



## Winter 2022 // WEEK 4

### Life Group Questions

Acts: Daring To Be The Church // February 5-6, 2022

Can We Actually Trust God? // Acts 22:30-23:35

## Introduction

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In Acts 23, Paul is brought before the Sanhedrin (Jewish ruling council) and more chaos erupts. We read about God's encouragement, a plot to kill Paul, and God's sovereignty and providence as Paul is protected and whisked away to Caesarea. In looking at this passage we discover that even when it looks like the worldly kingdoms are in charge, the advance of God's kingdom will not be stopped. Through Paul's experience we also learn that God promises to be with us and He will deliver and sustain us as we trust Him and partner with Him in spreading the message of His kingdom.

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. What is one thing in your life that turned out different than you thought it would?
2. What is an area in your life where you struggle to trust God? What is it about this area that makes it hard for you to trust God? What is one step you could take towards trusting God in this area?

## 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 God to form you into a community of love
    - 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 indicated by the discussion questions.***
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## Study Questions *(Suggested time: 40 min)*

- 1) How did this week's sermon encourage or challenge you?
- 2) In last week's and this week's passage we see many hardships the Apostle Paul had to endure; beatings, crowds calling for him to be put to death, almost being scourged, accused before the Sanhedrin (Acts 22:30-23:10) and a plot to kill Him (Acts 23:12-35). **Paul endured all those things because of his desire for Jesus to be known among the Jewish people and his desire to be obedient to God's call on his life.** This is a reminder to us that the main character in this story is God. It is always a good question to ask, **What do we learn about God from this passage?**

How can you apply your answer in your personal life?

- 3) In Acts 23:6-10, the ruling council devolves into an argument over Paul's claims and then in Acts 23:12-15 we learn that they are conspiring in a secret plot to have Paul killed. This indicates the hardness of their hearts toward the gospel. Pastor Jeff discussed how no matter how careful or forceful we are, there is no way over, around or through the impenetrable wall of a hard heart. Only God can work in such a way as to encourage someone to humble themselves before Him. **Is there someone you are praying for that you feel has a hard heart towards the gospel? If you are willing, share your burden for this person with your Life Group.**

Can you identify what is God's part and what is your part in your burden for this person?

We must remember that when God (or we) move towards a person with the gospel, even then God gives people agency to decide whether to accept Him or reject Him. Sometimes moving towards someone with the gospel may be to just serve or love them in a concrete way. **What is one way you could reach out to someone (maybe the person above) to be a blessing or show love?**

- 4) In verse 11, the Lord appears to Paul to encourage him. Maybe Paul was discouraged because his opportunities to share with his Jewish brothers did not seem to go the way he had hoped. We do not know for sure, but we know the messenger said "Take courage...". **How has the Lord encouraged you in times of challenge or opposition or when things have not gone as you thought they would? Are there specific verses of truth that you hold onto?**

- 5) Pastor Jeff talked about the idea that God is not committed to our comfort. He has something more for our lives. He intends to lead us into the life of greatest joy as we partner with Him to accomplish His purpose of extending His kingdom to the ends of the earth! But we must be willing. We must relentlessly fight against protecting and advantaging ourselves. Take a look at Luke 9:23-25. **In what ways do you attempt to save your life by protecting or advantaging yourself?**

**In what ways have you sought to lose your life for the sake of Jesus by disadvantaging yourself and surrendering to God's purposes?**

**In light of the fact that God is worthy of our trust, are you willing to fully entrust your life to Him? Why or why not?** (For further reflection on this see the Personal Spiritual Exercises below.)

### **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.**

**Personal Reflection:** Take some time to journal about your answers to question 5 above. Here are a few more journaling prompts:

**In light of the fact that God is worthy of our trust, are you willing to fully entrust your life to Him?**

**Are you willing to surrender those areas where you seek to advantage and protect yourself?**

**What might it look like to surrender in one of these areas on a daily basis?**

**Being a Blessing:** As Abraham's descendants by faith, we are "blessed to be a blessing to others." This is part of what it means to extend the kingdom of God to others. When we bless others, it fosters a spirit of generosity, mirrors the character of God and alerts others to His reign in the world!

**Begin a practice of seeking to bless two people each week.** Blessing someone can be a small or large act. Anything that relieves their burden in life. Anything that helps them breathe more easily. Anything that lifts their spirit or alleviates their distress. Examples could be a **words of affirmation** (a note, an email or a text), **acts of kindness, or giving a simple gift.**

**Remember, the key to successful blessing is that the recipient must feel blessed. We are not seeking to manipulate people.**

**If you are comfortable with doing so, share with your group about your experiences of seeking to bless people.**