



WINTER 2022 // WEEK 5

Life Group Questions

Acts: Daring To Be The Church// February 12/13, 2022

Defensible Behavior // Acts 24:1-27

Introduction

Chapter 24 finds Paul at the first of a series of trials at Caesarea Maritima that will eventually lead him to Rome. In this trial before the Procurator, Felix, Paul defends himself against accusations of instigating riots among Jews and desecrating the Temple. Paul skillfully shows these accusations are false. He argues that his actions did not create civil unrest. Furthermore, he demonstrates that his teachings and behavior are consistent with the Jewish Scriptures. Though Paul is not released from his imprisonment, his conduct rightly represents the gospel he proclaims. ***There are some great opportunities to put this week's passage into practice in the Personal Spiritual Exercises Section.***

To get the most out of your group time, we invite you to look over the questions below and write your thoughts down before you meet with your group.

Warm Up *(Suggested time: 20 min)*

Here are some suggestions to get your conversation started:

1. Have you ever been accused of something serious that you did not do? Tell the group what that experience was like.
2. If you could sit down for coffee with the Apostle Paul, what one question would you ask him about his life?

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.
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Study Questions *(Suggested time: 40 min)*

- 1) What did this week's sermon force you to think hard about after you went home?
- 2) The High Priest and Tertullus make some serious, but clearly false, accusations against Paul. **How would you describe the tone of Paul's reply to these accusations?**

Think of a time when you were falsely accused. **What was the tone of your response? Was that tone helpful or counterproductive? Would you say your tone was consistent with the message of the gospel? If your tone was not consistent with the message of the gospel, how would you change the way you responded if another opportunity arises?**

- 3) In his defense, Paul pointed to his behavior among the Jews and in the Temple as one piece of evidence that the charges against him were false. **In accomplishing the mission God has given the Church, do you think the message of the gospel or the lifestyle of the message is more important? Give reasons for your answer.**
- 4) Because of the strong things Paul writes against those who want to force Gentiles to become Jews in order to be accepted by God (for example, *Galatians*), many wrongly assume Paul as being anti-Old Testament or anti-Judaism. **In his defense, why does Paul not distance himself from the Old Testament or Jewish practices?**

What do you think Paul is saying about the relationship between Judaism and The Way?

- 5) After the formal trial, Felix summoned Paul to hear him talk about what commitment to Jesus is all about (verses 24-26). As Paul explained this to him, Felix was afraid and shut Paul up. **What do you think stirred up fear in Felix?**

Do you think the prospect of giving one's life to Jesus is always pleasant for someone to hear? Why or why not?

- 6) Felix was not done with Paul. The text tells us that he kept sending for Paul to talk with him, though Felix's reason was that he hoped Paul would bribe him (probably to be released from imprisonment). Paul was a smart guy and undoubtedly knew why Felix requested him for conversation. **Why do you think Paul kept going back to talk to Felix?**

Do you tend not to want to talk to people about Jesus who you know aren't really interested or might have suspicious motives for listening to you? Why or why not?

Prayer *(Suggested time: 20 min)*

Prayer opens us up to the leading of the Holy Spirit which makes it an important part of the Christian life. We realize that everyone has their own comfort level with group prayer, and we want this to be a time of safety and care. You may verbalize your prayer or pray silently to yourself; that way everyone is a participant in sharing this time before God together.

Some things to consider during prayer time:

- What did the message or group discussion cause you to notice about your relationship with Jesus?
- How can you express gratitude for what God's teaching you?
- What questions are stirring that only God can answer?
- Are there troubling things in your life that need to be confessed to God?
- Is there an unmet need that only God can fulfill?

Personal Spiritual Exercises

Each week we're suggesting a couple of spiritual exercises. These are not required, but they may help us to actively live our faith and grow as followers of Jesus. Feel free to practice one or both. If a certain exercise is helpful for you, we encourage you to find a way to incorporate it into your daily life. **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.**

(1) **Life Reflection:** Each evening this week take some time to reflect on your behavior during the day—at work, during leisure time, at the store, at sports events, and even driving. Ask yourself if by your actions people would believe you are a follower of Jesus and find your message credible. If not, what changes do you need to make?

(2) **Reading the Old Testament:** In this week's passage Paul appealed to his commitment as a Christian to the Old Testament scriptures. Christians can become so focused on the New Testament that they neglect the Old Testament. Spend some time each day this week prayerfully reading from the Old Testament. Perhaps, choose an Old Testament book to read this week, or read a Psalm each day. Ask God to reveal Himself to you in fresh ways through your engagement with the Bible Jesus knew and used.