. 13:34, 35)

14. Also essential to their testimony is a clear understanding of the gospel. How does Peter clarify the essential truth of the gospel? (vv. 8, 9, 11)

15. How has the Holy Spirit used this passage to challenge or encourage you?

Power to Witness in Word and Deed – Part 2

The Book of Acts

Acts 15:22–41

Review Acts 15:1–21.

1. The apostles and elders meet in Jerusalem to decide on the very divisive issue of circumcision and Jewish law keeping (15:1–2, 5) that threatens to split the church into Jewish and Gentile factions. What is the final decision? (vv. 19, 28)

Read Acts 15:22–35.

2. What evidence is there that the Holy Spirit has been actively at work in the council's deliberations? (v. 28; Consider Jn. 14:26–27; 16:13; Gal. 5:22)
3.
 - a. How do the believers in Jerusalem see themselves in relationship to the Gentile believers? (v. 23)
 - b. How have the Gentile believers already shown similar affection for the Jerusalem believers? (11:27–30)
4. Read Ephesians 2:13–16.
 - a. What used to define the relationship between Jew and Gentile?
 - b. What brought about such a radical change in their relationship with one another?
5. The apostles and elders decide to write to the Gentile believers.
 - a. What steps do they take to make sure that the recipients of this letter know that it is authentic and trustworthy? (vv. 22–23; 27)
 - b. How does the letter acknowledge the feelings of the Gentile believers? (v. 24)
 - c. How does it affirm the ministry and authority of Paul and Barnabas? (vv. 25–26)
6. How do Judas and Silas follow up on the instructions given to them (v. 27) as stated in the letter? (vv. 32–33)

7. The Jerusalem Council makes four requirements (v. 29) in reaction to pagan worship practices (such as sacred prostitution, drinking blood, and other sacrificial rituals) which were especially offensive to Jews.
 - a. How do you think the council's decision is meant to help the Gentiles as they fellowship with their Jewish Christian friends?
 - b. How would following these requirements be helpful as they preach the gospel to their unsaved Jewish neighbors?

8. The effect of the letter is that both Jewish and Gentile Christians will have to make changes to both their attitudes and their lifestyles. What will some of these changes be? (Gal. 5:13–14; Rom. 14:13–18;  * 1 Cor. 8:1–2, 9–13)

9.
 - a. If the letter were written today, what causes of division and hostility within the church do you think would be addressed?
 - b. What do you need to change in your own attitude and behavior toward others to be obedient to the spirit of the council's letter?

Read Acts 15:36–41.

10. Paul and Barnabas have “a sharp disagreement” (v. 39) as they prepare for their next trip.
 - a. Who is Mark? (v. 37; 12:12, 25; 13:5; Col. 4:10b)
 - b. Why does Paul refuse to take him on this next trip? (15:38;  13:13)
 - c. How does Paul's attitude toward Mark change over time? (2 Tim. 4:11)

11. This is the last we hear about the ministry of Barnabas. How does he, once again, live up to his name “Son of Encouragement” (4:36)? (vv. 37–39;  9:26–28; 11:25–26)

12. How do you see God working even in this discouraging conflict between Barnabas and Paul for the good of His kingdom?

Power to Witness in Word and Deed — Part 2

The Book of Acts

Acts 16:1–15

Read Acts 16:1–15.

1. Paul departs Syrian Antioch and travels through modern day Turkey and into Greece. Beginning with Acts 15:41 trace his travels through Acts 16:12 on the map provided in your folder.
2. On this trip Paul takes along Silas, a leader and prophet from Jerusalem (15:22, 32), and Timothy.
 - a. How does Luke introduce us to Timothy? (vv. 1–2)
 - b. What are some other things that the New Testament tells us about this young man, Timothy? (1 Tim. 1:1–2, 4:13–14; 2 Tim. 1:5, 3:14–15 OR skim through 1 & 2 Timothy for a broader picture.)
3. Following the decision of the Jerusalem council (15:28–29), what unexpected thing does Paul do? (v. 3a)
4. Compare what Paul says in Galatians 2:1–5 with what he does in Acts 16:3 with Timothy. What's at stake in these two circumstances?
Galatians 2:4

Acts 16:3
5. What principles motivate Paul to circumcise Timothy? (1 Cor. 9:19–23; Gal. 5:6)
6. In what ways have you found God leading you to be culturally sensitive as you share the gospel?
7. Why do you think the churches were "strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers" (v. 5) as a result of hearing the decision reached by the Jerusalem Council? (Consider 15:10, 19, 24, 31)

8. Read verses 6–12 with your map on hand for reference. Paul initially planned to visit the brothers in the towns where he'd already preached. How does God alter Paul's plan?
vv. 6b, 7b

v. 9

v. 10b
9. Following God's directions, the missionaries pass by a vast population of unevangelized people and make a sea voyage of 150 miles to arrive in Neapolis. From there they travel inland to Philippi, a Roman colony which served as an outpost to protect Rome on the frontiers of the empire.¹
 - a. How does God gain a foothold in this pagan city on the frontier of the church? (v. 14b)

 - b. What guarantees the success of the missionaries' work? (v. 14b; Col. 4:3–4)
10. In his life as a Pharisee, Paul would have "daily repeated such words as these, 'O God, I thank Thee that I am neither Gentile, nor slave, nor woman.'"² What evidence is there that the gospel has brought Paul into line with God's heart for women? (v. 13; Gal. 3:26–29)
11. What kind of woman was Lydia? (v. 14a; for an interesting twist, be sure to find her hometown on the map and compare that with verse 6b)
12. What impact did the gospel have on Lydia? (vv. 15, 40; Phil. 1:4–5, 4:10, 14–18)
13. Jot down some ways that God's direction of the missionaries and Lydia's conversion can encourage you as you consider sharing the good news with others.
14. How has the Spirit led you into various situations and relationships for the sake of the gospel?

Allow these examples to fill you with great expectations for what he will do in the future. Praise God for his creativity in building his kingdom and for using you to do it.

¹ Morgan, G. Campbell. *The Acts of the Apostles*. (NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1924), p. 378-9.

² *Ibid*, p. 381.

Power to Witness in Word and Deed – Part 2

The Book of Acts

Acts 16:16–40

Read Acts 16:16–18.

1. While on their way “to the place of prayer” (v. 16) in Philippi, Paul and his companions meet a slave girl who is held captive by an evil spirit that empowers her to predict the future (v. 16a). How is she a benefit to her owners? (v. 16b)
2. In Jesus’ earthly ministry, evil spirits often spoke in recognition of Jesus and his work (e. g., Lk. 4:33–34, 40–41; 8:26–28). Similarly, what two-part truth does this evil spirit persistently proclaim through the slave girl as she follows Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke? (v. 17)

Why do you think this is so troubling to Paul?

3. Jesus had appointed Paul “to open [the] eyes [of both Jews and Gentiles] and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me” (26:17–18). What does this mean for the slave girl?

Read Acts 16:19–24.

4. Concealing the true reason for their anger (v. 19), the slave girl’s owners contrive serious accusations against Paul and Silas. What are they? (vv. 20–21)
5. The punishment Paul and Silas receive is extreme, even if the charges had been true. Describe how they are treated. (vv. 22–24, 37)

Read Acts 16:25–34.

6. Though in great pain and held captive in the darkness of maximum security, Paul and Silas are freely “praying and singing hymns to God” (v. 25) within earshot of other prisoners.
 - a. What does this reveal about Paul and Silas? (Mt. 5:11–12, Eph. 5:15–20; Col. 4:2–6)
 - b. What does their ability to rejoice in the midst of suffering reveal about God? (Ps. 46:1; 59:17; Rom. 8:26–28)

7. Why don't Paul and Silas escape when the opportunity arises? (vv. 26–28)

8. What do you think leads the Roman jailer to ask, "What must I do to be saved" (v. 30)?

9. With wounds still filthy, bleeding and sore, Paul and Silas's answer in verse 31 is simple, direct, and very personal. What do Paul and Silas do next? (v. 32)

How does this selfless and intentional ministry of the gospel encourage or challenge you?

10. The jailer and his family came to believe in Jesus that night and were baptized. What acts of mercy do they immediately perform for Paul and Silas? (vv. 33–34)

11. Once despairing for his life, what is the jailer's demeanor now that Jesus has set him free? (v. 34b)

Read Acts 16:35–40.

12. Given the treatment Paul and Silas received the previous day, the Philippian authorities unexpectedly give the order to release them.
 - a. How does Paul's Roman citizenship and refusal to accept their offer to leave in peace threaten the officials?

 - b. Why do you think the final arrangement will be important for future ministry in Philippi?

13. Upon their release, Paul and Silas go back to encourage the newly formed church which includes Lydia, a slave girl, and a Roman (Gentile) jailer. What is remarkable about the people God chooses to establish this church? (Gal. 3:26–29, Eph. 2:11–13, 19–22)

14. Read Luke 4:18–19 that describes Jesus' Spirit-filled mission.
 - a. How did the Holy Spirit powerfully continue this mission in Philippi?

 - b. How is the Holy Spirit powerfully continuing this mission today through us?

6. Why are “Jason and some other brothers” (v. 6) brought into the situation? (vv. 5–7)

What are the consequences they suffer for this connection? (vv. 5–9)

7. Who are the real trouble-makers here? (v. 5a)
8. The mob charges them with proclaiming Jesus the Messiah as another king. This is considered high treason in the Roman world and so the “city officials were thrown into turmoil” (v. 8).
- What element of truth is contained in the charge made against Paul and the others? (Rev. 1:4–6; 11:15)
 - What do Paul’s accusers fail to understand when they make this charge? (1 Pet. 2:13–17;  Jn. 18:36)
9. As a result of the riot, Paul and Silas are sent away. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:17—3:6. Since they are unable to return, how do you see their concern for this new church expressed?

Read Acts 17:10–15.

10. Paul and Silas are sent to the city of Berea.
- What is notable about the Bereans? (v. 11)
 - Why is this praiseworthy in comparison to the Thessalonians?
11. Jews and Gentiles, prominent and unknown, men and women are all becoming believers as the truth of Jesus spreads.
- How do those opposed to the message continue to plague Paul? (v. 13)
 - What do the believers do to protect God's messenger? (vv. 14–15)
12. In this lesson you have read of the high value placed on Scripture’s truthfulness. Think about who and what informs your view of what is true. Consider 2 Timothy 3:14–16. What changes can you make to your daily routine that will allow the Scriptures to have a greater influence as your source of truth?

Power to Witness in Word and Deed

The Book of Acts – Part 2

Acts 17:16–34

Read Acts 17:16–34.

1. As the Spirit leads Paul from place to place he finds himself going from the heart of the Jewish nation, Jerusalem, to the pagan city of Athens, known for its art, history, and architecture.
 - a. Describe Athens. (You may also want to Google “Athens in biblical times” to get more insight.)

 - b. What does he do when he arrives in Athens? (vv. 16, 23)

2. Why is Paul so distressed that this city is full of idols?
Rom. 1:25

Ex. 20:3–5a

Is. 44:9–20

Jn. 4:23

3. How does Paul respond to his distress? (v. 17)

4. Why do you think it is important for Paul to go and reason with “the Jews and God-fearing Greeks” (v. 17) in the synagogue? (Jer. 10:1–5; Rom. 10:1–2)

5. What does Paul preach in the marketplace? (v. 18)

***NOTE:** Epicureans “considered gods to be remote.... [T]he world was due to chance.... [T]here would be no survival of death, and no judgment. So human beings should pursue pleasure. The Stoics...acknowledged the supreme god but in a pantheistic way [believing that all things are god].... [They resigned] themselves to live in harmony with nature and reason, however painful this may be, and develop[ed] their own self-sufficiency.”¹*

¹ John Stott, *The Message of Acts* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1990), 281.

6. How do the people respond to Paul, since they have no knowledge of who Jesus is? (vv. 18–20)

7. Paul is taken to the Areopagus, a council that was considered “guardians of the city’s religion, morals and education.”²
 - a. How does Luke describe the Areopagus? (v. 21)

 - b. How would you characterize Paul’s opening statement at the Areopagus? (vv. 22–23)

 - c. What attitude might Paul have been tempted to have as a devout Jewish Christian? (Consider question 2.)

8. Paul’s message is concise but comprehensive. List all the ways Paul describes the one true God. (vv. 23–31)

9. How does Paul’s description of God confront the idolatry of the Athenians?

10. In the past Paul has “reasoned from the Scriptures” (17:2). Why do you think he takes a different tack here, even quoting Greek poets in verse 28?

11. How is this first-century generation different from all previous generations? (vv. 30–31; Rom. 16:25–26; 1 Pet. 1:20)

12. Paul’s talk of the resurrection has stirred up interest and persecution wherever he has gone. Why is preaching the resurrection central to sharing the good news? (1 Cor. 15:3–4, 12–23)

13. Don Richardson, missionary to Dutch New Guinea in the 1960s, authored *Peace Child*, a book detailing his life among the Sawi people. From his experience he came to believe that in every culture God has placed some concept, belief, or custom that can be used as a touchstone for sharing the gospel. Paul says it this way in Acts 14:17: God “has not left himself without a testimony.”

In today’s passage, Paul sees the altar to the unknown god as a way to share the gospel with the Athenians. What are some concepts, beliefs, or customs in your own “people group” that can help you share the good news?

² Ibid., 283.

Power to Witness in Word and Deed – Part 2

The Book of Acts

Acts 18:1–28

Read Acts 18:1–28.

- Trace Paul’s travels on your map. See especially verses 1, 18, 19, 22,¹ and 23.
- Corinth was a city of great importance in the Roman Empire. It was a wealthy center of commerce that was characterized by sexual immorality, “intellectual arrogance,” and “political prestige.”² All of this would have made Corinth a strategic but difficult mission field. What does Paul later tell us of the way he approached this metropolis? (I Cor. 2:1–3)
- Priscilla and Aquila are a great help to Paul, and later to Apollos. But what painful and unjust circumstance did God use to bring them to Corinth? (v. 2; * Compare 8:1b, 4; 11:19)
- Once again, Paul goes first to the synagogue, and once again he is rejected. What does Paul say and do in response? (vv. 6–7a)
- Read the following verses, and then write down what you think Paul’s words and actions mean and how serious they are: Ezek. 33:1–9; Lk. 10:1, 8–12; Acts 13:46, 50–51.
- What commands and promises does the Lord Jesus give Paul in his vision? (vv. 9–10)

<u>Commands</u>	<u>Promises</u>
a.	a.
b.	b.
c.	c.
- Why do you think God granted Paul this special vision at this time and place?
- What does Paul do as a consequence of his vision? (v. 11)

*The  symbol indicates verses or questions for further study.

¹ The language of going “up” to the church and then going “down” to Antioch tells us that the church Paul is visiting in verse 22 is most likely in Jerusalem, because of that city’s high elevation.

² John Stott, *The Message of Acts* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1990), 295.

9. The Romans were not always tolerant of religions other than their own, but Judaism enjoyed special status in the empire as an “authorized religion.”³ The Jews who bring Paul to court are likely trying to make the case that the faith he is preaching is not true Judaism, and is therefore not legal. (📖 Evaluate the truth of their charges.)
- a. What is the outcome of this case? (vv. 14–16)

 - b. How does this outcome partially fulfill the promises in Paul’s vision?
10. In verse 23 Paul sets out on his third missionary journey, stopping along the way to “strengthen[] all the disciples” in the churches he planted on his first journey. Where did he probably stop? (13:14; 14:1, 6–7)
11. Apollos is a gifted and fervent evangelist, but his understanding of the faith is incomplete. How do Priscilla and Aquila demonstrate wisdom in their handling of this situation?

12. Though Luke is primarily tracing Paul’s steps, the spreading of the gospel is not a one-man show. Fill in the chart to see how various people with various gifts work together to expand the kingdom.

Verse(s)	Who?	Geographical/religious background?	What gift(s)?
vv. 2–3, 18, 26			
v. 5 and 1 Thess. 3:6–7		16:1–2; 15:30–32	
v. 7			
v. 8			
vv. 24–25, 27–28			
v. 27			

13. Skim back over this week’s passage and jot down God’s concern and provision for
- a. ...those who are working to spread the gospel.

 - b. ...those who need to hear and believe the gospel.
14. What confidence can you draw from this demonstration of God’s providential care as you think about sharing the gospel with others?

³ Stott, 299.

Power to Witness in Word and Deed – Part 2

The Book of Acts

Acts 19:1–22

Paul continues his third missionary journey and comes back to Ephesus, thus fulfilling his promise to return (18:21). “This city was an essential port for all sea lanes...the judicial center and capital of the Roman province of Asia; and the religious and cultural center with its Artemis cult (cf. 19:27). Ephesus was, indeed,...most strategic to Paul’s evangelistic purpose (19:10, 26).

“The gospel had already been preached there by Priscilla and Aquila and Apollos, who had moved to Corinth (18:19, 24-27).”¹

Read Acts 19:1–7.

1. Arriving at Ephesus, Paul found about twelve disciples (vv. 1, 7).
 - a. Who were they disciples of? (v. 3;  * Lk. 3:1-6)

 - b. Who had they not heard of? (v. 2)

2. John the Baptist “told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus” (v. 4). How was John’s baptism lacking compared to the baptism that Paul knows? (vv. 4-5; Acts 2:38; Lk. 3:16;  Jn. 1:23-34)

3. What special signs accompanied the gift of the Holy Spirit for these believers? (v. 6)

4. What are some of the differences that the Holy Spirit makes in the lives of all believers?

Jn. 16:13-15

Rom. 8:9-11

Eph. 1:13-14

Ezek. 36:26-27

Read Acts 19:8-10.

5. Paul moves his ministry from the synagogue to a public meeting place (v. 9). How does this change in location reflect what God is doing spiritually? (v. 10; Eph. 2:11-22)

¹ William J. Larkin, *Acts*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream: Tyndale, 2006), 558

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

6. In Acts 16:6 Paul was “kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia.” What is the Holy Spirit now doing in the Asian city of Ephesus? (v. 10; Acts 1:8)

Read Acts 19:11-22.

7. The seven sons of Sceva are beaten and humiliated when they “tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed” (v. 13).
What does the evil spirit say to the sons of Sceva? (v. 15)

What are the sons of Sceva missing in comparison to Jesus and Paul? (Mt. 12:22-28; Jn. 14:11-13)

8. What effect does this attack by the evil spirits have on the community? (v. 17)
9. What does this incident bring about in Ephesus, a stronghold of idolatry and sorcery? (vv. 18-20)
10. What can we learn about the name of Jesus from these events?
11. Given what has happened in verses 13-16 and 18-19, what can we infer about the spiritual climate of Ephesus?

Why do you think God uses “extraordinary miracles” (v. 11) to break into this culture?
12. Paul has plans to go to Macedonia, Achaia, Jerusalem, and ultimately Rome (v. 21). Why does he choose to postpone these plans? (1 Cor. 16:8-9)
13. Glance back over this week’s passage. Where is the power of the Holy Spirit at work transforming the city of Ephesus?
14. Sometimes the work of the Holy Spirit is dramatic (as in Ephesus), but sometimes it is more subtle. What are some ways you have seen his transforming work in your life since you first believed in Jesus’ name?

Power to Witness in Word and Deed – Part 2

The Book of Acts

Acts 19:23–41

1. Review Acts 19:1–20. How has Paul’s two-year ministry of the gospel affected Ephesus, a city where the worship of false gods and goddesses was deeply entrenched? (v. 20)

Read Acts 19:23–27.

2. Who is Demetrius? (v. 24)

Who is Artemis (also known as Diana)? (vv. 24, 27, 35)

3. Demetrius stirs up his fellow craftsmen by claiming that Paul’s message will hurt their business, and therefore their income (vv. 25-26). Do you think Demetrius’s complaint against Paul in verse 26 is valid? Explain.
4. Why is Demetrius’s concern ironic? (Consider verse 26b.)
5. What further consequences of Paul’s message does Demetrius fear will happen? (v. 27)

Read Acts 19:28–34.

6. The craftsmen respond in fury to Demetrius’s concerns (v. 28). What impact does their anger have on the city? (vv. 29, 32)
7. The disciples and “[e]ven some officials of the province” (v. 31) stop him from appearing before the angry mob. Interestingly, these officials had “as part of their official duties...the task of enforcing the imperial cult, which involved all the citizens sprinkling incense before the statue of the emperor.”¹
What does Luke call these officials in verse 31?

What do you think it says about Paul that even these pagan officials are begging him not to endanger himself?

8. Why could the fact that Alexander is Jewish inflame the crowd even further? (Consider Exod. 20:3–5a.)

¹ Bruce Milne, *The Acts of the Apostles: Witnesses to Him...to the Ends of the Earth* (London: Christian Focus, 2010), 390.

Read Acts 19:35–41.

9. What four points does the city clerk make as he attempts to quiet the unruly crowd?

vv. 35–36

v. 37

vv. 38–39

v. 40

10. In his effort to restore peace, the city clerk affirms the worship of false gods but also gives protection to those who worship the one true God. Why do you think this tolerance could be a greater threat to the young church in Ephesus than the opposition of an angry crowd?

11. Imagine yourself as a new believer in first-century Ephesus. Jot down some descriptions of this culture from how it is portrayed in today's passage.

Consider what the city clerk declares as “fact” in verses 35-36. What challenges and temptations do you think you'd face? (📖 * Jer. 2:11-13)

12. What exclusive claims does God make that these new believers would need to cling to in this pagan culture?
Isa. 43:10-13; 44:6

Jn. 14:6

Jn. 17:3

Acts 4:12

1 Cor. 8:4-6

13. Like the Ephesians, we are immersed in a culture that encourages false worship.

a. What are some of the ways you see this in your daily life?

b. What has God provided to protect you from falling for the messages of our culture?

c. What are some ways to engage people so as to point them to the one true God who is able to free them from worthless idolatry? (Note that this can apply to our interactions with both unbelievers and believers!)

*The 📖 symbol indicates verses for further study.

Power to Witness in Word and Deed — Part 2

The Book of Acts

Acts 20:1–12

Read Acts 20:1–6.

1. Three years of fruitful ministry have passed and the uproar caused by Demetrius has ended. Paul now makes plans to leave Ephesus on a trip that will eventually take him to Jerusalem.
 - a. Where is he going first? (v. 1) Find this region on your map.
 - b. What is one reason why he would want to revisit this area? (v. 2; skim over 16:11–17:15)
2. Paul's travels in verses 1–6 take about a year. His ultimate destination is Jerusalem (v. 16). What else is he doing on this roundabout journey? (Gal. 2:9–10; Rom. 15:25–26)
3. What dangers does Paul face on this trip? (v. 3; 2 Cor. 11:26)
4. What additional insight does Paul later give about his time in Macedonia? (2 Cor. 7:5)
5. As Paul travels, others join him along the way, including Luke. Where are the other men from?

Sopater son of Pyrrhus	from	
Aristarchus and Secundus	from	
Gaius	from	
Timothy, Tychicus and Trophimus	from	
6. Paul often had travelling companions, but why are these men accompanying him on this particular trip? (1 Cor. 16:1–4; 2 Cor. 8:16–23)
7. The Jews plot against Paul, so he alters his plans and travels back through Macedonia. What feast does he celebrate in Philippi? (v. 6)
8. This weeklong feast, which included Passover, was a Jewish memorial celebration (Exod. 12:17). What significant events changed the meaning of this celebration for the followers of Jesus? (Mt. 26:17; 27:45–50; 27:62–28:6)

Read Acts 20:6–12.

9. Troas was a port that Paul passed through when sailing between Asia and Macedonia.
 - a. How long do Paul and his companions stay in Troas this time? (v. 6)

 - b. What was Paul’s earlier experience in Troas? (2 Cor. 2:12)

10. What pattern has already been established in this new gathering of believers? (v. 7; * 2:42–47)

11. Eutychus will forever be known as the young man who fell asleep during the teaching of the great Apostle Paul.
 - a. What were the consequences of his slumber on this particular night? (v. 9)

 - b. What does Paul do? (v. 10)

 - c. Apart from the fact that a tragedy was reversed, why do you think the people were “greatly comforted” (v. 12)?

12. In this context, “breaking bread” means the Lord’s Supper or communion.
 - a. What is the purpose of breaking bread together? (1 Cor. 11:23-26)

 - b. Why do you think breaking bread would have been especially moving on this night?

13. Imagine the room and the people in it—including representatives from many of the churches—all celebrating the Lord’s Supper together. What is this a picture of? (Rev. 5:9–10;  Rev. 19:6–9)

How does looking forward to this ultimate worship service help to realign your priorities and renew your perspective on your daily life?

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

Power to Witness in Word and Deed —Part 2*The Book of Acts***Acts 20:13–38****Read Acts 20:13–17.**

1. On the map provided, trace Paul's journey from Troas to Miletus. (vv. 13-15)
2. Why does Paul call the elders of the Ephesus church to Miletus, instead of going there himself? (vv. 16–17)

Read Acts 20:18–38.

3. What does Paul highlight about his ministry in Ephesus? (📖* 2 Cor. 3:1–6; 6:3–10)
v. 18:

v. 19:

v. 20:

v. 21:

Why do you think he reminds the Ephesian elders of these things?

4. What surprising detail does Paul leave out about his ministry in Ephesus? (19:11–12)
5. How did Paul's ministry reflect Christ to the flock in Ephesus? (Jn. 15:12-13; Phil. 2:1–8)
6. The Spirit compels Paul to go to Jerusalem.
 - a. What things has the Holy Spirit warned him he will have to face? (vv. 22–23)
 - b. What is Paul's response to this warning? (v. 24)
 - c. How does Paul's response challenge you?

*The 📖 symbol indicates verses for further study.

7. What devastating news does Paul share? (v. 25)
8. What do you think Paul means when he says that he is “innocent of the blood of all men” (v. 26)?

How can Paul say this so confidently? (vv. 20–21, 25, 27; * Ezek. 3:17–19)

9. How does Paul both instruct and warn the Ephesian elders? (vv. 28–31)
10. In verse 24 Paul calls his message “the good news of God's grace,” and in verse 32 he entrusts the elders “to God and to the word of his grace.” Why do you think he emphasizes the importance of grace?
11. Paul wants the elders to become more like Jesus (become “sanctified,” v. 32) and to grow in their understanding of the inheritance that they are receiving from God. What is this inheritance like? (Eph. 1:13–14, 18–21; 1 Pet. 1:3–9)
12. What else does Paul want the elders to learn from his example in ministry? (vv. 33–35; 2 Thess. 3:6–9)
13. What strikes you most about the farewell scene in verses 36–38?
14. Paul and the elders are sad to say goodbye, but they have to put aside their comfort and security for the sake of the expansion of the kingdom of God. We too are often sad when we say goodbye to those who have been spiritual mothers or fathers.

How has God encouraged and comforted you in the process of letting go of those who have been spiritual mentors to you?

Power to Witness in Word and Deed —Part 2

The Book of Acts

Acts 21:1–26

Read Acts 21:1–26.

1. Paul tears himself away from the Ephesian elders and continues on his journey to Jerusalem, accompanied by Luke and various other Gentile believers (20:4). Trace his travels on your map. (20:17; 21:1–3, 7–8, 15)
2. Why is Paul so determined to get to Jerusalem?
20:22

24:17; Rom. 15:25–26

3. What notable people does Paul meet in Caesarea? (vv. 8–9; compare 6:1–6)
4. The prophet Agabus, whom we have met before (11:27–28), comes to Caesarea from Judea.
 - a. What message does he deliver to Paul? (v. 11; * 9:15–16; 20:23)
 - b. How do Paul’s friends (including Luke) respond to this prophecy? (vv. 12–13a)
 - c. In contrast, how does Paul respond? (v. 13)
 - d. What perspective does Paul have that causes him to respond in this way? (20:24;  2 Cor. 4:16–18; Phil. 1:20–21)
 - e. How do you think the truth of the gospel enables Paul to face suffering and his own death?
5. Paul’s friends stop trying to persuade him, saying, “The Lord’s will be done” (v. 14). In what tone of voice do you think they say this? Why?

*The  symbol indicates verses or questions for further study.

6. Paul again sees James, “the recognized leader of the church in Jerusalem and indeed of the world–wide Jewish Christian community.”¹ How do James and the elders of the Jerusalem church react to the news regarding Paul’s ministry among the Gentiles? (v. 20a)

7. What rumor has spread in Jerusalem concerning Paul and his ministry? (v. 21)

8. What does Paul in fact teach? (1 Cor. 7:17–19; Gal. 3:23–25)

9. The leaders of the Jerusalem church give Paul some very specific instructions.²
 - a. What do they ask Paul to do? (v. 24a)

 - b. Why do they want him to do these things? (vv. 21, 24b)

 - c. How does Paul respond to these instructions? (v. 26)

10. Elsewhere, Paul makes it clear that he is no longer required to perform Jewish rituals. Why, then, is he willing to undergo these rituals now? (1 Cor. 9:19–23;  Rom. 14:1–8, 13–21)

11. More than once in this week’s passage, we see the potential for disagreement and disunity.
 - a. How do you think the believers in this passage maintain their unity in Christ? (You may want to look at Eph. 4:2–6; 5:21; Phil. 2:1–4.)

 - b. Consider a relationship in which you need to seek unity rather than holding on to being right. How does this passage challenge you?

¹ John Stott, *The Message of Acts* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1990), 339.

² The four men James mentions have most likely taken a Nazirite vow: “By abstaining from products of the [grape] vine, not cutting their hair, and avoiding ritual impurity, they had been showing thankfulness for past blessings, earnestness in petition, or strong devotion to God” (William Larkin, *Acts* [Carol Stream: Tyndale, 2006], 586).

Power to Witness in Word and Deed —Part 2*The Book of Acts***Acts 21:27—22:29****Read Acts 21:27–39.**

1. What are the charges that the Jews from Asia use to turn the crowd against Paul? (v. 28)
2. As you consider your study of Acts, how true do you think these charges are? (See also v. 29.)
3. The accusations against Paul are not new; Jesus and Stephen faced similar charges. How do the accusations of the Jewish people show what they value most? (6:13–14; 21:20–21; * Mt. 26:59–61)
4. Who protects Paul as the mob tries to kill him? (vv. 31–32, 35)
5. Why would Paul's arrest not have been a complete surprise to him? (20:22–23; 21:10–11)
6. What does Paul know as he experiences this injustice and hatred? (9:15–16; 20:24;  Rom. 8:28–39)

Read Acts 21:40—22:21.

7. Paul is granted an opportunity to speak to his accusers.
 - a. How does he address them? (vv. 21:40—22:1)
 - b. Whom does this address echo? (6:15—7:2)
 - c. What does Paul stress about himself (and Ananias in verse 12) to connect with the angry crowd? (vv. 3–5)

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

8. Paul's defense is a testimony to God's transformational work in his life. How would you summarize his main points in the three sections of his speech?

vv. 3–5

vv. 6–16

vv. 14–21

9. This is the first time we hear Paul himself tell his conversion story. Why do you think he chooses to give his testimony to this crowd in Jerusalem?

Read Acts 22:22–29.

10. The crowd has silently listened to God's amazing intervention in Paul's life.

a. What is it that they cannot bear to hear? (vv. 21–22a)

b. How does the crowd in Jerusalem respond? (v. 22)

c. Why do they react this way? (1 Thess. 2:14b–16a)

11. The crowd's actions in verse 23 show their complete rejection of Paul.

a. In rejecting Paul, who else are they rejecting? (9:15; 22:18)

b. What judgment are they bringing upon themselves through this rejection? (1 Thess. 2:16)

12. The commander makes at least two errors in his interactions with Paul. What are they?

21:38–39

22:25–26, 29

13. How does this passage show one way God has prepared Paul even from birth for his ministry to the Gentiles? (v.28;  17:26–27)

14. God has also carefully prepared you from birth to be his witness. How has God used your unique background and experiences for his glory?

Power to Witness in Word and Deed —Part 2

The Book of Acts

Acts 22:30—23:11

Review Acts 21:30–34, 37–40 and 22:22–29. Read Acts 22:30—23:11.

1. Whom does the Roman commander order to assemble for Paul’s hearing? (22:30)

Why? (22:30)

2. What accusations do the Jews make against Paul? (21:27–29)
3. With what attitude does Paul address the Sanhedrin? (23:1)
4. Paul says, “My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day” (23:1). How has Paul fulfilled his duty to God in good conscience? (20:20–24; 24:10–16; * 2 Cor. 1:12; 1 Pet. 3:15-16)
5. Why do you think the high priest, Ananias, has Paul struck on the mouth (23:2)?

Is this allowed by Jewish law at this point in the hearing? (Deut. 25:1–3)

6. How does Paul respond to this unjust treatment? (23:3)

What does Paul mean by his response? (23:3; Mt. 23:27–28;  Ezek. 13:10–16)

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

7. Paul is informed that he has just insulted the high priest (23:4). How does Paul's response refute the accusation that he teaches against Jewish law (21:28)? (23:5; Exod. 22:28;  Deut. 17:12–13)

8. Paul states that he is on trial because of his hope in the resurrection of the dead (23:6).
 - a. What main theological issues divide the Sadducees from the Pharisees? (23:8)

 - b. What happens to the unity of the Sanhedrin when Paul mentions the resurrection? (23:7–10)

 - c. Do you think "the hope of the resurrection of the dead" (23:6) is the real reason Paul is on trial?

9. What strikes you most about the ending to Paul's hard day? (23:9–11)

10. Ananias was a corrupt high priest for more than ten years. He used the power of his position and wealth to further his own interest through cruelty and violence.¹
How is Jesus, our heavenly high priest, so different from Ananias? (Heb. 7:23–27; 2:17–18)

11. What does Jesus say to those who are persecuted for his name? (Mt. 5:10–12)

How does this comfort you when you encounter animosity toward the gospel?

¹ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 425.

Power to Witness in Word and Deed —Part 2

The Book of Acts

Acts 23:12–35

Read Acts 23:12–35.

1. As you look at the following verses, record the pressure Paul has been under for the past few days.
 - 21:27
 - 21:28–29
 - 21:30
 - 21:31
 - 21:33
 - 22:22–23
 - 23:9–10
2. Following the fierce debate between the Pharisees and Sadducees, forty men form a conspiracy to kill Paul (vv. 12–13). Why do you think these men seek to take matters into their own hands? (Consider what happened the previous day in Acts 23:6–10.)
3. How do the religious leaders become involved in this plot? (vv. 14–15, 20)
4. What factors make this conspiracy a credible threat to Paul? (vv. 12–15, 20;  * Jn. 16:1–3)
5. Paul's nephew brings him news of this deadly conspiracy.
 - a. What temptations might Paul have faced upon hearing this news?
 - b. What assurance could Paul cling to during this extremely frightening time? (23:11)
 - c. Describe a time when God has met you in the midst of your troubles or temptations.

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

6. Fill in the blanks to see how many people God mobilizes to protect Paul from these bloodthirsty men.

Long before Paul arrives in Jerusalem he asked the _____ in Rome (Rom. 15:30–32) to pray for his safety. Then, in answer to their prayers, Paul’s _____ (v. 16a) hears of the plot the Jews are hatching. He makes his way to the barracks to tell Paul who calls for one of the _____ (v. 17). This man takes Paul’s nephew to the _____ (v. 18) of the barracks. He then orders _____ soldiers (v. 23), _____ horsemen and _____ spearmen to take Paul to Caesarea under cloak of darkness to _____ (v. 24).

7. Claudius Lysias’s letter summarizes what has been happening with Paul in Jerusalem.

a. What is his earthly perspective on how Paul is rescued? (v. 27)

b. How does he view the problem the Jews have with Paul? (v. 29a)

c. What is his judgment concerning Paul? (v. 29b)

8. Paul seems totally vulnerable to the hostility of the religious zealots in Jerusalem. Once in Caesarea, he will be in the hands of Felix, "a cruel, corrupt and avaricious [extremely greedy] governor."¹ What has prepared him for these challenges to his faith?

Acts 9:15–16

Acts 20:22–24

Acts 21:10–13

 2 Tim. 1:8–9

9. Concerning these events, commentator William J. Larkin writes, "A destructive momentum developed that appeared unstoppable."² Why does this plot never have a chance of succeeding? (23:11; Job 5:12-16; Ps. 33:10-11; Prov. 19:21)

10. Acts is the story of the gospel going forth and God’s kingdom expanding as people are being saved and transformed. Behind the scenes is God’s ultimate enemy, Satan, who from the beginning³ sought to thwart God’s purposes by whatever means possible. How is your own faith strengthened as you consider God’s power to accomplish his purposes no matter what the odds?

Look for ways that God answers your prayers and accomplishes his purposes in ways you never could have anticipated.

¹ Thomas Walker, *Acts of the Apostles* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), 527.

² William J. Larkin, Ed. Philip W. Comfort, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Acts* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2006), 605.

³ Genesis 3:1-15

Power to Witness in Word and Deed —Part 2

The Book of Acts

Acts 24:1—25:12

Read Acts 24:1–9.

1. The high priest, Ananias, some elders, and Tertullus the lawyer go down to Caesarea to bring charges against Paul. Who else should have been there and why? (Acts 21:27–29; 24:19)
2. Review Acts 23:1–10, 26–30. Why do you think it was a good idea for Ananias to bring Tertullus? (24:2–4)
3. What are the three accusations made against Paul? (24:5–6)

Read Acts 24:10–21.

4. How does Paul answer the first charge, that of being a troublemaker? (24:11–12)
5. Tertullus wants to distance Paul from mainstream Judaism so he labels him the leader of a “sect” (v. 5). This implies that Paul is a heretic. Paul disagrees, of course!¹
 - a. What three beliefs does Paul say Jews and Christians have in common? (24:14–15)
 - b. How has Jesus transformed our understanding of these beliefs?
Heb. 10:19–22

Mt. 5:17; Gal. 3:23–25

Rom. 6:3–5
6. Paul prefers to talk about the Christians as followers of “The Way” (24:14, 22. See also Acts 19:9, 23). Why is this a better description of...
their beliefs? (Jn. 14:6; Acts 16:17)

their lifestyle? (Eph. 5:2; 2 Jn. 1:6)

¹ “For Paul, the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus the Messiah meant not that he was abandoning the faith of his ancestors but that he was penetrating to its very heart.” N.T. Wright, *Acts for Everyone: Part Two, Chapters 13-38* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 187.

7. How does Paul defend himself against the third charge, that he “tried to desecrate the temple” (24:6)? (24:17–18)

8. Paul cuts through all the lies and posturing. What is at the heart of the Jewish opposition? (24:20–21; Acts 2:31–32, 36–38)

Read Acts 24:22–27.

9. Over the course of two years Paul has the opportunity to witness many times to Felix, a corrupt and self-serving governor.
 - a. What aspects of the gospel does Paul share with Felix? (24:24–25)

 - b. Why do you think Felix is afraid in verse 25? (Consider Acts 17:30–31.)

 - c. We do not need to fear if we have “faith in Christ Jesus” (24:24). Why? (1 Cor. 1:30)

Read Acts 25:1–12.

10. It is obvious that much of the criminal case against Paul is flimsy, but just like Felix, Festus chooses to act out of self-interest and fails to judge justly. Paul should have been released; instead, he is used as a political pawn (24:27; 25:9).
 - a. How do the religious authorities in Jerusalem pursue their charges against Paul with the new governor? (25:1–3, 6–7)

 - b. Why does Paul finally appeal to Caesar? (25:9–11)

11. Luke’s purpose in writing Acts is to show how Jesus’ ministry moves forward by the power of the Holy Spirit through his disciples “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).
How is Paul walking in the footsteps of Jesus and continuing His ministry? (Lk. 4:16–19)

12. For Paul, walking in Jesus’ footsteps would mean imprisonment and ultimately martyrdom.
 - a. How is God at work through these circumstances? (Phil. 1:12–14; * Gen. 50:20)

 - b. How have you seen God at work through difficult circumstances in your life?

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

Power to Witness in Word and Deed —Part 2

The Book of Acts
Acts 25:13 – 26:32

Review Acts 25:1-12. Read Acts 25:13-27.

1. King Agrippa (son of King Herod in Acts 12) and his sister, Bernice, arrive in Caesarea to greet the newly appointed governor, Festus. Finding an opportunity to speak privately with the king, Festus discusses his handling of Paul's case (vv. 14b-21).
 - a. As far as Festus can determine, what is the real issue between Paul and his accusers? (vv. 18-19)
 - b. Festus has a dilemma. He sees that Paul has "done nothing deserving of death" (v. 25), but, because of Paul's appeal to Caesar, must write up a report of the case for the emperor. How can conferring with this Jewish king, Agrippa, be helpful? (vv. 20a; Acts 26:3a, 26-27)

Read Acts 26:1-11.

2. Bound in chains, Paul addresses the king (vv. 2-3), then begins his defense with some personal history. How does he describe himself prior to his experience on the road to Damascus? (vv. 4-5; 9-11)

What is he trying to establish about himself? (📖* Acts 22:3-5; Gal. 1:13-14; Phil. 3:5-6)

3. Paul says he is on trial "because of [his] hope in what God promised our fathers" (v. 6). What is the promise that the "twelve tribes [were] hoping to see fulfilled" (v. 7)? (Consider Gen. 3:15; Is. 9:6-7; and Ezek. 37:24-26.)

What was the surprising part that they did not anticipate and could not accept? (vv. 8, 22b-23)

Read Acts 26:12-18.

4. Having been commissioned by the chief priests (v. 10), Paul set out to persecute Christians in Damascus.
 - a. Why did Jesus appear to Paul? (v. 16b)
 - b. What did Jesus promise to do for him? (v. 17a)
 - c. What would Jesus do through his servant Paul? (v. 18a)
 - d. What would result from Paul's ministry? (v. 18b)

*The 📖 symbol indicates verses for further study.

Read Acts 26:19-32.

5. Paul was zealous both before (vv. 9-11) and after (vv. 19-20) his experience on the way to Damascus. What changed Saul, a man who was “breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples” (9:1) into Paul, the courageous apostle now standing before King Agrippa? (vv. 15-16a; 25:19b)

6. As the hearing before Agrippa proceeds, how is Paul fulfilling his calling from God? (Acts 9:15; v. 22a)

7. Why does Festus interrupt Paul’s defense? (v. 24; Consider 1 Cor. 1:21-25.)

How does Paul respond to Festus’ accusations? (v. 25)

After the interruption, how does Paul seek to re-engage Agrippa? (vv. 26-27)

What does King Agrippa’s response to Paul tell you about him? (v. 28)

8. What is Paul’s deep desire for the king and all those who have heard his defense? (v. 29)

9. In his defense before Festus and Agrippa, Paul tells about his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus and the transformation that followed. Why do you think he chooses to defend himself in this way?

10. How were you transformed by your initial encounter with Jesus?

How is Jesus continuing to change you?

Pray for an opportunity to share your story of encounter and transformation with someone this week.

Power to Witness in Word and Deed—Part 2*The Book of Acts***Acts 27:1–26****Read Acts 27:1–12.**

1. Why is Paul on his way to Italy (and, more specifically, Rome)? (25:9–12)
2. Who is making the trip along with Paul? (vv. 1–2; 📖* For more about Aristarchus, see 19:29; 20:3–4; Col. 4:10)
3. Beginning in Caesarea, trace their voyage on the map in your folder. (vv. 3–12)
4. What kindness does Julius, the Roman centurion, show Paul in Sidon? (v. 3)
5. Scan back through verses 4–8. How would you describe this part of their trip?
6. Paul warns his fellow travelers of the dangers of sailing so late in the year (vv. 9–10). What qualifies him to give them advice on matters of sailing? (13:4, 13; 14:26; 16:11; etc. 📖 2 Cor. 11:25)

Read Acts 27:13–26.

7. The crew takes the gentle south wind as a good sign—but they are wrong.
 - a. What happens? (vv. 14–15)
 - b. What measures does the crew take to try to avoid disaster? (vv. 16–19)
 - c. Is anything these humans do effective in the face of this powerful storm? (v. 20)
8. Why do you think Paul begins his little speech in verses 21–26 by reminding his fellow travelers that they should have listened to him before?

*The 📖 symbol indicates verses for further study.

9. What mercy does God give Paul in the midst of this dire situation? (v. 23)

10. What additional mercy does God show? (v. 24; To see the magnitude of this blessing, see 27:37.)

What hardship still lies ahead? (v. 26)

11. How does Paul describe his relationship with God? (vv. 23, 25)

12. Acts began with the declaration of God's plan for the advancement of the gospel "to the ends of the earth" (1:8). Read the following verses that trace the thread of Paul's part in God's big plan. How do you see God's purposes for Paul unfolding even in circumstances that seem out of control?

Acts 9:15–16

Acts 21:10–11

Rom. 1:10–15 (Note that Paul probably wrote this letter to the Romans shortly before he travelled to Jerusalem with the gift from the Gentile churches.)

Acts 23:11

Acts 27:23–24a

What picture emerges of God?

13. How do you generally respond to overwhelming situations?

14. Though God rarely sends angels to speak to his people, what is one thing he has given us that provides comfort and security in the storms we face? (Ps. 119:28, 50)

What verses do you run to when you're feeling overwhelmed? If you can't think of any, consider memorizing and meditating on one of the verses someone in your group shares.

Power to Witness in Word and Deed —Part 2

The Book of Acts

Acts 27:27–44

Paul and his companions are aboard a cargo ship of wheat headed to Rome. Along with them are the ship's captain, the crew of sailors, a Roman centurion, soldiers, and other prisoners.

Review Acts 27:13–26. Read Acts 27:27–44.

1. What has been happening to this group of people during the last 14 days? (vv. 14–15, 18–20, 33)
2. Who became their source of courage? (v. 25)
3. What change in their situation do the sailors notice? (vv. 27–28)
4. In their desperate situation what actions do the sailors take? (vv. 29–30)

Do you think these actions show that they believe in the promise of Paul's God (vv. 22b, 24b)? Why or why not?

5. God's promise to save all those who sailed with Paul (v. 24) is a picture of a what greater salvation? (Jn. 6:39; 17:12;  * Rom. 6:3–5)

What are the conditions and the blessings of this salvation?

Conditions

Blessings

Jn. 6:40

Jn. 10:9

Jn. 10:27-29

6. What has become Paul's role on this ship other than prisoner of the Romans?

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

7. In the early morning, what does Paul do? (vv. 33–36)

Why do you think this is encouraging to the other passengers?

8. How does Paul describe the complete care of God? (v. 34b)

What does Paul know about God that enables him to reiterate God's promise in such a bold way? (Rom. 4:20–21)

9. In the daylight, the sailors can make out "a bay with a sandy beach" (v. 39).

a. What do they plan to do? (vv. 39–40)

b. What goes wrong with their plan? (v. 41)

10. If a Roman guard lost his prisoner, the cost was the loss of his own life.

a. How do the soldiers plan to preserve their lives in the coming chaos of a shipwreck? (v. 42)

b. Who prevents them from carrying out their plan? (v. 43a)

c. Once again, who really is in control? (Prov. 19:21)

11. Scan back over verses 13–44. List what these men have had to endure.

12. What has Paul learned from earlier hardships that enables him to weather this storm? (2 Cor. 1:8-10; 4:7-18
 Jonah 2:1-10)

What have you learned or what are you learning now that will remind you of God's faithfulness in future storms?

Power to Witness in Word and Deed – Part 2

The Book of Acts

Acts 28:1–16

Read Acts 28:1–16.

1. Given the events of the last two weeks of Paul’s life, what is remarkable about verse 1? (27:17, 20, 29, 33)

2. The term Luke uses in verse 2 for islanders literally means “barbarians.”
 - a. Although these people were “despised by Greeks and Romans”¹ how does Paul see them? (See Rom. 1:14–15 and Col. 3:11 where the same term is used.)

 - b. What “unusual kindness” (v. 2) do they show to the victims of the shipwreck?

3. Cold and wet, Paul throws wood on the fire and “a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand” (v. 3).
 - a. What do the islanders conclude when they see this? (v. 4)

 - b. At first reading, the people of Malta may seem primitive to us. But what similar things do people say today when bad things happen?

 - c. What changes the islanders’ minds about the conclusion they had drawn? (vv. 5–6a)

4. Imagine how startling it would have been to be bitten by that viper.
 - a. What did Paul know that enabled him not to panic? (27:23–25)

 - b. What scriptures do you cling to when the unexpected comes into your life? (If none comes to mind, meditate on one of the following: Ps. 56; Is. 40:27–31; Rom. 8:37–39; 2 Cor. 1:8–11.)

¹ Bruce Milne, *The Acts of the Apostles: Witnesses to Him...to the Ends of the Earth* (London: Christian Focus, 2010), 482.

5. Paul has faced many accusations and trials, and more lie ahead. Yet God showed him exceptional kindness throughout his life.
 - a. What acts of kindness does God bless Paul with on his journey to Rome? (27:3, 23–24, 42–43; 28:2, 7, 10, 14–15, 16)
 - b. What are some ways that you have experienced God’s kindness?
 - c. How can you show kindness this week? Ask God to help you see opportunities.
 - d. What kindness does God show to the people of Malta through Paul? (vv. 8–9)
6. During their three months on Malta, Luke chooses to record only the viper incident and the healings at Publius’s estate.
 - a. How do the islanders respond to these things? (vv. 6, 9, 10)
 - b. Why has God empowered the apostles to perform signs and wonders in the book of Acts? (8:6–8; 14:3; Rom. 15:17–21)
7. At long last, the Apostle Paul arrives in Rome, about three years after writing his letter to the believers there. He has many friends in this well-established church (Rom. 16).
 - a. Why has he wanted to go to Rome? (Rom. 1:8–13; 15:32)
 - b. How do the believers show their eagerness to see Paul? (v. 15)
8. Sometimes God revealed to Paul his specific plans and directions, but this time Paul was clueless that a side trip to Malta was part of his itinerary. It was God’s kindness that brought Paul to these people and established a church among them.
 - a. When has God’s leading in your life surprised you?
 - b. How has this shown you God’s passion to extend and expand his kingdom?
 - c. What does this reveal to you about God?

Power to Witness in Word and Deed —Part 2

The Book of Acts

Acts 28:17–31

Read Acts 28:17–31.

1. After only three days in Rome, Paul meets with the leaders of the Jewish community. In verses 17–20, how does Paul summarize...
 - a. what happened with the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem?
 - b. what happened with the Roman officials in Jerusalem?
 - c. his own perspective on these events?
2. What surprising information is revealed in verse 21?
3. What difference do you see between the attitude of the Jews in Rome and that of the Jews in Jerusalem? (Compare verses 22–23 with 21:27–31 and 24:5–8.)
4. Paul says that he is in chains because of “the hope of Israel” (v. 20).
 - a. What does Paul mean by the “hope of Israel”? (Lk. 1:67–70; 2:25–32, 36–38; 24:13–27)
 - b. How does God validate the one who is the Hope of Israel? (2:31–36; 5:29–32)
5. Paul took full advantage of this wonderful opportunity to try to convince his listeners to believe in Jesus by teaching from “the Law of Moses and from the Prophets” (v. 23).
Pick one or more of the following passages and explain how it could be used to show that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies.

Micah 5:2

Isaiah 7:14

Zechariah 9:9

Psalm 22:6–8, 16–18

Isaiah 53

Psalm 16:10

2 Samuel 7:12–13

6. Throughout Acts, we have seen this pattern of people's reaction to the preaching of the gospel: "some were convinced...but others would not believe" (v. 24). What does the use of the words "would not" indicate about a person's responsibility upon hearing the gospel?

7. Paul quotes Isaiah 6:9–10.
 - a. How do verses 26–27 summarize Israel's problem? (* Rom. 10:1–3)

 - b. What is all of humanity's problem? (Rom. 6:6–18)

8. How do Paul's concluding remarks in verse 28 express the main thrust of the entire book of Acts?

9. In verses 30 and 31 what do we learn about Paul's activities in Rome over the next two years?

10. If you were called upon today to declare "the kingdom of God" (vv. 23, 31), what would you say?

11. Think back over the story that Luke has told in the book of Acts.
 - a. How has Jesus' prophecy in Acts 1:8 been fulfilled over the course of the book?

 - b. How are you a part of this exciting ongoing story?

12. While the human characters are prominent in the book of Acts, the true hero is God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. What have you learned about God as a result of our study in Acts?

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.