




Explore the Bible®

DEAF PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE



Do thyself no harm, for we are all here.
29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,
30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?
31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.
32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.
33 And he took them the next day, and went forth, and said, Sirs, I was a Jew, and was worshiping God with all my heart and might, and in pure conscience, and marrying one wife, as the law commandeth: and I served with good conscience that I might have quiet conscience.
34 And I was diligent, and gave alms unto all them to whom I gave, and was blameless to all men.
35 And I was diligent to keep the commandments, that I might have quiet conscience.
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Acts 13–28

Steve Gaines, General Editor

LIFE BY DESIGN

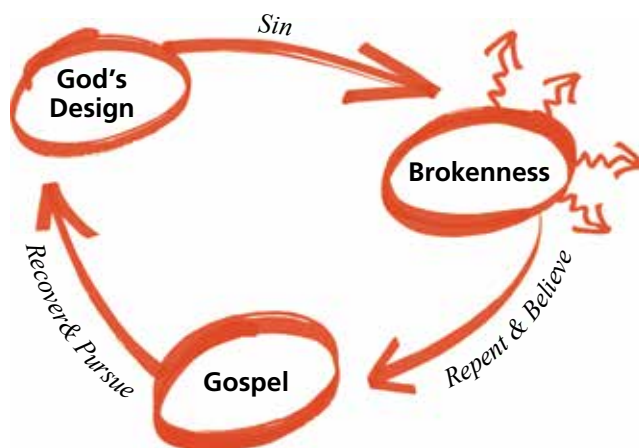
We live in a broken world. This brokenness is seen in suffering, violence, poverty, pain, and death around us. Brokenness leads us to search for a way to make LIFE work.

The Bible tells us that God originally planned a world that worked perfectly—where everything and everyone fit together in harmony. God made each of us with a purpose—to worship Him and walk with Him. (See Genesis 1:31 and Psalm 19:1.)

Life doesn't work when we ignore God and His original design for our lives. We selfishly insist on doing things our own way. The Bible calls this sin. Sin leads to a place of brokenness. The consequence of our sin is separation from God—in this life and for all of eternity. (See Romans 3:23 and Romans 6:23.)

At this point we need a remedy—some good news. Because of His love, God did not leave us in our brokenness. Jesus, God in human flesh, came to us and lived perfectly according to God's Design. Jesus came to rescue us—to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. He took our sin and shame to the cross, paying the penalty of our sin by His death. Jesus was then raised from the dead—to provide the only way for us to be rescued and restored to a relationship with God. (See John 3:16, Colossians 2:14, and 1 Corinthians 15:3-4.)

We don't have the power to escape this brokenness on our own. We need to be rescued. We must ask God to forgive us—turning from sin to trust in Jesus. This is what it means to repent and believe. Believing, we receive new life through Jesus. God turns our lives in a new direction. (See Mark 1:15, Ephesians 2:8-9, and Romans 10:9.)



When God restores our relationship to Him, we begin to discover meaning and purpose in a broken world. Now we can pursue God's Design in all areas of our lives. God's Spirit empowers us to recover His Design and assures us of His presence in this life and for all of eternity. (See Philippians 2:13 and Ephesians 2:10.)

Now that you have heard this Good News, God wants you to respond to Him. You can talk to Him using words like these: My life is broken—I recognize it's because of my sin. I believe Christ came to live, die, and was raised from the dead—to rescue me from my sin. Forgive me. I turn from my selfish ways and put my trust in You. I know that Jesus is Lord of all, and I will follow Him.

Excerpted from Life on Mission: A Simple Way to Share the Gospel.

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» MEET THE WRITER



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BIBLE READING PLAN

MONTH 1

- 1. Acts 13:1-3
- 2. Acts 13:4-12
- 3. Acts 13:13-15
- 4. Acts 13:16-25
- 5. Acts 13:26-33
- 6. Acts 13:34-41
- 7. Acts 13:42-47
- 8. Acts 13:48-52
- 9. Acts 14:1-7
- 10. Acts 14:8-13
- 11. Acts 14:14-20
- 12. Acts 14:21-23
- 13. Acts 14:24-28
- 14. Acts 15:1-5
- 15. Acts 15:6-11
- 16. Acts 15:12-21
- 17. Acts 15:22-29
- 18. Acts 15:30-35
- 19. Acts 15:36-41
- 20. Acts 16:1-5
- 21. Acts 16:6-10
- 22. Acts 16:11-15
- 23. Acts 16:16-24
- 24. Acts 16:25-34
- 25. Acts 16:35-40
- 26. Acts 17:1-4
- 27. Acts 17:5-9
- 28. Acts 17:10-15
- 29. Acts 17:16-21
- 30. Acts 17:22-29
- 31. Acts 17:30-34

MONTH 2

- 1. Acts 18:1-4
- 2. Acts 18:5-8
- 3. Acts 18:9-17
- 4. Acts 18:18-23
- 5. Acts 18:24-28
- 6. Acts 19:1-7
- 7. Acts 19:8-10
- 8. Acts 19:11-17
- 9. Acts 19:18-22
- 10. Acts 19:23-27
- 11. Acts 19:28-34
- 12. Acts 19:35-41
- 13. Acts 20:1-6
- 14. Acts 20:7-12
- 15. Acts 20:13-16
- 16. Acts 20:17-24
- 17. Acts 20:25-31
- 18. Acts 20:32-38
- 19. Acts 21:1-6
- 20. Acts 21:7-14
- 21. Acts 21:15-25
- 22. Acts 21:26-30
- 23. Acts 21:31-36
- 24. Acts 21:37-40
- 25. Acts 22:1-10
- 26. Acts 22:11-16
- 27. Acts 22:17-22
- 28. Acts 22:23-30
- 29. Acts 23:1-5
- 30. Acts 23:6-11
- 31. Acts 23:12-18

MONTH 3

- 1. Acts 23:19-24
- 2. Acts 23:25-35
- 3. Acts 24:1-9
- 4. Acts 24:10-14
- 5. Acts 24:15-21
- 6. Acts 24:22-27
- 7. Acts 25:1-5
- 8. Acts 25:6-12
- 9. Acts 25:13-22
- 10. Acts 25:23-27
- 11. Acts 26:1-7
- 12. Acts 26:8-11
- 13. Acts 26:12-18
- 14. Acts 26:19-23
- 15. Acts 26:24-32
- 16. Acts 27:1-6
- 17. Acts 27:7-12
- 18. Acts 27:13-20
- 19. Acts 27:21-26
- 20. Acts 27:27-38
- 21. Acts 27:39-44
- 22. Acts 28:1-6
- 23. Acts 28:7-10
- 24. Acts 28:11-16
- 25. Acts 28:17-22
- 26. Acts 28:23-24
- 27. Acts 28:25-29
- 28. Acts 28:30-31



ACCEPTING CHRIST



LeeAnn Carrera

One person had a huge influence on my life. He did not know sign language but made every effort to use his gestures to communicate with me. He adopted me when I was a child and he was in his old age. My father was a man of God and **devoted** himself to the Lord faithfully.

My father loved to read books. I remember one day my father answered the door and took a small box from the mailman. When I saw the package, I thought it must be something special. I was excited to see what was in the package. He carefully opened the box and lifted out a green book. I noticed something different about this book. I saw the words, *The Living Bible*. My father went through this book page by page. Then he got up and took it to his bedroom. I watched him put the green Bible on his worn out Bible on the table next to his bed. When I got close to it, the room was quiet and God touched my heart.

Every night, my father read the Bible. I would be on the floor doing my homework or reading something. I began to be curious about why my father enjoyed reading that book. His face always looked joyful. About six months later, he finished reading the whole Bible and gave it to me. I was excited. When I opened the Bible, I tried to read, but I could not understand the words. I tried it again and again. I felt frustrated so I put it away.

Later, my father died. My world was turned upside down and I was angry for everything. I went to a **Christian** school during middle school. One of my courses was a Bible class. The teacher told us to bring our Bibles. I went home and got the green Bible. I opened it and read the book of Genesis. It was still hard to understand and brought back bittersweet memories of my father. I turned my rebellion against God. I refused to do the assignments in my Bible class. I was just angry.

In high school, a 16-year-old friend of mine was killed in a hit and run accident. When I saw him at the funeral home, I felt sad for him. But his death impacted me. I asked myself what would happen to me if I died. When

I went back home, I picked up the green Bible again and went through the Gospels to find the answers. I kept looking for the answer.

During the summer after I graduated from high school, a friend invited me to a Bible study. During the study time, I was not paying attention, so I asked a friend to borrow her Bible and looked for something. My eyes caught the verses, Romans 10:9-10. “That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified and it is in your mouth that you confess and are saved.” The Lord touched my heart with the answer.

That same night, I believed and asked Jesus to be my **Savior** and Lord. I was 17 years old and finally knew I was ready to go to be in the presence of the Lord for eternity.

God changed my life. I stopped being angry. I love reading my Bible just like my father did. I praise God for His Word that enables me to walk in my journey. It reminds me in Psalm 56:10-12, “In God’s whole word I praise, in the Lord, whose word I praise—in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? I am under vows to you, O God; I will present my thank offerings to you. For you have delivered me from death and my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before God in the light of life.”

Maybe you have anger toward God. Maybe you are searching for the answer. Maybe you find the Bible hard to understand. Read again the words in Romans 10:9-10. It is not difficult to ask Jesus to be your Savior and Lord. All you need to do is:

- Romans 3:23—Confess your sins.
- Romans 10:9—Believe in Jesus and ask Him to forgive you and come live in your life.
- Romans 3:22—Have **faith**. Rejoice and thank God.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF ACTS

»» Who wrote the Book of Acts?

Most Bible teachers agree that Luke wrote both the **Gospel** of Luke and the Book of Acts. Luke was a **Gentile** and a medical doctor (Colossians 4:14). He worked and travelled with the **apostle** Paul.

»» Whom was Acts written to?

The Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts were written to the same man. His name was Theophilus. The name *Theophilus* means “one who loves God.” In his first book, Luke calls Theophilus most excellent. These words were used when speaking or writing to rich or important people or government officials.

The word *Theophilus* could also mean “people who love God.” This may have been the way Luke addressed all believers, Jew or Gentile, rather than a real person.

If Theophilus was a rich man, maybe he helped Luke with money for the books. It was very expensive to pay someone to write a book and then copy it by hand. Theophilus was rich enough to pay for the copying of Luke’s two books. In this way Luke was able to write books for many early Christians to read.

»» Why was Acts written?

Luke had several reasons to write this book. The good news about Jesus travelled all over the world. Luke wanted to show how that happened.

Luke also wrote about people who said untrue things about Christians. Christians were not troublemakers. They helped other people to live the right way.

Luke talked with many of the disciples and other people that knew Jesus. Luke wrote about the miracles he saw. In both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, Luke made sure he had the correct information.

Luke wrote about the strength and growth of the early church (believers). He told how they faced **persecution**. Luke wrote both books to help Theophilus and other new believers grow in their **faith**.

»» **When was Acts written?**

Bible teachers believe Luke finished writing the Book of Acts around **A.D.** 64.

»» **Important ideas in the Book of Acts**

Luke told how the good news about Jesus spread through the world. The outline of the Book of Acts is in Acts 1:8. The Christian faith started in **Jerusalem**. It spread to the country of Judea. It also spread to the people of Samaria. Finally, it spread to all places in the known world.

Luke wanted people to know the Christian faith was from God. Anyone who was against Christians was against God.

Luke wanted to show the Jews the Christian faith was not a separate religion. He used the apostles' words to prove the Christian faith made the Jewish faith complete. Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament. Jesus is the **Messiah**.

Finally, Luke showed the gospel of Jesus was for all people in every nation. Jesus died to give **salvation** to Jews and also to Gentiles.

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

Faith in Jesus is the only way for people to have eternal life.

FIRST THOUGHTS

For many years, the invention of the telephone was a wonderful thing for hearing people. Sadly, the telephone was a very bad change for Deaf and hard of hearing people. It took many years, but finally in 1964 two Deaf men, Robert Weitbrecht and James Marsters, invented the first TTY. Since 1964, we have seen many different solutions to the communication problem created by the telephone. Today we call our friends on the videophone. We are glad some people are creative in solving problems and continue to look for different solutions.

Unlike the telephone problem for Deaf people, there is a problem that has only one solution. Every person has sin. That is a problem. People may try to find different ways to solve their sin problem. The Bible shows us the solution for our sin problem. The communication problem has many different solutions, but there is only one solution for our sin problem. Jesus is the only solution.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Luke wrote about the beginning of the **Christian** church in **Jerusalem**. In the Book of Acts, he showed how the **gospel** spread from Jerusalem to the known world. Some visitors in Jerusalem on the day of **Pentecost** became saved. They returned to their homes and preached the gospel.

Saul was a Jewish leader. While Saul was traveling to **persecute** believers, Jesus appeared to him. Saul obeyed Jesus and became Paul, the **Apostle**.

The Lord spoke to Peter in a dream. He told Peter all people should hear about Jesus. Both Peter and Paul preached to Jews and Gentiles.

King Herod began persecuting believers. James was the first apostle King Herod killed. During this time, Paul and Barnabas began their first missionary journey.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 13:26-39)

1. Crucified (Acts 13:26-29)

VERSE 26

²⁶ *“Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and others who worship God, listen! The news about this salvation has been sent to us.*

Paul and a group of believers went to Antioch. Paul always went to the **synagogue** in every town he visited. On the **Sabbath**, Paul stood up and talked to the people who were worshiping in the synagogue. He did not give all the details he knew about Jesus. He explained the most important things about **salvation** through **faith** in Jesus.

He made a very strong statement in this verse. Paul said, “Listen!” That means pay attention to what he was going to say. He got the attention of the people who were worshiping at the synagogue in Antioch.

The family of Abraham in this verse means the Jewish nation. There were also people there who were called “God fearing Gentiles” or “God fearers.” We will see this phrase used often in the New Testament. This group was made up of people who were not born into Jewish families. They accepted the Jewish faith and obeyed the God of the Jews.

The worshipers in Antioch knew God promised to send them a **Messiah**. Paul told them the Messiah already came to earth. God already sent a **Savior** for all people. Most Jewish people believed the Messiah would come and free the Jewish nation from the Roman government. They did not understand the Messiah would give them spiritual freedom.

VERSE 27

²⁷ “Those who live in Jerusalem and their leaders did not realize that Jesus was the Savior. They did not understand the words that the prophets wrote, which are read every Sabbath day. But they made them come true when they said Jesus was guilty.

Paul blamed the Jews for Jesus’ death. Paul was careful to explain he was talking about the Jewish leaders living in **Jerusalem**. He did not blame all Jews. Also he included other people who lived in Jerusalem. Those people were Roman government officials. All of them made huge mistakes. They did not realize Jesus was the **Messiah**.

Synagogue leaders read from the scrolls every **Sabbath** day. The scrolls had the words of the Old Testament prophets. They read the words of the prophets every day but they did not understand what the words meant.

They did not understand their actions made the prophecies come true. When they said Jesus was guilty of some kind of crime they proved the Scriptures were true. Read the prophecy in Isaiah 53:4-12.

VERSE 28

²⁸ “They could not find any real reason for Jesus to be put to death, but they asked Pilate to have Him killed.

The Jewish nation was living under Roman law. Only a Roman court could punish a person with death. The Jewish leaders in Jerusalem asked Pilate, the Roman governor, to **condemn** Jesus to death. Pilate said he could not find anything wrong with Jesus. Pilate did not want to put Jesus to death (Luke 23:4).

VERSE 29

²⁹ “When they had done to Him all that the Scriptures had said, they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb.

Paul explained that all this happened exactly like the Old Testament Scriptures said it would happen. He wanted his people to know that Jesus really died. They would know He really rose from death to life. They would know that something wonderful happened.

Then Paul said they laid Him in a tomb. **Joseph of Arimathea** and Nicodemus laid Jesus in a tomb that belonged to Joseph of Arimathea. Read about these two men in John 19:38-42.

Paul emphasized Jesus was dead. He was truly dead and buried. We know that was not the end of the story.

People criticized and rejected Jesus. They did not accept Him as God's Son. They beat Him and **mocked** Him. No matter what people did to Him, He was willing to give His own life for their **salvation**.

In today's world, we do not beat Jesus physically. We do treat Him in bad ways. We rebel against Him. Our attitudes about Him are bad. Sometimes we are ashamed to say we love Him. No matter what we do to Jesus, He willingly gave His own life for our salvation.

What are some things people do to treat Jesus in bad ways?

Do Christians sometimes have bad or wrong attitudes about Jesus? What bad attitudes do they have?

Meditate on this verse, "But God shows his great love for us in this way: Christ died for us while we were still sinners" Romans 5:8. Write a prayer using this verse.

2. Resurrected (Acts 13:30-37)

VERSE 30

³⁰ *"But God raised Him up from the dead!"*

There is a story about believers during the early church history. They greeted each other with joy. They made powerful statements. One person would say "He (Jesus) is risen!" The other person would answer, "He is risen **indeed** (truly)!" Those statements showed each other they knew Jesus was alive.

Members of a Deaf church decided they would say the same thing when they met each other. They promised they would sign "He is risen!" and "He is risen indeed!" no matter where they were.

Several members gave a report to the group on the next Sunday. They said some people who saw them sign these statements wanted to know what they meant. The Deaf members were able to tell their friends about Jesus' death and **resurrection**. One person accepted Jesus as her **Savior**.

VERSE 31

³¹ *“After this, for many days, those who had gone with Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem saw Him. They are now His witnesses to the people.*

Paul explained the truth about Jesus’ **resurrection**. Many people saw Him after He rose from the dead.

Jesus’ resurrection was a real **miracle**. Jesus appeared in front of His disciples after God raised Him from death to life.

Jesus showed Himself to some of His followers over the next forty days (Acts 1:3). Those followers told other people that Jesus was resurrected. They loved Jesus and wanted other people to know He was alive.

VERSES 32-33

³² *“We tell you the Good News about the promise God made to our ancestors.*

³³ *God has made this promise come true for us, His children, by raising Jesus from the dead.*

We read about this also in Psalm 2: “You are my Son. Today I have become your Father.”

Paul used the Old Testament Scriptures to show how Jesus fulfilled God’s promises to the Jewish people. The Scriptures were fulfilled by Jesus’ death and resurrection.

VERSE 34

³⁴ *“God raised Jesus from the dead, and He will never go back to the grave and become dust. So God said: ‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings that I promised to David.’*

God promised David his kingdom would last forever. Mary, Jesus’ mother, was from the family line of King David. Jesus rose from the dead and went back to heaven. David’s family line lasts forever (Isaiah 55:3).

VERSE 35

³⁵ *“But in another place God says: ‘You will not let your Holy One rot.’*

David died and his body rotted. But Jesus died and His body did not rot. God raised Him from the dead.

God raised other people from the dead. Those people died again. Jesus rose from death to life. He never died again.

VERSES 36-37

³⁶ “David did God’s will during his lifetime. Then he died and was buried beside his ancestors, and his body did rot in the grave.

³⁷ But the One God raised from the dead did not rot in the grave.

The One God raised from the dead is Jesus. His body did not stay in the grave and **decay**. Jesus reigns on His throne in heaven forever. We know He is living because people saw Him after He rose from the dead. Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene at the tomb (John 20:14-16), two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-31), the disciples in the upper room (Luke 24:36), Thomas (John 20:26-27), and the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias (John 21). We know He is living because the **Scripture** tells us He is alive.

In your own words, explain how you know Jesus rose from the dead.

Find a Bible verse that says Jesus is living forever.

BIBLE SKILL: *Comparing Verses*

Look up the verses below. The verses on the left are from today’s session. The verses on the right explain them. Read each verse. Draw a line from the verses on the left to the correct verse on the right.

Acts 13:29

Psalms 16:9-10

Acts 13:31

Mark 16:14

Acts 13:34

Romans 8:3

Acts 13:35

John 19:38-42

Acts 13:38-39

Isaiah 55:3

3. Proclaimed (Acts 13:38-39)

VERSES 38-39

³⁸ “Brothers, understand what we are telling you: You can have forgiveness of your sins through Jesus. The Law of Moses could not free you from your sins.

³⁹ “But through Jesus everyone who believes is free from all sins.”

Paul wanted to be sure the people understood what he said. Why did he give the background about Jesus’ death and **resurrection**? He wanted them to understand that **salvation** can come through Jesus only. There is no other way to have our sins forgiven.

The **Law of Moses** only showed people their sins. The Law itself could never forgive sins. The Jewish religion taught that a person must follow the Law of Moses to be saved. They must offer animal sacrifices and live perfect lives to have their sins forgiven. Paul explained no one could follow the Law perfectly. Everyone broke one or more of the commandments. People were weak. So the Law could not **save** any one.

Paul wanted them to understand belief in Jesus was the only way sins could be forgiven. Why? Jesus takes the place of sacrifices. He sacrificed His own life so we can be forgiven. We can have eternal life with Him.

Do you believe Jesus is the only way to be saved?

Write a few words about why you believe faith in Jesus is the only way to have salvation.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Salvation*

There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

IN MY CONTEXT

The words *In My Context* mean, “What does this session mean to me?” You will see them at the end of each session. This section helps you know how to use the things you learned today in your life.

Today we learned about the Good News that we can have eternal life. Jesus died to save people from eternal death.

Do you think a person’s good actions can save them and give them eternal life? Yes or No

Which verse in today’s session answers that question?

Read Romans 5:8. In your own words explain what this verse means.

Do you believe Jesus rose from the dead? Why do you believe that?

Write two reasons we can know that Jesus rose from the dead and He is living eternally.

Read John 3:36. What does this verse mean?

Write a few sentences about how you decided to follow Jesus as your Savior and Lord.

If you have not accepted Jesus as your **Savior**, talk to your leader or pastor to learn more about how to become saved and follow Jesus.

MEMORY VERSE

“But God raised Him up from the dead!”

—Acts 13:30



MISTAKEN WORSHIP

Only God is worthy of worship and praise.

FIRST THOUGHTS

Have you ever misunderstood something you saw or heard? Did you understand better after someone explained all the facts to you? Were you able to change your actions after you heard the complete facts?

Today's session is about people who heard the **gospel** for the first time. They did not know they were worshipping false gods until Paul explained about the one true God.

Christians today need to be strong like Paul. People may **mock** us or punish us for telling the truth about God, but we must not be afraid of them.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Paul and Barnabas were missionaries. They left Antioch and went to **Iconium**. They spoke about Jesus. Many Jews and Greeks became believers.

Some Jews and non-believers were upset. They **persuaded** other people to be against believers. They said Paul spoke against the **Hebrew** God.

Paul and Barnabas stayed in Iconium a long time. They talked about Jesus bravely. God gave them power to do miracles to prove their words were true.

Some Jews, Gentiles, and city rulers wanted to **stone** them to death. They escaped to **Lystra**.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 14:8-20)

1. Healing (Acts 14:8-10)

VERSE 8

⁸*In Lystra there sat a man who had been born crippled; he had never walked.*

The Roman government ruled Lystra. Paul was a **Jew**, but he was also a Roman citizen. Not many Jews lived in Lystra. There was no **synagogue** there. Bible teachers believe Lystra did not have a synagogue because Paul and Barnabas were preaching in the streets. When they travelled to other towns, they preached in synagogues.

A crippled man was sitting in the street listening to Paul preach. He was probably begging for money.

VERSE 9

⁹*As this man was listening to Paul speak, Paul looked straight at him and saw that he believed God could heal him.*

While Paul was preaching, the crippled man looked very interested. Paul looked at him and knew the man believed he could be healed. God allowed Paul to know that the man believed.

Sometimes when Deaf believers explain their faith in Jesus, they can tell if the other person believes the things they are saying. How do they know? God gives them the feeling the other person is accepting their **testimony**. Other times we can know if a person does not believe our testimony.

VERSE 10

¹⁰*So he cried out, "Stand up on your feet!" The man jumped up and began walking around.*

Paul shouted loudly for the man to get up. Why did Paul shout? Often when people give a command, they shout to make sure the other person knows it is a command. Paul did not give the man a suggestion. Paul expected the man to obey his command. When Deaf people give a command, they often make strong signs. They show they really mean for the other person to understand and obey.

How did God show grace and mercy to the crippled man?

After God healed him, how would his life change?

How do you think God can use you to show His grace and mercy to other people? Name at least one way:

2. Reaction (Acts 14:11-13)

VERSE 11

¹¹ When the crowds saw what Paul did, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, “The gods have become like humans and have come down to us!”

There were more people around when the crippled man was healed. They saw what happened and heard Paul’s words. It is important for us to understand some things about the people in **Lystra**. Most of them never heard of the one true God. They believed in **Greek** false gods. They believed the story that those false gods visited earth a long time ago.

One of the false gods was Zeus; the other was his son Hermes. Zeus was the chief god. Hermes was the one who spoke for Zeus. Hermes was the messenger.

VERSE 12

¹² Then the people began to call Barnabas “Zeus” and Paul “Hermes,” because he was the main speaker.

Paul spoke loudly in a strong voice so the people thought he was Hermes. He spoke for himself and Barnabas. Bible students believe Barnabas was a large man. The people thought he was Zeus because he was bigger than Paul.

The people understood the Greek language Paul used to preach to them. They had their own language they used in their daily lives. The people used their own language to communicate with each other in this story.

VERSE 13

¹³ The priest in the temple of Zeus, which was near the city, brought some bulls and flowers to the city gates. He and the people wanted to offer a sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas.

The people who saw the crippled man become healed did not understand. God's power healed the man. The people misunderstood and thought Paul had the power to heal. They decided he was a god. They prepared to worship Paul and Barnabas. They brought sacrifices to offer to the missionaries.

Sometimes nonbelievers do not understand how God works in and around them. Can you think of a time when you talked to a non-believer about your faith in Jesus and they did not understand God's grace? Write a few words about your experience.

3. Changing Focus (Acts 14:14-18)

VERSE 14

¹⁴But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard about it, they tore their clothes. They ran in among the people, shouting,

At first Paul and Barnabas did not understand the people thought they were gods. Maybe they did not understand the Lycaonian language.

When Paul and Barnabas understood, they became very upset. They tore their clothes. It was the custom of Jews to tear their clothes to show sorrow or disgust. They did it when people insulted God.

They did not stand still. They ran out among the people. It seems they tried to be sure each person understood what they said.

VERSE 15

¹⁵"Friends, why are you doing these things? We are only human beings like you. We are bringing you the Good News and are telling you to turn away from these worthless things and turn to the living God. He is the One who made the sky, the earth, the sea, and everything in them."

The people wanted to offer sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas. The missionaries were able to stop them. It was not easy. Paul's message was new to them. They did not know about the one true God.

When Paul preached to Jews, he explained about Old Testament prophecies. The people in Lystra did not know about any of the Jewish religion. They were not Jews or God-fearers. Paul talked about God in ways they could understand. He tried to clearly point to Christ and give Him glory. Paul did not want glory for himself.

There is a story of a famous preacher. He had great skill as a preacher. People complimented him. They praised him. They gave him gifts. He loved for people to adore him.

Soon he began believing their praise. He allowed them to give him glory. He took the glory away from God. He became involved in both financial and sexual sins. His church officers fired him, and he had nothing left. He was a broken man because he did not give glory to God.

Believers must clearly point to Christ and give Him glory. We must not accept glory for ourselves.

BIBLE SKILL: Complete the Meaning

Fill in the missing words from each verse.

1 Corinthians 8:6: for us there is only _____.

1 John 5:20: He is _____ and the eternal life.

Deuteronomy 4:39: He is God in heaven above and on _____ below. There is no other _____.

Exodus 20:3: "You must not have any _____ except me.

Matthew 4:10: 'You must worship the Lord your God and _____ him.'"

What did you learn from these verses?

_____.

VERSES 16-17

¹⁶ "In the past, God let all the nations do what they wanted.

¹⁷ Yet He proved He is real by showing kindness, by giving you rain from heaven and crops at the right times, by giving you food and filling your hearts with joy."

God let people do things in their own way. But God always cared about them. He showed He was there by giving them things they needed for their lives. God provided things like rain even when they did not ask Him for rain. He helped their crops grow so they would have food. Also, He gave them happiness.

This sounds very much like today's world. People **reject** God, but He continues to care for them.

VERSE 18

¹⁸ Even with these words, they were barely able to keep the crowd from offering sacrifices to them.

Paul and Barnabas saw the crowd was starting to worship them. They tore their robes. The crowd was probably surprised to see the preachers ripping their clothes. That caused the crowd to take their attention away from trying to worship them.

God uses believers to do His work and bring other people to Himself. He is the only One worthy of glory. We should encourage others to give glory to God.

How do you react when people give you compliments about your work for Jesus?

Are you ever tempted to take credit for yourself instead of praising God? Yes or No

Write a few words about how that makes you feel.

4. Rejected (Acts 14:19-20)

VERSE 19

¹⁹ Then some evil people came from Antioch and Iconium and persuaded the people to turn against Paul. So they threw stones at him and dragged him out of town, thinking they had killed him.

The evil people who came from Antioch were Jews. They followed Paul and Barnabas from town to town. They tried to stop the growth of the **Christian** church. They were angry that many Jews became Christians.

Paul and Barnabas escaped from **Iconium** because those same Jews tried to **stone** them. The people rejected Paul's teachings. They rejected Jesus and His **salvation**.

Those angry Jews led the crowd to be against Paul. The crowd was already upset because Paul and Barnabas would not accept their worship. The Jews added to the anger of the crowd. The people from **Lystra** and the Jews threw rocks at Paul.

Then the people thought Paul was dead. The custom of that time was to **stone** or **execute** someone outside the city (Leviticus 24:13, Luke 4:28-29, Acts 7:57-58). They dragged his body out of town.

The people were angry, but their actions showed their choice. They chose to **reject** the message Paul preached. They chose to reject Jesus Christ. They refused to give up worshiping their gods. They did not turn to the true God. Instead, they became violent toward God's messenger.

VERSE 20

²⁰But the followers gathered around him, and he got up and went back into the town. The next day he and Barnabas left.

We do not know exactly who the followers were. Some of them travelled with Paul. Maybe some people in Lystra became believers. We know the man who was crippled believed and was healed. We don't know if he was in the crowd of believers or not. The believers gathered around Paul. They probably prayed for him at that time.

Early Christians were brave. They knew they could be punished for their **faith**. Paul was very brave. Notice the verse says, "he got up." Where did he go? He went straight back into town. He stayed one night and left the next day. He and Barnabas went to Derbe.

What are some actions of people who reject Jesus today?

Discuss your answers with your Bible study class.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Man*

Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God.

IN MY CONTEXT

A good way to understand this session is to look at the topics in each section.

1. Healing: God uses believers to show His **grace** and mercy.

Does the word healing always mean a physical healing? Yes or No

In what other ways does a person need healing?

2. Reaction: Nonbelievers react to us by the way they see us live.

How can Christians show their faith clearly for their nonbelieving friends to see?

How can we be sure they understand God can be real to them?

3. Changing Focus: Often nonbelievers want to focus on negative things they see Christians do. Think about the ways Christians can change the nonbelievers' focus from negative things to the love and mercy of Jesus.

What are some of those ways?

4. Rejected: No matter how sincere we are, not all people will accept the message of God's love. They are not rejecting us, they are rejecting Jesus.

What can you do when a person rejects your testimony?

MEMORY VERSE

"We are bringing you the Good News and are telling you to turn away from these worthless things and turn to the living God. He is the One who made the sky, the earth, the sea, and everything in them"

—Acts 14:15b



AVAILABLE TO ALL

The message of **salvation** through **faith** in Jesus is for all people.

FIRST THOUGHTS

Many years ago, I went on a mission trip to South Africa. Even though the **apartheid** system had ended many years before my trip, I could still see discrimination and **segregation** in many areas. People identified themselves by their skin color: *Afrikaans* (white), *Bantu* (black) and *Coloureds* (mixed). I visited Bible studies with our Deaf missionaries. They taught Bible studies for the deaf South Africans. It did not matter what skin color they had. They understood that God does not discriminate. They knew that God's message is for all people, not just for some.

Some of us remember life in the United States when there was racial segregation. Our own country experienced the same changes as South Africans faced after apartheid ended. We had to change our attitudes. The early Christians learned a lot about separation and discrimination. They had to learn lessons from God about including non-Jewish people into the church.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Last week we learned about things that happened in **Lystra**. Paul and Barnabas left Lystra and visited many towns to encourage believers and

preach the good news about Jesus. This was Paul's first missionary journey. Look at the map in the back of this book to see his travels.

While Paul and Barnabas were in Antioch, believers from **Jerusalem** came and told the **Gentile** believers they must follow all the laws of the Jewish religion. Non-Jewish believers must be circumcised. Paul and Barnabas disagreed with those people.

Paul and Barnabas went back to Jerusalem to meet with church leaders to discuss this disagreement.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 15:6-11,24-31)

1. No Difference (Acts 15:6-11)

VERSE 6

⁶The apostles and the elders gathered to consider this problem.

The apostles gathered to discuss accepting non-Jewish believers as full members of the church. Peter explained that all people are saved the same way. It did not matter what their background was. It did not matter if they followed all the Jewish rules.

Jewish people loved their religion. They knew they worshiped the one true God. The Jewish religious laws were precious to them. They did not want anyone to change them.

That love for their religion caused them to require new believers to follow their religious laws. Why did they want non-Jewish people to follow their religious laws? They knew Jesus was the **Messiah**. The prophets of the Old Testament told about the Messiah. They knew Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament. He made their religion complete. They still included their laws.

VERSES 7-9

⁷After a long debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brothers, you know that in the early days God chose me from among you to preach the Good News to the nations. They heard the Good News from me, and they believed.

⁸God, who knows the thoughts of everyone, accepted them. He showed this to us by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us.

⁹To God, those people are not different from us. When they believed, He made their hearts pure.

Peter was the second **apostle** Jesus chose. He was an important leader in the early church. The first part of his ministry was to Jewish people. God appeared to him in a **vision** and told him all people could become saved. The Christian faith was not for Jews only. You can understand what Peter meant when you read about his experience in Acts Chapter 10.

Peter travelled to many non-Jewish towns to tell about Jesus. Peter told the leaders who were gathered in **Jerusalem** four things:

1. God chose him to preach about Jesus to other nations, not the Jewish nation only.
2. When Peter preached to non-Jewish people, they believed him. They knew the **gospel** was true.
3. To prove God accepted non-Jewish believers, God gave them the Holy Spirit.
4. The way non-Jewish people were saved is the same way Jewish people were saved. They believed the gospel and God made their hearts pure.

VERSE 10

¹⁰ *“So now why are you testing God by putting a heavy load around the necks of the non-Jewish believers? It is a load that neither we nor our ancestors were able to carry.”*

The Jewish religion had many rules. Jewish people knew it was impossible to obey all those rules. Peter explained it was like putting a heavy load around someone’s neck.

How do people usually carry loads? They carry loads in their arms or on their backs or heads. They never carry them around their necks. Why? They would need a rope to hold the load. If the heavy load were in front of them, they could not be able to see how to walk. If it were hung in the back, they would choke to death. Peter meant it was like choking them spiritually.

In a few words he said, “It is impossible to follow all the Jewish rules.”

VERSE 11

¹¹ *“But we believe that we and they too will be saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus.”*

Peter tied these thoughts together. He said:

1. It is impossible to follow all the Jewish rules to be saved. That means no person can be saved by the things they do.
2. God gives us a way to be saved through Jesus. **Salvation** is through His **grace**. It is a free gift.

BIBLE SKILL: *Look Up Verses to Explain How to Be Saved*

The Bible is our instruction book. It clearly explains God's purpose and desire are for all people to have a right relationship with Him. It also clearly explains how to become saved. These verses help us understand God's purpose and plan.

Look up these verses and fill in the missing words.

John 3:16: ...whoever _____ in Him...

Romans 3:22: ...through their faith in _____.

John 3:36: ...believe in _____ have eternal life...

2 Peter 3:9: He does not want _____ to be lost.

Write a sentence explanation explaining what these verses teach.

Some churches believe a person must do many good things so they can be saved and have eternal life. The Bible does not teach that belief. Some churches teach that a person must be baptized to be saved. Again, the Bible does not teach that. The Bible says salvation is through God's grace. It is a free gift.

Read Romans 4:16 and fill in the blanks. "So people receive God's promise by having _____. This happens so the promise can be a _____. Then all of Abraham's children can have that promise. It is not only for those who live under the Law of Moses but for _____ who lives with faith like that of Abraham, who is the father of us all."

How does this verse explain what Peter said in Acts 15?

2. Clear Expectations (Acts 15:24-29)

Verses 12-23 explain the decision made by the church in Jerusalem. The leader in the church was Jesus' half-brother, James. After Peter finished speaking James spoke and said he agreed with Peter.

The leaders made an agreement. They understood it was God's desire for His kingdom to include people from every nation. It did not matter the language they used or the color of their skin. His church should be like God's kingdom.

The group wrote a letter to the church at Antioch. Two of their members took the letter back with Paul and Barnabas.

VERSE 24

²⁴ We have heard that some of our group have come to you and said things that trouble and upset you. But we did not tell them to do this.

A group of believers from **Jerusalem** went to Antioch to try to make non-Jews obey all Jewish rules. The problem was, the Jerusalem church did not know the group went. They not give the group permission to go and teach those things.

Betty was a **Christian** Deaf woman from a small town. She moved to a large city for a new job. She did not know anyone there. She did not know how to find a Deaf church or Deaf ministry. She met an older Deaf lady at her work place. The lady invited her to her home for Bible study.

Betty was excited to go until she arrived for the Bible study. The Deaf man teaching the Bible study was teaching things Betty knew were not true.

The Holy Spirit let her know the truth. He led her to find a Christian church that taught the truth of the Scriptures.

VERSES 25-27

²⁵ We have all agreed to choose some messengers and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul-

²⁶ people who have given their lives to serve our Lord Jesus Christ.

²⁷ So we are sending Judas and Silas, who will tell you the same things.

The letter says all agreed. This included the disciples, elders or deacons, and other members of the church. They decided it would be better to send Judas and Silas back to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They wanted to be sure the Antioch Christians knew the whole church agreed with their letter.

Do not confuse this Judas with the Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus. This Judas is also called Barsabbas. Silas later traveled with Peter and Paul at separate times.

VERSES 28-29

²⁸ *It has pleased the Holy Spirit that you should not have a heavy load to carry, and we agree. You need to do only these things:*

²⁹ *Stay away from any food that has been offered to idols, eating any animals that have been strangled, and blood, and any kind of sexual sin. If you stay away from these things, you will do well. Good-bye.*

The church leaders prayed. The Holy Spirit led the two groups to come to a **compromise**. A *compromise* means “each group gives up a little.” Both groups come together to form one strong group. The strict Jews did not give up all their practices. The non-Jews were not forced to accept all the Jewish religious requirements.

They came to an agreement. The church leaders listed four things the non-Jews must do. Their **salvation** did not depend on these four things, but they were important to the Jewish believers.

This compromise helped prevent arguments among early church members. This was a compromise so there would not be arguments among early church members. The four requirements were:

1. Stay away from food that had been offered to idols. It was the custom of people who worshiped idols to offer food to the idols. Then they went around to different idols and took the food and ate it. Some **Gentile** Christians collected food from the idols. This action bothered strict Jews. So the church leaders told the Gentile Christians to stop eating that food.
2. Do not eat animals that were strangled. This commandment goes back to the agreement God made with Noah. Read Genesis 9:4. God told Noah not to eat meat that still had blood in it. If it was strangled, it still had blood in it.
3. They were commanded to not eat meat with blood because blood gives life.
4. Stay away from sexual sin. Gentile religions often encouraged **prostitution** and other sexual sins. This is one of the major ways the Jews and Gentiles were different. God gave Moses the commandment against sexual sins. Read Exodus 20:14.

Believers today must show their trust in Jesus by the way we speak and act. What are some ways believers can show they trust Jesus today?

KEY DOCTRINE: Salvation

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer.

3. Secure Encouragement (Acts 15:30-31)

VERSES 30-31

³⁰ *So they left Jerusalem and went to Antioch where they gathered the church and gave them the letter.*

³¹ *When they read it, they were very happy because of the encouraging message.*

The members of the church in Antioch were happy because they did not need to receive circumcision. They accepted the four rules. They did not argue about them. They were happy to **compromise**. They were happy because Judas, Silas, and others from the **Jerusalem** church came to them. The Jerusalem church could have sent the letter back with Paul and Barnabas. It was important to the Jerusalem church and the **Gentile** believers to have the visitors come and encourage those in Antioch. This was an important decision by the church.

Sometimes our words alone are not enough. What are other ways we can encourage other believers?

IN MY CONTEXT

This session tells us we can have joy because **salvation** is for all people who place their **faith** in Jesus.

Some leaders in the early church did not want to let everyone become members of the church. God helped them see that His salvation was for all people. There is no discrimination in God.

What about our churches today? What are some ways we welcome new people to our church or Bible study group?

Do we do these same things to welcome all people, even if they are from a different race, seem to be poor, or recently released from prison?

If the apostles were writing a letter to your church today, what might it include?

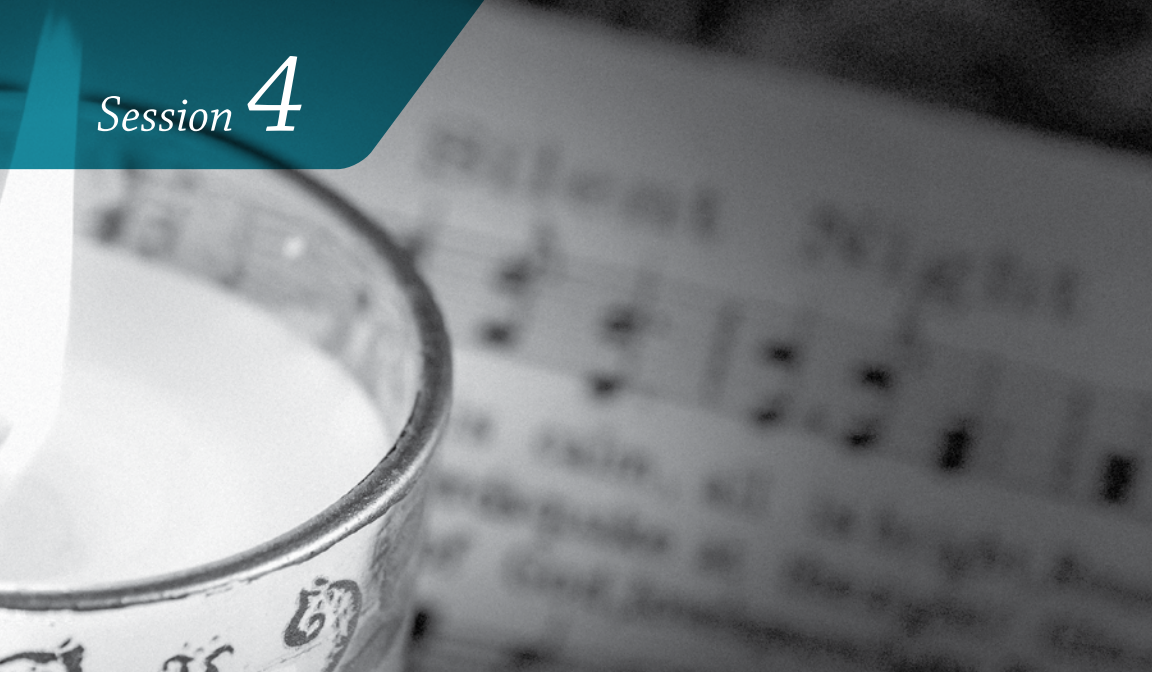
Encouraging one another is important in the church. Think about a time when members of your group or church encouraged you. What are some ways your church or Christian group encourages other believers?

What is the most important thing you learned from this session?

MEMORY VERSE

To God, those people are not different from us. When they believed, He made their hearts pure.

—Acts 15:9



THE PROMISED MESSIAH

Jesus is the promised **Messiah**, the One who provides **salvation** to all who trust Him.

FIRST THOUGHTS

When we think about the birth of Jesus, we usually think about angels, shepherds, wise men, and a baby in a manger. People knew Jesus was the Messiah because angels appeared to them. The angels announced Jesus was the Messiah.

Forty days after Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph went to the Temple in **Jerusalem** to offer a **sacrifice** and to dedicate Jesus to the Lord. While they were there two other important people welcomed Him as the **Savior**.

Simeon and Anna were there. They were waiting to see the Savior. How did they know Jesus was the Savior? The Holy Spirit led them to know Jesus was the promised Messiah.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

The Roman **emperor**, Caesar Augustus, sent an order that all people must go to their own towns to be registered. This was a census used for taxes.

Joseph left **Nazareth** and went to Bethlehem. Bethlehem was known as the town of David. Joseph went there because he was from the family of

David. Mary was from the family of David, also. Joseph registered with Mary. While they were in Bethlehem, she gave birth to her first son.

When the baby was eight days old, Jesus was circumcised. Then when it was time for Mary to offer the sacrifice required of Jewish women, Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem. They met Simeon and Anna at the temple.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (LUKE 2:25-38)

1. Simeon's Praise (Luke 2:25-32)

VERSE 25

²⁵In Jerusalem lived a man named Simeon who was a good man and godly. He was waiting for the time when God would take away Israel's sorrow, and the Holy Spirit was in him.

Bible teachers do not know a lot about Simeon. He was probably an old man. This verse says he was good and godly. He obeyed the laws of God. He trusted in God and expected the **Messiah** to come. He was looking forward to the Savior. Some translations use the word anticipation. Anticipation means "to be excited for something wonderful to happen."

Rome ruled Israel at that time. The Jewish people were like slaves to Rome. They were not allowed to govern themselves. They were forced to accept Roman law. This verse calls it Israel's sorrow. Most Jews thought the Messiah would be an earthly king. They hoped He would free them from Rome.

It is not clear what Simeon thought. The Holy Spirit was in him, so he probably knew the Messiah would be the Savior of souls.

VERSE 26

²⁶Simeon had been told by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he saw the Christ promised by the Lord.

We do not know if Simeon was a priest or not. He seems to be a **prophet**. The Lord promised him he would not die until he saw the Christ. For Simeon to hear God's specific promise, he had to have a close relationship with Him. He lived with that great expectation. We do not know what Simeon expected when he met the Christ. The important fact is Simeon believed God's promise to him and recognized Jesus as the Messiah.

VERSES 27-28

²⁷ *The Spirit led Simeon to the Temple. When Mary and Joseph brought the baby Jesus to the Temple to do what the law said they must do,*

²⁸ *Simeon took the baby in his arms and thanked God:*

The Holy Spirit led Simeon to go to the Temple at the same time Mary and Joseph brought Jesus into the Temple. So, Simeon was there when they came. It was not an accident that they were there at the same time. When Simeon saw the baby Jesus, he knew He was the Christ. He knew the Lord's promise to him was true. It was a very emotional time for Simeon. It was a time of great joy for him.

Can you imagine how Simeon felt? He knew he was holding the **Savior** of the world in his arms. He immediately started thanking and praising God.

VERSE 29

²⁹ *“Now, Lord, you can let me, your servant, die in peace as You said.”*

When Simeon said the Lord could let him die, he was not sad. He was happy and relieved. He was peaceful. He knew God's promise to him was complete. In Jewish history, there were other people who believed God's promises even though their earthly life ended before they saw the promise fulfilled with their eyes. They believed God's promise with eyes of **faith** (Hebrews 11).

Simeon knew when he died he would be with his Lord. All the troubles of his life would be over.

VERSES 30-31

³⁰ *“With my own eyes I have seen your salvation,*

³¹ *which you prepared before all people.”*

Why was Simeon ready to die? He knew the goal of his life was reached. His goal was to see God's **salvation**. He saw the Savior with his own eyes.

Jesus was only a baby. How did Simeon know He was the Savior? How did he know the little baby would grow up and **save** people from their sins? He knew because God told him.

Jesus did not come only for Israel. He came for any person from any nation in the world that accepted Him. God wanted all nations to hear the good news about salvation through Jesus. God sent Jesus to save people in every nation from their sins. He saves all who believe in Him.

VERSE 32

³² “It is a light for the non-Jewish people to see and an honor for your people, the Israelites.”

Even when Jesus was a baby, wise people knew He came into the world for all people. He came for people who were not Jews. Simeon says Jesus was the light for non-Jewish people. Simeon may have been remembering words from the **prophet** Isaiah when he said, “The LORD will show his holy power to all the nations. Then everyone on earth will see the salvation of our God” (Isaiah 52:10).

Simeon said Jewish people must be honored because the Savior came to them as a **Jew**. God still cared for His chosen people, the people of Israel. He promised the **Messiah** would come from a Jewish family, the family of David. God fulfilled His promise. Jewish people should be honored.

Simeon held the baby Jesus and knew He was the Savior for the world. He praised God for the promised Messiah.

How do you know Jesus is the Savior? _____

What does it mean to have faith like Simeon?

What are some things that help you have faith that Jesus is the Son of God? Name a few things: _____

BIBLE SKILL: *Finding Words that Describe Someone*

Jesus is the light.

Draw a line from the words on the left to the verses on the right that contain those exact words (NCV).

The true Light	John 12:36
I am the light	John 1:9
The Lamb is the city's lamp	2 Cor. 4:6b
Believe in the light	John 8:12
That is in the face of Christ	Revelation 21:23

2. A Future Sadness (Luke 2:33-35)

VERSE 33

³³ *Jesus' father and mother were amazed at what Simeon had said about Him.*

Mary and Joseph already knew about the things Simeon said about Jesus. It surprised them that Simeon knew these things. He came to the temple at the exact time when they came to the temple. Maybe they knew the Lord sent Simeon. In the next verse Simeon spoke to Mary about Jesus' future.

VERSE 34

³⁴ *Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, "God has chosen this child to cause the fall and rise of many in Israel. He will be a sign from God that many people will not accept,*

Simeon blessed Joseph and Mary. His blessing included a prophecy about Jesus. He said Jesus would cause a great division among people. He said Jesus would cause people to **oppose** each other.

Even today people are either for Jesus or against Him. They must choose. There will be people who will not accept Him. Jesus will become like a rock people stumble over. People that do not accept the **Savior** have no hope for **salvation**.

Read verse 34 again. What were the two things Simeon said about Jesus?

1. _____
2. _____

Why do you think Simeon said those things?

VERSE 35

³⁵ *"so that the thoughts of many will be made known. And the things that will happen will make your heart sad, too."*

Jesus showed people what God is like. Many people refused to believe in Him as God. They became His enemies. Their actions showed the things they were thinking. Their actions were against Jesus. They hurt Him in many ways.

Simeon spoke to Mary. He told her the things that would happen to Jesus would make her heart sad. Mary saw Jesus die (John 19:25). She felt terrible. It was like a sword that cut through her heart. The saddest thing in her life would be to feel the pain of His death.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Jesus*

Christ is always God's Son. He came to earth as Jesus. He was born of the Virgin Mary with the help of the Holy Spirit. He became a real person.

3. Anna's Beliefs (Luke 2:36-38)

VERSE 36

³⁶ *There was a prophetess, Anna, from the family of Phanuel in the tribe of Asher. Anna was very old. She had once been married for seven years.*

Anna's name means **grace**. Luke often emphasized the place of women in the life of Jesus.

Anna belonged to the **tribe** of Asher. Asher was one of the ten tribes of Israel that Assyria took away from Israel. Some people from those tribes stayed in Israel. Many people from these tribes joined with Judah during the rule of Hezekiah. The tribe of Asher came back to **Jerusalem** and joined with the tribe of Judah. A large group of people from the tribe of Asher lived in Jerusalem at that time. They continued to worship the one true God.

VERSE 37

³⁷ *Then her husband died, and she was a widow for eighty-four years. Anna never left the Temple but worshiped God, going without food and praying day and night.*

Bible teachers do not know exactly how old Anna was. If Anna was married for seven years and was a widow for eighty-four years, that means she would be more than one hundred years old.

Another translation from the **Greek** language says "she was a widow until she was eighty four years old." They both mean she was a very old woman.

She **devoted** herself to fasting and prayer. This verse says she went without food. It probably meant she did not join in meals with other people. She ate only enough to keep her strength.

Have you ever heard the phrase “staying in the attitude of prayer”? It means a person’s thoughts are always focused on God. They focus on praising Him with thanksgiving. That describes the life of Anna.

VERSE 38

³⁸ Standing there at that time, she thanked God and spoke about Jesus to all who were waiting for God to free Jerusalem.

When Mary and Joseph came into the temple, Anna went to them. Maybe she was there when Simeon took Jesus in his arms. She saw the baby Jesus. She knew that He was the **Messiah**. The Holy Spirit let her know Jesus was the Messiah. She praised God. She spoke about Jesus to those people who waited for God to send the **Savior**.

Anna’s devotion to prayer was very strong. How can Christians devote themselves to prayer?

How often should we pray?

What are some of the things that prevent Christians from staying in the attitude of prayer?

What can we do to have a more active prayer life?

IN MY CONTEXT

In this session we learned that Jesus is the promised Messiah. During the time Jesus lived, people had different ideas of what the Messiah would be like. They had different thoughts about what the Messiah would do. Some people were surprised. Some people were disappointed. And others were filled with joy and praised God.

How did Simeon and Anna know the baby Jesus was the Messiah?

Even today, people have different ideas about Jesus as the Messiah. Do you believe Jesus is the Savior? Yes or No

Why do you believe that? Write a few words about your belief.

Simeon and Anna knew Jesus had a reason for coming to earth. What do you think that full purpose was?

What are some things you can do to help people understand that purpose and accept Jesus?

Like the world in Simeon's time, our world is filled with problems and sorrow. Simeon and Anna praised God during that time. They saw God's **salvation**.

Write a short poem of praise to God for sending Jesus to save us.

MEMORY VERSE

And she gave birth to her first son. Because there were no rooms left in the inn, she wrapped the baby with pieces of cloth and laid Him in a feeding trough.

—Luke 2:7



STRENGTHENED

God gives strength to His church through His faithful servants.

FIRST THOUGHTS

Believers do not always agree about everything. Disagreements are a normal and natural part of our association with other people. Disagreements sometimes cause us to think more deeply. We might even change our minds about something. Jesus even anticipated disagreements among believers. Before He was arrested, He prayed for unity among His followers so that the world would notice a difference and believe in Jesus (John 17:21-23).

How we handle our disagreements should set us **apart** from non-believers. Non-believers often handle their disagreements with violence and hatred.

We, as God's children, must handle our disagreements with love and understanding.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Paul and Barnabas finished their first missionary journey. Some towns did not welcome them. People in **Iconium** forced them to leave town. In **Lystra** people stoned Paul and left him for dead. Paul and Barnabas escaped, continued their journey, and returned to **Jerusalem**.

They started their second missionary journey by going to Antioch. They stayed in Antioch for a long time. Because they might travel by ship to some places, they probably waited for winter storms to end. Then they began their second missionary journey in the spring. They planned to go back to the same towns they visited on their first missionary journey.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 15:36-41; 16:1-5)

1. Separate Ways (Acts 15:36-39)

VERSE 36

³⁶ *After some time, Paul said to Barnabas, “We should go back to all those towns where we preached the message of the Lord. Let’s visit the believers and see how they are doing.”*

“After some time” probably means several months later. Maybe winter was over so Paul and Barnabas could travel again. Paul wanted to visit the churches that they started on their first missionary journey. He wanted to visit every town where they preached on their first trip.

VERSES 37-38

³⁷ *Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them,*

³⁸ *but he had left them at Pamphylia; he did not continue with them in the work. So Paul did not think it was a good idea to take him.*

Barnabas also wanted to make the second journey, and he wanted John Mark to go with them. But there was a problem. During their first missionary journey, Mark left them while they were in Perga. Luke did not explain why Mark left them. Some Bible scholars think he was sick. Maybe he did not want to cross the high mountains on the way to Antioch.

Whatever the reason was, Paul thought it was a serious thing. He was not with them in the towns where they were not welcome. Paul and Barnabas finished their work alone (Acts 13:13).

Mark, also known as John Mark, was Barnabas’s cousin. Barnabas wanted to give Mark a second chance. But Paul did not trust John Mark. He was afraid Mark might do the same thing again. Paul would not give him a second chance.

Paul and Barnabas each had a good reason for their decision. Barnabas’ name means “one who encourages” (Acts 4:36). He wanted to encourage Mark to become strong again in his work.

VERSE 39

³⁹ Paul and Barnabas had such a serious argument about this that they separated and went different ways. Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus,

Paul and Barnabas could not agree about John Mark. Their argument was very serious. It is interesting to see dedicated, godly Christians can disagree. The Bible does not say they stopped being friends.

The early church was still a baby church. It was not perfect. There are stories in the Book of Acts about people that lied to the Holy Spirit. There were disagreements about requirements for **salvation**. There were disagreements between disciples. The church continued to grow. God's work overcame human weaknesses.

Paul and Barnabas decided to separate. Why? They did not want to continue the argument. Arguments could hurt their ministry.

Barnabas was born in Cyprus. So he took Mark and went to Cyprus. Paul chose Silas to help him.

In this situation, Paul and Barnabas became good friends again. Barnabas is not mentioned in the Book of Acts after he and Paul separated. However, we know that Paul and Barnabas became friends again because Paul wrote about Barnabas in two letters (1 Corinthians 9:6 and Colossians 4:10). Paul also became friends with John Mark again. Later, he wrote to Timothy (2 Timothy 4:11) and to Philemon (verse 24) that Mark helped him. When Paul knew he was nearing death, he wanted Mark to be near him (2 Timothy 4:11).

Paul and Barnabas made a hard decision. They thought about the results of that decision. They thought about God's purpose for their lives. They wanted to be faithful to Him.

Have you ever needed to make a difficult decision? List some things you thought about to help you make a decision.

2. A New Team (Acts 15:40-41; 16:1-3)

Sports teams replace players regularly. The new players must learn to get along with other players. They must learn how the new team functions. They all learn to work together if they want to be winning teams.

Paul had a totally new team. They helped the work of the Lord grow.

VERSE 40

⁴⁰but Paul chose Silas and left. The believers in Antioch put Paul into the Lord's care,

Paul asked Silas to go with him on his second missionary journey. Silas was one of the men that took the letter from the **Jerusalem** leaders to Antioch.

Paul already traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch in Syria. Now he began his journey again.

The phrase, "Put Paul into the Lord's care," means the believers prayed for them. They trusted God to take care of Paul and Silas. Also they probably put their hands on Paul's head as they prayed for him.

VERSE 41

⁴¹and he went through Syria and Cilicia, giving strength to the churches.

Paul did not go to Cypress. Barnabas went to Cypress. Paul went through the northern part of Syria and through the area of Cilicia. Paul's home town of Tarsus was in Cilicia.

BIBLE SKILL: *Find Places in the Bible*

An important part of understanding Scripture is to learn about the places mentioned in the Bible. Some of these places are named in Acts 13:4–14:26.

Look at the map on the back inside cover of this book and draw a circle around each of these places (city, state).

Antioch, Syria

Iconium, Galatia

Selucia, Syria

Lystra, Lycaonia

Salamis, Cypress

Derbe, Lycaonia

Paphos, Cypress

Attalia, Pamphilia

Antioch, Pisidia

Perga, Pamphilia I

VERSES 16:1-2

¹Paul came to Derbe and Lystra, where a follower named Timothy lived. Timothy's mother was Jewish and a believer, but his father was a Greek.

²*The believers in Lystra and Iconium respected Timothy and said good things about him.*

Paul did not hesitate to go back to **Lystra**. Do you remember what happened to him the first time he was in Lystra? He was stoned. People thought he was dead, so they dragged him out of town. Paul remembered that very clearly but he was not afraid to return to Lystra.

We see Timothy's name for the first time here. Timothy's mother was a Jewish **believer**. We read in 2 Timothy 1:5 his mother was called Eunice. Maybe she became a believer when Paul visited Lystra on his first missionary journey. Timothy's father was **Greek**. Timothy was educated in the Greek culture and system of learning.

When he was a child, Timothy's mother taught him the **Hebrew** Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:15). It was easy for him to be with both Jews and Gentiles. He understood both cultures.

Timothy was still young, but the believers respected him. He had a good reputation.

There is a group of people called CODAs. They are hearing children of Deaf adults. As they grow up they learn at least two languages. They learn spoken English and American Sign Language.

CODAs grow up in Deaf families. They learn the Deaf Culture. When they go to school or have hearing playmates, they learn the culture of the hearing world. They become skilled in associating with people from both cultures.

Timothy was valuable in the ministry because he understood both the Greek and Jewish cultures. He learned from Paul.

VERSE 3

³*Paul wanted Timothy to travel with him, but all the people living in that area knew that Timothy's father was Greek. So Paul circumcised Timothy to please his mother's people.*

Why did Paul **circumcise** Timothy? Jews taught if a **Jew** married a **Gentile**, their children were Jewish. The Jews said Timothy was a Jew because he had a Jewish mother.

For some reason Timothy was not circumcised when he was a baby. Maybe his father did not allow it. Paul knew Timothy would be a wonderful helper. But Paul did not want to upset Jewish Christians in towns where he traveled. He circumcised Timothy to show respect for the Jewish laws and culture.

Paul wanted the Jewish believers to accept Timothy. This does not mean Paul wanted all Gentile Christians to be circumcised. He was against requiring Gentiles to be circumcised (Galatians 2:3-5). Circumcision was not

a requirement for **salvation**. Timothy was different because he had a Jewish mother. He was considered to be Jewish so he needed to show respect for Jewish laws.

Paul and Barnabas both found partners to work with in their ministries. They helped each other fulfill God's mission.

What characteristics would make someone a good partner with you in God's work?

What are some things you might have to change or sacrifice to be a supportive partner in God's work to someone else?

3. Growth Seen (Acts 16:4-5)

Carlos was a young Deaf leader of a Deaf Ministry. Deaf members of his group depended on him for wisdom and encouragement.

The Lord led him to become pastor of a Deaf church. His former group prayed for him. He was a new young pastor. His work in his new church grew. His former group chose a new leader. Both groups had new team members. Both groups grew.

VERSE 4

⁴Paul and those with him traveled from town to town and gave the decisions made by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey.

What was the decision made at the **Jerusalem** meeting? Remember in Session 3 there were four rules the Jerusalem leaders asked non-Jewish believers to follow. They did not need to follow all of the laws of the Jewish **faith**.

Paul and his helpers told many more Christians about the four rules (Acts 15:28-29).

VERSE 5

⁵So the churches became stronger in the faith and grew larger every day.

Paul taught the new Christians in a way that made them stronger. As the new Christians understood more about what God wanted them to do, their faith grew. More people joined the churches every day.

Believers have several responsibilities in ministry to others. Paul is a wonderful example of how to fulfill two of those responsibilities. His purpose was to share the **gospel** of Jesus and help people know how to become Christians. At the same time, he was interested in visiting and encouraging the churches from his first missionary journey. Write a short statement about how you fulfill these two responsibilities.

1. How does your church share the gospel of Jesus?

2. How does your church encourage other believers in their spiritual growth?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Evangelism and Missions*

The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ.

IN MY CONTEXT

What do you think is God's purpose for your life?

How does His purpose for your life help you to make decisions?

It does not matter if decisions are great or small, they are important. Do you think you can grow spiritually if you do not ask for God's help to make decisions? What do you think will happen if you try to make decisions on your own without God's help?

Making right decisions is important to help you fulfill God's mission for you and for the world. An important decision you must make is to join with other believers. Believers help each other stay true to God's calling.

How can you team up with other believers to follow God's plan? List a few ways you can do that.

Another important decision you must make is how you will be involved in sharing the gospel and in encouraging other believers.

What are some ways you can be involved in sharing the gospel?

List some ways you feel you can encourage other believers.

MEMORY VERSE

So the churches became stronger in the faith and grew larger every day.

—Acts 16:5



A CHANGED FAMILY

God uses our influence to lead others to Him.

FIRST THOUGHTS

In our country we read about fires, floods, and earthquakes. Those things destroy property and lives of believers and non-believers. Some people lose all of their money and property. In other countries, we see the same and sometimes worse disasters. In addition to natural disasters, we hear of people in other countries who suffer or die because of their **faith** in Jesus. Non-believers watch to see how Christians react to disasters and **persecution**. Do they see believers sing and praise God during those hard times?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Paul and his group went to several cities in Asia. The Holy Spirit did not allow him to preach in every city.

They headed to Macedonia by going first to Philippi. At Philippi they met a woman named Lydia, from Thyatira. Her job was selling purple cloth. She worshiped God. He opened her mind to pay attention to what Paul said. She and all the people in her house were baptized.

Later, they met a servant girl who earned money for her master by telling fortunes. The girl kept following Paul and his group. She shouted that they were telling people how to be saved.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 16:22-34)

1. The Situation (Acts 16:22-24)

The servant girl followed them for many days. It bothered Paul. He ordered the evil spirit to come out of her. That was the first **miracle** in today's session. The people saw it, but they did not understand it.

The owners of the girl were angry with Paul. They knew the girl could not make money for them anymore. They grabbed Paul and Silas and took them to the Roman rulers. They told the rulers Paul and Silas were teaching things against Rome.

VERSE 22

²² The crowd joined the attack against them. The Roman officers tore the clothes of Paul and Silas and had them beaten with rods.

Luke does not give a reason for the crowd's anger. The officials did not try to find out if the people were telling the truth.

The Roman officials told people to punish Paul and Silas. They beat Paul and Silas with rods. Roman whips caused a lot of pain and injuries.

The person's clothes were torn off. Their backs and chests were left bare. The soldiers tied the person to a post. Usually there were thirteen hits to the chest and twenty-six hits to the back. Often people died from their injuries.

VERSE 23

²³ Then Paul and Silas were thrown into jail, and the jailer was ordered to guard them carefully.

Jailers were responsible to make sure a prisoner stayed in jail. If a prisoner escaped, the jailer would be punished. Many times jailers were killed because prisoners escaped.

VERSE 24

²⁴ When he heard this order, he put them far inside the jail and pinned their feet down between large blocks of wood.

The jailer did a good job. He put them far inside the jail, through several doors. When they were in the jail cell, he tied their feet between large pieces of wood. These blocks are called **stocks**.

Paul and Silas already felt a lot of pain from the beating they just received. It did not matter to the jailer that they were in great pain. He tied their feet to heavy pieces of wood. That caused more severe pain.

His actions showed he was not a good or kind man. He did not care that he caused more pain to the missionaries.

Paul and Silas were not doing anything wrong. They were punished for doing good.

Do you know someone who was punished for doing something good?

What were they doing?

How did it make you feel to see them being punished?

2. The Opportunity (Acts 16:25-28)

VERSE 25

²⁵About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing songs to God as the other prisoners listened.

Paul and Silas were probably very tired. They were in a lot of terrible pain. What do you think most people would do in their situation? They may give up and feel sorry for themselves. They may try to escape. They would be angry and frustrated.

Paul and Silas were not angry. They did not plan to escape. They prayed and praised God. They were very happy. They were not happy because they were in jail. They were happy because they loved Jesus.

They were happy to use this time to witness to other people. They witnessed through their attitude. They praised God with songs.

The other prisoners were probably surprised as they listened to the songs. They were surprised when Paul and Silas praised God out loud. They knew the missionaries were different. God was the reason that Paul and Silas were happy. Their love for Jesus was the reason they were different.

We must learn to praise God in difficult **circumstances**. When we praise God during hard times, people see something different in us. We show them that we are happy. We know that God is taking care of us. That is why we are happy.

VERSE 26

²⁶ Suddenly, there was a strong earthquake that shook the foundation of the jail. Then all the doors of the jail broke open, and all the prisoners were freed from their chains.

Here we see the second **miracle** in today's session. God used an earthquake. Earthquakes happened often around Philippi. The people there were used to them. This earthquake was different. It was different for two reasons.

First, God caused the earthquake at exactly the right time. It was the time when the missionaries were deep inside the jail. It did not happen before they were thrown into jail. God sent it at the right time.

Second, it was a very powerful earthquake. It was so strong that it shook the jail doors open. It shook the chains off the prisoners.

Paul and Silas were free. It also shook the chains off all the prisoners' arms and legs. All the prisoners were free.

VERSE 27

²⁷ The jailer woke up and saw that the jail doors were open. Thinking that the prisoners had already escaped, he got his sword and was about to kill himself.

The earthquake caused the jailer to wake up. We do not know if jailers lived somewhere in the jail. Maybe they had homes or apartments attached to the jail. We know the jailer was there because when he woke up he saw the open jail doors.

Roman law said if any prisoner escaped, that prisoner would receive punishment when caught. Usually that punishment was death. The jailer would receive the same punishment. It did not matter if the escape was not his fault.

The jailer thought the prisoners escaped. He decided to kill himself. He wanted to die quickly.

VERSE 28

²⁸ But Paul shouted, "Don't hurt yourself! We are all here."

It is interesting that all of the prisoners stayed in the jail. None of them escaped. The actions and words of Paul and Silas influenced them. They did not follow their own human nature.

The third miracle in today's session is that all of the prisoners were free, but they did not try to escape. God did not allow them to escape because He had plans for the jailer to be saved.

Believers can praise God when we are persecuted or **mocked**.

What are some words of praise you can use when bad things happen to you?

What are some ways unbelievers may respond when they see you praising God when you suffer?

3. A Jailer Saved (Acts 16:29-32)

This session's fourth **miracle** is lost people are saved.

VERSE 29

²⁹ *The jailer told someone to bring a light. Then he ran inside and, shaking with fear, fell down before Paul and Silas.*

The jailer went inside the jail to see for himself. He could not believe all prisoners were still in jail. Somehow he knew Paul and Silas would have answers. He knew they were different from other prisoners. He heard them singing praises and praying to God. Other prisoners he had seen were angry and uncooperative.

VERSE 30

³⁰ *He brought them outside and said, "Men, what must I do to be saved?"*

The first thing the jailer did was to ask Paul and Silas how to be saved. Maybe he heard the **gospel** somewhere else. Maybe the songs of Paul and Silas explained about Jesus.

The Holy Spirit worked in his heart to let him know he needed to be saved.

VERSE 31

³¹ *They said to him, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved—you and all the people in your house."*

Luke does not explain how or why the jailer's family was there. He does not explain how they knew to come to the jail. Clearly the jailer called for them to come to the jail.

VERSE 32

³² So Paul and Silas told the message of the Lord to the jailer and all the people in his house.

Paul and Silas told the officer what he needed to do. By that time the jailer's family and servants were at the jail. We do not know how many people came.

Paul and Silas explained what it meant to have **faith** in Jesus. They told the good news about Jesus to everyone in his house.

The jailer had a good relationship with his family. They were happy to do whatever he asked them to do. They woke up and went to the jail in the middle of the night.

One of the first things the jailer did was to bring his family to hear the gospel.

How can Christians share their faith with members of their family?

How can you share your faith with your family?

KEY DOCTRINE: *The Family*

A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family

4. A Life Changed (Acts 16:33-34)

VERSE 33

³³ At that hour of the night the jailer took Paul and Silas and washed their wounds. Then he and all his people were baptized immediately.

Everyone there believed the gospel message. They believed that Jesus was their **Savior**. They began to follow Jesus immediately. The jailer demonstrated an immediate change. He took care of Paul and Silas' wounds from their beating. After he took care of them, the jailer and his family were baptized.

VERSE 34

³⁴After this the jailer took Paul and Silas home and gave them food. He and his family were very happy because they now believed in God.

The jailer's life began to show change immediately. He invited Paul and Silas to his own home. Remember they were still prisoners.

When they first arrived at the jail, he treated them in a mean way. Now he took care of them. He cleaned and cared for the wounds the rods made.

He gave them food to help them get their strength back.

The jailer was different. He became a good and kind man. He showed he was different because Jesus lived in his heart.

There is a true saying, "Jesus has no secret disciples." What do you think that means?

**Are you a secret disciple? _____ Do your actions show your faith?
_____ How can other people see your faith?**

BIBLE SKILL: *Using the Bible to Make Lists*

Look for the miracles in Acts 16.

The session today talked about four miracles. In your own words describe the miracles you see in the session. Use your own Bible to find the Bible verses that explain the miracles.

Miracles	Bible Verses
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

IN MY CONTEXT

The soldiers and the jailer held positions of power. The owners of the demon-possessed girl used their influence and false accusations to cause Paul and Silas to be arrested. These actions are similar to actions by bullies today. They **mock** and hurt people physically.

Describe what you think bullies have in their hearts and minds.

What can Christians do to help them stop being bullies?

What do you think you would do if someone bullied you or hurt you?

The missionaries praised God during difficult times. How can Christians influence others if they praise God during hard times?

List family members who need to hear about Jesus.

How can you help them understand Jesus loves them and wants to forgive them?

MEMORY VERSE

They said to him, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved—you and all the people in your house."

—Acts 16:31



THE UNKNOWN KNOWN

Through faith in Christ, sinful humans can know the one true God.

FIRST THOUGHTS

Most Christians do not have a good understanding of beliefs that are different from theirs. For people who grew up in **Christian** families or have been a **believer** for a long time, it is hard to understand there are non-believers who have very little knowledge about God and Bible stories. Some Christians do not know how to clearly express the things they believe in ways people with limited Bible knowledge can understand.

Often believers are harsh and unkind when they talk to others about Jesus. Sometimes they use “church” words or signs that non-Christians do not understand. Believers have a responsibility to learn how to reach non-believers with firm kindness and understanding.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Paul and Silas went to Thessalonica. People there were against them.

They went on to Berea. The people from Thessalonica followed them and made trouble. Paul went on to Athens. Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea.

Athens was an important city. People came there to teach about religion. Idols were everywhere. People worshiped them.

Paul knew the people in Athens liked to discuss new ideas in public.

Some teachers argued with him. Other people wanted to know more about the things Paul taught. They brought Paul to the Areopagus. They asked him to explain the new ideas he taught.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 17:22-34)

1. Unknown God (Acts 17:22-23)

VERSE 22

²² Then Paul stood before the meeting of the Areopagus and said, “People of Athens, I can see you are very religious in all things.

The Areopagus was the name for the group of leaders of the city of Athens. That group had a lot of political power. The Areopagus made important decisions about the law, education, and religion.

They liked to get together and talk about religion. They wanted to hear whatever new ideas people had. They were all non-Jews. They worshiped false gods. They worshiped idols and other things like the sun and moon. Paul preached in a new way to them.

When Paul preached in the synagogues of other cities, he spoke from the Old Testament Scriptures. The way he preached in the meeting of the Areopagus was different than in other cities. Paul did not mention the Scriptures or Jewish history. Why? These people did not know anything about the Jewish religion and Jewish prophets of the Old Testament. Paul preached in a way that they understood.

VERSE 23

²³ “As I was going through your city, I saw the objects you worship. I found an altar that had these words written on it: TO A GOD WHO IS NOT KNOWN. You worship a god that you don’t know, and this is the God I am telling you about!

Paul started his speech by introducing them to the unknown God. Paul talked about things they knew. He got their attention quickly by connecting with them at their level. He talked about an altar he saw. It was an altar that said, “To a god who is not known.”

Bible teachers have different ideas about this altar. One idea is that people found an old broken down altar. They did not know which god it was for. They called it an altar for an unknown god.

Most Bible teachers believe the people in Athens did not want to make any gods mad. They wanted to be sure they had an altar for all gods.

They built an altar to an unknown god. They wanted to be sure they did not miss worshiping any god.

We learn in Romans 1:20-23 that all people know God through His creation, even though they have not seen Him. They have no excuse when they choose to **reject** Him and worship other gods. The people of Athens considered themselves to be wise, but they really lived in darkness.

Read Romans 1:20-23. Do you know someone who is searching for the truth? What are some things they do or say that show you they are searching for the truth?

What can Christians do or say to help non-believers find the truth?

2. The Known Creator (Acts 17:24-29)

VERSES 24-25

²⁴ *“The God who made the whole world and everything in it is the Lord of the land and the sky. He does not live in temples built by human hands.*

²⁵ *“This God is the One who gives life, breath, and everything else to people. He does not need any help from them; He has everything He needs.*

Paul did not talk about the Scriptures. He carefully chose some words the people understood. He used them to describe God. Those words were like the words writers used in the Old Testament. Paul discussed nine things about God:

1. God made all things.
2. He is the Lord over all things.
3. God does not live in one place only.
4. God is much bigger than anything that we can build.
5. God does not need anything from us.
6. We cannot give to Him anything that He does not already have.
7. Everything that we have comes from Him.
8. He gives us life.
9. He keeps us alive.

VERSE 26

²⁶ *“God began by making one person, and from him came all the different people who live everywhere in the world. God decided exactly when and where they must live.*

God made all people. He is the ruler over all people. God controls everything that happens in the world. All people came from one man, Adam (Genesis 2:7). The Greeks probably did not know the name Adam. Paul said “one person” instead of using the name Adam.

The Greeks thought they were better than other nations. Paul showed them no nation is superior. God made all people from one man. God decided when each person would live on earth and where each person would live.

VERSE 27

²⁷ “God wanted them to look for Him and perhaps search all around for Him and find Him, though He is not far from any of us:

Paul continued to talk about the people God made. God did not make us so He could watch us from far away. He wants us to search for Him. He wants us to know Him. He wants us to be close to Him. That is His plan.

Paul wanted his audience to understand it is possible to know God. He is very near to us. God wants us to know we can talk to Him as a friend. He is a personal God.

Sally went to a state school for the Deaf. This was the first time she was away from her family. She was lonely. She felt like she had a hole in her heart. That is the way people feel when they don't know God.

VERSE 28

²⁸ “By His power we live and move and exist.’ Some of your own poets have said: ‘For we are His children.’

Paul often used words from the Jewish Scriptures when he explained about God. He could not do that at this meeting. Members of the Areopagus would not understand.

He used words from their own **Greek** poets about God and people. He used words of the Greek poets Epimenides (600 **B.C.**) and Aratus (310 B.C.).

Those poets talked about false gods. Paul used their words to explain about the one true God.

VERSE 29

²⁹ “Since we are God’s children, you must not think that God is like something that people imagine or make from gold, silver, or rock.

We are God’s children. He designed us. We cannot design God from metal or **stone**. It is not possible. God is Spirit (John 4:24). We cannot make an **idol** that can show a spirit.

Paul was careful not to upset his audience. He did not try to make them feel foolish. He told them the truth. He spoke to them in a kind way.

Do you think God makes Himself known to us? Write a few words about how God helps people know Him.

When a person becomes a believer, how do they respond to God?

Read Psalm 138 as a prayer of worship and for unbelieving friends.

BIBLE SKILL: *Compare Old Testament with New Testament*

Paul’s words here are like the way Isaiah described God. Read Isaiah 42:5-6. Find the four phrases in these verses that are like the phrases in today’s Scripture text. The words are not exactly the same. They have the same meaning. Explain them in your own words.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

3. Judgment by the Son (Acts 17:30-31)

VERSE 30

³⁰ “In the past, people did not understand God, and He ignored this. But now, God tells all people in the world to change their hearts and lives.

Paul went back to the things he said at the beginning of his speech. He said the people in Athens did not know or understand God. He ignored the fact people did not understand Him.

Then Paul says “Now...” This strong word is to make Paul’s point. God will not ignore people’s ignorance about Him anymore.

“Now” means Christ has already come. Deaf people may use the signs before, happen, finish. God tells all people to change their hearts and lives. Christ is the way for people to make that change.

The change means they must not worship idols any more. That change means they must **repent**. They must worship God. Jesus Christ shows what God is like.

“Now” people cannot say they do not know who the true God is.

VERSE 31

³¹ *“God has set a day that He will judge all the world with fairness, by the man He chose long ago. And God has proved this to everyone by raising that man from the dead!”*

God has already planned for a special day to happen. On that day He will decide what will happen to every person. He will decide because He made every person. No person can hide from God’s judgment.

God chose “a man” to judge people. That man is Jesus Christ. God proved He chose Jesus. How did He prove He chose Jesus? He raised Jesus from death to life.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Last Things*

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness.

4. Split Decision (Acts 17:32-34)

VERSE 32

³² *When the people heard about Jesus being raised from the dead, some of them laughed. But others said, “We will hear more about this from you later.”*

There were two reactions to Paul's explanation of Jesus' **resurrection**. The first group did not believe in resurrection. These people laughed at Paul and **mocked** him. They called him a **babbler**.

This first group was made up of two sets of people. The Epicureans believed the body and spirit both died and did not come back to life. The Stoics believed the spirit continued to live after death. The body did not live and did not come back to life.

The second group wanted to hear more. They wanted him to explain more at another time. They did not want to make a decision immediately. Have you met people who want to delay making the decision to accept Christ?

VERSE 33

³³ *So Paul went away from them.*

Then Paul left Athens. The New Testament does not mention a new church in Athens.

VERSE 34

³⁴ *But some of the people believed Paul and joined him. Among those who believed was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, a woman named Damaris, and some others.*

A few people became believers and they left Athens with Paul. Dionysius was a member of the Areopagus. He became a **believer**.

Some Bible teachers say the woman named Damaris was a foreigner. Ordinary women in Athens did not attend meetings of the Areopagus. Other Bible teachers think that she was Dionysius' wife.

Paul could have been discouraged by the responses of the people in Athens. Even though only a few responded, he continued to preach in other cities, and he encouraged and taught the new believers who joined him.

How can you respond to someone who rejects the offer to become a believer?

When you see a person become a Christian, what can you do to encourage them in their faith?

IN MY CONTEXT

People are searching for the truth. They are looking for meaning in life.

People can discuss about God. They can learn some things about Him from books. There is only one way to truly know God.

What is the only way to truly know God?

God makes Himself known in various ways.

Why do you think He makes Himself known to us?

It is the responsibility of believers to help people know God. We help them know God by telling them the good news about Jesus.

When we spread the **gospel** today, people may respond in different ways. People's reactions may be like the reaction of the people Paul spoke to.

Some people will laugh at us. Some people will criticize us and call us names.

What should our reaction be to them?

Other people will want to hear more before they believe. Whatever their reaction is, we must pray that they make a decision for Christ.

Why is it so important for believers to tell people about Jesus?

MEMORY VERSE

In the past, people did not understand God, and He ignored this. But now, God tells all people in the world to change their hearts and lives.

—Acts 17:30



ALL ARE IMPORTANT

God values every life He creates. We must value and protect human life.

FIRST THOUGHT

Government leaders are discussing some important things believers must face today. These things are: 1. **Abortion**—killing a baby before it is born; 2. Euthanasia—killing people that are old, sick, or handicapped; 3. Assisted suicide—helping people kill themselves; and 4. Human trafficking—kidnapping and selling women and children to become sex slaves and child soldiers.

God hates these things. Believers must stand strong against them. They are now widespread and growing daily.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In session six we learned about the things that happened to Paul and Silas in Philippi. Owners of a slave-girl dragged them to the city center. Officials beat them and threw them in jail.

In jail they sang praises to God. God sent an earthquake. The jail doors were opened. None of the prisoners tried to escape.

The jailer and his family were saved and baptized. Today's session explains the reason they were in jail.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 16:16-19; PSALM 139:13-16)

1. Freedom Gained (Acts 16:16-18)

VERSE 16

¹⁶ *Once, while we were going to the place for prayer, a servant girl met us. She had a special spirit in her, and she earned a lot of money for her owners by telling fortunes.*

Luke wrote about three people in Philippi. One of those people was a slave girl. An evil spirit controlled her. It spoke through her to tell people about the future. The word Luke used to describe this girl's power was the same word used to describe false prophets in the Old Testament.

It was a real power from Satan. The girl earned money for her owners by using this power. They did not care about the girl. They were only interested in the money they got from her.

VERSE 17

¹⁷ *This girl followed Paul and us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God. They are telling you how you can be saved."*

She was telling the truth. Paul really was telling people how they could be saved. Notice that the verse says "she followed us." That means Luke was with Paul in Philippi. Luke was with Paul most of the time, but not all of the time.

Paul's group often went to the place where people prayed. The slave girl followed them everywhere. The evil spirit in her was a demon. It knew Paul and the others were God's servants.

VERSE 18

¹⁸ *She kept this up for many days. This bothered Paul, so he turned and said to the spirit, "By the power of Jesus Christ, I command you to come out of her!" Immediately, the spirit came out.*

The girl followed them for several days. Paul talked to people. The girl shouted at the same time. Paul became tired of her. The **Greek** word that Luke uses for bothered means very upset. It also means "angry" and "sad." Paul did not want people to link God's message of **salvation** with an evil spirit.

He was sad and angry that the girl was suffering. But her owners did not care about her. The only thing they cared about was money. They wanted her to earn money for them.

Finally, Paul decided to do something. This verse does not say he shouted at the spirit. He spoke to the evil spirit. He commanded the evil spirit to leave her. It left immediately. Paul did this “by the power of Jesus Christ.” Some Bible versions say “in Jesus’ name.” Both phrases mean that Jesus Christ gave Paul the power to command the evil spirit to come out of the girl.

What organizations help people who are being used inappropriately by others for their own personal gain?

How can you, your group, or your church support these organizations?

2. The Complaint (Acts 16:19)

VERSE 19

¹⁹When the owners of the servant girl saw this, they knew that now they could not use her to make money. So they grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them before the city rulers in the marketplace.

The owners of the slave girl realized they were going to lose money because the demon was gone out of her. She could no longer see in the future. They took Paul and Silas by force to the local authorities.

The girl’s owners were very angry with Paul and Silas because the evil spirit was gone. She could not tell fortunes anymore. The way the girl’s owners made money was gone too! They blamed Paul and Silas. The owners dragged Paul and Silas into the marketplace.

The marketplace was a place where people bought and sold things. The marketplace was the center of public life. There was no city hall like we have today. Everyone was able to see everything that happened there. They did not miss any important thing.

The slave girl was like the people that are victims of human trafficking today. Evil people trick and kidnap women and children. They take them away and sell them as sex-slaves.

Some armies in other countries force young boys to fight. Some of the boys are only nine or ten years old.

The last few years we read about approximately three hundred young girls that were kidnapped from a **Christian** school in Nigeria, East Africa. The average age of the girls was thirteen-years old. They were used as wives of soldiers and to carry explosives in attacks called “suicide missions.”

In America and other modern countries, women and girls are captured and sold to be sex slaves. They are forced to be prostitutes. The people that capture and sell these boys, girls, and women make a lot of money.

Human trafficking is a crime, but most of the evil people are never caught. Some churches have programs that help people who escape from the people that captured them. The churches give counselling. The churches help them start a new life. They offer a place to stay, and training in a field that will help them support themselves.

There are still thousands of captured people who need help. Believers must try to do something to stop these illegal activities. The activities must be stopped before the lives of more people are destroyed.

What can we do?

1. We can speak out and try to get our government leaders to take stronger action against these things.
2. We can educate young children and teenagers about the dangers that can happen to them.
3. We must pray for the victims. We must pray that God will cause these things to stop.

What are some of the ways you think evil people trick children and teenagers to go with them?

What are some ways you or your church can help stop human trafficking?

There are businesses that do not value the lives of women and girls. What about movie and television programs that disrespect women? What about strip clubs where men go to look at women with no clothing? Why do these businesses exist? Their only purpose is to make money. They are making money by using human beings. They do not respect people.

Society must also decide to not allow those things that do not value human life. Believers must work to pass laws that would not allow those things to happen.

BIBLE SKILL: *Compare Scriptures*

An important method of Bible Study is to compare a Bible verse with other different Bible verses. Find verses in today's session to compare with the verses below. The words may not be exactly the same. Find out if they have the same meanings.

Other Verse	Today's Verse
1. Acts 4:12	
2. Philippians 2:9	
3. Psalm 8:4	

3. Valued by God (Psalm 139:13-16)

VERSE 13

¹³*You made my whole being; You formed me in my mother's body.*

God has all power. He took a tiny bit of material and put everything in it to make a person. That piece of material is smaller than the period at the end of a sentence. That piece of material has the plan for the color of a person's eyes, hair, and skin. It has the plan for the size of the person.

It is clear the Bible says a person is a living being from the very minute of **conception**. *Conception* means "when the cells from the father come together with the mother's cells in her body." That is called conceiving or conception.

At that moment the cells come together and become a **fetus**. The fetus is the first part of human development. The fetus is a human person.

Some people believe **abortion** is OK. They say the fetus is not a baby until it is born. Other people say abortion is wrong if the doctor can hear the baby's heartbeat.

We know the baby is a human person when it is conceived. What does that mean to the believer? It means abortion at any time is wrong. It is killing a person. God does not want humans to be killed at any time in their lives.

VERSE 14

¹⁴I praise You because You made me in an amazing and wonderful way. What You have done is wonderful. I know this very well.

This psalm celebrates the wonderful way God created humans. The psalm celebrates the fact that God created everything about every person. He made human beings to have control of other living things on the earth.

VERSE 15

¹⁵You saw my bones being formed as I took shape in my mother's body. When I was put together there,

In Psalm 8, David asked a question, "Why are people important to God?" The answer is in this verse. He made us. From the very beginning He was with us. He was with us even in our mother's body. He put us there.

Johnny made a little boat he could play with in a stream near his home. It was not a perfect boat. It was not very pretty. Johnny loved his boat. His father wanted him to have a nice boat to play with. He told Johnny he would buy him a nicer and bigger boat. Johnny said no. He loved his little boat because he made it himself.

We may not be beautiful, smart, or talented, but God loves us. God loves us because He made us Himself.

Why was it important for David to remember all people that God created?

How does this truth help us face life today?

VERSE 16

¹⁶You saw my body as it was formed. All the days planned for me were written in Your book before I was one day old.

David says God has a book. God writes the plans He has for us in His book. He writes those plans with love. He knows our secret thoughts. He continues to care for us.

In Psalm 8, David also asked why God takes care of human beings. The answer is in this verse. God had plans for humans before they were born. He made them a little lower than the angels. He crowned humans with glory and honor.

God put humans in charge of everything He made. Humans are God's most precious creation.

God created humans. He cares for us. He honors us by making us just a little lower than the angels. He gives man control of the things He made.

God proves all human life is valuable. Why should people think human life is valuable? God made people and He values them. We must value human life also.

KEY DOCTRINE: *The Christian and the Social Order*

We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death.

Have there been times when you had negative thoughts about or criticized yourself? Yes No

Write the words from Psalm 139 that can change your thoughts about yourself.

Use these words in a prayer of thanksgiving to God for His love and plan for your life.

IN MY CONTEXT

Throughout God's Word we see how much God values each person. He loves each person so much that He willingly died so that every person might have eternal life. Throughout history and today, we see how sin in the world has caused people to value money or personal success more than human life.

Believers must answer some very difficult questions today. One question is, "Why does every person have worth and value at the time of conception?" What do you think?

Do you think Christians have a responsibility to protect all human life? Why do you think that?

What are some things Christians can do to show they value all human life?

The final question believers must answer is, "Does God expect Christians to help protect people they do not know?" Yes or No

What does He expect Christians to do to help protect all human life?

If you feel God wants you to do something special to help protect all human life, pray right now He will show you what to do.

MEMORY VERSE

I praise You because you made me in an amazing and wonderful way.

What You have done is wonderful. I know this very well

—Psalm 139:14



INCOMPLETE PICTURE

God uses believers to help others understand the gospel better.

FIRST THOUGHTS

This session may remind us of something witnesses say in court today. They promise they will “tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” Telling some of the truth is not enough. A witness must not leave out any truth. They must not add their opinions to the truth. Sometimes they do not know the whole truth.

The person on trial might be punished if the witness does not tell the whole truth. Witnesses are like Apollos in the session today. They may not know the whole truth.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

The verses between last week’s session and the session today explain the places Paul traveled. He went from Athens to Corinth. He stayed there for a year and a half. While he was there a group of Jews were against him. They tried to make the government official punish him. The official refused.

Paul decided to go to **Jerusalem** to report about his work. He started his third missionary journey. He went back to Antioch. He visited several towns and cities in the area of Galatia and Phrygia.

During the time Paul was visiting different cities, a **Jew** named Apollos went to Ephesus.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 18:24-28; 19:1-7)

1. An Unfinished Witness (Acts 18:24-26)

VERSE 24

²⁴A Jew named Apollos came to Ephesus. He was born in the city of Alexandria and was a good speaker who knew the Scriptures well.

Apollos is a **Greek** name, but Apollos was a Jew. Alexandria is a city in Egypt. Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, and Jews lived there. One-fourth of the people who lived there were Jews.

In about 150 **B.C.** the **Hebrew** Scriptures were translated into the Greek language. Alexandria had the largest library in the world. It included the Greek translation of the Scriptures.

People went there to study the deeper meanings in the Scriptures. Apollos knew the Scriptures well.

VERSE 25

²⁵He had been taught about the way of the Lord and was always very excited when he spoke and taught the truth about Jesus. But the only baptism Apollos knew about was the baptism that John taught.

Apollos knew about Jesus. He believed in Him. He lived in Egypt. How did he know about Jesus? He heard about Jesus from the followers of John the Baptist.

John the Baptist loved Jesus. He knew Jesus was the **Messiah**. He preached that people must **repent**, be baptized, and follow Jesus. He baptized Jesus.

We read in Mark 6:14-29, King Herod beheaded John the Baptist. His followers buried him in a tomb. Bible teachers believe his followers scattered to different countries because they were afraid of King Herod.

That is the reason Apollos knew about Jesus. He did not know the rest of the story. He did not know Jesus died and rose from the dead. He did not know Jesus went back to heaven.

He did not know about the **baptism** of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-38). The only baptism he knew was the baptism John the Baptist gave. His understanding of Christian baptism was not complete.

VERSE 26

²⁶ *Apollos began to speak very boldly in the synagogue, and when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him to their home and helped him better understand the way of God.*

Priscilla and Aquila were a **Christian** couple who left Rome around **A.D.** 49. The **Emperor** Claudius ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Bible teachers think they were tentmakers. Paul was also a tentmaker.

From Rome they went to Corinth. They met Paul there, probably around A.D. 50. They helped Paul with his ministry. Then they went with him to Ephesus. They stayed in Ephesus. Paul went on to Antioch. During this time Apollos moved from Egypt to Corinth and then to Ephesus. He met Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus.

Apollos was a strong preacher. Priscilla and Aquila heard him preach. He did not preach wrong beliefs. They saw he did not know some very important things. He left out things about the death and **resurrection** of Jesus. They did not tell him this in front of other people. They invited him into their home. They taught him the things he did not know about Jesus.

When they were alone they showed him prophecies about Jesus in the Old Testament. They did not talk to him in front of other people.

Apollos was very smart. He had a good education. Apollos was a good teacher and a good learner. He wanted to learn more about Jesus. He wanted to learn about the Holy Spirit. He needed a deeper understanding of **baptism** in Jesus' name. Apollos was a witness, but he needed to finish learning about the work and life of Jesus.

Apollos was a good preacher, but he did not know all the facts about Jesus. If we pay attention to a teacher who does not have all the information they need, what might happen?

How can we be sure to get right information from our Bible teachers?

2. A Complete Witness (Acts 18:27-28)

VERSE 27

²⁷ *Now Apollos wanted to go to the country of Southern Greece. So the believers helped him and wrote a letter to the followers there, asking them to accept him. These followers had believed in Jesus because of God's grace, and when Apollos arrived, he helped them very much.*

Achaia was a large area of Greece. Corinth and Athens were in this area. Apollos felt the Lord calling him to go to that area. Aquila, Priscilla, and other believers agreed with him. They encouraged him to go.

They wrote a letter to the followers there. They asked the followers to welcome him. The Bible does not say if there was a church there. There was a group of people that loved and followed Jesus. While Apollos was there he helped them become stronger in their **faith**.

VERSE 28

²⁸ He argued very strongly with the Jews before all the people, clearly proving with the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.

Later, Apollos went to Corinth. Many of the believers in Corinth were not Jews. They did not know the **Hebrew** Scriptures well. They could not argue with the Jewish leaders in a successful way.

When Apollos arrived, he explained how Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament promises of the **Messiah**. This verse says he argued with the Jews before the people. *Before* is “in front of all the people.”

The Jewish leaders had a hard time standing up to his arguments. He was an extremely smart teacher. He used his knowledge of the Old Testament and its special meanings. He used the things he learned from Aquila and Priscilla. He was able to teach the whole meaning of the **gospel**. His witness was complete.

The church is stronger when believers study to get a deeper understanding of God’s Word. They are able to share their understanding with other believers.

Look at the verses in this section. What did you learn new from them?

If you did not get a deeper knowledge, what do you think you can do to learn more deeply?

3. An Incomplete Faith (Acts 19:1-7)

VERSES 1-2

¹ While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul was visiting some places on the way to Ephesus. There he found some followers

² and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” They said, “We have never even heard of a Holy Spirit.”

While Apollos was ministering in Corinth, Paul was traveling to Ephesus. He stopped at some places along the way. At one place he met some believers. Look at the map in the back of this book to see the way Paul traveled. The places were around Ephesus.

Paul went back through **Lystra** and **Iconium**. Remember these are the two cities where the Jews stoned him but he escaped. He continued on to Ephesus. He met a group of men there. There were probably only a few people in the group. Luke says that they were believers.

Some Bible teachers think they were not true believers. They believed about Jesus. They did not know Him personally. They did not know enough to be saved.

Other Bible teachers say they were believers because they believed the truth they heard about Jesus. They believed the things they knew but they did not have complete knowledge. Paul realized that something was wrong with their **faith**. He asked them if they already received the Holy Spirit.

Nobody told them about the Holy Spirit, so they could not receive Him. These people were like Apollos. The only people that told them about Jesus were the followers of John the Baptist. His followers left **Jerusalem** before the death, **resurrection**, and ascension of Jesus. They were not around Jerusalem when the Holy Spirit came to the believers at **Pentecost**.

KEY DOCTRINE: *The Holy Spirit*

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. He inspired men of long ago to write the Scriptures. He makes God’s Word clear so people can understand truth. He gives honor to Christ. He brings people to Jesus. He helps believers grow in good character. He gives believers spiritual gifts to help them serve God in His church. He lives in Christians to help them become more like Christ.

VERSES 3-4

³ So he asked, “What kind of baptism did you have?” They said, “It was the baptism that John taught.”

⁴Paul said, “John’s baptism was a baptism of changed hearts and lives. He told people to believe in the one who would come after him, and that one is Jesus.”

Paul backed up a little. He wanted to know if they were baptized. They said yes. Paul asked them what kind of **baptism** they had.

True believers were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. These believers had received baptism from John or one of his followers.

Paul explained that was not enough. John’s baptism was to prepare for when Jesus came. They repented of their sins and were baptized. But there was more to come.

They must follow Jesus now. They were finished with following John. Now Jesus had come. He completed His work on earth and returned to God, His Father. He sent the gift of the Holy Spirit.

VERSE 5

⁵When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

The men were baptized in water for a second time. It was believer’s baptism. This time they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Now they knew the whole truth. They accepted Jesus as their **Savior** and Lord.

VERSES 6-7

⁶Then Paul laid his hands on them, and the Holy Spirit came upon them. They began speaking different languages and prophesying.

⁷There were about twelve people in this group.

The group was small. Only about twelve people were there. Remember at Pentecost more than three thousand were saved and filled with the Holy Spirit. Paul put his hands on them. The group was small so Paul was able to lay his hands on all of them.

The Holy Spirit filled them. The Holy Spirit gave them gifts. They spoke in other languages and they prophesied. They experienced the same things as the first believers did during Pentecost. Their **salvation** was the same. The gift of the Holy Spirit was the same. Their faith was now complete.

How do you think the two things in these verses show a person has real faith in Jesus?

1. Baptized in the name of Jesus

2. Filled with the Holy Spirit

BIBLE SKILL: *Finding the Same Ideas*

The description of the Holy Spirit:

When we study the Bible, it is helpful to find things that are the same in several places. The words are not always exactly the same. The meaning is the same. Find the things that are the same:

Acts 19:6-7 and Acts 2:4

Acts 19:5-6 and Acts 8:16-17

IN MY CONTEXT

There are teachers in some churches who teach things that are only half of the truth. They do not lie, but they do not tell the whole meaning.

They are very good speakers. They use wonderful words and stories. They have powerful voices. They use beautiful signs.

Have you heard some of these teachers and preachers? What do you think “half-truth” means?

How can you know if they are not telling the whole truth?

The church becomes stronger when believers study the Scriptures deeply.

The church becomes even stronger when they share their understanding of the Scriptures with other believers. In Acts 17:11, we find a good example of Christians who listened and studied the **Scripture** to make sure the teaching was true. “These people were more willing to listen than the people in Thessalonica. The Bereans were eager to hear what Paul and Silas said and studied the Scriptures every day to find out if these things were true.”

How does the Holy Spirit help believers understand Scripture?

Do you think it is the responsibility of all believers to study Scriptures in a deep way? What will you do to grow in understanding the Scriptures?

MEMORY VERSE

He argued very strongly with the Jews before all the people, clearly proving with the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.

—Acts 18:28

Session 10



DELIVERED

Sharing the gospel is worth sacrifice and effort.

FIRST THOUGHTS

Only a few Christians in America make sacrifices to share the **gospel**. Christians in some other countries are forced to make the greatest sacrifices humans can make for their **faith**. They lose their lives or the lives of their children.

American Christians, as a group, do not make much of an effort to share their faith. The number of non-believers is growing every day. The American **atheist** group says their numbers are growing. The time may be coming soon that will force Christians in the United States to make stronger efforts to share the gospel. If we do not, we may lose all our religious freedoms.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Paul and several of his co-workers travelled through Macedonia, Greece, and Troas. On the way Paul faced some people that were against him. He went around them.

Paul experienced miracles at some places he visited. At Troas he spoke at a meeting late into the night. A young man named Eutychus sat in a third floor window. He fell asleep and fell out of the window.

When people went to him he was already dead. Paul knelt down, put his arms around him, and said, “Don’t worry. He is alive now.” Then they traveled on to Miletus.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (ACTS 20:22-35)

1. His Commitment (Acts 20:22-24)

Luke wrote about the speeches Paul made during his first two missionary journeys. During his first missionary journey, Paul preached in Antioch. In Antioch, he spoke mainly to Jews about how Jesus fulfilled Jewish prophecies. That was his first speech.

Then he went to Athens and spoke to Greeks in the Areopagus. They worshiped idols. He talked to them about the one true God. That was his second speech.

Finally, Paul sailed to Miletus. While he was there he asked the leaders of the church at Ephesus to come to him in Miletus. In this third speech, he talked to Christians.

In verses 18-20, Paul reminded the leaders of the church he was always humble in his service to the Lord. He was always open. He never had secrets from his **Christian** brothers and sisters. And he witnessed to all people. He witnessed to Jews and Gentiles.

VERSE 22

²² *“But now I must obey the Holy Spirit and go to Jerusalem. I don’t know what will happen to me there.”*

This speech is Paul’s third sermon. It is a **farewell** speech. He was in Miletus. He did not expect to return to Ephesus. In the verses before this verse he reminded the elders his ministry was led by the Holy Spirit.

While he was in Corinth, the church there took a collection of money to send to the **Jerusalem** church because many of their members were very poor.

Now the Spirit was urging him to go to Jerusalem. He would take the money to the church in Jerusalem. He was honest with the elders. He did not know what might happen. Many bad things already happened to him.

VERSE 23

²³ *“I know only that in every city the Holy Spirit tells me that troubles and even jail wait for me.”*

He knew going back to **Jerusalem** would be dangerous. Both Jews and Roman officials persecuted believers.

The Holy Spirit was telling Paul two things. First, Paul must go to Jerusalem. Second, the Spirit said he would face troubles on his way to Jerusalem. The Spirit told Paul he would be put in jail.

Paul knew whatever happened to him would be the will of God. He felt comfort knowing God was in everything that happened.

VERSE 24

²⁴ *“I don’t care about my own life. The most important thing is that I complete my mission, the work that the Lord Jesus gave me—to tell people the Good News about God’s grace.*

Paul was willing to **sacrifice** his freedom and his own life. He knew he had to finish his work. Paul was not looking for a better life for himself. He was satisfied following God’s will, even if it meant suffering or death. He found joy in serving God and God’s people.

Paul often said he was like a runner in a race. Completing this mission is like finishing a race. He might become tired, but he must finish the work that Jesus gave him. What was the work? It was to tell people the good news about Jesus. Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.

What is God’s purpose for a believer’s life?

When you are abiding in God and being faithful to His purpose for your life, how do you feel?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Evangelism and Missions*

The new birth of man’s spirit by God’s Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations.

2. His Concern (Acts 20:25-31)

VERSE 25

²⁵ *“And now, I know that none of you among whom I was preaching the kingdom of God will ever see me again.*

Bible teachers say Paul planned to go to Jerusalem and then to Rome. He did not plan to come back to places he visited on his three missionary journeys.

Also, Bible teachers say Paul probably knew he would give up his life for the **gospel**. The reason did not matter to the elders from Ephesus. They knew they would never see Paul again.

VERSES 26-27

²⁶ *“So today I tell you that if any of you should be lost, I am not responsible,*

²⁷ *because I have told you everything God wants you to know.*

Often Paul used teachings from the Old Testament. The **prophet** Ezekiel told the people of Israel about a watchman (Ezekiel 33:1-9). A *watchman* was “someone who stood at a high place on the wall of a city.” If the watchman saw enemies coming, he must warn the people of the city.

If the people heard his warning but did not plan to defend themselves, it was their own fault if they died. The watchman warned them already.

What if the watchman saw the enemy and did not warn the city? Some people might die. Whose fault was it if they died? It was the watchman’s fault. God would punish the watchman if people died.

Ezekiel was the watchman for Israel. He told them to stop sinning. Paul was the watchman for lost people. He told them about Jesus.

He told them everything they needed to know to be saved. If anyone was lost, it was not Paul’s fault. It was their own fault. All believers have the responsibility to tell others how to be saved. God will judge the **believer** who does not warn people about spiritual death.

VERSES 28-29

²⁸ *“Be careful for yourselves and for all the people the Holy Spirit has given to you to oversee. You must be like shepherds to the church of God, which He bought with the death of His own Son.*

²⁹ *I know that after I leave, some people will come like wild wolves and try to destroy the flock.*

Several other Bible translations use the words “guard yourselves.” That means to be careful and take care of yourselves spiritually. Do not let wolves destroy your flock.

He knew people would come and destroy the church. They were like wolves. He told the elders to be shepherds of the church. God bought the church with the death of Jesus. The church belongs to God. Christians are the sheep. Elders are the shepherds.

BIBLE SKILL: *Find the Meaning*

In John 10:11, Jesus said He is the Good Shepherd. What is a good shepherd?

Read Psalm 23. In your own words list the twelve things David says about the Good Shepherd.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____

VERSE 30

³⁰ *“Also, some from your own group will rise up and twist the truth and will lead away followers after them.*

Paul warned about spiritual attacks that will come from inside the church group. False teachers seem wise and seem to have correct teachings, but they are false teachers. Those teachers will twist the truth. Then people will stop obeying God. They will begin to obey the false teachers.

False teachers do not talk about Christ. They do talk about themselves. Good teachers encourage people to obey Christ. False teachers want to be important. They want people to honor them.

False teachers and leaders want money. They want to be famous. They want people to admire them. Paul told the elders they must not be like bad teachers.

VERSE 31

³¹ *“So be careful! Always remember that for three years, day and night, I never stopped warning each of you, and I often cried over you.*

Paul warned them one last time. He told them to be careful. It was not his only warning. He was with them for three years. He continued to warn against problems the church would face.

He was close to each of the elders. He warned them personally. Paul often cried about them.

How can you tell the difference between a true teacher and a false teacher?

What would you say to them about the truth?

3. His Commendation (Acts 20:32-35)

VERSE 32

³² *“Now I am putting you in the care of God and the message about His grace. It is able to give you strength, and it will give you the blessings God has for all His holy people.*

Paul was leaving the Ephesian believers. He could not take care of them anymore. He gave them to God. God would take care of them. He reminded

them of the **grace** of God. What was God's grace? God's grace was the **salvation** He gave them through Jesus.

God's grace would give them strength. Paul often talked about the **Christian's** future life, the eternal life they have. That life includes all the blessings God already promised the **believer**.

VERSES 33-34

³³ *"When I was with you, I never wanted anyone's money or fine clothes.*

³⁴ *You know I always worked to take care of my own needs and the needs of those who were with me.*

Paul closed his speech with some of the same ideas he used when he started the speech. He pointed to himself as an example for them to follow.

1. He was humble. He never wanted praise for himself.
2. He did not ask the people for money or fine clothes.
3. He worked as a tent maker to get money to pay for the things he needed. He also supported people that traveled with him.

VERSE 35

³⁵ *"I showed you in all things that you should work as I did and help the weak. I taught you to remember the words Jesus said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"*

Paul challenged the church leaders to follow his example. Church leaders must take care of God's people. That is their responsibility. But they must not do this to get a reward. They should trust God to provide for their needs.

Paul did not mean churches should not pay their shepherds. Church members have the responsibility to support their shepherds while the shepherds serve them.

It can be tempting for a person in authority to become greedy and find ways to take money. It is especially sad when this happens in a church. You may know of situations where the church, either a Deaf church or a hearing church, had to ask their pastor to leave because he took money. Paul knew it could be easy to become greedy. Believers need to guard themselves from greed. A good way to do that is to focus on helping others who have needs.

What are some situations that a Christian could be tempted by greed?

How can Christians guard themselves from greed?

IN MY CONTEXT

A Deaf ladies Bible study group met every Thursday at noon. They talked about the things they were learning in the group and in their Sunday Bible study. Sometimes they talked about problems they had at work.

Janice said her co-workers and customers did not appreciate her. The discussion turned to church activities. Several ladies in the group felt the people did not appreciate the work they did for the church. They had a long discussion. They decided God called them to serve Him faithfully. They should be happy to do that. It didn't matter if others appreciated them or not.

Are there times in your life you feel that others do not appreciate you? Why or why not?

Are you content and happy to serve God faithfully anyway? Discuss this question with your Bible study group.

What are some things that will help you appreciate God's blessings as you serve Him?

Is one of those ways focusing on the needs of other people? Discuss this question with your group.

MEMORY VERSE

"I showed you in all things that you should work as I did and help the weak. I taught you to remember the words Jesus said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

—Acts 20:35



THE TESTIMONY

The gospel changes people from sinners into instruments God can use.

FIRST THOUGHTS

A Deaf seminary student did a small **survey**. He asked other Deaf people if they were willing to answer his questions. First he asked what religion they believed. Then he asked them why they believed that religion.

He reported people named many different religions. Many said they were Christians. Some said they were Christians because they lived good lives. Others thought they were Christians because they were honest and kind.

The seminary student asked forty people those questions. Only one said he was a **Christian** because Jesus was his **Savior** and Lord. He had a good **testimony**. Only one person out of the whole group shared a life-changing experience.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Paul said **farewell** to the elders from Ephesus. People warned him not to go to **Jerusalem**. The **prophet**, Agabus, warned Paul not to go to Jerusalem.

Paul went on to Jerusalem. He met with the Jerusalem elders and James, the leader of the Jerusalem church. James was also the half-brother of Jesus. Some Jews still wanted Gentiles to be circumcised. Paul reminded them of the letter they sent earlier (Acts 15:23-29).

The Jews thought Paul brought Greeks into the temple. They dragged him out, beat him and put chains on him. They wanted to kill him. He spoke to the crowd.

EXPLORE THE TEXT: ACTS 22:3-8,15-22

Today, we will learn about some very important issues. They are:

1. **Conversion**, 2. Evangelism, 3. **Salvation** offered to all races of people, and 4. **Baptism**. You will understand these issues as you see them in Paul's experience. Underline the issues as you read about them.

1. Former Life (Acts 22:3-5)

Paul started speaking to the Jewish leaders in their own language. The people were surprised. They thought he was a **Greek** or from some other foreign country. They became very quiet and listened to him.

Almost all of Paul's audience were Jewish men. Some Bible translations say Paul called them brothers and fathers.

Christians call themselves brothers and sisters. That is a way of saying we belong to the same family. Paul wanted the Jewish leaders to know he was from their religious family.

VERSE 3

³"I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in the country of Cilicia, but I grew up in this city. I was a student of Gamaliel, who carefully taught me everything about the law of our ancestors. I was very serious about serving God, just as are all of you here today.

Paul wanted them to know that he was a true **Jew**. He was not against the Jewish people. He was born in Tarsus. He grew up in Jerusalem. Bible scholars think his parents probably moved from Tarsus to Jerusalem so Paul could get the best Jewish education.

He learned everything about the Law. His teacher was a famous Jewish teacher named Gamaliel.

VERSE 4

⁴"I persecuted the people who followed the Way of Jesus, and some of them were even killed. I arrested men and women and put them in jail.

Paul persecuted Christians. He believed they turned people against the Jewish religion. He put them in jail. He said some of them died.

Paul said he persecuted people who followed the Way of Jesus. What does the “Way of Jesus” mean? It is the name used to describe followers of Jesus’ teachings. They followed the way He lived. Jesus is the Way to be saved (John 10:9).

VERSE 5

⁵*“The high priest and the whole council of elders can tell you this is true. They gave me letters to the brothers in Damascus. So I was going there to arrest these people and bring them back to Jerusalem to be punished.”*

Before he became a **Christian**, members of the **synagogue** in **Jerusalem** respected Paul. They trusted him. They gave him letters to take to Damascus. Those letters allowed him to arrest people of The Way. He was encouraged to bring them back to Jerusalem to be punished.

Paul believed he was serving God. He believed he was doing the right thing. He respected the law of the Old Testament and lived as a serious law follower. Like many others, he believed his **salvation** came through obeying the law. That was most important.

Today, there are people who believe the same thing. There are some religions that teach people are saved because of their good works.

What are some verses you can share with people who believe they will go to Heaven if they do enough good works?

2. A Meeting That Changed a Life (Acts 22:6-8,15-16)

The first issue we learn about is **conversion**. *Conversion* is a word that means “to change from one way to another way of living.”

Paul was converted. He was against Christians. Then he changed. He became a Christian. He loved Jesus. He was still a **Jew**. He still knew the God of the Jews. He was different because God changed him on the inside.

Luke wrote about Paul’s conversion story in Acts 9:1-19. In the verses today, we can read Paul’s conversion story in his own words.

VERSES 6-7

⁶*“About noon when I came near Damascus, a bright light from heaven suddenly flashed all around me.”*

⁷*I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?'*

God did something in Paul's life. Paul did not decide to follow Jesus by himself. He changed because of God's work in his life.

God sent the bright light. Paul said he was able to see the light at noon. The sun shines brightest at noontime. The light Paul saw was brighter than the sun.

He fell to the ground. While he was on the ground, he heard the voice speaking to him. Paul did not know who was speaking at first. He knew it was a powerful being. He spoke directly to Paul. Remember Paul's name was Saul when he left Jerusalem to arrest followers of the Way of Jesus in Damascus.

VERSE 8

⁸*"I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' The voice said, 'I am Jesus from Nazareth whom you are persecuting.'*

Then Paul knew he was speaking to the Lord. He knew only God could make that bright light. He did not know it was Jesus' voice until Jesus told him who He was.

Jesus called Paul by his **Hebrew** name, Saul. Saul's **Greek** or Roman name was Paul. Then the voice said He was Jesus of **Nazareth**. That is important because Paul was talking to a Jewish group. They knew about Nazareth. Jewish men knew who Paul was talking about.

He asked Jesus what to do. Paul realized the voice truly was Jesus talking to him.

Verses 9-14 continue the story of Paul's conversion. The light made Paul blind. The people traveling with him did not hear the voice. They saw the light but did not become blind.

The Lord told Paul to go to Damascus. Someone there would tell him all the things Jesus planned for him.

He met a **believer** named Ananias. Be careful to understand this is not the same Ananias that we read about in Acts 5:1-11. Ananias, in Damascus, obeyed God and healed Paul of his blindness.

He told Paul God chose him long ago to see Jesus. Read verses 9-14 to learn the full story of Paul's conversion.

VERSE 15

¹⁵*"You will be His witness to all people, telling them about what you have seen and heard.*

Now we see the second issue listed in the first paragraph. The issue is evangelism. Ananias said Paul would be a witness. A witness tells people about the things they know or things they saw. Paul must tell the things he saw and heard on the road to Damascus.

Ananias told Paul he would be a witness to all people. He would tell about **salvation** through Jesus to Jews and Gentiles. Salvation is the third issue.

VERSE 16

¹⁶ “Now, why wait any longer? Get up, be baptized, and wash your sins away, trusting in Him to save you.”

Ananias told Paul he must be baptized. **Baptism** is the fourth issue listed. Baptism does not **save** people. Baptism is an act of obedience to Jesus’ command.

There are people who speak strong words against Jesus. Do you believe these people lose their chance for salvation because of their strong words? Write the reasons for your answer and discuss with your group.

KEY DOCTRINE: Baptism

Christian baptism means the believer goes under water in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Believers show obedience to Jesus. Baptism is a picture of their faith. Like Jesus they die to themselves. They are buried and raised to walk in a new life. It is the picture of what happens to sinners when they accept Jesus. Baptism does not save anyone. Baptism shows that the person is already saved.

3. New Purpose (Acts 22:17-21)

VERSE 17

¹⁷ “Later, when I returned to Jerusalem, I was praying in the Temple, and I saw a vision.

Paul said he was in the Temple. This showed that he was not against the Temple. The very earliest believers went to the Temple to worship and pray.

He went there to pray as a **Christian**. While he was there, Jesus appeared to him.

VERSES 18-19

¹⁸ *“I saw the Lord saying to me, ‘Hurry! Leave Jerusalem now! The people here will not accept the truth about Me.’*

¹⁹ *“But I said, ‘Lord, they know that in every synagogue I put the believers in jail and beat them.’*

Paul seemed to be arguing with Jesus. He did not want to leave the Jews. He hoped they would listen to him. They knew he was true to the Jewish **faith**. He could now help them change their minds about Jesus. In the past, Paul persecuted Christians. Now, he was a Christian.

VERSE 20

²⁰ *“They also know I was there when Stephen, your witness, was killed. I stood there agreeing and holding the coats of those who were killing him!”*

Do you remember the story of Steven? Paul was a witness when the Jewish leaders stoned Stephen to death. He stood and watched Stephen die. He agreed with the leaders. You can read this story in Acts 7:1-60.

VERSE 21

²¹ *“But the Lord said to me, ‘Leave now. I will send you far away to the other nations.’”*

Jews would not believe what Paul said. Jesus would send him to the Gentiles. Paul explained how his purpose changed after his **conversion**. He now focused on sharing the truth of the **gospel** with all people, including Gentiles.

What is the new purpose Jesus gave you when you were saved?

4. Rejection (Acts 22:22)

Paul also explained one reason he was sent to the Gentiles. Most Jews rejected Jesus as the **Messiah**. They rejected Paul because he included Gentiles in God’s plan. The group wanted Paul to be executed.

Gentiles could know God. God wanted them to know Him. They did not have to become Jews first. Paul’s words meant Gentiles were equal with Jews in God’s mind. That belief caused the Jews to become very angry.

VERSE 22

²² The crowd listened to Paul until he said this. Then they began shouting, “Get rid of him! He doesn’t deserve to live!”

The Jews seemed to have forgotten the words of Moses and the prophets (Genesis 18:18; Isaiah 60:1-3 and Jeremiah 3:17). They rejected the message of **salvation** through Jesus. They also did not want to share their God with the non-Jewish people.

The Jews showed their anger. The custom of that time when Jews were really angry, they threw off their coats and they threw dust. They wanted to kill Paul. They rejected Paul and his message.

What are some ways people reject Jesus today?

BIBLE SKILL: Compare Stories

We tell stories in different ways. They can both be true. Read both stories of Paul’s conversion from Acts 9:1-19 and Acts 22:6-16. See the things that are the same or different. Write same or different on each line for the event.

- 1. Damascus? _____
- 2. Bright light? _____
- 3. Who saw the light? _____
- 4. Who heard the voice? _____
- 5. Nazareth? _____
- 6. Scales? _____
- 7. Ananias? _____
- 8. Filled with the Holy Spirit? _____
- 9. Baptized? _____

IN MY CONTEXT

All believers have a story to tell about how they became Christians. Do you have a story? Your story is called your **testimony**. Sometimes it is hard for a **believer** to know how to tell their story.

Read the Accepting Christ on page 4. That is a testimony you can share with a friend. Another testimony you can share with a friend is your own story.

Answer these questions to write your own special story:

- 1. When did you learn about Jesus for the first time?**
- 2. How old were you when you accepted Jesus into your heart?**
- 3. What were you doing at that time?**
- 4. Who helped you to know how to be saved?**
- 5. Have you been baptized?**
- 6. How old were you when you were baptized?**
- 7. Did you tell someone about Jesus immediately?**
- 8. If yes, who did you tell?**
- 9. If not, why not?**
- 10. What are you doing now to serve Jesus?**

Now you have your story. Go tell your story about Jesus to someone. Pray and ask God to show you someone who needs to know about Him.

MEMORY VERSE

“You will be His witness to all people, telling them about what you have seen and heard”

—Acts 22:15



ANSWERING CRITICS

The gospel demands a response of repentance and faith.

FIRST THOUGHTS

A Deaf man named Charles lived in a medium-sized city for four years. One day a hearing friend told him about a Deaf ministry on the other side of town. Charles never heard of the ministry. He was not a **Christian**. He visited the church and heard the **gospel**. The one question he asked was, “Why didn’t I know about this group before? Is it a secret?”

Christians should let everyone know about their **faith**. We should not be selfish with the good news of Jesus.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

While Paul was in **Jerusalem** the Jews wanted to kill him. Paul told the Roman officer he was a Roman citizen. Roman citizens could not be punished without a trial first. Ananias (the third man in Acts with this name) brought a group of Jewish leaders. Both **Sadducees** and Pharisees were there. Paul told them that he was on trial because he believed in the **resurrection** of the dead. They began to argue and fight with each other about this. Soldiers took Paul to a place to be safe. The Jews made a plan to kill Paul. Paul’s nephew heard about the plan and warned Paul and the Roman commander. The Roman commander sent Paul to Caesarea.

Jewish leaders went to Caesarea to make **charges** against Paul in court. The Jews and Paul made their arguments before Felix, the Roman governor. King Agrippa came to listen to the case. Paul told King Agrippa his story.

EXPLORE THE TEXT: ACTS 26:19-29

In our study last week, we learned about noticing important issues as we read. This week there are two important issues. They are: 1) fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies that pointed to Jesus, and 2) the use of **Scripture** in witnessing.

1. The Gospel Told (Acts 26:19-23)

VERSES 19-20

¹⁹ *“King Agrippa, after I had this vision from heaven, I obeyed it.*

²⁰ *I began telling people that they should change their hearts and lives and turn to God and do things to show they really had changed. I told this first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem, and in every part of Judea, and also to the other people.*

King Agrippa was King Herod Agrippa II. He was a Jewish king. Claudius, then Caligula, were the Roman kings at the same time. Paul spoke to a king that knew Jewish laws and customs well.

Paul used only one paragraph to explain why the Jews wanted to kill him. He said his message had three parts.

1. People must change their hearts and lives. The word used most often to mean change their hearts is **repent**. Paul meant to be sorry for their sins. Change their lives meant to quit sinning. Paul meant to change their attitudes and their actions.
2. They must turn to God. People may be sorry for their sins. They cannot change their lives by themselves. They must depend on God to help them.
3. People must change their actions. People do have control over their actions. Paul meant when people stopped sinning, they must start to do good things. In letters he wrote to other churches and people he said to do good things. In some of his letters he told Christians the things they must do. They must care for orphans and widows. They must be patient and kind. He told them many other ways to change their actions.

VERSE 21

²¹ *“This is why the Jews took me and were trying to kill me in the Temple.*

The thing that made the Jews most angry was that Paul included Gentiles in his message. Remember the Jews grabbed Paul in the Temple. They wanted to bring **charges** against Paul in court. They said he taught things against the Jewish religion.

It is interesting to see Paul did not talk about the charges against him. He let Agrippa know the real reason the Jews were angry. They did not want to believe Gentiles were the same as Jews. God loves all races of people in the same way.

In the next verse Paul explained the message was for everyone. It did not matter if they were important or not. It did not matter if they were adults or children. He talked about Jesus to all people.

VERSES 22-23

²² *“But God has helped me, and so I stand here today, telling all people, small and great, what I have seen. But I am saying only what Moses and the prophets said would happen—*

²³ *That the Christ would die, and as the first to rise from the dead, He would bring light to all people.”*

In these verses we see the first important issue. Paul pointed to Old Testament prophecies that explained the **Messiah** would come to **save** people. Jesus is the fulfillment of those prophecies.

Paul knew without God’s help, he would not be talking to Agrippa. Paul recognized God arranged for all his opportunities to share Jesus with others. He used the words “small and great.” In the world’s view, King Agrippa and Festus were “great” people. They held high positions and had a strong influence on others. Paul wanted Agrippa to understand God’s plan for **salvation** was for all people, including great people like kings and governors.

Paul reminded Agrippa that Moses and the Prophets taught the truth about the Messiah long ago. The things they taught happened. The Christ did come to earth. He was Jesus. Jesus died. He was the first person to rise from the dead and stay alive.

He brought light to all people. Jesus said He is the Light of the world.

Paul showed he did not teach against **Hebrew** Scriptures. He used the Scriptures to prove Jesus fulfilled prophecies.

BIBLE SKILL: *Finding Fulfilled Prophecies*

Read the Old Testament and New Testament passages. In each blank line, write the fulfilled prophesy about Jesus.

Genesis 12:1-3 _____

Acts 3:24-26 _____

Isaiah 7:14 _____

Matthew 1:22-23 _____

Micah 5:2 _____

John 7:40-43 _____

Jeremiah 31:15 _____

Matthew 2:16-18 _____

Hosea 11:1 _____

Matthew 2:13-15 _____

Isaiah 35:5-6 _____

Luke 7:20-24 _____

Zechariah 9:9 _____

Matthew 21:1-7 _____

Zechariah 11:12-13 _____

Matthew 26:14-16, 27:3-5 _____

Zechariah 12:10 _____

John 19:31-37 _____

Isaiah 42:1-6 _____

John 8:12 _____

How can Christians be good witnesses if they do not know the verses about Jesus in the Bible?

List some verses you learned today that will help you be a good witness.

2. Objection not Accepted (Acts 26:24-26)

VERSE 24

²⁴ *While Paul was saying these things to defend himself, Festus said loudly, “Paul, you are out of your mind! Too much study has driven you crazy!”*

Paul tried to show the things Jewish leaders said were not true. While he was talking, another governor interrupted him.

Festus was governor after Felix. Festus knew about the things Paul taught. Festus called Jesus a dead man (Acts 25:19). Paul said Jesus was still alive. Festus said Paul was crazy. Festus thought Paul lost his mind because he studied too much.

VERSES 25-26

²⁵ *Paul said, “Most excellent Festus, I am not crazy. My words are true and sensible.*

²⁶ *King Agrippa knows about these things, and I can speak freely to him. I know he has heard about all of these things, because they did not happen off in a corner.*

It might be different if the life, death, and **resurrection** of Jesus were a secret. Paul’s words made sense because everyone knew the things that happened. Even King Agrippa knew about Jesus. Many people saw Jesus be crucified. Many people saw Jesus after He rose from death to life. It was not a secret.

Paul was quiet and kind when he answered Festus, but Festus talked loudly when he said Paul was crazy. Paul gave him a direct answer. Paul answered him in a polite way. Paul was polite to Festus, but he quickly turned his attention back to Agrippa. He appealed to King Agrippa’s knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures and the events surrounding Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection.

What are some arguments non-believers might say when they hear the good news about Jesus?

What are some loving, but direct, ways to respond to their argument?

How can believers prepare themselves to have a good response to objections?

3. Invitation Given (Acts 26:27-29)

VERSE 27

²⁷ “King Agrippa, do you believe what the prophets wrote? I know you believe.”

Agrippa was the king. Paul needed to be very bold to ask a king some important questions. Paul knew Agrippa was a **Jew**. He thought Agrippa believed the prophecies in the Old Testament. It would be easy for Agrippa to see Jesus fulfilled those prophecies. Agrippa’s belief in the prophecies would make it easy for him to make a decision about Jesus.

The second important issue we see in this session is the use of Scriptures in witnessing. Paul asked Agrippa to think about the things the prophets wrote. The king should make his decision based on his belief in the Scriptures.

KEY DOCTRINE: *The Scriptures*

All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

VERSE 28

²⁸ King Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think you can persuade me to become a Christian in such a short time?”

Paul made a good argument. Agrippa paid close attention. He understood Paul’s question. The Holy Spirit used Paul’s question to show Agrippa he needed to make a decision. He did not do anything. He did not answer Paul. He asked Paul a question.

We do not know why Agrippa asked that question. There are three possible reasons Agrippa asked the question:

1. He really wanted to know if Paul could persuade him to become a **Christian**. Maybe he was close to accepting Jesus as his **Savior**.
2. He was angry because Paul asked such a personal question. People could only ask kings direct questions if the king let them ask.
3. He was insulting Paul. He **mocked** Paul by asking if Paul thought he was good enough to cause him to make a quick decision. Did Paul really think he could change the king's mind with just a few words? Maybe he wanted Paul to know he would not make a decision in such a short time.

We do not know if Agrippa's question was sincere. We do know Paul's answer was sincere.

VERSE 29

²⁹ Paul said, "Whether it is a short or a long time, I pray to God that not only you but every person listening to me today would be saved and be like me—except for these chains I have."

Paul set a good example. Most Christians would have a hard time witnessing to a king. When the king did not agree with him, Paul continued to speak. Most Christians would stop their witnessing there.

Paul kept on speaking. He wanted Agrippa and everyone in the room to be saved. It did not matter how long it took. He wanted them to be like him. He wanted them to be saved.

Bible scholars are not sure what Paul meant when he said "in these chains." It could mean real chains. It could also mean he felt he did not have enough time to tell his message to everyone.

He probably would keep talking except for one thing. King Agrippa, his wife, Festus, and everyone in the room got up and left the room. Paul was left standing there.

Write in your own words what a person must do to be saved.

Practice explaining how to be saved in sign language.

IN MY CONTEXT

I have a Deaf friend who teaches groups in her church. She used to teach at the school for the Deaf. Now that she is retired, she has many visitors come to her home. She has a deep knowledge of the Bible and loves God. Some of her visitors belong to a different religion. Some of their beliefs are false. My friend shows them God's Word. She witnesses to them using **Scripture** with love and directness.

What are some reasons you must witness to other people?

It is good to learn how people in the Bible witnessed to their friends and enemies too.

What ideas did you get from Paul's example?

Where can Christians share their testimonies?

Some believers give up when someone mocks them. They are not strong enough to stay and continue to witness. We need boldness and strength from God to be a good witness.

MEMORY VERSE

“I began telling people that they should change their hearts and lives and turn to God and do things to show they really had changed. I told this first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem, and in every part of Judea, and also to the other people.”

—Acts 26:20



ALWAYS ON MISSION

The gospel message is for all people; some will believe, but others will not.

FIRST THOUGHTS

People seem to be busy always. They have serious looks on their faces. They hurry from one place to another. Do they have a reason to hurry? Why are they so serious?

Some of them have important things to do and important places to go. They are on a mission.

Christians should always be on a mission. Wherever we go, the believer's mission must be to serve God and witness to others.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

After Agrippa left Paul, he and Festus decided they could not make a decision about the **charges** the Jews brought against Paul. They sent him and his Roman guard to Rome.

They visited many places. When it was time to sail it was dangerous because it was so late in the season. Paul warned the sailors not to go. The captain decided to go ahead.

On the journey they were shipwrecked. They were tossed at sea for more than fourteen days. Finally they landed on the island of Malta.

They went on to Rome where Paul was allowed to live alone. Only a soldier guarded him.

EXPLORE THE TEXT: ACTS 28:17-28

1. The Journey (Acts 28:17-20)

There were large numbers of Jews in Rome. They were not well organized. They had several synagogues.

The **Christian** church in Rome seemed to be better organized. The Roman Christian leaders visited Paul. They took him the things he needed. He could not go to them because he was a prisoner in his own home. He had a Roman soldier guarding him.

VERSE 17

¹⁷ Three days later Paul sent for the leaders there. When they came together, he said, "Brothers, I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our ancestors. But I was arrested in Jerusalem and given to the Romans.

Rome was a very important **Gentile** city. Paul still followed his usual custom. He preached first to the Jews. He told them why he was there as a prisoner. He wanted to explain to the Jewish leaders why he needed to make an appeal to Caesar. He wanted them to know that he was a true **Jew**. That was why Paul asked them to meet him. He was a prisoner because he believed in the Jewish **Messiah**.

Paul told them three important things. In this verse he explained the first important thing. He said he did nothing against the Jewish people or their customs or way of life.

Paul was arrested. He did not do anything wrong, but he was arrested. The Jews gave him to the Romans.

VERSE 18

¹⁸ "After they asked me many questions, they could find no reason why I should be killed. They wanted to let me go free,

The Romans asked Paul many questions. They did not think he was guilty of breaking any Roman law. He did nothing wrong to deserve to die. The second thing Paul wanted the Jewish leaders to know was the Romans wanted to let him go free.

VERSE 19

¹⁹ *“but the evil people there argued against that. So I had to ask to come to Rome to have my trial before Caesar. But I have no charge to bring against my own people.*

Paul calls Jewish leaders from **Jerusalem** evil people. The Jews did not agree that Paul was not guilty. They were upset because of Paul’s belief in Jesus. So, Paul had to appeal to the **Emperor** Caesar.

The evil people were mean. They made false **charges** against Paul. They lied about him.

Paul showed his loving and kind spirit. He said he would not make charges against his own people, the Jews. Paul had good reason to make charges against the evil Jewish people, but he did not.

VERSE 20

²⁰ *“That is why I wanted to see you and talk with you. I am bound with this chain because I believe in the hope of Israel.”*

Many prophets in Israel prophesied there was a Hope coming to Israel. That Hope was the **Messiah**. Paul knew Jesus was the Hope the prophets talked about.

The third thing Paul wanted the Jews to know was he was in prison because he believed in the Hope of Israel, Jesus.

God uses different ways to bring Christians in contact with people who need to know Jesus. Maybe it is not in jail like Paul. He does use other ways and places. What are some places and ways you see God using to bring people to Him?

2. The Seekers (Acts 28:21-24)

VERSE 21

²¹ *They answered Paul, “We have received no letters from Judea about you. None of our Jewish brothers who have come from there brought news or told us anything bad about you.*

During the winter, ships could not come to Italy. Paul arrived before any letter or message from Jerusalem or Caesarea.

The Jews in Rome did not know anything about his trial. They did know something about him. They knew that he was a **Christian**. And they heard bad things about the group called Christians.

VERSE 22

²² “But we want to hear your ideas, because we know that people everywhere are speaking against this religious group.”

They wanted to hear Paul’s opinions. They were very polite to him. They were curious about his message. They were willing to hear him teach. They seemed to have open minds.

VERSE 23

²³ Paul and the people chose a day for a meeting and on that day many more of the Jews met with Paul at the place he was staying. He spoke to them all day long. Using the Law of Moses and the prophets’ writings, he explained the kingdom of God, and he tried to persuade them to believe these things about Jesus.

They arranged a time when he could talk to all the people. Bible Scholars believe Paul rented a very large house. It was large enough so many people could come and listen to him preach at the same time.

On that day, very many Jews came to Paul’s house. He preached to them for a whole day. He talked about God’s kingdom. He showed them proof from the Scriptures.

Luke did not say which Scriptures Paul used. Because he was talking to Jews, he probably used Scriptures about how the Messiah would suffer and die. Then He would rise from death.

Paul belonged to a new group but he did not change his religion. He was still a **Jew**. His belief in Jesus made his Jewish religion complete.

Jews did not need to wait for a **Savior** any longer. He believed that God promised a Messiah for the Jews. Paul also knew Jesus was the Messiah. Paul wanted the Jews to know that also.

KEY DOCTRINE: *The Scriptures*

All Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried.

VERSE 24

²⁴ *Some believed what Paul said, but others did not.*

Some of the Jewish leaders believed in Jesus. But some other Jewish leaders did not believe. That is a picture of the things that happened in synagogues all over the world at that time. The synagogues were divided. They had some **Christian** believers and some non-believers. Many times the two groups argued.

Remember, these things happened many times before when Paul preached. It happened at Paul's trial in **Jerusalem** (Acts 23:9).

Paul used every opportunity he had to share the **gospel**. He witnessed to everyone he met. He witnessed to priests, sailors, soldiers, kings, fortune tellers, and others.

Who are some people you come in contact with often that you could witness to? You do not need to list personal names. You can answer with the job a person does.

3. The Response (Acts 28:25-28)

VERSE 25

²⁵ *So they argued and began leaving after Paul said one more thing to them: "The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your ancestors through Isaiah the prophet, saying,*

The Jews began arguing. Paul put in the last word. It was one final Old Testament **testimony**. This time he did not quote **prophecy** about Jesus. This time he used verses that described the people that came to visit him (Isaiah 6:9-10). Jesus said the same things about the people who did not believe in Him (Matthew 13:14-15; Mark 4:11-12).

VERSES 26-27

²⁶ *Go to this people and say: You will listen and listen, but you will not understand. You will look and look, but you will not learn,*

²⁷ *because these people have become stubborn. They don't hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise, they might really understand what they see with their eyes and hear with their ears. They might really understand in their minds and come back to Me and be healed.*

People have two major ways of learning. They learn with their eyes or with their ears. People use their ears to listen, but they do not understand. They are stubborn. They can't hear with their ears. It is like they closed their ears.

Deaf people cannot hear everything with their ears, but they can learn a different way. They can see to understand. The **Scripture** says they look and look, but they will not learn. It does not say they will not see. It says they will not learn. They closed their eyes.

There was a Deaf minister who wrote an important paper. He had to meet with Bible teachers to talk about the different points in his paper. One teacher asked him a question: "How do you help the Deaf members of your church overcome discouragement when they read the Scripture, 'Let those with ears use them and listen'" (Mark 4:9)? After thinking for a minute, the Deaf minister answered, "Oh, there is no discouragement, because they have learned the true meaning of that verse has nothing to do with physical hearing. It is about hearing with the spirit. I have met many Deaf people who have excellent spiritual hearing, and I've met many hearing people who are spiritually deaf."

People, whether they are Deaf or hearing, understand spiritual things with their hearts. They look but they can't see. They listen but they don't hear. Their hearts are closed. If they don't hear or see spiritual things, how can their hearts understand? If they understood spiritually, they would do something to answer God's invitation to be saved.

VERSE 28

²⁸ "I want you to know that God has also sent His salvation to all nations, and they will listen!"

Paul was the missionary to the Gentiles. He always stayed true to his Jewish background. He hoped his own people would accept Jesus as their **Messiah**.

He preached to both Jews and Gentiles. All through Acts, Luke talked about Paul's success with both Jews and Gentiles. This verse seems to describe Paul as saying, "You Jews had your chance. You missed it. Now I will go to other nations." His final statement was, "You Jews would not listen, but the Gentiles will listen."

What do you think the following sentences mean? Believers must be faithful witnesses to all people. It does not matter how people respond to a believer. Write your idea of the meaning in your own words.

BIBLE SKILL: *Search the Scripture Background*

Jesus often spoke the words, "Let those with ears use them and listen!" Read the Bible passage just before these verses. In the space, write a few words about what Jesus talked about before he said these words.

Verses

Background

Matthew 11:15 _____

Matthew 13:43 _____

Mark 4:9 _____

Luke 14:35 _____

Revelation 2:7 _____

Revelation 2:11 _____

Revelation 2:17 _____

Revelation 2:29 _____

Revelation 3:6 _____

Revelation 3:13 _____

Revelation 3:22 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

Today we studied the last session of this series about the Book of Acts. We learned about Paul's ministries to both Jews and Gentiles. Paul faced hard times. He knew how to witness to different kinds of people. It did not matter who they were. The whole session today taught about Paul witnessing to his own people. Answer these questions about Paul and about yourself:

About Paul:

Who were Paul's people? _____

What work did they do? _____

What language did Paul use? _____

About Myself:

Who are your people? _____

What work do they do? _____

What language do you use? _____

Some Jews believed, but others did not. Paul finally reached out to Gentiles. They were non-believers.

Did God lead Paul to witness to them? How did the Gentiles respond to Paul's message? _____

Now look at your life.

Do you know people who are non-believers? _____

How can you tell them about your faith? _____

Finally, the session leads us to make a commitment to be on a mission for God. Will you pray and try to always be on a mission for the Glory of God? If you will pray about this commitment write AMEN!

MEMORY VERSE

He boldly preached about the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ, and no one stopped him.

—Acts 28:31

Next week we will begin a new series on Paul's letters to the church in Corinth. Begin reading 1 Corinthians to prepare.

PAUL'S MISSIONARY TEAM MEMBERS

First Missionary Journey

BARNABAS - Barnabas was a Levite and native of the island of Cyprus, named Joseph (Joses), before the disciples called him Barnabas. He sold his property and gave the proceeds to the Jerusalem church (Acts 4:36-37). He introduced Saul of Tarsus to the Jerusalem church (9:26-27). The church chose Barnabas to go to Syrian Antioch to investigate the unrestricted preaching to the Gentiles there. He secured Saul as his assistant. They took famine relief to the Jerusalem church (11:19-30). Barnabas went on to take many missionary journeys (13-14; 15:1-21,36-41).

JOHN MARK - An early missionary and church leader, John Mark wrote the second Gospel. He was the son of Mary in whose home the Jerusalem believers met to pray when Peter was imprisoned by Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:12). John was his Jewish name, and Mark was his Roman name. John Mark was kin to Barnabas (Col. 4:10). After Barnabas and Saul completed a relief mission to Jerusalem, they took John Mark with them when they returned to Antioch (Acts 12:25). When Barnabas and Saul went as missionaries, they took John Mark to help (Acts 13:5). Paul wrote about John Mark in Philemon 24; Colossians 4:10; and 2 Timothy 4:11. Peter referred to John Mark as his son, and sent greetings from him near the end of his first letter (1 Pet. 5:13).

Second Missionary Journey

SILAS - Also known as Silvanus, Silas was a leader in the early Jerusalem church. He accompanied both Peter and Paul on separate missionary journeys. One of his first missions was to carry news of the Jerusalem conference to the believers at Antioch (Acts 15:22). He and Paul left Antioch together on a mission to Asia Minor (15:40-41) and later to Macedonia. In Philippi the two were imprisoned (16:19-24), but they later won the jailer and his family to the Lord after God delivered them from prison. Later in his ministry Silas teamed with Peter on missions in Pontus and Cappadocia. He also served as Peter's scribe, writing 1 Peter and perhaps other letters.

TIMOTHY - Timothy was a friend and trusted coworker of Paul. A native of Lystra, he may have been converted on Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 14:6-23). Paul referred to Timothy as his child in the faith (1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2). This probably means Paul was instrumental in Timothy's conversion. When Paul came to Lystra on his second journey, Timothy was a disciple who was well-respected by the believers (Acts 16:1-2). Paul asked Timothy to accompany him. Timothy not only accompanied Paul but also was sent on many crucial missions by him. Paul wrote two letters to Timothy to encourage and instruct him in the faith; the second was probably Paul's final letter.

AQUILA AND PRISCILLA - A married couple, Aquila and Priscilla traveled from Italy to Corinth after the emperor Claudius ordered Jews expelled from Rome. They were tentmakers by trade (2 Tim. 4:19) and came into contact with Paul, who was also a tentmaker, in Corinth (Acts 18:2). It is not clear whether they became Christians before or after meeting Paul, but

they became workers for the cause of Christ and accompanied Paul to Ephesus (Acts 18:19). There they instructed Apollos in the Christian faith (18:25). A church met in their home, and they joined Paul in writing to the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 16:19).

LUKE - Luke, a physician, penned the third Gospel and the Book of Acts. He was a close friend and traveling companion of Paul. The apostle called Luke “beloved” (Col. 4:14). Many scholars believe Luke wrote his Gospel and Acts while in Rome with Paul during the apostle’s first Roman imprisonment. Apparently Luke remained nearby or with Paul also during the apostle’s second Roman imprisonment. While from Antioch, Luke adopted Philippi as his home, remaining there to oversee the young church while Paul went on to Corinth during the second missionary journey.

ERASTUS - Erastus was a disciple Paul sent with Timothy from Ephesus to Macedonia to strengthen the church during his third missionary journey.

Third Missionary Journey

ARISTARCHUS - Paul’s companion who was captured by the followers of Artemis in Ephesus (Acts 19:29). Apparently Aristarchus was the Thessalonian who accompanied Paul from Greece to Jerusalem as he returned from his third missionary journey (Acts 20:4). Aristarchus also accompanied Paul when he sailed for Rome (Acts 27:2). Paul sent greetings from Aristarchus, a fellow prisoner and worker, in his letters to the Colossians (4:10) and Philemon (24). Later church tradition said Nero put Aristarchus to death in Rome.

SECUNDUS - A representative of the church of Thessalonica, Secundus accompanied Paul on his journey as he took the church’s contributions to the Jerusalem church (Acts 20:4).

GAIUS - (1) A Macedonian Christian who was one of Paul’s traveling companions (Acts 19:29). Along with Aristarchus, he was seized during the riot in Ephesus incited by Demetrius the silversmith. (2) A Christian from Derbe who accompanied Paul into Asia (Acts 20:4)

TYCHICUS - One of Paul’s fellow workers and a native of Asia Minor (Acts 20:4), he traveled with the apostle on the third missionary journey. Tychicus and Onesimus carried the Colossian letter from Paul (Col. 4:7-9) and were to relate to the church Paul’s condition. Paul also sent Tychicus to Ephesus on one occasion (2 Tim. 4:12) and possibly to Crete on another (Titus 3:12). Tradition holds that he died a martyr.

TROPHIMUS - A Gentile Christian from Ephesus, he accompanied Paul to Jerusalem for the presentation of the collection (Acts 20:4-5; 21:29). Paul’s free association with Trophimus led to the false charge that Paul had defiled the temple by bringing a Gentile within the Court of Israel (Acts 21:19).

Adapted from the Holman Bible Dictionary (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991).

WORD LIST

- Abortion**—to kill a baby before it is born
- Advocate**—to support and defend another person
- A.D.**—A.D. 50 means 50 years after Jesus was born
- Ancestors**—a person’s relatives that lived a long time ago
- Apart**—separated from something or someone
- Apartheid**—separateness because of race or skin color
- Apostle**—a man that Jesus chose to lead other Christians
- Aramaic**—a Jewish language
- Atheist**—a person who does not believe in God or other gods
- Babbler**—talking in a way that does not make sense
- Baptism / Baptize**—to put a person into water, to show that Christ has made a person clean
- B.C.**—years before Christ came to the earth
- Believer**—a person who knows Christ and accepts Him
- Bully**—to act bossy or mean to cause another person to be afraid
- Charges**—when people accuse someone of crimes, these crimes are called charges
- Christian**—a person who obeys Jesus Christ; a person who believes in Him
- Circumcise**—to cut off the skin from the end of a boy’s or man’s sex part; For Jews, this was a sign to show God’s agreement with Israel.
- Circumstances**—things that are happening to a person
- Compromise**—to agree, each person giving up a little
- Conception**—when the cells from the father come together with the cells from the mother to create another life
- Condemn**—to say that someone is guilty because he or she has done something wrong
- Contend**—to struggle with someone
- Context**—what was happening around that time; what something means to someone in their situation
- Conversion**—to change from one way to another way of living
- Crucify**—to kill someone on a cross
- Decay**—rot
- Descendant**—a future member in a family or nation
- Devoted**—love and serve someone or something
- Emperor**—ruler in Rome, like a king

Ephesians—people from Ephesus; a letter from Paul

Everlasting life—life that continues always

Execute—to kill someone for breaking the law

Faith—when someone is really sure about God and Jesus, His Son

Farewell—to say goodbye

Fetus—a not yet born baby

Foreigners—People from a different country

Fortune teller—Someone who tells the future

Gentile—not Jewish; a person that is not a Jew

God-fearer—a Gentile that worshiped God

Gospel—the good news about Jesus; one of the first four books in the New Testament

Grace—God’s generous free gift; God’s love, help, and protection that people do not deserve and they cannot earn

Greek—the language people from Greece spoke; the language of the New Testament; a person from Greece

Hebrew—the language that Jewish people speak

High priest—the most important priest in the Jewish Temple

Hypocrite—a person who pretends to be good or holy

Iconium—city in Pisidia

Idol—a thing that people make from wood, stone, or metal

Indeed—it is true

Instruments—to be used in service for God

Jerusalem—the capital city in Israel

Jew—a person that is a member of Abraham’s family line

Joseph of Arimathea—follower; Jesus was buried in Joseph’s tomb.

Law of Moses—the commandments and laws of the Old Testament

Lystra—city in Pisidia

Magician—someone who makes strange things happen to surprise people

Martyr—a person who is willing to die for his or her beliefs

Messiah—in the Old Testament, the anointed king; in the New Testament, Jesus; Christ

Miracle—a wonderful thing that God does by his power

Mock / Mocked—to make fun of someone

Mysterious—no one understands it

Nazareth—the town where Jesus lived when He was young

Objection—to complain

Oppose—to disagree or have a different opinion

Pagans—people that worship a false god or gods

Passover—a holy day for the Jews; a special meal that they ate to remember when God led them out of Egypt

Pentecost—a special day that comes 50 days after Passover or Easter

Persecute / Persecution—to attack people because they believe in Christ

Persuaded—to convince someone to change their mind

Pharisee—a member in a group of Jews who strictly obeyed rules

Proclaimed—to tell in a strong way

Prophecy—to tell about things that will happen in the future; to speak a special message with God’s help

Prophet—someone who tells God’s messages; a person that God sends to speak for Him

Prostitution—to do a sex act for money

Rabbi—a Jewish word that means master; teacher

Regenerate life—made new; a new spiritual birth

Reject—refuse to accept

Repent—to stop doing sin and then to obey God

Resurrection—when someone comes back to life after they die

Righteous—live the right way; obey God’s commands

Riot—an angry crowd complaining about something in a loud way

Sabbath—the Sabbath was the 7th day in the week

Sacrifice—when someone kills an animal and offers it to God (or a false god), he asks God (or a false god) to forgive him

Sadducees—group of Jewish priests who did not believe a soul lives after death

Sanctity—valuable; holy

Salvation / Save—God saves us from sin’s power

Savior—Jesus, the person who saves us

Scripture—the Bible; the Old Testament

Segregation—living apart from other people who are different

Shepherd—a person who looks after sheep

Stocks—wooden frame to lock people in for punishment

Stone—a way to kill someone who broke the law

Survey—to ask the same questions to different people

Synagogue—a building where Jews gathered for prayer

Testimony—the story of a person’s experience

Tribe—a group that contains all the descendants of one son that Jacob had

Unclean—when something is not right to use because God does not accept it

Vision—a dream; sometimes a dream that comes to a person when he or she is awake

Womb—where babies grow inside their mothers before they are born



Explore the Bible.®

LEADER GUIDE

1:23-25;
Luce, 2:2
3:22 ch. 4:21
5:15;
7:10
8:30 ch. 2:37;
9:1 Luke 3:10
10:1 John
16:36, 6:47;
John 5:10
14: Luke
19:19;
27 ch. 22:25

Do thyself no harm, for we are all here.

29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Si-las,

30 And brought them out, and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

31 And they said, 'Believe on the Lord Je-sus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes: and

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

ACTS 13:26-39

PLAN AHEAD

- Pray for group members. Pray they will understand the importance of Jesus' death and **resurrection**.
- Ask a volunteer to practice signing the story of Paul's **conversion** in Acts 9:1-19. The member will sign the story to introduce the session.
- Review the map on the inside back cover that shows Paul's first missionary journey. Be ready to show the path from Antioch to Cyprus, Paphos, Perga, and then Pisidian Antioch. Pisidian Antioch is the place where Paul spoke to the Jews in today's session. Review the *Introduction to the Book of Acts* (page 6). Be ready to share this information with the group.

FOCUS ATTENTION

During this quarter the sessions will focus on the last half of the Book of Acts. The group may remember studying the first half of Acts last year. Briefly explain the information from the *Introduction to the Book of Acts* (page 6). Tell the group this half of the Book of Acts will focus on Paul's missionary journeys and his time in prison.

Ask the volunteer to sign the story of Paul's conversion. Explain that Paul began preaching after his conversion. He and Barnabas began a missionary journey. Use the map to show the places Paul and Barnabas went. Then point out Pisidian Antioch, the location of the session for today. Paul taught in the **synagogue** there.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Crucified (Acts 13:26-29)

Ask a volunteer to sign verses 26-29. Using information from the *Personal*

Study Guide, explain what Paul meant in verse 27. Ask the group to read Isaiah 53:3-7. **Ask:** How do we know these verses refer to Jesus?

Sometimes Christians wonder why the Jewish leaders did not recognize Jesus as the **Messiah**. They read from the prophets like Isaiah. They read about how the Messiah would suffer for the sins of all people. They still did not believe. Perhaps they wanted a different kind of Messiah. They did not want a suffering Messiah. They wanted a king to make Israel strong again.

Ask: Do we see this today? Do people have their own idea about God or do they believe the Bible? Why do people struggle to trust what the Bible says?

2. Resurrected (Acts 13:30-37)

Paul taught about Jesus' resurrection. People saw Jesus after He rose from the dead (verse 31). In 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 Paul says more about this. Sign the verses, and ask the group to notice who saw Jesus (Peter, the apostles, 500 people, James and Paul).

Ask each member of the group to find a partner. Ask one to sign "He is risen," and the other to respond, "He is risen **indeed!**" Let them practice the greeting with others in the group. Explain the information about this greeting from the *Personal Study Guide*.

Ask: Why is it so important to know Jesus rose from the dead? Sign or ask a group member to sign 1 Corinthians 15:14-17. Discuss.

3. Proclaimed (Acts 13:38-39)

Sign verses 38-39. Explain some people want to believe there are many ways to be saved. Some believe they can be good enough to earn **salvation**. Paul makes it clear Jesus is the only way to be saved. Ask a member to sign John 14:6 and another to sign Titus 3:4-5. Discuss these verses. **Ask:** The **Law of Moses** cannot **save** us. Why not? Why did God provide a way for us to be saved?

IN MY CONTEXT

Use the information from *In My Context* in the *Personal Study Guide*. Discuss Romans 5:8 and John 3:36. Also discuss their answers to the questions in that section.

Close with prayer. Ask God for boldness to share the good news of Jesus' resurrection with others.

MISTAKEN WORSHIP

ACTS 14:8-20

PLAN AHEAD

Pray for group members. Pray that they will worship only God and give glory to Him.

- Ask a volunteer to prepare to sign Acts 12:21-23.
- Make the session come alive! Practice signing the story from Acts 14:8-20. Practice so you can sign it without looking at the text. This will help in the discussion of the material.
- Review the verses from the Bible Skill.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Explain briefly that King Herod Agrippa treated believers badly. He was the one who put Peter in prison. Ask the volunteer to sign the story in Acts 12:21-23. **Ask:** What does it mean to give glory to God? Explain King Herod was proud of himself. He accepted the praise of the people. Instead, he should have helped the people praise God.

Explain that today's session shows how Paul and Barnabas gave glory to God. They did not accept praise for themselves. Sign the story from Acts 14:8-20.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Healing (Acts 14:8-10)

Ask: What happened first in the story? Sign this part of the story again.

Ask: How was Paul able to heal the man? (God gave him the power to do it.)

2. Reaction (Acts 14:11-13)

Ask: How did the people respond? (They wanted to worship Paul and Barnabas.)

Ask: Why did the people want to worship Paul and Barnabas? (They thought Paul and Barnabas were gods and had power to heal.)
What things or people do people worship today?

3. Changing Focus (Acts 14:14-18)

Ask: When Paul and Barnabas learned the people wanted to worship them, what did they do? Why did they tear their robes?

Compare the actions of Paul and Barnabas with those of King Herod.

Paul and Barnabas did not want any glory for themselves. They knew people should worship God only. They wanted the people to understand they were only human. They were not gods. Paul told the people about the one God who made all things. King Herod accepted the praise of the people. He did not give any glory to God.

Ask: How can we give God the glory for things in our lives? If someone offers us praise, how can we respond? (In a kind way we can point them to God. We can thank the person, and then express our thankfulness to God for allowing us to serve Him.) It is important for us to understand that all good things are from God. James 1:17 says, “Every good action and every perfect gift is from God.” God is the only one we should praise.

4. Rejected (Acts 14:19-20)

People can be fickle. *Fickle* means “to change attitudes quickly.” The people in **Lystra** wanted to worship Paul and Barnabas at first. But soon after that, evil people from Antioch **persuaded** the people to **stone** Paul. Perhaps the people were disappointed because Paul and Barnabas were not gods. Maybe they did not want to hear about the one true God. Whatever their reason, they became angry enough to try to kill Paul. God gave Paul strength. He and Barnabas traveled the next day.

Ask: Do you know of people who suffer for their belief in God? How do some Christians suffer when they share the **gospel** with others?

IN MY CONTEXT

Review and discuss the verses from *Bible Skill*. Emphasize that we should give glory to God and God alone. We have no right to be proud of ourselves or accept glory.

Remind the group about how Paul showed God’s **grace** and mercy to the crippled man. **Ask:** How can we show God’s grace and mercy to others?

Close in prayer. Ask God to help Christians show others His grace and mercy.

AVAILABLE TO ALL

ACTS 15:6-11,24-31

PLAN AHEAD

- Pray for group members. Pray that we will understand God's **salvation** is for all people.
- Ask three volunteers to sign one section each of the Scriptures for the session (Acts 15:6-11, Acts 15:24-29, and Acts 15:30-31).

FOCUS ATTENTION

A mission team from the United States traveled to Romania in 1990. They met with Deaf Romanians and shared the good news of Jesus through skits and mime. Many Deaf people believed and made decisions to follow Christ. The mission team returned to the United States.

The **Christian** Deaf Romanians continued to meet together regularly. Later, some of the members of the American mission team went back to Romania. They noticed the Romanians did some things in their worship differently from the American tradition. For example, in most American Deaf churches, one person leads in prayer while the others in church watch. In the new Romanian Deaf church, all the members of the church signed their prayers at the same time together.

Was it wrong for the Romanians to do things differently? Did they need to follow the ways of the Americans?

In today's session, some of the believers who were also Pharisees thought the **Gentile** believers should be circumcised. They wanted the Gentiles to become Jews first. Paul, Barnabas, and some others traveled to **Jerusalem** to meet with the apostles and leaders there to discuss the issue.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. No Difference (Acts 15:6-11)

Choose a volunteer to sign verses 6-11. **Ask:** How did Peter know God accepted the Gentile believers (verses 8-9)? How did God **save** them (verse 11)?

Peter talked about the “heavy load around the necks.” What did he mean?

It is important for believers to understand God offers salvation to all people. He does not require people to change before He saves them. They only need to believe (Romans 4:24).

2. Clear Expectations (Acts 15:24-29)

Paul and Barnabas told the believers about God’s work through them with the Gentiles. James led the group to write a letter to the Gentile believers. The letter stated what they should do.

Choose a volunteer to sign verses 24-29. Ask members to watch for the recommendations from the Jerusalem meeting. **Ask:** What did the letter say they should do? (See verse 29.) Why were these things important? (See the explanation in the *Personal Study Guide*.)

Ask: What is a **compromise**? Who made a compromise in the decision about what to include in the letter?

3. Secure Encouragement (Acts 15:30-31)

Choose a volunteer to sign verses 30-31. **Ask:** How did the Gentile believers feel when they read the letter? Why do you think they felt this way?

IN MY CONTEXT

In session one we discussed how the **Law of Moses** could not save. But some of the Jewish believers wanted Gentile believers to follow the Jewish law and customs. At the meeting in Jerusalem the believers affirmed that salvation is by God’s **grace**. Some Christians feel new believers need to fit their customs and traditions.

Ask: What is the difference between traditions/cultural customs and Christian behavior? Discuss. (One example: Many churches have a place in the church building to **baptize** new believers. Some Christians feel a baptistry is the only right place to baptize. Is this correct? Are there other places new believers can be baptized?)

Discuss the questions from *In My Context* in the *Personal Study Guide*.

Close with prayer. Ask God to help us be open to people who are different from us. Ask for boldness to share the good news with all people.

THE PROMISED MESSIAH

LUKE 2:25-28

PLAN AHEAD

- Pray for group members. Pray that Jesus' birth will be special and meaningful to them this Christmas.
- Review the first two sections in the *Introduction to the Book of Acts*. Luke wrote the **Gospel** of Luke and the Book of Acts.
- Make the session come alive! Practice signing the story from Luke 2:25-38. Prepare so you will not need to look at the text while you sign the story. This will help group members with understanding and discussion.
- Review the *In Your Context* section of the *Personal Study Guide*. Create a poem of praise to share with the group. Do not worry about making it perfect. The point is to praise God from your heart. It will encourage members to develop their poems of praise.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Using information from the Introduction to the Book of Acts, remind the group who Luke was and why he wrote the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts.

Ask group members to share parts of the Christmas story they remember. For example: Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem; there were no rooms for them; the shepherds visited; and so forth. Explain the events in today's session happened forty days later, after Jesus was born.

Guide members to find Luke 2:22-24 in their Bibles. Ask a volunteer to sign the verses. Encourage members to watch for the law mentioned in the verses (there are three places). Even while Jesus was a baby, He fulfilled the law of the Lord.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Simeon's Praise (Luke 2:25-32)

Sign the story from Luke 2:25-38. Ask members to watch for the Spirit as you sign verses 25-32 again. It is interesting to note the Holy Spirit is mentioned three times in this passage right after the law was mentioned three times.

Ask: What did the Spirit do in these verses? (The Spirit was in Simeon, told Simeon he would see the **Savior**/Christ, and led him to the Temple.)

Discuss: When Simeon saw Jesus, how did he respond? How can we know God is working in our lives? How should we respond when God works in our lives?

2. A Future Sadness (Luke 2:33-35)

Sign this part of the story again. Discuss the meaning of "rise and fall" in verse 34. **Ask:** What happens to people who believe in Jesus? What happens to people that **reject** Him?

The Spirit spoke through Simeon about the sadness Mary would face.

Ask: What could that sadness be? (Mary would see her own son, Jesus, die on the cross.)

3. Anna's Beliefs (Luke 2:36-38)

Sign this part of the story again. **Ask:** When Anna saw Jesus, how did she respond? (She thanked God and talked about Jesus.)

Discuss: Both Simeon and Anna watched for the **Messiah** to come. They knew God would send a Savior. Isaiah wrote about the coming Messiah 700 years earlier. Simeon and Anna knew the prophecy, and the Spirit confirmed Jesus was the Messiah. They thanked God.

IN MY CONTEXT

When God works in our lives we should respond with praise. Ask members to share some of God's characteristics (i.e. He has all power, He knows everything, He is everywhere, He is love). We can praise God for who He is. Share your poem of praise with the group. Then divide the group into smaller groups of three or four. Ask them to create a poem of praise together, then share the poems with the larger group.

Pray together. Ask God to encourage each member to be thankful and share the good news of the Savior.

STRENGTHENED

ACTS 15:36-41; 16:1-5

PLAN AHEAD

- Pray for group members. Pray that they will continue to love their brothers and sisters even when there are disagreements.
- Ask volunteers to prepare to sign the following verses: 1 Corinthians 9:16; Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11; and Philemon 24.
- Make the session come alive! Ask two members to think of a restaurant they like (they should choose different restaurants). They will act out an argument supporting their choice in the introduction for the session.
- Review the verses from *In Your Context*. Be ready to explain the plan of **salvation** to the group.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Begin the session by telling the class you would like for everyone to get together tonight for dinner. Ask for restaurant ideas. The two members you talked with earlier should make their suggestions and argue about which place is better. Then tell the group this was just an example of how Christians can disagree. Today, we will see how Paul and Barnabas had a serious disagreement.

Explain that in session 3 we learned how the group in **Jerusalem** came to an agreement because of **compromise**. Today's session is different because Paul and Barnabas could not agree. They did not compromise. They decided to go separate ways, but they each continued to serve the Lord.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Separate Ways (Acts 15:36-39)

Sign verses 36-39. Explain how Mark left Paul and Barnabas while they were on the first mission trip. We do not know why Mark left. **Ask:** What reasons could Paul have for not wanting Mark to go along? What reasons could

Barnabas have for bringing Mark with them? Discuss. They both had good reasons for their feelings. They could not agree about what to do with Mark. It is important to notice that both Barnabas and Paul continued in their work. They did not allow their argument to change their feelings about serving God.

2. A New Team (Acts 15:40-41; 16:1-3)

Sign Acts 15:40-41 and 16:1-3. Members may remember from Session 3 how the group meeting in Jerusalem decided the **Gentile** believers did not need to be circumcised. Use the information in the session to discuss why Timothy's circumcision was different.

Share this example: Joan's aunt and uncle believed women should not wear pants. They believed women should wear dresses. Joan wore pants for work and for some other activities. But when she visited her aunt and uncle she wore a dress. She did not want to offend them. She wanted to show respect for them. Ask the group to think of other examples of how Christians can show respect for others even if they think differently. Discuss.

3. Growth Seen (Acts 16:4-5)

Sign Acts 16:4-5. Discuss the positive things that happened after Paul and Barnabas went their separate ways. (They were able to visit and share with more people.)

Ask a member to sign Romans 8:28. Discuss the meaning of this verse. Guide members to give examples of positive things that have happened after difficult times.

IN MY CONTEXT

There is a happy ending to the story. It seems Paul and Barnabas remained friends. Paul mentioned Barnabas in 1 Corinthians 9:6 (ask the volunteer to sign this verse). Paul and Mark also became friends. Ask the volunteers to sign Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11; and Philemon 24.

Even when Christians disagree, they can love each other and continue to serve God. This is important because it is one way the world can know about Jesus. Read John 13:34-35. **Ask:** What are some ways we can show love even when we disagree?

Close with prayer, asking God to help us love and support each other at all times.

A CHANGED FAMILY

ACTS 16:22-34

PLAN AHEAD

- Pray for group members. Pray they will choose to praise God during difficult times.
- Ask _____ to practice signing the story of the servant girl in Acts 16:16-21. They will sign this story for the introduction to the session.
- Make the session come alive! Practice signing the story from Acts 16:22-34. Be ready to sign it without looking at the text. This will help members with understanding and discussion.
- Find an illustration of Paul and Silas in jail. (You can do a google image search for “Paul and Silas in jail” to find pictures of them in the **stocks**. The NCV describes the stocks as large blocks of wood.)
- Look at the Bible map on the inside back cover, and locate the places Paul and Silas went. The places are listed in the next section.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Show the places on the map where Paul and Silas traveled (Syria, Cilicia, Derbe, **Lystra**, **Iconium**, Phrygia, Galatia, Troas, and Philippi). The events in today’s session happened in Philippi.

Ask the volunteer to sign the story about the slave girl. Explain this is the event that caused the crowd to come against Paul and Silas. (In two weeks the session will focus on this story again for more discussion.)

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. The Situation (Acts 16:22-24)

Sign the whole story from Acts 16:22-34. **Ask:** What did Paul and Silas do wrong? Why were they in jail? Ask a volunteer to sign Acts 16:37-38. Explain that even if they did something wrong, they were Roman citizens and had

the right to a trial. They had a reason to be angry or feel it wasn't fair for them to be in jail. Show the picture of Paul and Silas in jail. **Ask:** Do they look comfortable? How do you think it would feel?

2. The Opportunity (Acts 16:25-28)

Ask: What did Paul and Silas do while in jail? (Sign this part of the story again if needed.) They were in pain. They did nothing wrong but were in jail.

Ask: Why were they able to sing and pray? Christians have the Holy Spirit living in our lives. He gives us power to react in ways that are different from the norm.

Ask: Why did the jailer plan to kill himself? Why did the prisoners not try to escape?

3. A Jailer Saved (Acts 16:29-32)

The jailer's family came to the jail. Discuss some ways they may have known to come where their father was. Discuss the importance of sharing Jesus with our family members. **Ask:** What are some challenges to sharing the good news about Jesus with our family members?

Some of our family members see us each day. They know how we behave. We need to practice praising God in all situations. Then our family members may become interested in learning more about Jesus.

4. A Life Changed (Acts 16:33-34)

Lead the group to compare the jailer's actions before he became a **believer** with his actions after he became a believer. **Ask:** What did the jailer do to show his life was different? (He took care of Paul and Silas. He and his family were baptized.)

Ask members to share how their life changed after they became Christians. This is a part of their **testimony**.

IN MY CONTEXT

Remind the group about the discussion on Romans 8:28 last week. **Ask:** In the story of Paul and Silas, what good did God make from the bad situation?

Ask members to share something they will do because of what they learned from this session.

Close with prayer asking God to help us praise Him in all things.

THE UNKNOWN KNOWN

ACTS 17:22-34

PLAN AHEAD

- Pray for group members. Pray they will grow in their **Christian** lives and become bold witnesses for Christ.
- Ask two or three members to be prepared to help lead small groups during the meeting time.
- Find Thessalonica, Berea, and the city of Athens on the Bible map.

FOCUS ATTENTION

After Paul and Silas left the jail in Philippi, they went to Thessalonica and Berea. Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea while Paul went on to Athens. Show these locations on the Bible map.

Acts 17:16 tells us Paul was troubled to see so many idols. **Ask:** Why do you think it bothered Paul to see the idols? Remember, Paul was a **Jew** and knew the law. Even before he met Jesus, Paul knew there is only one God. He knew we should only worship Him.

Paul taught in the **synagogue** and in the marketplace in Athens. Later he was invited to speak at the Areopagus. This was a group of important leaders in Athens.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Unknown God (Acts 17:22-23)

Sign verses 22-23. Use the information from the *Personal Study Guide* to discuss the altar to the “unknown god.” Note how Paul spoke to the people in a respectful way.

Ask: Why do you think the people had an altar to a god they did not know? (See Romans 1:20.)

2. The Known Creator (Acts 17:24-29)

In Acts 17:24-31, Paul taught the people about God. Remember these people were not Jews. They did not know the Scriptures.

Divide the group into smaller groups of 3 members each. Have a leader for each group. Ask the members to write a list of the ways Paul described God. Encourage them to add more of God's characteristics they would want to share with people.

The lists should include: God made the world; He is Lord of the land and sky; He does not live in temples that people make; He gives life and breath to people; He is independent; He has all he needs; He made one person that everyone else came from; He decided where people should be; He wants people to find Him; He is not far from us; He wants people to change their hearts and minds; God will judge the world through Jesus (the man He chose); and He raised Jesus from the dead.

When the groups have their lists ready, ask them to share their findings with the large group. **Ask:** Which of God's characteristics are most important to you? Discuss.

3. Judgment by the Son (Acts 17:30-31)

Paul gave the people information about God the Father first. Then he introduced the Son, Jesus, to them. He told them the important fact that God raised Jesus from the dead. **Ask:** Why is the **resurrection** so important? (Members should remember from discussion in past sessions.) Review 1 Corinthians 15:3-8,14.

4. Split Decision (Acts 17:32-34)

Sign verses 32-34. **Ask:** How did the people respond to Paul's message? As we have seen before, some people wanted to know more about Jesus. Others refused to accept Him. Remind the group of Simeon's prophecy in Luke. He told Mary her baby would cause the 'rise and fall' of many.

Ask: Have you seen people refuse to believe in Jesus? What do they say? Have you seen people want to know more about Jesus? How do they show they want to know more?

IN MY CONTEXT

Ask members to share their answers to the questions from *In My Context*. Close with prayer. Ask God to help members to show respect when sharing the good news with others.

ALL ARE IMPORTANT

ACTS 16:16-19; PSALM 139:13-16

PLAN AHEAD

- Pray for group members. Pray they will understand how God values all people.
- Resources: Find organizations in your city and state that help pregnant women and children. Make a list you can share with members of the group. Check out <http://www.erlc.com> for information and articles related to protecting life.
- Story: In the session two weeks ago one member signed the story from Acts 16:16-19. Ask this person to be prepared and sign the story again for the meeting.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Each January thousands of people participate in pro-life rallies across the country. In addition, many Christians honor **Sanctity** of Human Life Sunday on the third Sunday in January. These events help us remember that God values all human life, from beginning to end. It is also a time for us to share this news with others.

Abortion is not the only threat to life today. Use the information from *First Thoughts* to explain other things that threaten and disrespect human life (euthanasia, assisted suicide, and human trafficking). **Ask:** What are some other actions that show disrespect for human life? (Bullying, racism, etc.) Discuss.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Freedom Gained (Acts 16:16-18)

Two weeks ago we learned about a servant girl that made money for her owners. She had a demon in her that spoke through her. Paul and Silas were put in jail because of what happened in this story.

Today we will look at this story again. Encourage members to think about how the girl felt as they watch the story. Think about what her life was like as a slave. Ask the volunteer to sign the story of the servant girl and Paul.

Ask: Why do you think the girl's shouting bothered Paul so much? Discuss possible reasons. Be sure to include he may have felt sorry for her. She likely suffered because of the demon in her. She did not have control of her words. She also may have suffered because of her masters. Perhaps they beat her if she did not obey them.

2. The Complaint (Acts 16:19)

Ask the group to read verse 19. Bring attention to the phrase "now they could not use her to make money." Doesn't it seem people would be happy for the girl? She did not have a demon in her anymore. But her owners were angry. They did not care about the girl or what she wanted. They only wanted her because she could make money for them. **Ask:** What does it mean to use a person? Ask members to give examples they have seen.

3. Valued by God (Psalm 139:13-16)

Ask: When do you think life begins? Discuss. Some people, especially those who support abortion, believe life starts when a baby takes his first breath.

Sign Psalm 139:13-16. Ask a member to sign Jeremiah 1:5. Use the information from this section of the study guide to discuss the idea of **conception**. **Ask:** God knew us before we were born. What does it mean for us?

God loves all people. **Ask:** How does God show His love for all people? How can we show God's love to others?

IN MY CONTEXT

Lead members to share their answers from *In My Context*. Encourage members to make a plan to help people they know with spiritual and physical needs. Share the list of organizations with the group. Ask if they know of other organizations that help people. Pray for organizations that help people with food and shelter. Discuss possibilities of ways the group can help these organizations.

Close with prayer. Ask God for wisdom to know how we can show respect for life. Ask Him to give us His heart for others.

INCOMPLETE PICTURE

ACTS 18:24-28; 19:1-7

PLAN AHEAD

- Pray for group members. Pray that they will search for whole truths.
- Ask three volunteers to sign the three sections of **Scripture** for today's session (Acts 18:24-26, Acts 18:27-28, and Acts 19:1-7).
- Make the session come alive! Have a cake recipe ready to share with the group. Do not include the sugar in the recipe.
- Use the Bible map to show where Paul traveled. Find Corinth, Ephesus, **Jerusalem**, Antioch, and the area of Galatia and Phrygia.

FOCUS ATTENTION

When Paul left Athens he traveled to Corinth. He stayed there for a year and a half. During that time he worked with Priscilla and Aquila. Paul, Priscilla, and Aquila traveled to Ephesus. Priscilla and Aquila stayed in Ephesus while Paul went on to Jerusalem, Antioch, and then some of the cities in Galatia and Phrygia. Point out these places on the Bible map.

Tell the group you would like to share your favorite cake recipe with them. Sign (or write on the board) all the ingredients except for the amount of sugar. **Ask:** What was missing from the recipe? (Hopefully they will notice you did not include the sugar.) **Ask:** Will the cake taste right without sugar? Explain that in our session today we will see an example of how having all the information can be very important.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. An Unfinished Witness (Acts 18:24-26)

Ask the volunteer to sign Acts 18:24-26. **Ask:** How does Scripture describe Apollos? Do you think he was a good speaker? Why?

Ask: What was the “**baptism** of John”? After members respond, explain the purpose of John’s baptism was to prepare people for Jesus. People needed to know about their sin and **repent**. When people repented of their sin John baptized them. Then they followed Jesus. Apollos knew Jesus was the **Messiah**, but he didn’t know about baptism in Jesus’ name. It seems he did not know about the baptism of the Holy Spirit at **Pentecost**.

Ask: How did Priscilla and Aquila help Apollos? What kind of attitude do you think they had? Priscilla and Aquila gave a good example. We should be kind when we correct our **Christian** brothers. The purpose of correction is to encourage each other and give each other strength. (See 1 Thessalonians 5:11 and **Ephesians** 4:15.) In this way the church can become more effective in doing the work God calls us to do.

2. A Complete Witness (Acts 18:27-28)

Ask the second volunteer to sign verses 27-28. **Ask:** How could Apollos prove Jesus is the Christ from the Scriptures? (He did not have the New Testament; he had only the Old Testament Scriptures. The Old Testament has prophecy about the Messiah. Apollos explained how Jesus fulfilled the prophecies.)

3. An Incomplete Faith (Acts 19:1-7)

Ask the third volunteer to sign Acts 19:1-7. **Ask:** What does the Holy Spirit do for believers? Invite members to sign or read the following verses and share what they learn about the Holy Spirit: John 14:26; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:12; Acts 1:8; Galatians 5:22-23.

IN MY CONTEXT

Ask: How can we know if a Bible teacher is sharing the whole truth? Let members respond. Explain we can be like the people in Berea. Acts 17:11 says, “The Bereans were eager to hear what Paul and Silas said and studied the Scriptures every day to find out if these things were true.” Christians today have the complete Scriptures. We can study to know the full truth of God’s Word. We also have the Holy Spirit to help us know the truth.

Pray together asking God to give us wisdom to search for the whole truth.

DELIVERED

ACTS 20:22-35

PLAN AHEAD

- Pray for group members. Pray they will set a life goal to share the good news with everyone they know.
- Ask one of the group members to prepare to sign the story of the watchman in Ezekiel 33:1-9.
- Find Miletus and Ephesus on the Bible map.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Ask: What goals do you have for your life? Allow for discussion. Goals could include those related to education, health, finances, and other activities.

Discuss: How does it feel to have success with goals? What things cause us to give up? Allow members to share their experiences. Many times we give up on our goals because it is difficult. Working toward goals requires discipline and focus.

Explain: Paul had one main goal in his life. Paul continued doing the work God called him to do even when he suffered. He did not give up during difficult times. In today's session he shared his goal with the elders from Ephesus.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. His Commitment (Acts 20:22-24)

Paul continued his travels. While he was in Miletus, he asked the elders from Ephesus to come visit him. Paul felt it may be his last opportunity to be with them.

Point to the map to show the locations of Miletus and Ephesus. Explain that today's **Scripture** study is from Paul's message to the elders.

Sign verses 22-24. **Ask:** What was Paul's goal in life? Paul very much wanted to obey God and complete his goal of telling others the good news.

Invite members to share some of the hard times Paul experienced in his mission work. (For example, he was stoned and left for dead, he was beaten with rods, and put in jail.) The Holy Spirit told Paul he would have more troubles.

Several years later Paul wrote 2 Timothy. Ask a member to sign 2 Timothy 4:7-8. Toward the end of his life, Paul kept his commitment to complete his goal.

2. His Concern (Acts 20:25-31)

Paul loved the people in Ephesus. He was concerned for them. This section of Scripture addresses two of his concerns.

Sign verses 25-28. **Ask:** Why did Paul say “if any of you are lost, I am not responsible”? Invite the volunteer to sign the story of the watchman from Ezekiel 33. **Explain:** In this story the watchman has a responsibility to warn people about danger. If he does not warn them, they may die. The message we have, the good news of Jesus, is even more important. **Ask:** Why was the message about Jesus so important to Paul?

Sign verses 29-31. These verses are a good warning for Christians today. We must be alert and watch out for people that twist the truth. **Ask:** In what ways do people try to destroy the flock church? How can Christians stay on the right path?

3. His Commendation (Acts 20:32-35)

As Paul prepared to leave, he gave the leaders the responsibility to continue his work. Sign verses 32-35. **Ask:** How did Paul support himself? How did he encourage the leaders? Paul did not take advantage of others. He did not share the good news to get money. He shared the good news because he wanted to obey God. He wanted all people to know about Jesus.

IN MY CONTEXT

Sign Acts 20:32 again. **Ask:** What blessings will all God’s people have?

All God’s people will have a home in heaven. We will be with our **Savior** forever. We should help others have this blessing. We should share the good news.

Sign Philippians 3:12-14. Pray together asking God to help us stay focused on the mission God wants us to do.

THE TESTIMONY

ACTS 22:3-8,15-22

PLAN AHEAD

- Pray for group members. Pray they will learn and practice sharing their testimonies.
- Prepare your **testimony** to share with the group. Use the same outline Paul used (what your life was like before, how you learned about and believed in Jesus, what your life has been like since).
- Ask a member to share a summary of the events in Acts 21:17-40. It is important to understand the reason Paul shared his testimony in Acts 22.
- Be prepared to share the plan of **salvation** with someone in the group that does not know Christ.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Explain the **context** of Paul's message. On his way to **Jerusalem**, a **prophet** named Agabus warned Paul not to go to Jerusalem. Sign Acts 21:11-13 to see his warning and Paul's response. Paul knew he would face troubles. He still obeyed God and taught people about Jesus.

Invite the volunteer to share the background story from Acts 21:17-40.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Former Life (Acts 22:3-5)

Sign verses 3-5. **Ask:** What was Paul's life like before he became a **Christian**? Discuss. Notice Paul talked to Jews. He understood what they might feel because of his experience.

Ask: What was your life like before you became a **believer**? Encourage them to write down a few words about their life before they believed in Jesus. There is space at the end of this section in their book to answer this question.

2. A Meeting That Changed a Life (Acts 22:6-8,15-16)

Sign verses 6-8 and 15-16. (You may also summarize the information in verses 9-14.) Jesus spoke to Paul in an amazing way. In John 6:44, Jesus said the Father must draw people to Him. He brings people to Himself in different ways. Lead members to think about how they learned of Jesus. Ask how they made their decision to follow Him. Ask them to write a few words in their books about their experience.

Explain **baptism** is a picture of the decision we made. Our old life is buried with Jesus. When we come out of the water, we show that we are "raised" to a new life in Christ. Baptism shows we want to obey Jesus.

Ask members to consider how their lives changed after accepting Christ. Encourage them to write a few words about what their lives have been like since they believed in Jesus.

3. New Purpose (Acts 22:17-21)

Sign verses 17-21. **Ask:** What did Paul mean when he said God would send him to other nations? Discuss. **Ask:** What does God want all Christians to do? Ask a member to read Acts 1:8. Explain that sharing our testimony is one way we can witness. We need to practice telling our testimony so we become comfortable sharing at any time.

4. Rejection (Acts 22:22)

Sign verse 22. **Ask:** Why do you think the people became so angry? Explain some people may **reject** our testimony. Others may become angry. Some may become believers. We are still responsible to share the good news.

Ask three volunteers to sign the following verses: Genesis 18:18; Isaiah 60:1-3; and Jeremiah 3:17. These verses tell us God will bless people from all nations, not only the Jews. The people that heard Paul speak may have known these verses from the prophets. But they did not want the Gentiles to have God's blessing.

IN MY CONTEXT

Share your testimony with the group. Divide the group into pairs. Ask members to practice sharing their testimonies with each other.

There may be someone in the group that is not a Christian. You may be able to use this time to lead the person to Jesus.

Close with prayer asking God to help us share our testimony with others.

ANSWERING CRITICS

ACTS 26:19-29

PLAN AHEAD

- Pray for group members. Pray that they will choose the path of life.
- Read Acts 23-25 to learn what happened to Paul between last week's session and this week's session.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Introduce the session by sharing information from *Understand the Context*. All these events did not happen quickly. Paul was in Caesarea for over two years. Felix, the governor, often called for Paul to talk with him. After two years, Festus became governor. When Paul talked to Festus, he appealed his case to Caesar. The Lord told Paul he would testify in Rome (Acts 23:11).

King Agrippa came to Caesarea to greet Festus. He was curious about Paul. He wanted to hear Paul's defense.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. The Gospel Told (Acts 26:19-23)

Paul shared his **testimony** again. **Ask:** What was the **vision** Paul mentioned? (See verses 12-18.) How did Paul obey the vision?

In verse 22 Paul says God helped him so he could be there to share the good news. **Ask:** How did God help Paul? Discuss. They could include the following: He protected Paul when others planned to kill him, He encouraged him, and He helped Paul know what to do.

In this testimony Paul talked about the Old Testament Scriptures. The prophets taught about the Christ that would come. **Ask:** Why is it important for Christians to know Bible verses that teach about Jesus?

2. Objection not Accepted (Acts 26:24-26)

Sign verses 24-26. Non-believers today say mean things about Christians. Some laugh at Christians and say we are crazy. Invite members to share their experiences with non-believers.

Ask: When Festus insulted Paul, how did Paul respond? What was his attitude toward Agrippa? (He showed respect. He was polite. He assured Festus that he was telling the truth.)

3. Invitation Given (Acts 26:27-29)

Sign verses 27-29. Paul asked Agrippa a very important question. He asked if Agrippa believed the prophets. If Agrippa believed the prophets, he should recognize Jesus is the fulfillment of their messages.

It is the same today. If people believe the Bible, they should understand Jesus is the only way to become right with God. Ask a member to sign John 14:6.

Remind the group we learned two ways Paul shared the good news. Last week we learned how he shared his testimony by telling about his experience. Today we learned how he used **Scripture** to support his testimony.

We need to be ready to share our testimony in different ways like Paul did. You may meet people that do not believe the Bible. Your experience with Jesus will be important to them. You will need to explain to them clearly how Jesus changed your life. Others you meet will believe or have respect for the Bible. You can share verses about Jesus with them. The most important thing is to be ready to share.

Ask: What did Paul want for all the people? (See verse 29.)

Encourage members to share verses they know about Jesus. They could include these verses when witnessing to others.

IN MY CONTEXT

Divide the group into smaller groups of three each. Ask the groups to create a skit. One person will share their testimony. Another will insult or argue with that person. The third can support either the one sharing or the one arguing. The skit should show how to respond to insults in a respectful way.

Let each group do their skit for the larger group if there is enough time. Close with prayer asking God to help us show respect as we share the good news with all people.

ALWAYS ON MISSION

ACTS 28:17-28

PLAN AHEAD

- Pray for group members. Pray they will focus on God's will in their lives.
- Ask two members to prepare to sign 2 Corinthian 11:3 and Philippians 2:5-11.

FOCUS ATTENTION

The title of today's session is "Always on Mission." What does this mean? As we study Paul's life, we see how he had one goal. That goal was to do what God told him to do. He did not let anything distract him. He was beaten. He was stoned. Acts 27 tells about the shipwreck Paul survived. Through it all, Paul kept his mind on doing God's will. He wanted all people to know about Jesus.

In Paul's letter to the Corinthians, he expressed a concern. Ask a member to sign 2 Corinthians 11:3. **Ask:** What things cause our minds to be distracted from following God's will?

In Paul's letter to the Philippians he describes how Jesus set the example. Ask a member to sign Philippians 2:5-11. **Ask:** What was Jesus' goal? (He obeyed God, His Father, in all things.) What was His attitude? (He was humble. He was willing to become a servant.)

We are to have the "mind of Christ." We should practice paying attention to God's commands and His ways. We should always be a witness for Him. We should be ready to serve. This is the way to always be on mission.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. The Journey (Acts 28:17-20)

Paul gave a short explanation about how he came to Rome. Ask a member to sign verses 17-20. **Ask:** What did Paul want the leaders to know about him?

(He did nothing against the Jewish people, the Romans wanted to let Paul go free, and he was in chains because he believed in Jesus.)

Paul experienced difficult times. But through all of his experiences, God gave him opportunities to share the good news.

2. The Seekers (Acts 28:21-24)

Sign verses 21-24. Ask: What did the leaders know about Paul? Why did the leaders want to hear Paul's ideas?

The leaders were interested to hear from Paul. Paul was happy to have the opportunity to teach them. He was always ready to share. He later encouraged Timothy always to be ready (2 Timothy 4:2). This is another example of being on mission.

3. The Response (Acts 28:25-28)

Ask: How did the leaders respond? Verse 24 says some believed and some did not. We saw this same response in other parts of Acts. We will experience the same thing when we share the good news. Some people will believe, others will not.

Ask a member to sign verses 25-28. Paul used verses from Isaiah. Remind the group that Isaiah was written around 700 years before Jesus was born. The leaders knew the verses were about them. **Ask:** Why did some of the leaders argue and leave? (They did not like what Isaiah said about them. They also did not want **salvation** to be for other nations.)

IN MY CONTEXT

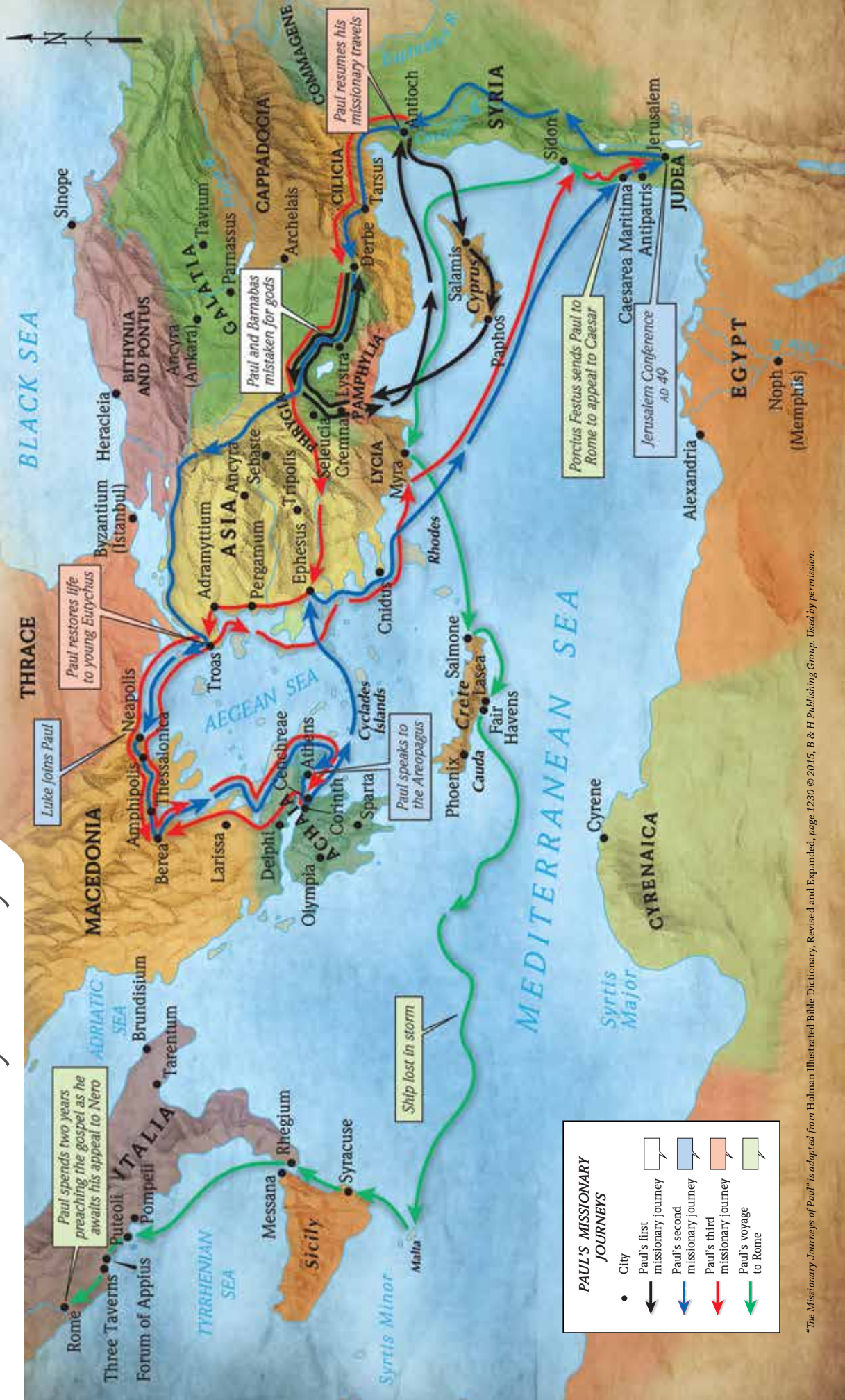
Ask: What things take our attention away from God's plan? We have many things to do in life. We need to work, take care of family, and take care of our homes. We want to be involved in fun activities. **Ask:** How can we be on mission while doing these things? (Answers could include: think about Bible verses we know, look for opportunities to share the good news with people we meet, and remember God is always with us.)

Close with prayer. Pray we will practice keeping our minds focused on obeying God. Pray we will be willing to serve and not be selfish with the good news.

LOOKING AHEAD

In the next few months, you will be studying 1 and 2 Corinthians. Begin reading these books of the Bible in preparation for next week.

Paul's Missionary Journeys



PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS

- City
- Paul's first missionary journey
- Paul's second missionary journey
- Paul's third missionary journey
- Paul's voyage to Rome

"The Missionary Journeys of Paul" is adapted from Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Revised and Expanded, page 1230 © 2015, B & H Publishing Group. Used by permission.

Acts 13–28

As you study the Book of Acts, you will notice that the apostles were certain the risen Jesus had called, commissioned, and empowered them. Jesus was still at work through them. It is clear that no follower of Christ in the Book of Acts thought of Jesus as dead or gone. He was—and is—alive and at work through His church. Jesus' ascension into heaven did not mark His departure, but only a change in the manner by which He performs His earthly ministry. Acts is the continuing story of what Jesus is doing. He is still at work advancing His kingdom through His church. The work of getting the gospel to the ends of the earth is not finished. Our role in the story is clear. Live in the power of the Spirit, bear witness to Christ, and watch what our God does through the obedience of His people!



Let the Word dwell in you.