

## Introduction

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We step back into our study in Acts as Paul continues to make his way to Jerusalem. While this may begin as a travelogue, we soon discover the deepening commitment Paul has to answer the call of God on his life, even though it may include persecution. How he relies on the Holy Spirit to guide and direct his path is an example to us today.

To think through the main ideas in the sermon and prepare for your discussion together, we invite you to look over the questions below and write your thoughts down before you meet with your group.

## Warm Up *(Suggested time: 30 min)*

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Here are some suggestions to get your conversation started:

1. If someone were to make a documentary about your life, what would be your favorite scene? What event would you definitely ask them to leave out?
2. In 5 words or less, how would you describe your ultimate purpose in life?

## Getting Started

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Transition into group discussion.

- 1) Open group discussion with prayer. Here are a few potential prayer items:
    - a. For the Spirit of God to lead you in truth
    - b. For the fruit of the Spirit to be cultivated in your lives
    - c. For grace to hear and apply what the Spirit says to you
  - 2) Invite someone to read the passage in the group.
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## Study Questions *(Suggested time: 40 min)*

- 1) In what ways did the sermon this week challenge you in *Daring to Be the Church*?
- 2) Look back to Acts 20:22-24. **In Paul's words, what is it that clearly defines his life?**

Compare that to what Paul says in Acts 21:13-14. **How would you describe Paul's level of commitment to his calling?**

- 3) The believers in both Tyre and Caesarea were given a glimpse by the Holy Spirit of how Paul would be persecuted in Jerusalem, and they concluded he should avoid suffering. **What does that tell you about the difference between their perspective and Paul's concerning God's call on his life?**

**When have you been, or might you be tempted to advise someone else without taking into account the way the Holy Spirit might be leading them?**

**How could you encourage that person to press on by faith rather than avoid a trial they are facing?** (Hint: this is more about actively listening than trying to fix their situation)

- 4) Read Hebrews 11:32-38 for a perspective on counting the cost of faithfully following God's call. **What thoughts and feelings are stirred in you when you read about those who suffered?**

**How have your feelings about suffering informed the perspective you have about your ultimate purpose in life?**

- 5) Pastor Bryan described *living our calling* as taking the opportunities we are given with the brief time we have on earth in order to live for what matters into eternity. Read Ephesians 4:1-3. **In practical terms, what are some ideas you can share with your group about what it looks like to live your calling in the areas listed below?** (Bonus points for creativity and courage!)

Family/Personal life:

Community life:

Church life:

Work life:

## Prayer *(Suggested time: 20 min)*

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A significant part of “coming together” is being open and honest with our lives. Sitting in a group of people for prayer may be new or it may be familiar to you. If you would rather not pray aloud when it is your turn, feel free to pray silently and then say “Amen” aloud signaling the next person in the group to pray. Whether or not you choose to verbalize your prayer, everyone is a participant in sharing this time before God together.

Take a few moments to prepare a prayer request. What did the message, working through the above questions or the discussion cause you to notice about your own relationship with Jesus? Would you be willing to share your prayer request with the group?

## Personal Spiritual Exercises

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Just like physical exercises help strengthen and stretch our bodies for healthy living, these spiritual exercises are meant to move us spiritually in ways that may be new so we might experience inner growth. Since God longs for us to experience Him with our whole selves – mind, body, spirit – we invite you along each week to strengthen your souls with suggestions and prompts. **Next week in your Life Group, take a few moments to share how either of these exercises may have changed your outlook on your daily life.**

**Sitting With God:** to stretch our awareness of God in and around us. When we still our mind, body, and thoughts, we open ourselves to listen to the still, small voice of God.

**Exercise 1:** Set a timer for 10 minutes. Sit upright but comfortably in a chair with your palms open and upward on your lap. Focus on a word or short phrase about the character of God the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. When your thoughts wander to the things on your to-do list or other people’s needs, redirect them back to the character of God. When the 10 minutes are up, close in a short prayer of gratitude.

**Exercise 2:** Imagine sitting beside Jesus on a park bench. Where would you choose to be? What would you see, smell, hear, and experience physically? How would you begin a conversation? Listen for Jesus’ response.