

# EMPOWERED

The Acts of the Holy Spirit



PARTICIPANTS GUIDE PART 5 - SUMMER 2025



**MACOMB**  
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

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# LETTER FROM KURT

*The book of Acts, in my opinion, is the most indispensable book of the New Testament. We have four Gospel accounts, 13 letters from Paul, and many letters from other writers which are all equally important. But Acts stands alone as a unique book unlike no other in our New Testament. It describes what the early church looks like, and prescribes what all churches should aspire to.*

*Acts is more than just a historical documentary...it is a personal narrative telling the story of God's followers. This narrative includes many scenes, acts (no pun intended), characters, and plot lines which lead us back to God. There is one person who ties everything together and is woven throughout the narrative as the main character with the leading role..and it may not be who you think it is.*

*Luke wrote the book of Acts, but he rarely mentions himself. Peter and John were the pillars of the early church, but they take a back seat in this story. Over half of the narrative follows the life and journey of the Apostle Paul, but he is still not the most important person in the book.*

*The main character in the book of Acts is the person of the Holy Spirit! You see his presence, power, and influence throughout every story and plot twist. Before Jesus left, he promised his followers something better was coming...the Holy Spirit (John 16:7).*

*We learn more about who the Holy Spirit is and how he operates in the book of Acts than any other book in the Bible. In this book, we see the power of the Holy Spirit and how he empowered followers of Jesus to accomplish the will of God (Acts1:8).*

*It is my hope and prayer throughout this LIFE Group season, you not only learn about Jesus and his first followers...but you receive, follow and EMPOWERED by the Holy Spirit!*

*May God bless,*

**Kurt Charlton**



*Lead Minister*

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE:

The purpose of this guide is to help you dive deeper into the book of Acts and the works of the Holy Spirit.

### SERMON NOTES:

Bring this workbook to church each Sunday. As you listen to the sermon, make a note when you hear something that surprises you, intrigues you, bothers you, challenges you, or encourages you. Use this as a starting point for your group discussion.

### ACTS OVERVIEW:

Each week, we will provide extra insight into the background of the text as you begin your own study. These notes are meant to help the scriptures come alive for us. They will add a depth of meaning and help us see the continuity of the central themes throughout the book of Acts.

### CONNECT QUESTIONS:

These questions will help you and your group members become more comfortable with talking and sharing with each other. Not only will you learn more about one another, the questions will help to steer the discussion in the direction of the topic.

### DIGGING IN:

These questions are the “meat” of the discussion and will point back to the sermon each week. Feel free to read and answer the questions before your group meets. They will also help you dig deeper into the Scriptures during your group discussions.

### CHANGE QUESTIONS:

Conviction leads people to significant actions. At the end of Jesus’ most famous sermon, he says if you do not put his words into practice, then you are a fool (Matthew 7:24-27). Life transformation is the ultimate goal of a follower of Christ. This happens through personal reflection and a genuine response to what you have heard from God. Feel free to answer the questions out loud when your leader reads them or you can quietly reflect and write a response in your workbook. This is the time to go deep and make it personal!

### WRAP UP:

This section is a summary of that week's study.

### CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER:

Please focus this time on your own personal praises and requests instead of listing all of the bad things that happened to someone you know. We challenge you to get “deep” with one another relationally, which means becoming a little bit vulnerable as you are honest with one-another.

### LEADER LEARNING:

This information may help you in preparing for the material you will be leading and anticipate some of the questions the group may ask. This section will not appear in the student’s workbook.

# WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THE BOOK OF ACTS:

## INTRODUCTION

Acts is written by Luke, the physician, who is the only Gentile author of the New Testament. Luke covertly includes himself into the narrative a few times by saying we/us. The Gospel of Luke is episode one; Acts is episode two. The movement of the church in Acts follows the general flow of Jesus' instructions in Acts 1:8; Jerusalem (Acts 1:1-8:1a); Judea/Samaria (Acts 8:1b-12:25); Ends of the world (Acts 13-28).

## MAJOR THEMES

### - HOLY SPIRIT (and his power)

Holy Spirit is mentioned 56 times, which is more per chapter than any other book of the Bible. He is responsible for every major turning point in the narrative. (1:2; 1:8; 2:1-4; 4:28-31; 5:32; 8:15-17; 10:44-46; 11:15; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:4-6; 20:22)

### - PERSECUTION (and its results)

Early Christians suffered intense persecution, but Luke always records the positive attitudes and results. (4:3-4; 4:23-24; 5:40-42; 8:1-4; 11:19-21; 12:1-19; 14:1-7; 14:8-22; 16:25-34; 18:1-8; 21:11)

### - BAPTISM (and its importance)

Baptism was clearly commanded as a response to faith in Jesus (2:38) and was the common practice for all new believers. (2:37-41; 8:5-13; 8:36-38; 9:10-12; 9:17-19; 10:47-48; 16:13-15; 16:27-34; 18:5-8; 19:1-5; 22:14-17)

### - THE CHURCH (and its ups/downs)

Luke gives church summary statements like a narrator who wants to inform the readers of what they missed in-between each scene. (2:42-27; 4:32-37; 5:12-16; 5:42; 6:7; 9:31; 12: 24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:19-20)

### - PRAYER (and its effects)

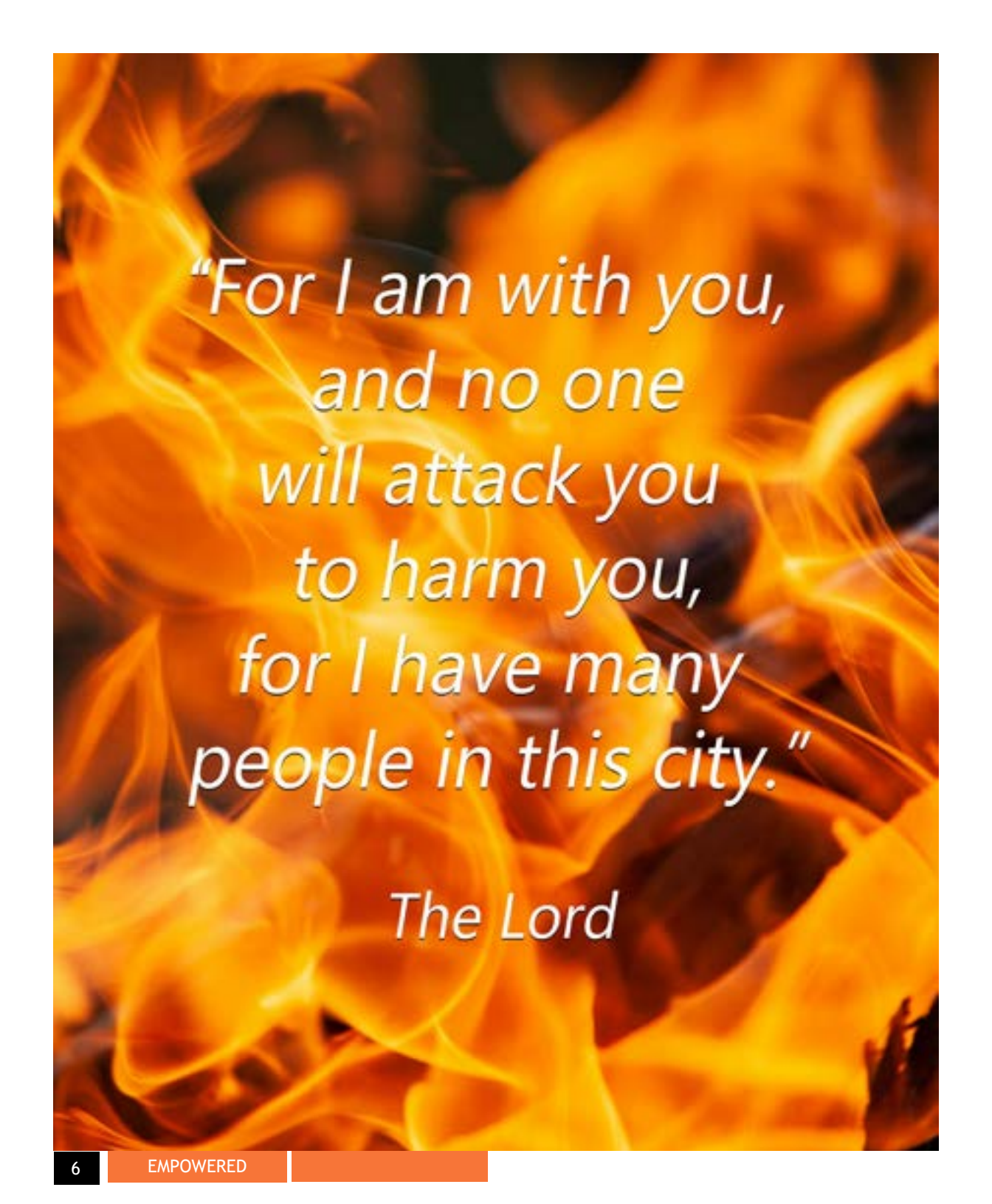
Prayer is intentionally scattered throughout the entire narrative. It is almost like a supporting character beside the Holy Spirit. (1:14; 1:21; 4:31; 6:6; 9:40; 10:1-9; 12:12; 13:1-3; 14:23; 16:25; 20:36; 21:5; 22:17; 28:8)

## DESCRIPTIVE VS. PRESCRIPTIVE

Be careful not to read the book of Acts as a prescription for how every single church should operate today. There are times when Luke is merely describing the events as they unfold. It is up to us to interpret and apply what these descriptions mean for us today. One way to do this is to seek the underlying principle that is described, and then turn that into a principle for life.

Should we cast lots or draw names out of a hat when choosing leaders for our church? Should we meet together every single day of the week? Should we sell all of our possessions and give our money to the poor? Should we speak in tongues when we accept the Holy Spirit? These are examples of descriptions not prescriptions for everyone, everywhere.

An example of turning a description into a principle can be found in Acts 2:42. Luke says the first converts devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching and to fellowship. The principle for our lives today is: we us in we should be devoted to God's Word and to living in community with other Christ followers. Acts 2:46 says they met daily in the temple courts and in homes. The principle for us is we should regularly gather corporately and privately with other believers.



*“For I am with you,  
and no one  
will attack you  
to harm you,  
for I have many  
people in this city.”*

*The Lord*

# EMPOWERED

The Acts of the Holy Spirit

April 27 - Empowered Discipleship

# APRIL 27 - EMPOWERED DISCIPLESHIP

## ACTS 18:1-25 NIV

### In Corinth

<sup>1</sup> After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. <sup>2</sup> There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, <sup>3</sup> and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. <sup>4</sup> Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

<sup>5</sup> When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. <sup>6</sup> But when they opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent of it. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”

<sup>7</sup> Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. <sup>8</sup> Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptized.

<sup>9</sup> One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: “Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. <sup>10</sup> For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.” <sup>11</sup> So Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.

<sup>12</sup> While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews of Corinth made a united attack on Paul and brought him to the place of judgment. <sup>13</sup> “This man,” they charged, “is persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law.”

<sup>14</sup> Just as Paul was about to speak, Gallio said to them, “If you Jews were making a complaint about some misdemeanor or serious crime, it would be reasonable for me to listen to you. <sup>15</sup> But since it involves questions about words and names and your own law—settle the matter yourselves. I will not be a judge of such things.” <sup>16</sup> So he drove them off. <sup>17</sup> Then the crowd there turned on Sosthenes the synagogue leader and beat him in front of the proconsul; and Gallio showed no concern whatever.

### Priscilla, Aquila, and Apollos

<sup>18</sup> Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sisters and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Cenchreae because of a vow he had taken. <sup>19</sup> They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. <sup>20</sup> When they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined. <sup>21</sup> But as he left, he promised, “I will come back if it is God’s will.” Then he set sail from Ephesus. <sup>22</sup> When he landed at Caesarea, he went up to Jerusalem and greeted the church and then went down to Antioch.



<sup>23</sup> After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out from there and traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

<sup>24</sup> Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. <sup>25</sup> He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. <sup>26</sup> He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

<sup>27</sup> When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers and sisters encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. When he arrived, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. <sup>28</sup> For he vigorously refuted his Jewish opponents in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.

## ACTS OVERVIEW

### PRISCILLA AND AQUILA (Acts 18:1-4; 18-26)

This dynamic duo were extremely helpful to Paul's ministry. Aquila was a tent maker like Paul, which was one reason for their close partnership. A tent maker was likely a catch-all term for someone who dealt with all sorts of leather and woven goods. Paul mentions Priscilla and Aquila multiple times in his letters, which means they remained close associates and ministry partners (1 Corinthians 16:19; Romans 16:35; 2 Timothy 4:19, Prisca was Priscilla's formal name). The fact Priscilla's name is often mentioned first shows she played a significant role in the ministry of the early church.

### ASKING FOR HELP (Acts 18:5)

Paul was very willing to ask for help in major ways. It is difficult to overstate the logistical and financial burdens of Paul's missionary journeys. Travel was expensive, slow, and dangerous. Paul and his team sought to devote as much of their time as possible to preaching the Gospel and support new congregations, but it was a challenge. They struggled to find venues where they could teach and safe places where they could stay for lengthy periods. Paul and his team needed friends in the community to help them, and there were very few seasoned Christians at this point.

God orchestrated friendships for Paul with a handful of especially influential individuals. Many people placed their trust in Christ and partnered with Paul in substantial ways throughout his journeys. Paul was not afraid to ask for help or receive help in his ministry, but he was also cautious not to over-ask and become a burden. (See 2 Corinthians 11:9; Philippians 4:19)

## PAID PASTORS (Acts 18:5)

There are times when Paul would use his trade as a tent maker to provide for himself and support his own ministry but other times he would gladly accept and even ask for support from others. There is neither a right nor wrong approach. Throughout the New Testament we see many examples of church leaders being paid and supported. This echoes the support God instituted for the Priests and Levites in the Old Testament (Numbers 18:8-32). In Acts 18:5 we see that the support from the Macedonian church allowed Paul to focus on his primary calling and giftedness: preaching. (See also 2 Thessalonians 3:7-10; 1 Corinthians 9:9-14; Philippians 4:16-19; Acts 6:2; 1 Timothy 5:17-18.)

## WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT?

In this passage, we encounter Aquila and Priscilla taking Apollos aside to correct his beliefs and teach him about Christian baptism. Two words we use to point out what could be wrong in a different belief system are theology, the study of God, and doctrine. Errors in theology are errors in the way people view God, perceive God, or believe God has acted. Errors in doctrine have more to do with beliefs about spiritual truths. They can include theology but are not limited to the character and actions of God. Doctrine is a broader term that can encompass an error in belief, practice, or truths about God.

## REFLECTING

- **Think back to the message on Sunday. What stood out to you? What did you discover that was a new thought for you?**

## OPENING QUESTIONS

1. **Who first helped you understand your faith?**
2. **When has someone seen potential in you and helped you develop?**
3. **When have you felt like you were capable of a job/task/opportunity but were overlooked?**

## DIGGING IN

1. **Read Acts 18:1-8. How does Luke's description of Paul as a tentmaker (vs. 3) relate to Silas and Timothy's arrival (vs. 5)?**
2. **What leadership lesson can we learn from Paul being able to devote himself exclusively to preaching in Acts 18:5? (See "Asking for Help" on pg. 9 and "Paid Pastors" on pg. 10.)**





## CHANGE

- 1. Who is someone that I am developing or discipling?**
- 2. How can I help others develop through delegating and empowering?**
- 3. How can I correct the beliefs of others with kindness and respect?**

## WRAP UP

Paul found such success in ministry in Corinth that he stayed a long time. Discipleship is a process. We should not be content with just conversions. Priscilla and Aquila spent a small amount of time with Apollos, but their investment in him brought great dividends to the church. When we practice discipleship, we just don't fulfill our role: we also empower others to fulfill the role that Jesus has given to them, as well. Conversion is just the beginning of the process. Discipleship is a life-long endeavor.

## CARE

- **How can we pray for each other?**
- **How can we pray for our church?**

ADDITIONAL NOTES





# MAY 4 - EMPOWERED TRUTH

## ACTS 19:1-41 NIV

### Paul in Ephesus

<sup>1</sup> While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples <sup>2</sup> and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”

They answered, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”

<sup>3</sup> So Paul asked, “Then what baptism did you receive?”

“John’s baptism,” they replied.

<sup>4</sup> Paul said, “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” <sup>5</sup> On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

<sup>6</sup> When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. <sup>7</sup> There were about twelve men in all.

<sup>8</sup> Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. <sup>9</sup> But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. <sup>10</sup> This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.

<sup>11</sup> God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, <sup>12</sup> so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.

<sup>13</sup> Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, “In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.” <sup>14</sup> Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this.

<sup>15</sup> One day the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?”

<sup>16</sup> Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.

<sup>17</sup> When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. <sup>18</sup> Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed what they had done. <sup>19</sup> A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. <sup>20</sup> In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.

<sup>21</sup> After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. “After I have been there,” he said, “I must visit Rome also.” <sup>22</sup> He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he stayed in the province of Asia a little longer.

## The Riot in Ephesus

<sup>23</sup> About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. <sup>24</sup> A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in a lot of business for the craftsmen there. <sup>25</sup> He called them together, along with the workers in related trades, and said: “You know, my friends, that we receive a good income from this business. <sup>26</sup> And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that gods made by human hands are no gods at all. <sup>27</sup> There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited; and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty.”

<sup>28</sup> When they heard this, they were furious and began shouting: “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” <sup>29</sup> Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul’s traveling companions from Macedonia, and all of them rushed into the theater together. <sup>30</sup> Paul wanted to appear before the crowd, but the disciples would not let him. <sup>31</sup> Even some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, sent him a message begging him not to venture into the theater.

<sup>32</sup> The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there. <sup>33</sup> The Jews in the crowd pushed Alexander to the front, and they shouted instructions to him. He motioned for silence in order to make a defense before the people. <sup>34</sup> But when they realized he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for about two hours: “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”

<sup>35</sup> The city clerk quieted the crowd and said: “Fellow Ephesians, doesn’t all the world know that the city of Ephesus is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image, which fell from heaven? <sup>36</sup> Therefore, since these facts are undeniable, you ought to calm down and not do anything rash. <sup>37</sup> You have brought these men here, though they have neither robbed temples nor blasphemed our goddess. <sup>38</sup> If, then, Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a grievance against anybody, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. They can press charges. <sup>39</sup> If there is anything further you want to bring up, it must be settled in a legal assembly. <sup>40</sup> As it is, we are in danger of being charged with rioting because of what happened today. In that case we would not be able to account for this commotion, since there is no reason for it.” <sup>41</sup> After he had said this, he dismissed the assembly.

## ACTS OVERVIEW

### WRONG BAPTISM (Acts 19:1-7)

Yes, there are wrong ways to be baptized. While the baptism these men received was not wrong, it was not the baptism Jesus gave to us. When we study the scriptures, we find a complete baptism found in the salvation and work of Jesus. Baptism is not just a way to repent of sins. This story is also connected to what comes immediately before in Acts 18:24-26. In the passage from last week, the entire point is that Apollos was a gifted communicator and evangelist, but his doctrine was wrong and incomplete. These were sincere mistakes in doctrine, but they had to be corrected.

### JOHN'S BAPTISM (Acts 19:4-6)

John the Baptist was the cousin of Jesus (Luke 1), an extremely successful preacher (Luke 3:1-12), and one who fulfilled the prophecy to prepare the way for Jesus (Luke 3:4-6). He preached in the wilderness outside of Jerusalem in order to usher in the ministry of Jesus. He personally baptized Jesus but was soon killed because he spoke out against King Herod the Tetrarch (Luke 3:19-20).

Ephesus was 800 miles from Jerusalem where John the Baptist, preached and this event in Acts happened decades later. So, John's influence in the region was enormous. John's baptism was not sufficient for salvation; it was a precursor to show something greater was coming (Luke 3:16). John's baptism and Christian baptism are both tied to repentance, but Christian baptism involves much more. This story unites belief/faith, repentance, water baptism, the Holy Spirit, and salvation.

### EXORCISMS (Acts 19:13-16)

Movies, books, and folklore perpetuate many myths and misconceptions about demonic activity. Christians and non-Christians may get caught up in thinking they can understand and control the spiritual world, either for good or bad intentions. This can be extremely dangerous. As this passage shows, exorcisms, or any other miracle, can only be performed through the power and permission of God/Jesus/Spirit. We cannot copy the actions, words, or procedures of anyone else and use them as a formula to freely wield the power of God/Jesus/Spirit. (See Mark 9:28-29 for another example of a failed exorcism.)

### ARTEMIS/DIANA (Acts 19:24, 35)

Artemis is the Greek rendition of the Roman goddess Diana. "She was the most powerful divinity in the area. In the distant past a meteorite smashed into the surface of the earth somewhere near Ephesus, and the local public people regarded it as a gift from heaven, a statue (though presumably not very lifelike) of the goddess herself." She is often portrayed as a grotesque figure with many nodules protruding from her chest which can be understood as fertility symbols.

“The temple of Artemis was massive and her cult -- run entirely by female officials-- was the religious center of the whole area. Images of Artemis, large and small, dominated the city. Archaeologists have found dozens of them.” Excerpts from *Acts: 24 Studies for Individuals and Groups* by N. T. Wright, pg 97.

## LONGER MINISTRIES

On this missionary journey, we see Paul intentionally spending larger periods of times with two churches. His first missionary journey was marked with a very quick trip through many cities, trying to establish a few Christians in each place. But on this missionary journey, Paul spends 1.5 years in the city of Corinth (Acts 18:18), and 2.5 years in the city of Ephesus (Acts 19:8-10). These cities did not only receive attention from Paul during his journeys: he also later wrote letters to these churches to continue the discipleship process that he had begun.

## REFLECTING

- **Think back to the message on Sunday. What stood out to you? What did you discover that was a new thought for you?**

## OPENING QUESTIONS:

1. **What is something you didn't understand and were surprised when you discovered the truth?**
  
2. **Have someone search for “36 Secret Hidden Messages in Company Logos You See All the Time” and give a few examples to discuss as a group.**





## CHANGE

1. **How can I have and help others to have a healthy doctrine of baptism and salvation?**
2. **How can I have and help others to have a healthy approach to spiritual matters?**
3. **How can I have and help others to have a healthy approach to cultural realities?**

## WRAP UP

God's power was working through Paul and his traveling companions. The truth they spoke in Ephesus caused quite a disturbance. The display of God's power enforced the truth so well that the economics of the city were affected. God's truth was able to influence a large, pagan, idol-worshipping city. When God's truth is accompanied by God's power, the effect is always seen. God is more powerful than illness and disease, evil spirits, and city mobs.



## CARE

- How can we pray for each other?
- How can we pray for our church?

ADDITIONAL NOTES

# EMPOWERED

The Acts of the Holy Spirit

May 11 - Empowered Calling

# MAY 11 - EMPOWERED CALLING

## ACTS 20:1-21:16 NIV

*(Due to space constraints, we have only included Acts 20:13-38 below. The entire passage for this week's message and study is Acts 20:1-21:16.)*

### ACTS 20:13-38

#### Paul's Farewell to the Ephesian Elders

<sup>13</sup> We went on ahead to the ship and sailed for Assos, where we were going to take Paul aboard. He had made this arrangement because he was going there on foot. <sup>14</sup> When he met us at Assos, we took him aboard and went on to Mitylene. <sup>15</sup> The next day we set sail from there and arrived off Chios. The day after that we crossed over to Samos, and on the following day arrived at Miletus. <sup>16</sup> Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus to avoid spending time in the province of Asia, for he was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem, if possible, by the day of Pentecost.

<sup>17</sup> From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. <sup>18</sup> When they arrived, he said to them: "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. <sup>19</sup> I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents. <sup>20</sup> You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. <sup>21</sup> I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

<sup>22</sup> "And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. <sup>23</sup> I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. <sup>24</sup> However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace.

<sup>25</sup> "Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. <sup>26</sup> Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of any of you. <sup>27</sup> For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. <sup>28</sup> Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. <sup>29</sup> I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. <sup>30</sup> Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. <sup>31</sup> So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

<sup>32</sup> "Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. <sup>33</sup> I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. <sup>34</sup> You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. <sup>35</sup> In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

<sup>36</sup> When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. <sup>37</sup> They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. <sup>38</sup> What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship.

## ACTS OVERVIEW

### FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK (Acts 20:7)

Luke includes the small but significant detail that Christians would meet together on the first day of the week to break bread together. The first day of the week was Sunday, which was the day Jesus was resurrected from the dead. It was the law, custom, and tradition of the Jews to meet as congregations in the synagogues on the Sabbath which was Saturday. This first-person account from Luke confirms the new custom for Christian congregations was to meet on Sundays to celebrate the Lord's Day. Also note the first person "we" which means Luke was present for this resurrection event. (See John 20:1; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Revelation 1:10; [gotquestions.org/Lords-day.html](http://gotquestions.org/Lords-day.html))

### CHURCH IN EPHESUS (Acts 20:13-38)

Paul briefly established the church in Ephesus during his second missionary journey and left Priscilla and Aquila as leaders (Acts 18:19-21). He promised he would come back, which he did between his second and third missionary journeys. Paul's extended stay in Ephesus lasted around three years, which is the longest recorded time Paul spent in one place (Acts 19:8-10; 20:31). He saw tremendous success in this city; so much that the entire region and province of Asia heard about the Word of the Lord (Acts 19:10).

The book of Acts ends with Paul's imprisonment in Rome. It was during this time that he wrote the epistle of Ephesians to the church. This letter, especially the first chapter, shows the tremendous love and close relationship Paul had with the Ephesian church.

### PAUL'S FINAL SERMON (Acts 20:18-35)

This is the last message we have from Paul and the only one directed at believers. Paul stresses four major themes that summarize his entire ministry career: preaching the Gospel of Grace (vs. 21, 25-27, 31-32), suffering (vs. 19, 22-23), giving/working (vs. 18, 33-35), and leadership (vs. 28-31). This is a message to the Church, not just one congregation. This sermon has two unique and interesting features. (1) Paul never cites Scripture. Rather, his "text" is the testimony of his own life of service and suffering for the believers. (2) Paul does quote Jesus, but it is a saying never recorded in the Gospels. This free-floating proverb is attached to Paul's sermon as its finale. How fitting that Jesus gets the last word in Paul's final sermon!



- 2. Review Acts 20:16-38. What stands out to you about the relationship Paul had with the Ephesian church? (See “Church in Ephesus” on pg. 20)**
  
- 3. Reread Acts 20:22-24. What is shocking about how the Holy Spirit compels Paul? How does this compare to what many people think the Holy Spirit may be leading them to do?**
  
- 4. Examine Acts 20:25-31 again. Why is the imagery of sheep, shepherds, and wolves appropriate for the leaders and overseers of the church?**
  
- 5. Read Acts 20:32-35. Why do you think Paul ended his speech by encouraging the leaders to be generous? What can we learn from this?**
  
- 6. Read the following passages: Acts 21:4; 21:10-11; 21:12-14. What do each share in common? Contrast that message with Acts 20:22.**

7. The statement made Paul's friends in Caesarea in response to his decision to go to Jerusalem -- "may the Lord's will be done" (21:14) -- echo Jesus' words in Gethsemane in Mark 14:36. How are the circumstances similar?

## CHANGE

1. How can I develop close relationships with those in our church like Paul did with the Ephesians?
2. When have I sought comfort and convenience instead of answering the call to surrender?
3. Where do I think the Holy Spirit is leading me? What do I think I am being called to do?



## WRAP UP

Paul's calling was not an easy one. Not only was his task daunting (taking the message of Jesus to all the Gentile world), but he faced opposition all along the way. The next calling from the Spirit was no different. He would have amazing opportunities to share the gospel, but he would face the most challenging legal battles of his life. Our calling will not be easy, but it will be rewarding. At times, our calling will require sacrifice. Not everything God has asked us to do is easy. Many times, following God will put us in uncomfortable circumstances and ask us to do challenging things. But God promises to always go with us, and his power will be displayed in us when we choose to surrender and follow.

## CARE

- **How can we pray for each other?**
- **How can we pray for our church?**

**ADDITIONAL NOTES**



# MAY 18 - EMPOWERED HARDSHIP

## ACTS 21:17-23:35 NIV

*(Due to the length of the passage this week, we have only included 2 sections of the text for the lesson this week. We would still encourage the group to read the entire passage for the purpose of study and discussion.)*

### ACTS 21:17-26 NIV

#### **Paul's Arrival at Jerusalem**

<sup>17</sup> When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brothers and sisters received us warmly. <sup>18</sup> The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and all the elders were present. <sup>19</sup> Paul greeted them and reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

<sup>20</sup> When they heard this, they praised God. Then they said to Paul: "You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law. <sup>21</sup> They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs. <sup>22</sup> What shall we do? They will certainly hear that you have come, <sup>23</sup> so do what we tell you. There are four men with us who have made a vow. <sup>24</sup> Take these men, join in their purification rites and pay their expenses, so that they can have their heads shaved. Then everyone will know there is no truth in these reports about you, but that you yourself are living in obedience to the law. <sup>25</sup> As for the Gentile believers, we have written to them our decision that they should abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality."

<sup>26</sup> The next day Paul took the men and purified himself along with them. Then he went to the temple to give notice of the date when the days of purification would end and the offering would be made for each of them.

### ACTS 23:1-11 NIV

#### **Paul Before the Council**

<sup>1</sup> Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, "My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day." <sup>2</sup> At this the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth. <sup>3</sup> Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck!"

<sup>4</sup> Those who were standing near Paul said, "How dare you insult God's high priest!"

<sup>5</sup> Paul replied, "Brothers, I did not realize that he was the high priest; for it is written: 'Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.'"

<sup>6</sup> Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, “My brothers, I am a Pharisee, descended from Pharisees. I stand on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead.” <sup>7</sup> When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. <sup>8</sup> (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees believe all these things.)

<sup>9</sup> There was a great uproar, and some of the teachers of the law who were Pharisees stood up and argued vigorously. “We find nothing wrong with this man,” they said. “What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?” <sup>10</sup> The dispute became so violent that the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them. He ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force and bring him into the barracks.

<sup>11</sup> The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, “Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.”

## ACTS OVERVIEW

### WHY DID PAUL GO TO JERUSALEM?

Paul knew that harm would come to him when he arrived in Jerusalem, but he went anyway. There were many godly believers who tried to talk Paul out of going to Jerusalem, including Luke himself (Acts 21:12). But Paul was compelled by the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem (Acts 20:22-24). This scene is reminiscent of Jesus being compelled to go to Jerusalem to be arrested and murdered (Luke 9:51). The disciples also tried to talk Jesus out of going to Jerusalem to die. But it was ordained by God.

### PAUL’S NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES

- Acts 21:30-31 - Jewish rioters almost killed Paul; Roman troops arrested him to save him.
- Acts 21:35-36 - After being arrested, Paul had to be taken away again because the crowd was going to kill him.
- Acts 22:22-24 - Again, Paul was almost killed after his speech to the crowd and had to be removed.
- Acts 23:10 - Paul was almost torn to pieces by the Sanhedrin/religious leaders and had to be removed.
- Acts 23:12 - More than 40 Jews formed a conspiracy and took a vow to kill Paul; the Roman commander sent Paul away to save him.

## PAUL'S ROMAN CITIZENSHIP

“Did Paul have to prove his Roman citizenship?... It may seem unlikely that Paul still had the proof about his person after all he'd been through, but there was an official badge, a little double-faced tablet, made of bronze most likely, known as a ‘diploma.’ It functioned both as a birth certificate and as a citizenship token.... Antony, the famous Roman general and politician, had granted some Jews citizenship after they had helped him in his campaigns in the middle of the 1st century BC. Further back, there is evidence for a Jewish presence in Tarsus in the 170's BC and for some Jews there becoming Roman citizens at least 100 years before Paul's day. So, it is perfectly possible that Paul's citizenship was inherited, not just by him, but by his father and even his grandfather before him.” Excerpt from *Acts: 24 Studies for Individuals and Groups* by N. T. Right. pg. 107.

## PAUL KNEW HE WOULD NOT DIE

An often used saying is “a man destined to hang can never drown.” This is usually used to give someone courage and resolve to keep on fighting knowing they will be able to endure what they are going through because of their destiny. In Acts 19:21, Paul decided in the Spirit that he was destined to go to Rome. In Acts 23:11, Jesus confirms this and encourages Paul that he must go to Rome. This would have strengthened his resolve to continue preaching, leading, and evangelizing in the midst of some terrible situations. Regardless of how close to death Paul came, he knew he would testify one day in Rome.

## PAUL'S MINISTRY...GOD'S SUCCESS

*Acts 21:19 says “Paul greeted them and reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.”*

Notice the words Luke uses in this detailed report of Paul's missionary journeys. Paul's report was about what GOD had done among the Gentiles, not himself. Paul did not take credit for the success. It was his ministry and his work, but it was ultimately God who was responsible for the success. Churches and individuals should celebrate successful ministry accomplishments, but they should never take the credit for the success. God does the work! Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:7 *“So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.”*

## REFLECTING

- **Think back to the message on Sunday. What stood out to you? What did you discover that was a new thought for you?**

## OPENING QUESTIONS:

1. **Who is a person you have met whose reputation precedes them?**
2. **When have you gone into a situation knowing it was not going to turn out well?**
3. **Have you ever had a near-death experience? What happened?**

## DIGGING IN:

1. **Read Acts 21:17-26. What was the report that Paul gave to the church leaders in Jerusalem? How did they respond to this success? (See “Paul’s Ministry...God’s Success” on pg. 38. )**
2. **How did Paul's success in ministry lead to a bad reputation in Jerusalem? What did he do to delay his inevitable arrest?**

- 3. How willing was Paul to compromise on the “non-essentials” of the faith for the purpose of solidarity with the Christians in Jerusalem?**
  
- 4. Examine Acts 22:1-21. In what ways did Paul relate to the Jewish crowd to which he was talking? What can we learn from this when we are telling people our testimony?**
  
- 5. What is your testimony? How would you describe your former way of life and compare that to how Jesus has transformed you?**
  
- 6. Look at Acts 23:1-11. How do you see Paul being bold and crafty in his responses to the Sanhedrin?**
  
- 7. We are told that Paul was almost killed at least four times while in Jerusalem (See “Paul's Near-Death Experiences” on pg. 37.) How would Jesus’ words in Acts 23:11 impact Paul at this moment?**





## WRAP UP

In a short period of time, Paul's life was threatened 4 times. He was harshly treated and beaten. The hardships for following the gospel continued to grow. From the “riots in Antioch, the stoning in Lystra, the beatings in Philippi, more riots in Thessalonica, being run out of town in Berea, the court cases and anti-Jewish violence in Corinth, and then that escapade with thousands of chanting pagans in Ephesus”, Paul's life seems to have been constantly in danger. God was building in Paul a testimony of His power and providence. These stories witnessed to the crowds and gave boldness to Paul. God was with him. (Expert from *Acts: 24 Studies for Individuals and Groups*, by N. T. Wright, pg. 103.)

## CARE

- **How can we pray for each other?**
- **How can we pray for our church?**

## ADDITIONAL NOTES

# ADDITIONAL NOTES

# EMPOWERED

The Acts of the Holy Spirit

May 25 - Empowered Witness

# MAY 25 - EMPOWERED WITNESS

## ACTS 24:1-26:32 NIV

*(Due to the length of the passage of scripture, we have only provided portions of the passage this week. Please read Acts 24-26 in preparation for your group discussion.)*

### ACTS 24:1-16 NIV

#### Paul's Trial Before Felix

<sup>1</sup> Five days later the high priest Ananias went down to Caesarea with some of the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus, and they brought their charges against Paul before the governor. <sup>2</sup> When Paul was called in, Tertullus presented his case before Felix: "We have enjoyed a long period of peace under you, and your foresight has brought about reforms in this nation. <sup>3</sup> Everywhere and in every way, most excellent Felix, we acknowledge this with profound gratitude. <sup>4</sup> But in order not to weary you further, I would request that you be kind enough to hear us briefly.

<sup>5</sup> "We have found this man to be a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect <sup>6</sup> and even tried to desecrate the temple; so we seized him. [<sup>7</sup>] <sup>8</sup> By examining him yourself you will be able to learn the truth about all these charges we are bringing against him."

<sup>9</sup> The other Jews joined in the accusation, asserting that these things were true.

<sup>10</sup> When the governor motioned for him to speak, Paul replied: "I know that for a number of years you have been a judge over this nation; so I gladly make my defense. <sup>11</sup> You can easily verify that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship. <sup>12</sup> My accusers did not find me arguing with anyone at the temple, or stirring up a crowd in the synagogues or anywhere else in the city. <sup>13</sup> And they cannot prove to you the charges they are now making against me. <sup>14</sup> However, I admit that I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, <sup>15</sup> and I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. <sup>16</sup> So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

### ACTS 25:7-12 NIV

#### Paul's Trial Before Festus

<sup>7</sup> When Paul came in, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him. They brought many serious charges against him, but they could not prove them.

<sup>8</sup> Then Paul made his defense: "I have done nothing wrong against the Jewish law or against the temple or against Caesar."

<sup>9</sup> Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there on these charges?"

<sup>10</sup> Paul answered: "I am now standing before Caesar's court, where I ought to be tried. I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well. <sup>11</sup> If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!"

<sup>12</sup> After Festus had conferred with his council, he declared: "You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!"

## ACTS 26:12-19 NIV

### Paul's Trial Before Agrippa

<sup>12</sup> "On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. <sup>13</sup> About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. <sup>14</sup> We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' <sup>15</sup> "Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?'

" 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied. <sup>16</sup> 'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me. <sup>17</sup> I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them <sup>18</sup> to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

<sup>19</sup> "So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven."

## ACTS OVERVIEW

### FIVE TRIALS OF JESUS & PAUL

#### 5 Trials of Jesus

- Caiaphas (John 18)
- Sanhedrin (Luke 22)
- Pilate (Luke 23)
- Herod (Luke 23)
- Pilate (Luke 23)

#### 5 Trials of Paul

- Jewish populace (Acts 22)
- Felix (Acts 24)
- Festus (Acts 25)
- Agrippa II (Acts 26)
- Rome

### FELIX

Felix was the governor of Judea and Samaria when the apostle Paul was arrested in Jerusalem. Antonius Felix was formerly a slave but was promoted by Claudius Caesar to the office of governor. The Roman historian Tacitus described Felix as "cruel, licentious, and base." He attempted to solicit a bribe from Paul but did not receive it.

## FESTUS

Porcius Festus was the fifth procurator of Judea from 59 to 62 AD. Festus succeeded Felix as the procurator of the region. Felix had created a mess between the Jews and the Romans. His preference for those who would pay for his favor made him unpredictable and unfair. Festus tried to be a better man than Felix, but the tension between the Jews and the Romans was already a powder keg. Festus even had to intervene between Agrippa and the Jews. Herod Agrippa II had built his palace so close to the temple that it threatened to block the entrance to one of the gates. Festus, as Agrippa's overseer, had to settle the disagreement.

## AGRIPPA II

Herod Agrippa II was the fifth and final "King Herod" and the figurehead King of the Jews. He lived with his sister, Bernice, and was rumored to have relations with her. Late in his career, Herod Agrippa II saw that tensions were rising between Rome and the Jews, and he tried unsuccessfully to prevent war. Ultimately, he sided with Rome, and he was expelled by his Jewish subjects. He lived the rest of his life in Rome. ([From www.gotquestions.org/Felix-in-the-Bible](http://www.gotquestions.org/Felix-in-the-Bible))

## WITNESS

As Paul shares his testimony with King Agrippa II, he shares with us more details about his conversation with Jesus on the road to Damascus. Notice below how Jesus called him to be a witness, fulfilling the challenge Jesus had given to all the Apostles in Acts 1:

- Acts 26:16 (NIV) *"Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me."*
- Acts 1:8 (NIV) *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

## REFLECTING

- **Think back to the message on Sunday. What stood out to you? What did you discover that was a new thought for you?**





- 3. Why do you think the topics of righteousness, self-control, and judgment were frightening for Felix (See Acts 24:25)? Why are these topics difficult or alarming today? (See "Felix" on pg. 47)**
  
- 4. Summarize the events of chapter 25:**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 5. Look at Acts 26. Why do you think Paul appealed to Caesar even though it seemed as if he could have gotten out of trouble another way?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 6. Read Luke 12:11. In what ways do we see the fulfillment of this prediction of Jesus in Acts 24-26? How did Paul's empowered response protect him?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 7. In what ways can Christians today quickly lose their witness in the midst of false accusations and trials of public opinion today?**

## CHANGE

1. If I were put on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict me?
2. How would I respond if I had to testify in court regarding my activities for God?
3. What is my testimony? Am I ready to be a witness to what Jesus has done for me?

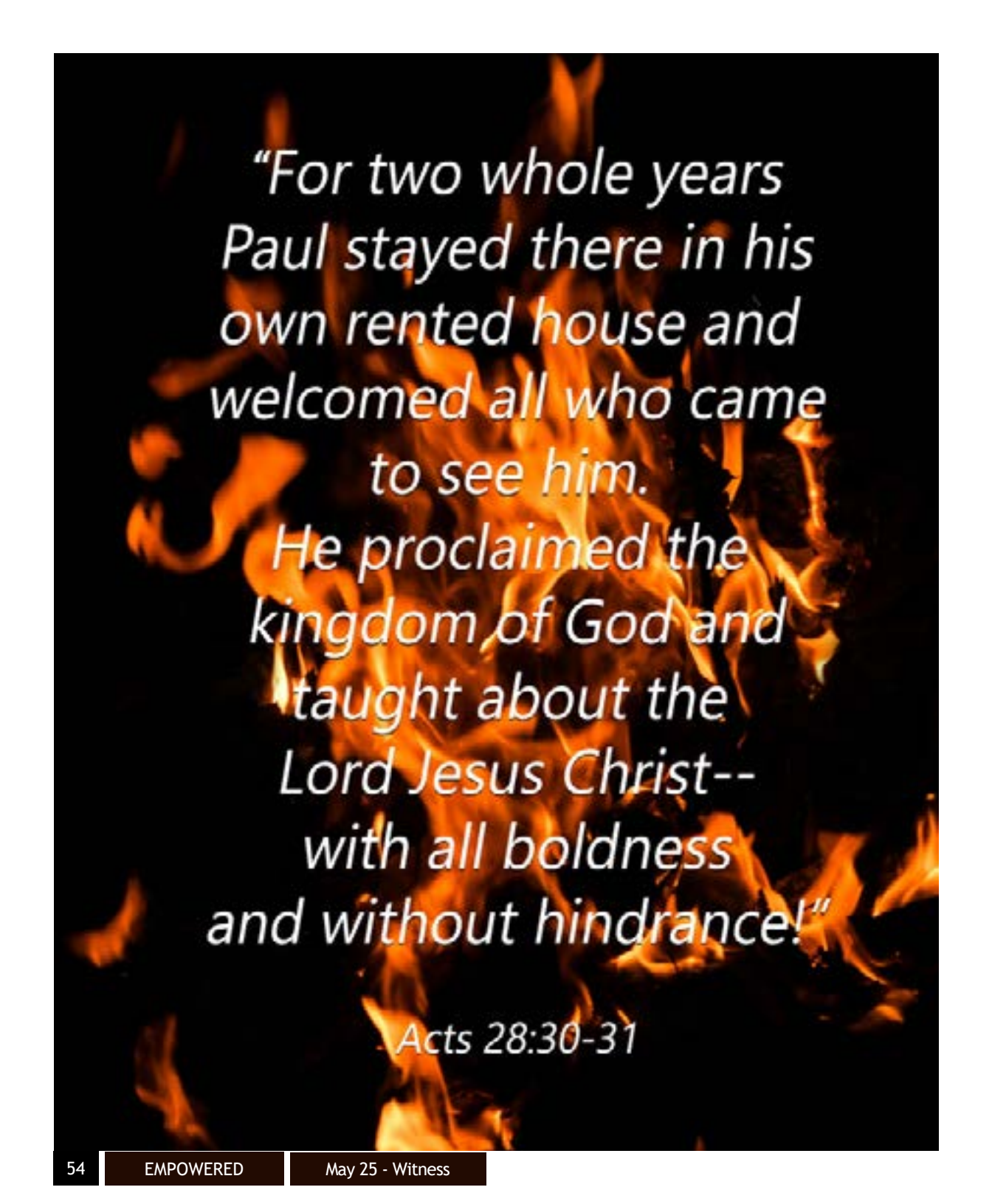
## WRAP UP

Paul's journey through these trials showed the Holy Spirit's power in his life. He did not respond with the same words in each trial, yet the words he spoke were the right words to get him an audience before Ceasar in Rome. When we are put in situations where we can share the witness of what we know about Jesus, we can trust the Spirit to help us with what to say. Our witness is not just our creation; the Spirit of God empowers our witness. Even if our words are not perfect, he can still bring about a perfect result.

## CARE

- **How can we pray for each other?**
- **How can we pray for our church?**

## ADDITIONAL NOTES

The background of the slide is a close-up, high-contrast image of bright orange and yellow flames against a dark, almost black background. The flames are dynamic and appear to be rising and dancing.

*“For two whole years  
Paul stayed there in his  
own rented house and  
welcomed all who came  
to see him.*

*He proclaimed the  
kingdom of God and  
taught about the  
Lord Jesus Christ--  
with all boldness  
and without hindrance!”*

*Acts 28:30-31*

# EMPOWERED

The Acts of the Holy Spirit

June 1 - Empowered Trust

# JUNE 1 - EMPOWERED TRUST

## ACTS 27:1- 28:10 NIV

*(Due to the length of the passage, we have included only portions of the scripture in the workbook. Please consider reading the entire passage before you complete this study.)*

### ACTS 27:9-11 NIV

#### Paul Sails for Rome

<sup>9</sup> Much time had been lost, and sailing had already become dangerous because by now it was after the Day of Atonement. So Paul warned them, <sup>10</sup> “Men, I can see that our voyage is going to be disastrous and bring great loss to ship and cargo, and to our own lives also.” <sup>11</sup> But the centurion, instead of listening to what Paul said, followed the advice of the pilot and of the owner of the ship.

### ACTS 27:21-26 NIV

#### The Storm

<sup>21</sup> After they had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up before them and said: “Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss. <sup>22</sup> But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. <sup>23</sup> Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me <sup>24</sup> and said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.’ <sup>25</sup> So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me. <sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island.”

### ACTS 27:33-44 NIV

#### The Shipwreck

<sup>33</sup> Just before dawn Paul urged them all to eat. “For the last fourteen days,” he said, “you have been in constant suspense and have gone without food—you haven’t eaten anything. <sup>34</sup> Now I urge you to take some food. You need it to survive. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head.” <sup>35</sup> After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat. <sup>36</sup> They were all encouraged and ate some food themselves. <sup>37</sup> Altogether there were 276 of us on board. <sup>38</sup> When they had eaten as much as they wanted, they lightened the ship by throwing the grain into the sea.

<sup>39</sup> When daylight came, they did not recognize the land, but they saw a bay with a sandy beach, where they decided to run the ship aground if they could. <sup>40</sup> Cutting loose the anchors, they left them in the sea and at the same time untied the ropes that held the rudders. Then they hoisted the foresail to the wind and made for the beach. <sup>41</sup> But the ship struck a sandbar and ran aground. The bow stuck fast and would not move, and the stern was broken to pieces by the pounding of the surf.



<sup>42</sup> The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners to prevent any of them from swimming away and escaping. <sup>43</sup> But the centurion wanted to spare Paul's life and kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to land. <sup>44</sup> The rest were to get there on planks or on other pieces of the ship. In this way everyone reached land safely.

## ACTS 28:7-10 NIV

### Paul on Malta

<sup>7</sup> There was an estate nearby that belonged to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us to his home and showed us generous hospitality for three days. <sup>8</sup> His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him. <sup>9</sup> When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured. <sup>10</sup> They honored us in many ways; and when we were ready to sail, they furnished us with the supplies we needed.

## ACTS OVERVIEW

### JULIUS THE CENTURION

It is not known, but it is possible that Julius the Centurion became a Christian since we are told his name by Luke. Many believe that Luke's mentioning of the names may indicate they became followers of Christ. He may have given Julius' name to lend credibility to the story since the early readers may have known him and could confirm the details of the account.

### GOD ALLOWS STORMS IN YOUR LIFE

God could have paved the way for Paul to have an uneventful voyage to Rome. Instead, God orchestrated the events so His name would be praised. God used Paul to prophesy about the shipwreck (Acts 27:10) and then offer hope and encouragement to hundreds of men when the storm hit (Acts 27:21-26).

We often pray for God to calm the storms in our lives, and sometimes He does. But when the storms do not stop raging, perhaps our response should be more than prayers of rescue. Perhaps they should also be prayers of opportunity. We should seek to praise God, offer hope, and make His name known to everyone around us, especially when storms hit!

### I TOLD YOU SO

Paul apparently never read the book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. He attempted to encourage a shipload of terrified, hungry, and seasick sailors, soldiers, and prisoners. How did he get their attention? With a good old fashioned "I told you so." The fact that he was right may have done little to win their approval. His purpose, of course, was to convince them that he did, in fact, know what he was talking about.

Paul's evidence was an angel who appeared to him the previous night. Verse 24, coming from anyone else, would sound incredibly arrogant. Paul not only claims to be the servant of God but also the savior of the ship and destined to stand before their Caesar. This was intended to encourage them, and Paul's own faith in God was to bolster theirs. Paul adds one P.S.: "Oh, by the way, we will run aground on some island." It would add yet another bullet point to the accuracy of God's revelation to Paul.

## MAP OF THE JOURNEY

Ships typically hugged the northern coast of the Mediterranean Sea when traveling this part of the world. It allowed them safe harbor during the winter storms and dozens of good ports to resupply provisions. The fact that the ship was driven out to the middle of the Sea was dangerous. This would have pushed at the superstitions of many of the sailors who avoided sailing out of sight of land.



## COMPARE PAUL WITH JONAH

We do not know if it is intentional, but the parallels of this story with Jonah from the Old Testament are difficult to ignore. Both sailed on the Mediterranean Sea. Both encountered a great storm on the sea. Both crews threw cargo overboard. Jonah does not seek God's guidance while Paul receives a vision. The captain advises Jonah while Paul advises the captain. Jonah did not listen to the captain, while the captain did not listen to Paul. Jonah is running away from the will of God while Paul is running toward the call of God.

## REFLECTING

- **Think back to the message on Sunday. What stood out to you? What did you discover that was a new thought for you?**

## OPENING QUESTIONS:

1. Do you find it hard to trust advice that seems contrary to common sense?
2. When have you been broken down and needed to rely on someone for help?
3. Do you stop to help people who are broken down? *Share a story.*

## DIGGING IN:

1. Look back at Acts 27:9-26. Why did the centurion ignore Paul's advice not to set sail from Fair Haven? Why do you think they were more willing to listen to Paul's advice later in the journey?
2. Read vs. 21 again. When have you had a "I told you so" moment with someone? How did it feel? How do you think Paul felt when he addressed everyone?





## CARE

- How can we pray for each other?
- How can we pray for our church?

## ADDITIONAL NOTES

# EMPOWERED

The Acts of the Holy Spirit

June 8 - Empowered

# JUNE - EMPOWERED

## ACTS 28:11-31 NIV

### Paul's Arrival at Rome

<sup>11</sup> After three months we put out to sea in a ship that had wintered in the island—it was an Alexandrian ship with the figurehead of the twin gods Castor and Pollux. <sup>12</sup> We put in at Syracuse and stayed there three days. <sup>13</sup> From there we set sail and arrived at Rhegium. The next day the south wind came up, and on the following day we reached Puteoli. <sup>14</sup> There we found some brothers and sisters who invited us to spend a week with them. And so we came to Rome. <sup>15</sup> The brothers and sisters there had heard that we were coming, and they traveled as far as the Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns to meet us. At the sight of these people Paul thanked God and was encouraged. <sup>16</sup> When we got to Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself, with a soldier to guard him.

### Paul Preaches at Rome Under Guard

<sup>17</sup> Three days later he called together the local Jewish leaders. When they had assembled, Paul said to them: “My brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or against the customs of our ancestors, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. <sup>18</sup> They examined me and wanted to release me, because I was not guilty of any crime deserving death. <sup>19</sup> The Jews objected, so I was compelled to make an appeal to Caesar. I certainly did not intend to bring any charge against my own people. <sup>20</sup> For this reason I have asked to see you and talk with you. It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain.”

<sup>21</sup> They replied, “We have not received any letters from Judea concerning you, and none of our people who have come from there has reported or said anything bad about you. <sup>22</sup> But we want to hear what your views are, for we know that people everywhere are talking against this sect.”

<sup>23</sup> They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. He witnessed to them from morning till evening, explaining about the kingdom of God, and from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets he tried to persuade them about Jesus. <sup>24</sup> Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe. <sup>25</sup> They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement: “The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your ancestors when he said through Isaiah the prophet:

<sup>26</sup> “Go to this people and say, “You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.”

<sup>27</sup> For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.’



<sup>28</sup> “Therefore I want you to know that God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!” [<sup>29</sup>Some manuscripts include here “After he said this, the Jews left, arguing vigorously among themselves.”]

<sup>30</sup> For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. <sup>31</sup> He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!

## ACTS OVERVIEW

### WHAT HAPPENED AFTER ACTS?

The book of Acts abruptly ends while Paul is under house arrest in Rome probably in the year 60 or 61 AD. Since God promised Paul he would stand trial before Caesar (Acts 27:24), we can assume he appeared before Emperor Nero. Scholars assume Paul was released since he expected to visit Colossae in Philemon 1:22. Based on early church historians, many scholars believe Paul went on a fourth missionary journey to Spain, as he planned in Romans 15:24. The Christian historian Clement wrote in 95 AD that Paul had preached in the East and in the West, which would have been understood as Spain. This means Paul would have taken the Gospel to the limits of the known Roman world.

### PRISON CONDITIONS FOR PAUL

Although Paul was often arrested, beaten, and persecuted, his time in Rome was relatively comfortable, comparatively speaking. He was allowed to write and receive letters, have others bring him provisions, and receive visitors. This was perhaps because of his Roman citizenship and popularity.

### LETTERS FROM PRISON

Paul did not stay idle during his extended house arrest in Rome. He continued his correspondence and ministry to many different churches. He wrote the Biblical letters of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon during his first imprisonment (61-62 AD). Paul established the churches in Ephesus and Philippi during his second missionary journey and returned to each city in his third missionary journey. We do not have record of Paul visiting Colossae, but it is possible since he was nearby on his journeys. Alternatively, the Christians in Pisidian Antioch or Laodicea may have sent Christians to Colossae. The book of Philemon is a letter to Paul’s personal friend who was the leader of a house church in Colossae.

## END OF PAUL'S LIFE

In 2 Timothy 4:6-8, Paul anticipates the end of his life. He was writing from a prison in Rome during his second imprisonment. His first imprisonment is believed to have ended with his release. His conditions were not as pleasant in the second imprisonment as his previous house arrest. The historian Eusebius records that Paul was eventually martyred by Emperor Nero in AD 67 by being beheaded.

## REFLECTING

- **Think back to the message on Sunday. What stood out to you? What did you discover that was a new thought for you?**

## OPENING QUESTIONS:

1. **If you could not leave your house for two years, what would you try to accomplish in that time?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. **When has just the sight of someone brought you joy and encouragement?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. **How do you typically spend your free time? What are some productive things you do with your free time?**







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ADDITIONAL NOTES

