

## Introduction

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Three decades after Jesus' ascension to heaven, the story of *Acts* concludes in chapter 28 with Paul arriving (finally!) in Rome. During this time, we have seen:

- the Church launched at Pentecost.
- the early Christians struggling with how Jews and Gentiles will come together to form the new people of God.
- the spread of the gospel to peoples outside Judea and around the Roman world.
- the Church's chief spokesman enduring persecution, trials, and shipwreck to arrive at the capitol city of the Roman Empire to announce a new king, Jesus, and a new kingdom, the kingdom of God.

Chapter 28 details this last stage of Paul's journey facing shipwreck on Malta for three months and then his arrival in Rome where he tirelessly proclaimed and taught about the Kingdom of God and it's King. This is where the story of *Acts* ends, but is it really the end of the story of the Church's mission?

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)*

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Here are some suggestions to get your conversation started:

1. Think back to your high school or college graduation. In what ways was it an ending of a phase in your life? In what ways was it a continuation, or even a new beginning?
2. If Jesus appointed you as a spokesperson for His Church and you could stand before our nation, what message would you bring? Why that message?

## 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) What one word would you use to summarize chapter 28? Explain.
  
- 2) In many respects chapter 28 is “business as usual” with Paul continuing his mission no matter the circumstances and God providing and moving His plan forward. **In what specific ways do you see Paul being faithful to his mission? Where do you see God’s hand at work providing and leading?**

Do changing and challenging circumstances make it difficult for you to be faithful to the mission God has given you? Explain.

Can you think of a time when being true to the mission was difficult but God’s provision and leading enabled you to continue forward? Briefly summarize what happened.

- 3) The book of *Acts* ends abruptly once Paul arrives in Rome. In many ways the story is done. Paul’s goal of getting to Rome is fulfilled. Yet, we are left with a feeling that there is more to this story. **How is chapter 28 a fitting ending to the story of *Acts*?**

In what ways is *Acts 28* the beginning of the Church’s story?

- 4) Many are disappointed with how *Acts* ends. There seems to be too many unresolved issues. Did Paul get to make his case to Caesar? What exactly happens to Paul? **If you wrote *Acts*, how would you have it end?**

- 5) The book of *Acts* is a story about one kingdom (God's) overthrowing another kingdom (the World's). As the Church expands from Judea throughout the Roman Empire, outposts of God's kingdom (churches) are established from which His kingdom continues to spread. **How are we (the people of Lincoln Berean Church) doing in representing God's kingdom to people in our city and state? Assign a letter grade to our church and your reasons for that grade.**
- 6) Good stories have heroes. **As you think back through our study, who is the hero of the book of *Acts*? Give reasons for your answer.**

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

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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

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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) Josh Luse used the following prayer by 17<sup>th</sup> Century French philosopher, Blaise Pascal.

*O Lord, let me not henceforth desire health or life except to spend them for you, with you, and in you. You alone know what is good for me; do therefore what seems best to you. Give to me or take from me; conform my will to yours; and grant that with humble and perfect submission and*

*in holy confidence I may receive the orders of your eternal providence, and may equally adore all that comes to me from you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

For the next week, pray this prayer daily (or perhaps twice a day, morning and evening) and ponder your contribution and responsibilities to God's kingdom mission.

(2) Review the book of *Acts* this week by skimming through it, or reading it in whole if you have time. Make two columns on a sheet of paper. In the first column write down the obstacles you see that stood in the way of the progress of the spread of God's kingdom. In the second column, write down how God removed those obstacles. What lessons did you learn from this exercise?