



Winter 2022 // WEEK 3

Life Group Questions

Acts: Daring To Be The Church // January 29-30, 2022

Us and Them // Acts 21:17-22:29

Introduction

We continue in Acts 21 as Paul arrives in Jerusalem after strategic travels. It is in the coming chapters and verses that the cost of Paul's calling from the Lord is realized. As the details of Paul's final moments of ministry unfold, we also get a glimpse of his heart for his own people. He loved the Hebrew people and he longed to see them come to know Jesus as Savior.

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)*

Here are some suggestions to get your conversation started:

1. If you could spend the weekend in any city, which would you choose and why?
2. What one goal do you wish to accomplish in your spiritual growth this year? If you have yet to set one, identify one area with the help of the Holy Spirit. Share it with your group.

Getting Started

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. ***Due to the lengthy passage of Scripture this week, try reading the narrative in large segments as guided by the discussion questions.***
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Study Questions *(Suggested time: 40 min)*

- 1) In what ways did the sermon this week challenge your heart for people that seem against the cause of Christ?
- 2) Upon Paul's return to Jerusalem, the first events of the text in Acts 21:17-26 show that he sought community with fellow leaders of the Jewish faith. **What do you notice about this interaction of leaders? How do they start their time together? What concerns are expressed? How do they decide to move forward as a cohesive unit, daring to be the church?**

This moment is an example of how authentic community can be used by the Holy Spirit to guide and encourage the next steps in someone's walk with the Lord. **Do you desire this kind of community? How are you cultivating this safe and authentic space with your Life Group? What are you doing well as a group?** (Take time to glorify God together.) **How can you decide to move forward as a cohesive unit, daring to be the church?**

- 3) A moment of authentic community is followed by chaos and confusion when Paul is noticed in the temple by the Jews from Asia. Read Acts 21:27-36. **What did the legalistic Jews from Ephesus accuse Paul of doing? Thinking back through what we have read so far in Acts, were the accusations true?**

Chaos and confusion eventually led to anger and destruction by these highly devout and law keeping Jews. **What was the source of their anger? In what way might we see similar behavior in our culture today where opposing views create a damaging "us/them" mentality? How have you responded to such efforts?**

We've seen Paul time and again, throughout his ministry, cross over the lines of "us" and "them" removing obstacles for the sake of advancing the Gospel. We even see it here in the midst of his persecution. Compare Paul's own words in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. **How do you see him living out his stated commitment to the Corinthians now in Jerusalem and in his persecution there? What are some specific ways that you too can "do all things for the sake of the gospel" so that you might remove any obstacles to advancing the Gospel?**

- 4) Read Acts 21:37-22:21 for Paul's response to the false accusations and violent crowd. **Why does Paul choose to tell his testimony in response to the direct accusations of the mob? What do you think allowed Paul to respond with respect and love rather than matching anger with more anger?**

Share of a time when you were mistreated or criticized for your faith in Christ. **How did you respond in the moment? What was the resolution to the conflict? How are you inspired by Paul's testimony to also respond in love when experiencing criticism?**

- 5) Much of this scene feels like a chaotic whirlwind. In the end, Paul was spared more physical torture because of something totally out of his control. Read Acts 22:22-29. **Even though Paul's fate seems out of his control, where do you see God in control of this chaotic situation? Why is this important for us to remember especially in circumstances that seem unfair and out of control?**

Prayer *(Suggested time: 20 min)*

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

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.**

Preparing Your Story: to stretch our awareness of how God has changed our lives. When we prepare our testimony we are ready to share Christ with those around us.

Exercise 1: Set a timer for 15 minutes. Capture some key milestones in your journey with Christ. Be as specific as possible. These details can be used to share your story with others.

- Before:
 - Before you knew Christ, what were some of your needs? What was lacking or what was missing in your life?
 - What methods for improving your life did you try that fell short?
- How:
 - What were the circumstances that caused you to consider following Jesus?
 - What made you trust and surrender to Jesus as Lord? (Romans 10:9-10)
 - What has become your favorite Bible verse and why?
- After:
 - Give an example of how God has met your needs – either physical or emotional – since you accepted Jesus.
 - Share what you are most grateful for in your relationship with God today.

Exercise 2: You know your testimony and now you feel prepared to share it with someone else. Paul ministered to the Gentiles because God told him to go and make disciples. His heart and passion also remained with his own people, the Jews. Paul suffered greatly to ensure that he could share his story with them. Who are your people? Identify who you are passionate about reaching no matter the cost. Take time to pray for people by name or by category. Ask God to give you moments to share. Pray for wisdom, guidance and courage to respectfully engage and respond in love.