

Acts 28-Day

Reading Guide



This devotional is meant to be a guide as you read through the book of Acts in 28 days. Read one chapter per day in the book of Acts and spend time with God using the devotions and questions provided.

“However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.”

- THE APOSTLE PAUL

Acts 1: Let's Go

Crucified! Buried! Risen! Everything Jesus said has proven true! More than a good teacher, more than a wise friend, He is God of all! Fear evaporates and hope springs up as we encounter the risen Lord. Imagine the anticipation and excitement building among the first followers of Jesus as they wait together for the promised Holy Spirit. What an amazing time to be part of the Church!

The promises and commands of Jesus resonate today just as they did over 2000 years ago. Acts 1:8 says, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." The mission is not finished. God has called us and empowered us to take the gospel to the world. What an amazing time to be part of the Church!

Are you ready for God to move in your family? Do you anticipate an amazing move of God in your workplace? Are you eager for God to change your community? The time for waiting is over. God is moving! Reading through the book of Acts as a church, we will recognize the local church as an unstoppable force. Its potential as an agent of change in our world is realized when those in the church begin operating with urgency for the gospel of Jesus Christ. Are you ready for change around you? If so, begin by asking God to do something new in your heart. Let's go!

- 1. What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?*
- 2. Jesus tells the disciples in Acts 1:8 they will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes. What comes to mind when you think of the word “power”? Does your life exhibit the power of God?*
- 3. How can you join the mission of the church today? Who can you share the gospel with today? Who can you invite to church?*

NOTES

Acts 2: I Can't Outgive God

The early disciples knew God as an extravagant giver. "God so loved the world that He gave..." was a daily reality. They walked with Jesus, they saw Him die, and they experienced the joy and power of His resurrection. As if the indescribable gift of Jesus wasn't enough, the promised Holy Spirit was given on the day of Pentecost and "about three thousand were added to their number that day." In response to God's immeasurable generosity the early church became radically generous. The Bible says believers shared all they had and gave to anyone as he had need. The early church understood there is no way to outgive God.

What if the generosity of our church changed the economy of South Carolina? Imagine no more welfare, no homelessness, no struggling single moms and no kids without shoes. What if our generosity opened doors for the Gospel to be shared and accepted throughout this state? The giving power of the local church leveraged for the gospel has unlimited potential to impact lives. It worked in Acts. It will work today so that together we can say, "And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

- 1. What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?*
- 2. Write down what God has given you, starting with salvation.*
- 3. Is there anyone in your life that God is leading you to bless financially today?*

NOTES

Acts 3: His Name

In Acts 3, Peter and John came upon a beggar who sat in close proximity to the temple at a gate called "Beautiful." Everyone knew the beggar at the Beautiful Gate because he had begged there for many years. This man sat only feet away from what should have been a house of healing unable to enter because in this temple, the sick and broken were unwelcome. This man watched for years as healthy temple-goers walked inside to worship and pray. The title "Beautiful" ironically describes this scene for what happened there was not beautiful at all.

Where do you see yourself in this story? Perhaps you identify with the beggar, not physically disabled but spiritually and emotionally broken. You've been stuck in the same place for weeks, months or maybe years. Others call your situation normal, reinforcing your cynicism. You know deep down that definitive change is needed, but from where? Or, perhaps you identify with those walking by the beggar. You know something should be done, but what? What can just one person do? What can one church do?

No matter where you find yourself in the story, know that hope is found in the Name of Jesus. Through Him healing happens, religion evaporates, communities transform and lives completely change. Through Him what is broken is made whole; what is ugly is made truly beautiful.

- 1. What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?*
- 2. Are there any bad habits in your life that you have accepted as normal? What are they?*
- 3. We see in verse 11 that the beggar held on to Peter and John as they stood by him. Who are some people in your life that you can hold on to in times of need, friends that will help you stand?*

NOTES

Acts 4: Ordinary

Just months before the events in Acts 4, Peter and John denied any association with Jesus and fled into hiding. Now, in what seems to be a reckless disregard for their personal safety, we see Peter and John boldly speaking the name of Jesus, confronting those who ordered Jesus' crucifixion. These uneducated fishermen stood confidently speaking truth to the religious, political and intellectual elite of their day. What they did seems to contradict who they were. This dramatic turnaround was noted by those who listened, "When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus."

For anyone feeling under-qualified, underprepared, or over their head, this chapter offers an abundance of hope. God will always do more through you than expected. It is not education, wealth, position or political influence that makes us competent or qualified to do great things for God. Rather, it is our time spent with Jesus that marks us ready for purpose. Spend energy and time connecting with Jesus every day instead of worrying about your resume or level of preparedness for the task ahead. God will make you ready for all He wants to do through you!

- 1. What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?*
- 2. What does boldness look like in your life? How can you be bolder at work, school or home?*
- 3. What qualified Peter and John to stand before the Sanhedrin and present their case? What qualified them to preach to the crowd?*

NOTES

Acts 5: Stand Up

The book of Acts is not for wimps. It's a direct challenge to our natural desire to play it safe. While well-intentioned televangelized voices say Christianity is about comfort and prosperity, the Bible paints a much different picture. Peter and John's trial before the Sanhedrin is just the beginning. The early church endured prison, beatings, exposure to death, stoning, shipwrecks, sleeplessness, hunger, thirst and nakedness as a result of proclaiming Jesus as Lord. They counted it "all joy" and rejoiced that they suffered for Jesus. Most of us have never been flogged for our faith nor should we desire to be. We shouldn't feel guilty that we haven't endured that kind of persecution. Rather, we should be challenged to stand up in our current circumstances.

God placed us in this time and place so His name might be glorified now. Are we boldly carrying His name into every area of our lives or are we hiding behind the warm blanket of apathy and comfort? The reward of a life spent boldly living for Jesus far outweighs any temporary consequences we may endure. Who knows what the repercussions of sharing Jesus in your school, workplace or family will be? But we can be sure that whatever we face, Christ has gone before us so in any situation we can boldly share the gospel.

- 1. What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?*
- 2. How is Barnabas' attitude towards generosity in Chapter 4 different than Ananias and Sapphira's in Chapter 5?*
- 3. How is God challenging you to get out of your comfort zone today?*

NOTES

Acts 6: Change

Some do well with change and some don't. What is the difference between those who can handle change and those who can't? It comes down to what we value. Some of us value our own ambition and self-preservation more than Jesus' mission. If personal comfort is our goal in life, we will fight against change. However, if Jesus is our ultimate treasure, change becomes an acceptable reality. In Acts 6 the apostles make a tough leadership decision that affected lots of people. Some people probably responded positively and others probably responded negatively. When change comes, we get to decide what kind of person we're going to be and what we value. Will we embrace change positively and allow growth to happen?

The apostles realized that without a drastic change, the gospel would not reach the world. Because the early church was willing to change, "The Word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith." Imagine what can happen in your personal walk with Jesus when you open your heart to change. Imagine what can happen in our church when we are willing to make the changes necessary to see more and more people hear the gospel of Jesus Christ.

- 1. What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?*
- 2. Are there areas of your life where you are unwilling to change? Why?*
- 3. Is there anything that God is asking you to change in your life today?
Anything you need to start doing or stop doing?*

NOTES

Acts 7: Full

Jesus said, "The thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy but I've come that you might have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10). How do we measure fullness? How do we know if we are experiencing the fullness Christ offers?

Stephen's recorded ministry career consisted of delivering food to widows—the equivalent of a 1st century Meals-On-Wheels program—and a brief gospel message delivered to a group of stone-throwing religious types. In both ministries, Stephen gave everything he had to the task. He performed faithfully behind the scenes receiving the thanks of a few well-fed widows, and he performed just as faithfully on a more public platform when death seemed his likely end. No doubt Stephen was motivated by an empty tomb and empowered by the Holy Spirit. We can agree that Stephen's life was full despite its brevity. The measuring stick for fullness is not the length of our days, the number of our accomplishments or the frequency of our happiness. Stephen was boldly, faithfully obedient in every situation. He was ALL IN. His life shows us fullness is found in a life of Christ-centered purpose.

- 1. What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?*
- 2. How does our culture measure success? What is the biblical definition of success?*
- 3. How is God using you to accomplish His purposes? Is there anything distracting you from fulfilling God's purpose in your life?*

NOTES

Acts 8: Go

Occasionally we encounter someone with incredible passion for the gospel, and we wonder what makes them different. We might think their passion results from the gift of evangelism or a powerful conversion story. In reality, their enthusiasm stems from a deep understanding of what Jesus has done for them. This knowledge has transformed their behavior. The believers in Acts were undergoing tremendous persecution. Their lives were threatened if they spoke of Jesus, yet, "Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went." Jesus is alive; He is the only way to God. Not even death could prevent them from sharing that message with the world.

To see the gospel spread and lives changed, we've got to do more than pray. We have to go! In Acts 8, Philip was so passionate about the good news he ran alongside the Ethiopian's chariot waiting for an opportunity to share the gospel. If you're not running with the gospel, it's time to reevaluate what Jesus did for you. Our only reasonable response to all He's done for us is to get moving!

- 1. What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?*
- 2. How has the gospel changed you? How has it changed what you talk about?*
- 3. Can a person know Jesus and not have a desire to share Jesus?
Why or why not?*

NOTES

Acts 9: Monumental Change

Have you ever stood at the rim of the Grand Canyon? It's a powerful experience. The size of the canyon is almost more than you can fathom. It is difficult to even see the other side. The overwhelming feeling of standing on the rim can best be described as awe. There's no doubt the wide expanse between one side of the canyon and the other has been created by an incredible God. It is too big, too beautiful to have been made by man's effort.

You want to see a chasm just as wide and beautiful? Read verses 1 and 21 of Acts 9. Saul's life was radically changed when he saw Jesus for who he really is. Everybody could see a difference. Some people were excited and wanted to help Saul in any way they could. Some people wanted to kill him. The before and after in Saul's life was too big to miss. His life was dramatically affected and that affected others. Nothing was the same for Saul and it never would be again.

- 1. What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?*
- 2. Saul had been religious and kept rules well. He was an enemy of God before he met Jesus on the road to Damascus. Can we be good enough for God? Why or Why not?*
- 3. Maybe you didn't have a dramatic conversion experience like Saul. Think back on your decision to follow Jesus. What happened? Write out your story.*

NOTES

Acts 10: New Perspective

"I can't help it! That's just the way I am!" Have you ever used that excuse? It is so easy to use the way we were raised or the things we've been taught as excuses to hold on to the habits and attitudes God calls us to change. Peter would've understood. What Peter was asked to do goes against everything his family and his culture believed. In Peter's culture you just don't associate with "those" people—ever.

Verse 29 is such a startling response, "so when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection." Peter's attitudes and beliefs were passed down to him over many generations but Jesus' calling was bigger than any of that. Is that true for you? It doesn't matter if your past is filled with great memories or painful ones. You've inherited attitudes and habits that need to change. As God's word shows you new ways to think and feel, how will you respond?

- 1. What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?*
- 2. How has Jesus changed your perspective since you met Him? Since every one of us is a work in progress, what is God changing in you now?*
- 3. Our culture today also struggles with accepting the fact that God loves all people and all races. Are there any prejudices in your heart that God wants you to overcome today?*

NOTES

Acts 11: Even Them

The fact that God made salvation possible for people outside of Israel broke thousands of years of religious tradition. In this period, Jews would not even associate with Gentiles. They were considered the low rung of society, cursed by God and unfit for interaction with a “holy” people. However, Jesus makes it clear He came to save the whole world, even those who at one time seemed unreachable.

Jesus always goes after the lost sheep—the ones who stray and seem like a lost cause. The Jews had no reason to believe Gentiles were loved by God. But verse 23 says when Barnabas arrived in Antioch he saw what the grace of God had done. Jesus was active in Antioch long before Barnabas had even considered making the trip. Understand God’s saving power is not restricted by your sense of morality. God’s resume is full of converted murderers: Moses, David and Paul. Oh, and by the way, we fit nicely on that list, don’t we? It was our sins that crucified Jesus. Before we give up on others, remember that God didn’t give up on us. “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Who do you know that seems too far gone? It’s time to extend another invitation!

- 1. What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?*
- 2. Is there anyone in your life that you believe to be too far from God? Write out a prayer to God for that person.*
- 3. Do you go out of your way to share the love of God with those far from the Church? How can you improve in this area?*

NOTES

Acts 12: Your Rescuer Awaits

Chained to two soldiers and guarded by 14 others, Peter needed a rescuer. Facing a hostile court and certain death the next morning, God came to the rescue by sending an angel to free Peter from his chains. The angel escorted Peter past the guards, and Peter walked out of prison unscathed.

It was a miraculous liberation, but no less miraculous is God's work in our church today. Every day He offers people freedom through a small group or a volunteer role. He storms prisons of loneliness, addiction, financial bondage, worthlessness and rejection, and He sets people free with the love, fellowship, teaching and purpose-filled living they find by taking their next step.

Are you waiting for God to “beam you up” and out of your difficulties through a deliverance that costs you nothing? Or are you willing, like Peter, to wake up, get up and follow God out of prison by taking your next step?

- 1. What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?*
- 2. Write about a situation in your life where you need God to show up big. Ask Him to do just that.*
- 3. Peter walked out of the prison unscathed, but it all started with his first step. What first step is God asking you to take today?*

NOTES

Acts 13: Driven by Prayer

In Acts 2, the early church movement starts with believers gathered in one room praying and seeking wisdom from God. A couple of chapters later, they gather for a prayer meeting and the room physically shakes with the power of God. In Acts 13, the Antioch church meets to pray and fast over their next step and Barnabas and Saul are sent out on mission. The power of prayer is unmistakable in the life of the Church.

What are you praying for? Not the casual give-a-brief-thought-and-look-up kind of prayer. Not the kind of "prayin' for ya" we post on Facebook with good intentions but never follow through on. What are you desperate for? What are you asking for that without a miraculous move of God will never happen? The good news is you don't have to be perfect at prayer, just persistent.

- 1. What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?*
- 2. Saul and Barnabas immediately responded with obedience when they knew what to do. Has God asked you to do something and you are delaying obedience? Why?*
- 3. How has the persecution against the Church allowed them to reach more people with the gospel?*

NOTES

Acts 14: Crazy

Do you ever feel that no matter what you say about God, people misunderstand you? Paul and Barnabas were misunderstood many times as they traveled and spoke about Jesus and salvation. Some thought they were crazy. In synagogues, the Jews, "stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds" and "the people of the city were divided." Later in Lystra and Derbe, people thought Paul and Barnabas were gods because of the miracles they performed in Jesus' name. Amazing acts of God happened and crowds of people still hated Paul and Barnabas.

God has not left us to face the world alone. Paul and Barnabas had each other's back. When they returned from preaching, they came to the local church for encouragement and prayer. Don't be afraid to live boldly even if others think you are crazy. You are not alone. We are in this together.

- 1. What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?*
- 2. Despite repeated threats, Paul and Barnabas continued to boldly and patiently share the gospel. Why do you think they continued to live bold in the face of trouble?*
- 3. Even after being stoned nearly to death, Paul got back up and went in to the city. In what areas of your life have you faced adversity? In what ways can you be bold and get back up?*

NOTES

Acts 15: The Diverse Church

As the gospel spreads and grows in the early church a diverse group emerged. What was once a small band of Jewish locals now included a large number of non-Jews or Gentiles. The differences within the church body caused friction. People in the Church hoped leaders would pick a side, failing to realize they were all working toward a common vision. Our church must be on guard against division springing up from our different backgrounds, traditions, and preferences. While we have many differences our common denominator is salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone. Our mission to see the gospel spread throughout the world unites us!

Peter says in verse 8 that it is the same Spirit in all of us; God has not made a distinction. Those in Christ are all under the love of God. We are the body and we each have a role to fill. Embracing our differences and focusing on our united mission will help us reach people faster. Let's be mindful that divisions in the church are cancerous to the body. We are one.

- 1. What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?*
- 2. What benefits are there to having a more diverse church? How can we help this happen at NewSpring?*
- 3. Are you trying to earn God's approval through good works? How do we receive salvation? What pleases God (Hebrews 11:6)?*

NOTES

Acts 16: Found People Find People

Finding people far from God is Paul's primary ambition. If you haven't picked up on it yet, Paul was obedient to this mission no matter the cost. Paul followed the Spirit's lead wherever he needed to go, even prison. While speaking truth and love, Paul is persecuted again in Acts 16. This time he was publicly humiliated in his own home country, flogged and imprisoned. Most of us would want to shout out, "Wait, I'm a citizen! What do you think you are doing?" And, in prison, I'm sure we wouldn't be singing hymns and praying—unless it was praying for a quick way out. Despite Paul's discomfort, not one, but a whole family came to know the Lord as Savior! Because Paul was obedient and faithful, he got to see God change people's hearts. Are we willing to get uncomfortable in order to see others come to know Christ?

- 1. What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?*
- 2. Every one of us has experienced hardships in life. Think through difficult times you have experienced: what are some ways God can work for good out of these situations?*
- 3. That person on the top of your prayer list—the one far from God—are you willing to do whatever it takes to reach them with the truth? What does that look like for you?*

NOTES

Acts 17: Serious Time with God

Paul stood before a group and boldly proclaimed the truth. How awesome is the way Paul's words exude confidence, not insecurity? Why was he able to speak with such authority? Because Paul knew Jesus intimately. He had spent time studying God's word and committing it to memory. When Jesus changed Paul's heart, Paul experienced an extreme spiritual transformation.

Paul's authoritative teaching was born from dedicated time with God. Time spent not just on his camel on the way to his tent-making job, or worshiping an hour a week, but committed regular time. If Paul were here today, it's quite possible he would wake before sunrise and find a quiet place away from distractions to spend time with God. Eliminating distractions means escape from this "i" world—the iPod, iPad and iPhone—to meet with Jesus.

Maybe you've made a decision to follow Jesus, but you've never taken that next step of reading the Bible regularly and doing whatever it takes to get to know Him better. Acts 17:27 says God is not far from any of us. That is great news!

- 1. What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?*
- 2. How has God worked for good during the difficult moments of your life?
What hope does this give you for the future?*
- 3. Paul was “greatly distressed” by the idols in Athens. What breaks your heart?
What can you do about it?*

NOTES

Acts 18: God's Will

Paul left Corinth, setting sail for Ephesus with these final words, "I will come back if it is God's will." That phrase—"if it is God's will"—punctures our hedge of comfort. Paul was sailing toward more persecution and suffering. Soon he willingly journeyed to Jerusalem knowing he would likely be arrested and put to death. Why? Because it was God's will, spoken to Paul, and there was no other decision but joyful obedience. How often do we make plans and purchases assuming God is with us?

Do we want to know God's will for our life? Do we really? What if it means discomfort or worse? What if God wants us to leave our city, state or even country? It is easy for us to make decisions in life based on personal comfort instead of purpose. You are created on purpose for a purpose. God has a plan for you. Are you ready to obey no matter the cost?

- 1. What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?*
- 2. What next step is Jesus asking you to take today? Is there a big decision you have been praying over recently? Are you ready to obey?*
- 3. Does it seem that hardships slow Paul down? Do you think it is a result of positive thinking or something more? Is it true that he is never discouraged?*

NOTES

Acts 19: American Idols

In Ephesus, people had strong emotions about the silver statues of their goddess, Artemis. The silversmiths knew if people started believing in God instead of their man-made idols their income would suffer. While silver statues may not be the objects of our affection as Americans we have plenty of false gods of our own. One of our most prevalent “gods” is the unquenchable desire for more—more income, a bigger home, or maybe just a cooler phone. Some call it “the gift of acquisition.” Solid biblical principles can help break the idolatry of more, bigger and better. Learning to steward our resources God’s way can bring peace to our finances and break the hold of idolatry in our life.

- 1. What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?*
- 2. What does it mean to value God more than material possessions and money?
What does that look like in your life?*
- 3. Is it possible to be close to Jesus and even invoke the name of Jesus without actually knowing Jesus? What does this look like in the modern day church?*

NOTES

Acts 20: Don't Give Up

Sometimes we all feel like giving up. When we feel like our prayers are not getting through, we struggle. Sometimes we make promises to do better, we pray more or try harder in hopes of finding our way out of the funk. When even our best efforts don't seem to work, God reminds us of the truth. He loves us and will never abandon us. This is the message of Jesus: while we were still sinners, He came to save us. Nothing we do will ever separate us from the love of God.

Paul battled through tears, overwhelming opposition, loneliness and weariness, but he never gave up on his calling to follow Jesus. And he did not attempt to do it alone. Throughout his ministry, Paul was surrounded by a community of believers. Some encouraged and helped him, others let him down, but he never gave up.

- 1. What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?*
- 2. How does Paul's testimony in verses 18-35 encourage you to share your faith? Has discouragement kept you from telling someone else about Jesus?*
- 3. Paul says in verse 24 that he counts his life worth nothing, except to finish the mission God has given him. Can you say that? What calling has God put on your life? What can you do today to obey God's call?*

NOTES

Acts 21: “All In” Defined

Paul didn't play. He took his commitment to Christ seriously. So seriously, he insisted on walking boldly in obedience toward a next step that promised prison and hardship. Despite the persistent warnings of other believers, he could not be deterred from what God had for him next. Why was that? Because Paul had a personal encounter with Jesus that proved to him God can be trusted. God's foresight is perfect and His plans are always ripe with purpose. God's way is rarely easy because easy never results in a spiritual profit. If there ever was a definition for “All In,” it lives in verse 13, “...I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” Paul's resolve was well guarded by his courageous faith. Fear and self-interest were not entertained.

- 1. What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?*
- 2. In your gut, what is really holding you back from the courageous faith and bold obedience exemplified by Paul?*
- 3. Has there ever been a time in your life when influential people tried to dissuade you from doing what you felt God was directing you to do? If so, how did you decide what to do? How can we know what God wants us to do?*

NOTES

Acts 22: Everybody Loves a Good Story...

There are few things more powerful and disarming than a story, particularly the story of how Jesus changed someone's life. Paul could have argued the finer points of the law with anyone in the crowd. He could have expounded on Christ's fulfillment of every nook and cranny of Old Testament prophecy. Instead, he shared his story of transformation with a vicious mob. A murderer of Christians morphed into a preacher of the gospel—that's compelling stuff!

Every follower of Christ has a story to tell. Every one of us has been rescued from a life of sin and disobedience, set free to follow Jesus. God does not call us to be articulate salesmen or well-educated philosophers. He has better equipped us. God has given each of us a story of life change and the power of the gospel. Who are we sharing that story with?

- 1. What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?*
- 2. Jesus says in Matthew 16:25, "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it." How does this verse relate to Paul's life? How does this verse relate to your life?*
- 3. Baptism is our chance to tell the story of what God has done in our life. Why does God command baptism as the first step of obedience after salvation? Have you taken this step? Why or why not?*

NOTES

Acts 23: Eyes to See; Ears to Hear

Paul shared his story before a violent crowd of people. Perhaps a few hearts were softened, and maybe even changed by his message. But mostly his message was greeted with resistance. Paul could've been bitter about his circumstances. He could have been angry with God. Beaten, attacked, pulled on and almost torn to pieces, Paul was aware of the purpose behind his hardship. He continued to focus on advancing God's kingdom. He pressed on to finish the race to which he was called. Comfort, safety and personal preference were not considerations. The good news was ever on his lips and the gentle encouragement of a compassionate Father in his ear saying, "Take courage!" Paul had eyes to see the Lord at work in his circumstances and ears to hear God's consistent reassurance of His certain faithfulness.

1. *What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?*
2. *How do you see God wanting to use your current circumstances for spiritual benefit—your own or someone else's?*
3. *What hypocrisy does Paul call out in the high priest in verse 3? Why is it spiritually dangerous to say one thing yet do another?*

NOTES

Acts 24: The Inconvenience of Truth

Convenience is not something we should expect from God. Truth will never feel convenient. It may feel poorly timed, perhaps even prickly, sharp and uncomfortable. The paradox is this—God’s Word is always perfectly timed—just by a different time-piece. Any attempt to schedule growth—to wait until life isn’t so busy, to wait until the children are older, to wait until God’s commands feel less confrontational—will mean missing out on what God is doing now. Felix, though “well acquainted with the Way,” missed out on God because His truth felt like a spur in Felix’s indulgences. He tried to take God in small doses—dismissing Paul when he had enough. It can be easy to slip into that mode of comfortable religion, consuming morsels of Truth sporadically so as to dilute its impact. Growth and change require a daily diet of God’s Word—not appetizers of scripture served up on special occasions.

- 1. What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?*
- 2. In verse 25, what do you think frightened Felix about Paul's message on righteousness, self-control and judgment to come? How is it possible to hear Truth and remain unchanged by it?*
- 3. Is your commitment to growth and change more similar to that of Paul or Felix? How?*

NOTES

Acts 25: Problem or Opportunity

Paul knew he was called to go to Rome and preach the gospel. He was committed to doing what God had called him to do no matter the cost. He encountered setbacks and problems along the way but he trusted in God's faithfulness. Paul understood that if God was truly in control of his life, even the problems he faced were tools in God's hands. What if your problem is the vehicle that brings you to your next big opportunity?

Paul was in prison but he made the most of his situation. He saw the chance to stand in front of King Agrippa as an opportunity to share the gospel instead of an opportunity to complain about his situation.

- 1. What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?*
- 2. What challenges and problems have you faced as you pursue what God has asked you to do? How do you see God working through those problems and challenges?*
- 3. What if God's answer to our prayers isn't what we expect? Have you been praying for something for a long time and it seems the problem won't go away? Ask God what He wants to do about your problem.*

NOTES

Acts 26: It's Not About Me

After finally receiving an opportunity to plead his case before King Agrippa, Paul instead chooses to share the story of his miraculous conversion to Christ. Why would he do that? Jesus is the hero of Paul's story. His life focuses on the message of the cross, offensive to some and unbelievable to others. Through it all, Paul focuses on Jesus and the eternity Christ offers rather than the temporary consequences of this life. It is all about Jesus!

Paul's attitude and focus is most clearly revealed in verse 29: "I pray that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains." Paul understands that light and momentary trials achieve an eternal glory far outweighing any hardship he faces. That's why, given this opportunity, he shared the gospel instead of begging for his life. When given an opportunity, do you make much of you or much of Him? We were put here to make Him known!

- 1. What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?*
- 2. How do you react when people respond negatively to you? What can you learn from Paul's response to Festus and Agrippa?*
- 3. Think back over your conversations and stories the past few weeks. Who is the focus of your attention and hero of your stories? Why?*

NOTES

Acts 27: Value

Paul's journey to Rome was frustrating. Transferring from ship to ship, he was hauled across international waters, chained as a prisoner at the mercy of poor decision makers. Although Paul warned the captain that pressing forward would be disastrous, the captain listened to other advice and the ship crashed, splintering into pieces. If everyone on the ship had perished but Paul, he would have been a free man. Instead, Paul accepted his role as prisoner and instructed everyone how to survive after the storm. Instead of bitterness, Paul saved lives. How many of us can say we would have responded the same way? Paul valued the salvation of others more than his own comfort. Do you value other's salvation more than your comfort?

- 1. What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?*
- 2. Have you ever listened to the wrong people and made a wrong decision like the captain of the ship? How has God been faithful to you in spite of that decision?*
- 3. How has God proven trustworthy in your life? Are you more concerned with others or your own preservation?*

NOTES

Acts 28: “Yes!”

Verse 31 is an incredible epitaph to Paul's life and ministry. “Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul faithfully completed all God called him to do. He faced difficult and challenging times in his life, but he never gave up, never quit and never let his circumstances deter him from serving his Savior. God accomplished His purpose in Paul's life because Paul said “yes” to God. Will you surrender to God's purpose for your life even before you know what God will ask of you? Make this commitment to the Lord: “God, whenever you say ‘move,’ I'll move. Wherever you say ‘go,’ I'll go. Whatever you say ‘do,’ I'll do.” The story of God changing the world through the church doesn't stop in Acts 28. His work continues today through passionate people like yourself who surrender everything to God and say with confidence, “YES, I'M ALL IN!”

1. *What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?*
2. *What desires has God put in you? What is your next step to be faithful to what God has asked you to do?*
3. *What do you want people to write about your life one day? Would people say like Luke did of Paul, that you were focused on Jesus?*

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