# STAY Ourse

THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

# Your truth is the compass that points me back north

Jesus, my Captain My soul's trusted Lord

All my allegiance is rightfully Yours

Captain by Hillsong UNITED

Originally produced for the Women's Ministry of The Shoreline Church, San Clemente. © 2019

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# PASSION VISION UNITY TRUTH HEART

This Journey Belongs To:

Est. 5 B.C AD.10 Paul is Born	
Est. A.D. 16-22 Paul begins study in Jerusalem	
Est. A.D. 32 Stephen martyred in Jerusalem; Paul looks on approvingly Est. A.D. 32-35 Paul persecutes believers Est. A.D. 35 Paul is converted on the road to Damascus Est. A.D. 35-38 Paul in Arabia, then Damascus Est. A.D. 38 Paul meets Peter and James in Jerusalem Est. A.D. 38-48 Paul in Tarsus and surrounding region	
Est. A.D. 49 Paul and Barnabus begin first missionary journey  Est. A.D. 50 Paul and Silas begin second missionary journey  Est. A.D. 53 Paul begins third missionary journey	
Est. A.D. 57 Paul arrested in Jerusalem Est. A.D. 57-59 Paul imprisoned in Caesarea Est. A.D. 60-62 Paul's journey to Rome; house arrest in Rome	
Est. A.D. 63-64 Paul imprisoned in Rome  Est. A.D. 65 Paul's Death	

# In This Study...

Introduction to Stay the Course	by Dianne Sanborn	p.6
Week One: Charting Your Course	by Valerie Stephens	p.8
Week Two: Preparation	by Dianne Sanborn	p.26
Week Three: Vision	by Sarah Spencer	p.54
Week Four: Striving for Unity	by Kara Whalley	p.74
Week Five: With Full Courage	by Amber Slaybaugh	p.94
Week Six: Truth of God's Word	by Carla Erland	p.116
Week Seven: Dependence	by Bev Merwin	p.138
Week Eight: Believing in the Journey	by Lori Moe	p.158
Week Nine: The Passion of a Pastor	by Allison Martin	p.182
Week Ten: The Secret of Paul's Passion	by Shannon Davidson	p.208

# Introduction...

### Welcome Fellow Travelers,

We are so glad you will be joining us on this journey, STAY the COURSE: the Life and Ministry of Paul.

The story of travel involves more than your mode of transportation or the clothing you pack. It should include the discoveries you make, the people you meet, and the things you learn on your journey. These are the essentials of a compelling and powerful story. Your personal travel story is important to us, and it is our commitment to provide you with the tools to help you through this journey.

Over the course of the next 10 weeks, you will have 10 different travel guides to help you navigate your way. Each guide will assist you in making the most of your voyage through the book of Acts and the Pauline epistles. Their task is to help you discover principles from the life of Paul that will help you STAY the COURSE in your own life's journey. Each of these guides has a personality and style that is unique to her, and we believe you will enjoy the variety.

Some new features of our travel log (study book) are listed below.

OPTIONAL SIDE TRIP — Many of our guides have designed side trips. These excursions are opportunities for those who have the time and would like to discover more and gain added insight on the trip. Again, these are optional and are provided for your enjoyment.

MY JOURNEY — In your travel log you will notice a MY JOURNEY page at the end of days 1-4 of each week's journey. This is your opportunity to journal about your experiences over the course of your trip—in other words to write your own travel story. A journal captures the highlights and insights of a journey so you can look back on your journey and reflect on all that took place. The acrostic COURSE is there to aid you in your writing. For example, if something really Stood out to you...write your thoughts on that. Or maybe there was something that Encouraged you, then write about that. Remember, each travel guide will be highlighting principles to help you STAY the COURSE, and you might want to write about what you learn so you can reflect on it at a later time.

PAUL/SAUL — Note that some guides will use Paul, while others will use Saul, or even Paul/Saul. These all refer to the apostle Paul. Through part of the book of Acts, he is referred to as Saul and part he goes by Paul. Your guide may use one or the other...or even a combination of both. Don't let this confuse you, again they are the same man.

Finally, we would like to invite you to write a prayer to the Lord expressing your desires for this journey and seeking His strength and guidance over the course of your travels. Commit the journey to Him and you will find joy and blessings will be your reward. This prayer will be your reminder for those times you feel discouraged or overwhelmed—an encouragement to STAY the COURSE.

Bon voyage — Wishing you a rewarding and enjoyable journey.

# My Prayer for this Tourney



...Lesson Notes

### Introduction

## Charting Your Course

"So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace."
- Romans 8:6

Planning is not my favorite word. I usually like to fly by the seat of my pants which as you can imagine is not good preparation! This week we will be going against my personality type for very necessary reasons.

Going on a trip is one thing Charting Your Course for the trajectory of your life is monumental. The stakes are too high to simply "go with the flow" - there are currents out there that will get you off track, storms, and changes in the wind. Unless we have the Right Chart for our journey no one can guarantee success in God's eyes. Yes, maybe the world will cheer for you but all that fades when you try to come ashore.

Where does your chart lead you? Where are you headed? Would this chart be in accordance with God's plan for you?

Saul started out on the WRONG course. We will explore what was the wrong path and how he found the RIGHT one.

What are the signs that warn us and what are the truths to navigate by?

All this will be looked at this week as we Find how to Chart Your Course.

Day One - Religious Course

Day Two - Wrong Course

Day Three - Crash Course

Day Four - God's Course

Day Five - Main Course

DAY

Philippians 3:6b "...as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault"

### Jorayer

Lord, Open my eyes to your truth and how it applies to my life today.

Today we will be looking at Saul's foundation for his course or direction in life prior to his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. (Note: Saul's Hebrew name changes to Paul his Greek name on his first missionary trip to the Gentiles). Saul was steeped in Religious activity but initially missed the Messiah. Many times we read in Scripture that we are very capable of deceiving ourselves with our hot outward religious activity while maintaining a cold heart to God's Spirit. Saul was such a hothead as an exceptionally devout Jew. He was called a Pharisee which was a religious sect that meticulously kept the laws of Moses and a multitude of their own making. Many Pharisees became Christians yet others believed Jesus was a heretic or false teacher. Saul was the latter.

I could really easily be Saul. No, not the Saul who wrote the better portion of the New Testament but Saul before his conversion. No, I wasn't trying to kill or imprison Christians but there is a beginning to that end. What is that beginning? Human pride and Human effort and Human achievement, Human accolades, ...I had all that going for me like a tidal wave of "goodness" that would most assuredly lead me down the wrong path IF that was my testimony. My father was a pastor, my mother a bible teacher, my brother a pastor, my father-in-law a pastor and my husband a youth pastor, what did all that add up for me? Disaster if for a moment I thought any of that had anything to do with me personally knowing and loving Jesus. Don't get me wrong having a Christian heritage is a blessing, calling that my testimony is Deception 101.

Unfortunately, we are easily deceived. This is a critical truth to swallow though it can feel like a camel of a pill. Our broken nature so easily falls for the glamor of a worldly identity and then clamors for control. We oftentimes live literally hell-bent on human praise and evidence that we are right, squashing anything that contradicts our curtailed reality.

As you read today about the life of Saul before he found God's path, note every part of his life though "good" could have been made into an obstacle to finding the right path. Then apply using the same lens to look at your own life to find what may be good yet harmful when allowed to deceive you and stand in place of a real heart connection to God.

READ: Acts 22:3-5, 26:4-5 and Galatians 1:13-14; Phillippians 3:4-6

1. As Saul describes His background as a Jew what were his credentials?

	2. Summarize what he could have been trusting in from his own account of his past?
RE <i>A</i> D	Jesus' words in Matthew 9:10-13
	3. How do Jesus' words to the Pharisees help correct our self-righteous attitudes?
	4. What "good things" keep feeding your independence from Him?
	a. Evaluate yourself Do your religious outward activity or roles consume more of your time than learning and listening from Jesus? Explain.
	b. How much of my faith is routine and not real?

# My Fourney

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was	there	anything	that:
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C onvicted me

O pened my eyes

U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

Write about it here:

 $\mathsf{DAY}$ 

2

Acts 26:9

"I used to believe that I ought to do everything I could to oppose the very name of Jesus of Nazareth."

### Prayer

Pray before you begin for God's Spirit to pour on your heart softening you for his foundational truths.

Our beliefs affect and infect who we are on every level. False beliefs can set a foundation of hardness that even hearing God's truth can't penetrate. Religion and ritual devoid of a relationship with God, 100% leads to a corrupt mind and actions. This reality is more than evident in Saul's life.

How hard was Saul's heart to God's truth? Miraculous healings were taking place around him and he wanted to suppress the testimony. His own mentor warned the Pharisees to be careful that they were not "fighting against God himself!" (Acts 5:39) This had no effect on Saul. Saul even heard a Godly man's Spirit-filled speech and wanted him dead. Acts 6:8 describes Stephen as "a man full of God's grace and power, {he} performed amazing miracles and signs among the people." Stephen was a man chosen by the apostles for being full of faith and wisdom yet when Saul listens to Stephen, whose face was glowing like an angel, murder comes to his mind!

Think of Saul hearing Stephen's words (Acts 7) spoken straight to a Jewish heart noting the entire Jewish history from Abraham to Jesus and it bounced. Stephen even closes his speech hoping to crack the walls of his accusers and says, "You stubborn people! You are heathen at heart and deaf to the truth. Must you forever resist the Holy Spirit?"

Instead of opportunity for insight, Saul becomes enraged and celebrates the murder of Stephen through the barbaric practice of stoning. Acts 8:1 "Saul was one of the witnesses, and he agreed completely with the killing of Stephen."

A religious foundation void of God's Spirit is a formula for pride and corruption to the core. The kind of sickness that blinds our ability to discern right from wrong. Saul had so much religious clout that his heart was clouded over like cataracts over eyes. His brand of spirituality had real-time consequences it puffed him up so far that he believed anyone not on his side was against God. Saul was in spiritual darkness.

Now the fruit of that darkness in Saul was now going to erupt. The false foundation would bare out in a lifestyle of hatred and evil actions with a seared conscience. Keeping our hearts softened to God's truth is like trying to prevent cement from drying. God's Word must be poured on our hearts continually like water or the curing begins.

Today we will look at two things: the outcome of Saul's false foundation of pride and power, and what needs to be our foundation according to Jesus.

# READ Acts 8:3; 9:1-2; 22:4-5,19-20 (optional Stephen's speech Acts 7-8:2) 1. What were the actions of Saul while he was deceived by his false beliefs? 2. Have you ever had false beliefs lead you to wrong actions? (Write down all that come to mind) False Belief Wrong Action READ Jesus' words in Matthew 7:24-29 3. What are the two ingredients for a solid rock foundation according to Jesus? (vs. 24) 4. One of the teachings of Jesus is Matthew 10:28-31. Read these verses and write down the True beliefs and Right

Right Action

actions

True Belief

# My Fourney

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Was	there	anything t	that:
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C onvicted me

O pened my eyes

U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

Write about it here:

Galatians 1:15

"But even before I was born, God chose me and called me by his marvelous grace..."

Prayer

Pray for renewed awareness of the lavish grace of Jesus.

The 'Wonderful Grace of Jesus' has been sung for over a century and Saul would probably sing it the loudest! One of the most amazing events in all of human history is the conversion of Saul. And next to Jesus the most impactful for the advancement of Christianity.

The beauty for all persons is the incredible realization that no one is outside the reach of God's grace. God's amazing grace saved a wretch like Saul and you and me and all the rest of believers. We can have tremendous hope as we see God's unlimited resources and power transform, rehabilitate and ignite a new believer. How brilliant is God's plan showing the world what is possible when we stop kicking and start surrendering.

Do you have someone that you feel is outside of God's transforming power? Be encouraged! Saul is the perfect example how far God's arm stretches (think Elastigirl from The Incredibles) to save someone so lost and outside of our realm of salvageable people.

As you read the account of Saul's conversion story don't miss the beauty of Jesus calling his name, "Saul, Saul" (!) How beautiful is this reminder that God knows each of us so personally. Pause and think about Jesus calling your name....

There is something so incredible when we realize no matter how off course we are that there is an attentive God who can utter our name and break the wall of arrogance and ignorance. What was impenetrable for man was an easy rodeo for God. In a few seconds a venomous attacker is down off his high horse and on his keister from the glory of God and the voice of our Savior. Glory and Words. Words that revealed Jesus knew everything about Saul, knew he was bent on evil, knew he was abusing the new converts, knew he was ignoring all the warnings coming his way like Stephen's speech and miraculous events and even the warnings of Saul's own mentor! But God is so gracious that he trumps our deaf ears and blind eyes with miraculous intervention. Saul was getting Truth and it was coming like a freight train of reality.

Amazing as this event is in history is it is also a vivid picture of what true conversion should resemble. Saul is finally physically what he has been spiritually all along. Blind. In fact, faith in Jesus makes us recognize that true sight only comes when we know HIM.

Our story unfolds as Saul is actively pursuing his violent hateful, attack on the men and women of faith.

Saul's conversion is recorded three times.

### READ Acts 9:3-7; 22:6-9; 26:12-15

1. What stands out to you in his conversion story?
2. What is added in the telling of his story in chapter 26:14?
a. Jesus' Greek metaphor "It is hard for you to kick against the oxgoads." Is an example of a farmer getting an ox to move and the ox only hurting itself by kicking against the sharp prodding. Write down your own experience where you resisted the Lord and brought further harm to yourself?
b.What is the alternative Jesus offers? Read Matthew 11:28-30

3. Note the sequence of events: Bright light, falling down, Voice of Jesus calling his name, Saul understanding who is speaking, Saul obedient to Jesus. Can you find your story of conversion here as well? Rewrite yours here. (i.e., Valerie, Valerie I saw the truth about my life, I humbled myself and understood his personal message to me, I obeyed what was revealed about my life and the Lord.)

# My Fourney

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was there anything that:
C onvicted me

U rged me to

O pened my eyes

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

Write about it here:

DAY

4

Acts 26:16

"But get up and stand on your feet. For I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen from Me and what I will show you."

### Prayer

In your own words seek His wisdom for the call he has placed on your life today.

How fast is Hope? How quickly does Jesus change Saul's posture of humility to a stance with purpose? The answer is immediately. As soon as Jesus clarifies that the one speaking is Jesus, Saul is told who he is! An appointed servant who will be taught by Jesus how to rescue Jews and Gentiles from darkness and blindness (something Saul knows alot about!)

What a friend we have in Jesus. We lose touch with reality when we view Jesus through our broken human relationships. Unfortunately, we can have harmful experiences with people that taint our views, making vulnerability/humility unsafe postures in our minds. These experiences can create defensiveness in us that scream it is not safe to be vulnerable or admit freely when we are wrong. What a mistake this is when our Heavenly Father is Love and Safety for our frail and neck exposing confessions. It would bring such freedom and joy to trust the finished work of Jesus and rest in the grace he freely provides. We would become confession addicts if we understood how forgiveness feels like love. Paul will later write about this in 1Cor. 13:5b {love}... "keeps no record of being wronged." God is love and Jesus expresses love for Saul as he throws him an undeserved future from a disastrous past.

Yet forgiveness doesn't mean Godly character has been developed. God will now bring the right ingredients for Saul to comfortably wear the big Saintly shoes he was graciously given.

After the monumental intervention and commissioning, Saul is led away by his bewildered friends. Saul is blind refusing to eat and waiting for help, and waiting and waiting. Three days blind and not eating and waiting must have seemed like 3 weeks but God's timing is perfect. He knew what Saul needed in order to become increasingly dependent on Him. We know from Scripture that he was praying during his waiting. Saul was truly coming to the Lord for all his needs.

How important in those three days it must have been for Saul to lay all he could think or recall about his ugly past before the feet of Jesus and experience over and over again the waves of loving forgiveness. How much more we can understand his words later in Scripture as he states that he forgets the past and looks forward to what lies ahead. (Philippians 3:13)

Saul is even given exactly what Jesus told him would occur, messages from Him about his future (Acts 26:16b). Saul has a vision in prayer while he is blind telling him how he would regain his sight. Saul has 20/20 spiritual eyes... he is much better off physically blind and spiritually seeing! Saul is now in touch with reality. God's plan is Jesus and God's call is on Saul.

### READ Acts 9:8-20; Acts 22:10-16; Acts 26:16-20

1.	Saul is taught by Jesus, now what is the next step for a solid foundation? (Acts 26:19)
2.	How likely is it that Saul would have become the instrument of God if he had not obeyed?
	a. Is there any area in you life that you've been taught by Jesus but you haven't obeyed? Could this dull you availability and effectiveness as God's chosen instrument?
	In Acts 9:18 it says something like "scales" fell from his eyes. What could those scales symbolically represent nowing the "spiritually blind" condition of his life?
5.	What would the scales represent in your life that Jesus removed? Are there still scales that need removing? Explain
	a. Share in group our write below how God's transforming power has impacted your life?

# My Fourney

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U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

Write about it here:

5

Philippians 3:7-8

"...but whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ..."

### Prayer

Pray for the dependency on Jesus to live out the truth in the everyday moments of your life.

ncredible truths can be gleaned from this week examining the journey of Saul from Religious Zealot to Righteous Servant. The unlikely contestant becomes the showcase of God's supernatural power and transformative effects. How can we not be encouraged?

As we review this weeks' main truths be reminded that if you've been raised in the church and found yourself lukewarm or a hot mess, Jesus wants you. If you've found yourself on the wrong side of the tracks and have a passport full of worldly failures, Jesus wants you. Saul is the poster child for the extremes on each side. He's been ultra religious and he's been violent against men and women. He's applauded murder.. Look no further than Saul to see the indiscriminate Grace where it isn't about what we've done and all about what Jesus has done for you.

Take time right now to stop and thank Jesus....

Read the verse for today and ponder how this is the same man that had every box checked that human religion could offer. Think of the perfect attendance awards, the right transcripts, pedigree, etc. and now he can say it is all nothing...even garbage! What a transformation has taken place.

READ Paul's words more fully to the Philippians 3:3-14

We will use those verses as we review days one through four.

Day One: Religious Course

What do you think you could consider garbage as you grow closer to Jesus?

Day Two: Wrong Course

What foundational truth will you live by? How would that show up in your everyday life?

Day Three: C	rash Course
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Where can you stop fighting and start resting with Jesus?

Write three words to describe your conversion using one word for "before", "conversion" and "after."

### Day Four: God's Course

What steps in obedience to Jesus can you take today?

Saul was masterfully transformed through his great love and obedience to Jesus. The key to his transformation was his recognition of how lost he was and his clear picture of God's supernatural power ready and available to complete him in every way. This clear vision set him ablaze until he died. Oh to live with such conviction and holy pursuits. Let's personalize the words Jesus used to describe Saul's new life.

Write in the blanks of Acts 9:15 Inserting your name, unsaved family and friends, and your city.

"Go, for			is my chosen instrument to take my		
	Your name				
message to		and to		, as well as to	
	Family name		Friend name		
the people of		,,, •			
	Your City				

Celebrate how big your life gets when you begin humbly, ride the tide of grace and find yourself called to a life richer, and deeper than your wildest dreams.

Thank you, Saul, for giving us the template of grace and transformation.

Thank you, Jesus, for nothing good comes to any of us without you.

# My Tourney



...Lesson Notes

### PREPARATION: The Vessel Made Ready

"The hand of man can never mold a vessel meet for the Master's use. The One who is to use the vessel can alone prepare it." <sup>1</sup>
- Arthur W. Pink

If we are to be successful, every endeavor we undertake must be preceded by a time of preparation or training.

"Champions do not become champions when they win the event, but in the hours, weeks, months and years they spend preparing for it." <sup>2</sup> - T. Alan Armstrong

It was no different for Saul (better known as the apostle Paul). Even though he was well-educated and had studied under one of the greatest teachers of his era, he needed time to study and to grow spiritually before he could begin the course set before him. Although he immediately began to proclaim the gospel in Damascus, the Lord did not allow him to stay there long. For the Lord would use this time to prepare him - to train him - and to mature him in his faith before He would set him out on the course He had designed for him.

The main passage we will look at this week (Acts 9:20-30) covers a period of 10 to 14 years - and it is believed by some to focus on the Lord's preparation of Saul for the journey he would undertake.

Just as God prepared Saul, He also prepares each of us for our individual journeys. He not only prepares us for the journey, but also to complete the journey - to cross the finish line. When we join Him in the preparation process, we can be assured we will STAY the COURSE and finish strong. It is God's desire that we do so and He Himself provides us with all we will need.

This week as we journey with Saul, we will make stops in Damascus, Arabia, Jerusalem, and Tarsus. Each day we will be looking for principles from Saul's life by which we might learn to STAY the COURSE. On our final day we will head home to focus on our own journey and how we might put to use all we have learned throughout our week.

Day One: Damascus - PREPARED with His POWER

Day Two: Arabia - PREPARED in His PRESENCE

Day Three: Jerusalem - PREPARED by His PEOPLE

Day Four: Tarsus - PREPARED through His PROMISES

Day Five: Home - PERSONAL PREPARATION

NOTE: Questions are based on the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise stated.

### Damascus—PREPARED with His POWER

DAY

1

Micah 3:8a (NLT)

"But as for me, I am filled with power—with the Spirit of the LORD."

### Prayer

Father God, anoint my eyes to see, my ears to hear, and give me an open heart ready to receive, to understand, and to apply all that You would speak to me through today's lesson. Oh, how I need Your Spirit by my side - to guide me - to teach me - and to empower me to live out all You reveal to me in Your Word. Amen.

### Fellow Travelers,

We start today in Damascus. Here Saul begins his journey on a new course. Not only is he on a new course, he himself is a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17), with a new power, and a new sense of direction.

"The story in Acts doesn't say that Saul spoke in tongues or prophesied...what Acts offers instead is the remarkable statement that Saul went at once to the synagogue in Damascus and announced that Jesus was the son of God...there was a new power coupled with a new sense of direction." 1-N. T. Wright

He has exchanged the old for the new.

"The exchanged life - it is not some thing, it is some ONE.

It is the indwelling of the Lord Jesus Christ made real and rewarding by the Holy Spirit." <sup>2</sup> - V. Raymond Edman

It is this new power - this some ONE we will look at today. We will learn that we must look to the power of the Holy Spirit for the strength to live the Christian life and STAY the COURSE.

"Without the Spirit of God we can do nothing. We are as ships without wind or chariots without steeds. Like branches without sap, we are withered. Like coals without fire, we are useless" <sup>3</sup> - Charles Spurgeon

### WORSHIP SONG: Same Power by Jeremy Camp

Wow! "The same power that rose Jesus from the grave - the same power that commands the dead to wake - the same power that moves mountains when He speaks - the same power that can calm a raging sea - the same power LIVES IN US." This same power - this some ONE that was promised by the Lord Jesus (Acts 1:8) now lives in us! Let that sink in.

### READ: Acts 9:20-25; 26:16-20

1. We read in today's passage that those who heard Saul were amazed - they could not believe he was the same man. What was the difference? What brought about such a remarkable change? The answer: he had encountered the Holy Spirit.

a. Compare P	Paul befor	re and afte:	he encountered	the Holv S	pirit.
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BEFORE	AFTER
Acts 8:1	Acts 9:17
Acts 9:1	Acts 9:20
Acts 9:1-2	Acts 9:20, 22

b. How about you? If you were to make a before and after chart of the changes in your own life, what before and after attitudes and actions would you include?

c. When we encounter the Holy Spirit, we cannot help but be changed. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17, and take a moment to think on this truth and what it means for your life. Write your thoughts below.

2. The first evidence of true faith in God is obedience to His Word. Read again Acts 9:20-22 and Acts 26:16-20 and answer the following questions.
a. How did Saul demonstrate obedience?
b. How quickly did he respond to God's command?
c. What have you been hearing from God lately? Is there some action He is asking you to take - a habit He wants you to make or break? Write it on a 3 X 5 card and put it in a place where you will see it. Every time you see it remind yourself of the "same power," and the "some ONE" who lives in you - and then act in obedience.
Charles Stanley writes, "Our will plus the Holy Spirit's power is true willpower." Saul aligned his will with God's will and in the power of the Holy Spirit he began to boldly proclaim Jesusthat's true willpower!
3. How might having this "true willpower" help you STAY the COURSE? Share your thoughts.
It is believed that Saul's trip to Arabia takes place between verses 22 and 23 of Acts 9, and that the events of verses 23 through 25 occur after his return to Damascus. We will discuss this further in tomorrow's lesson, but before we leave Damascus, I wanted us to look at these verses - so read again Acts 9:23-25.
4. Paul/Saul gave his commentary on this event in 2 Corinthians 11:30-33. Here he states it exposed his weakness.
a. Describe the experience as related in Acts 9:23-25 and 2 Corinthians 11:32-33.
b. What lessons did he learn from this experience?
1 Corinthians 2:1-4
2 Corinthians 12:9-10
1 Thessalonians 1:5

Writers from Tozer and Spurgeon to present day writers such as Jim Cymbala and Francis Chan speak of the Holy Spirit as the "forgotten God" or the "forgotten One." Francis Chan writes, "From my perspective, the Holy Spirit is tragically neglected and, for all practical purposes, forgotten." <sup>5</sup> Tozer goes so far as to say, "If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95 percent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference." <sup>6</sup> Jim Cymbala adds to this thought, "...we have developed a religious industry whose machinery runs smoothly without any need of the Holy Spirit...we have become set in our ways - but they are not the ways of God's blessing and power." <sup>7</sup>

5. Do you agree with this idea that the Holy Spirit has essentially been forgotten in the church today and that if the Spirit were to be withdrawn, we would not even notice because what we have is a religious industry void of the Spirit? Why or why not? What are the consequences of this happening?

OPTIONAL SIDE TRIP: Frances Chan in his book, Forgotten God writes, "I believe that this missing something is actually a missing Someone - namely the Holy Spirit...without Him, people operate in their own strength and only accomplish human-size results." I don't know about you, but I want to see God-sized results. How would you like to see more of the Holy Spirit's power in your life?

# My Fourney

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was there anything that:

C onvicted me

O pened my eyes

U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

Write about it here:

### DAY

### Arabia—PREPARED in His PRESENCE

2

"...God's preparation of Saul was a lonely stint in the Arabian wilderness." —R. Kent Hughes

### Prayer

Lord God, my heart's desire is to know You more and more, and to hear from You what it is You expect of me. As I dedicate this time to You and Your Word, I ask for quietness of thought and a mind and heart open before You. Amen.

Hello Travelers,

Today we join Saul as he travels from Damascus to the Arabian wilderness - or more specifically the Sinai wilderness. Here God will continue to prepare Saul for the journey that lies ahead.

"There is divine poetry here. At Sinai Moses received the Law. Now at Sinai Saul learns about grace... Saul's preparation took place on the backside of the desert. The usual approach today is to promote a famous convert's testimony, not to send him off for in-depth spiritual grounding." - R. Kent Hughes

From man's viewpoint plans for Saul would have involved promotion, but God had other ideas. His plan involved seclusion and an advanced course in Spiritual Disciplines.

We know little of the details of Saul's time in Arabia - so the thoughts on this time period are as varied as those who write about it. R. Kent Hughes believes that the focus of Saul's time in Arabia was the two questions he asked as he lay on the Damascus Road: "Who are you, Lord?" and "What shall I do, Lord?" (Acts 22:8, 10). Is that not our desire from the moment we first come to Christ? Don't we too want to know Him more and what He desires for us?

So, for today we will consider the two questions asked, and how time in His presence helps to prepare us to STAY the COURSE.

WORSHIP SONG: The More I Seek You by Kari Jobe

As stated yesterday, many believe this time period is found between verses 22 and 23 of Acts 9. Paul/Saul's own account in his letter to the Galatian churches tells us he went away to Arabia immediately after his conversion, later returning to Damascus before going up to Jerusalem. Those who hold to this idea see the "after many days" of Acts 9:23 as a reference to the "three years" of Galatians 1:18. If you compare the passages you should see the chronology of the events.

READ: Galatians 1:11-18a

authority to preach it from man.
a. How did Saul receive this message?
b. Saul discovered Christ not only wanted to save him from something, but He also wanted to save him for something. According to Acts 26:17-18 what was that something he was saved for?
Do you remember the two questions mentioned in the introduction? If you don't, look back and remind yourself of them before doing the next questions.
2. Moses also spent time in the Sinai wilderness. Let us glean insight from his life to help us see what time in the Lord's presence can be. Read Exodus 33:7-23.
a. What do we learn of Moses' relationship with the Lord from this passage? List verses where you get your answers.
b. What did the people do during Moses time in the Tent of Meeting (vv 7-11)?
c. In verses 12-23 we get a glimpse of Moses' conversation with God. What requests does he make? Do you see any correlation to the questions Saul asked of the Lord? Share your thoughts.
d. What can you take away from Moses' example that will help you in your quiet time in the Lord's presence?

1. Paul/Saul states clearly in this passage that the message he preached was not from man nor did he receive the

"When a man is born from above, the life of the Son of God is born in him, and he can either starve that life or nourish it. Prayer is the way the life of God is nourished. Our ordinary views of prayer are not found in the New Testament. We look upon prayer as a means of getting things for ourselves; the Bible's idea of prayer is that we may get to know God Himself." Oswald Chambers
3. When we want to get to know someone intimately, there is no better way than to spend quality time together. The same is true of our desire to know the Lord more intimately.
a. What does your time with the Lord look like? Do you have a special time or place where you meet the Lord?
b. What struggles do you experience in trying to set aside a time with the Lord? Share any solutions or strategies that have helped you.
"You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever." - Psalm 16:11 (NASB)
4. What are the blessings and/or benefits of your time spent in His presence? Also, how do these help you STAY the COURSE? You might want to accept the challenge of answering in acrostic form:
P eace
R
${f E}$
S
E
N
C
${f E}$
2. Kent Hughes states that in Arabia Saul received his D.D. (Dr. of the Desert). <sup>4</sup> But as we will see, there are more courses e will need to complete before the Lord says he is ready to move on

R he will need to complete before the Lord says he is ready to move on.

"When I look to those times out of the mainstream of what I thought the Lord was doing, I can see that I was being better prepared for fast-moving currents which later carried me on the high seas of adventure and effectiveness.

The Lord will not use us until he has made us ready."5

# My Fourney

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was	there	anything	that:
-----	-------	----------	-------

C onvicted me

O pened my eyes

U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

Write about it here:

# DAY

### Jerusalem—PREPARED by His PEOPLE

3

"...the new life in Christ and the new community of Christ always go together." <sup>1</sup> - John Stott

## Prayer

Father God, I thank You for Your Word. I know there is something You desire me to see in this portion of Scripture that will help me to view the Christian community in a new light. So, with an open mind and heart I come to Your Word. Amen.

# Welcome Travelers,

Today on our itinerary is Jerusalem, a city well-known to Saul. He had spent a great deal of time here in the past, but his reception on this day would be very different.

I can imagine that Jerusalem looked pretty good to Saul after his swift and humiliating escape from Damascus (Acts 9:25; 2 Corinthians 11:32). I can well picture Saul fresh from his long stay in Arabia with his degree (Dr. of the Desert) in hand looking to find Peter from whom he expected to receive his GO to the Gentile orders.

But instead Saul found he was not finished with the education God had planned. Here in Jerusalem the course was New Community 101. Later in his letters he would write much about the responsibilities and benefits of community. Possibly some of those ideas came from this brief visit to Jerusalem.

WORSHIP SONG: Here I Am Lord by Renee Bondi (older, but still one of my favorites)

I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard My people cry. All who dwell in dark and sin, My hand will save. I who made the stars of night, I will make the darkness bright. Who will bear My light to them? Whom shall I send?

CHORUS: Here I am Lord. It is I Lord. I have heard You calling in the night. I will go Lord, if You lead me. I will hold Your people in my heart.

I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne My people's pain. I have wept for love of them, they turn away. I will break their hearts of stone, give them hearts for love alone. I will speak My word to them. Whom shall I send?

(REPEAT CHORUS)

I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame. I will set a feast for them. Whom shall I send?

READ: Acts 9:23-30; Galatians 1:18-19 (Remember questions are based on the NASB)

- 1. Focus in on Acts 9:25-26. When Saul arrived in Jerusalem he had just come from Damascus where he had experienced a humiliating exit, and now in Jerusalem he encounters rejection.
  - a. How do you think he was feeling?

b. As mentioned in the introduction, Paul/Saul would write much about the community of believers. Look over the following verses found in his letter to the Romans. Romans 12:5 "...we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." Romans 12:10a "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love..." Romans 12:10b "...give preference to one another in honor." Romans 15:5 "...be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus..." Romans 15:7 "...accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us..." Romans 15:14 "you are...full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another." Romans 16:16 "Greet one another..." c. Now, write your thoughts on how these might apply to Saul's situation. 2. Identify the followers of Christ who came to Saul's aid and describe how they helped him. Acts 9:25 But \_\_\_\_\_ Acts 9:27 Acts 9:30

"The thrust of biblical encouragement is to come alongside of someone with the goal to move them FORWARD in their lives and walk with God...It's not just about making them feel better, it is about helping them BE better." <sup>2</sup>

3. Based on this definition of <i>encouragement</i> , answer the following questions.
a. What words do you associate with encouragement? List them here.
b. What actions do you associate with encouragement? List them here.
c. Who in today's passage is known for encouragement? What were the results of his encouragement as found in Acts 11:22-24?
d. Now, is there someone you need to encourage? How might you come alongside them?
"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens [and influences] another [through discussion] Proverbs 27:17 (AMF
4. Read again: Galatians 1:18 and Acts 9:27.
a. Who did Saul meet with for 15 days?
b. Imagine this meeting of two men with very strong personalities. What do you think they <i>discussed</i> , and do yo believe they <i>influenced</i> one another? Share your thoughts.

"and let us consider [thoughtfully] how we may encourage one another to love and to do good deeds, not forsaking our meeting together [  believers for worship and instruction], as is the habit of some, but encouraging one anothe  and all the more [faithfully] as you see the day [of Christ's return] approaching  - Hebrews 10:24-25 (AMI
5. We have spent time today looking at the act of encouragement. As you consider all that you have studied, answ the following.
a. How might encouragement help you STAY the COURSE?
b. How important is the community of believers in our ability to STAY the COURSE? Explain your answer.
c. Have God's people ever helped you to STAY the COURSE or get back on the course? If so, please share yo experience.
OPTIONAL SIDE TRIP: As I was pondering the 15 days Saul spent with the apostle Peter, I wondered what Peter mig have imparted to Saul to help him STAY the COURSE. Looking to Peter's second letter I found a passage on developing faith. Is it possible he shared this with Saul? We don't know, but I am sharing it with you. Answer the following question about developing your faith.
READ 2 Peter 1:1-11. I really enjoyed reading it in the Amplified version (AMP).
a. For what reason does Peter encourage us to add to our faith (verse 4)?

b. What seven qualities or virtues does he encourage us to diligently apply to our faith?	
c. How might these virtues, not only deepen our faith but keep us on the course set before us? thoughts.	Share your

# My Fourney

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"
Was there anything that:
C onvicted me
O pened my eyes
U rged me to
R eminded me
S tood out to me
E ncouraged me

Write about it here:

# DAY

## Tarsus—PREPARED through His PROMISES

4

Proverbs 3:5-6 (MSG)

"Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; He's the one who will keep you on track."

## Prayer

Father God, I come before You with a willing spirit and an open heart. May my time with You be fruitful, and may I be diligent to apply the lessons I learn to my own journey with You. So now would You quiet my thoughts that I might focus only on what You would speak to me through Your Word. Amen.

# Pellow Travelers,

Welcome to Day Four of our travels. Yesterday we were with Saul in Jerusalem. One day he is moving freely throughout the city, boldly proclaiming the name of Jesus and talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews - and, the next day he is being hurried out of the city and taken to Caesarea where he is put on a ship to travel to Tarsus.

Saul will be here in Tarsus for the next 7 to 10 years, waiting for word from the Lord to GO to the Gentiles. Apparently, there is still work to be done to prepare him for the journey ahead. This next course in God's classroom is one called WAIT.

"There is no uniform curriculum in the school of God. Each servant is dealt with according to his individual needs and disciplined with a view to the particular work which God has for him to do." <sup>1</sup> - A. W. Pink

Although there is no uniform curriculum, WAIT seems to be a course which many of God's servants have taken. For example, David was anointed the future king of Israel when he was young but spent years of WAIT before laying claim to his promised title. Today we will spend some time looking at the lives of Abraham and Joseph - men who spent time waiting to receive what was promised them. These men in their times of WAIT held on to the promise and were rewarded for doing so. Today's emphasis will be on the purpose of WAIT, which is to train, purify, strengthen, and prepare God's vessel to STAY the COURSE and finish strong.

WORSHIP SONG: You'll Come (with lyrics) by Hillsong

Let us remember the promise made to Saul...

READ: Acts 26:16-18

To prepare for our lesson, I have a few things for you to think on to put the events we will look at in perspective:

- Think back 7 to 10 years. Do you remember what was going on in your life? What changes have taken place in your life since that time? What changes have taken place in our nation? In the world?
- Is there something you have been waiting for? How long have you been waiting? Have you waited 7 years, 8 years, 9 years, 10 years? Less? More? Saul would wait in Tarsus 7 to 10 years for the call to GO to the Gentiles.
- As was stated in today's introduction Saul was not the first to take the course called WAIT. Abraham and Sarah waited 25 years for their promised son. Joseph waited 13 years for his promised dream to be fulfilled. David waited 17 to 20 years to claim his promised crown.

"Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eag	les
They will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become wear	y. '
- Isaiah 40:31 (NAS	В

1. We are not told what Saul did or how he felt during this period in his life. But we can imagine ourselves in the position of WAIT.
a. What might he be feeling? How might these feelings lead him off course?
b. How might he be spending his time?
c. What do you think he learned in his time of WAIT?
2. Let us look at Joseph's story. Read the Scripture and describe the events.
Genesis 37:6-7
Genesis 39:19-23
Genesis 41:41-43
a. Read Psalm 105:17-22. This is King David's commentary on this event. What does he have to say about this time in Joseph's life (verse 19)? Look at several versions to get a better understanding. I suggest the AMP and the NLT.
b. Finally, what did Joseph himself have to say about the time between the dream and the fulfillment? Read Genesis 50:20.

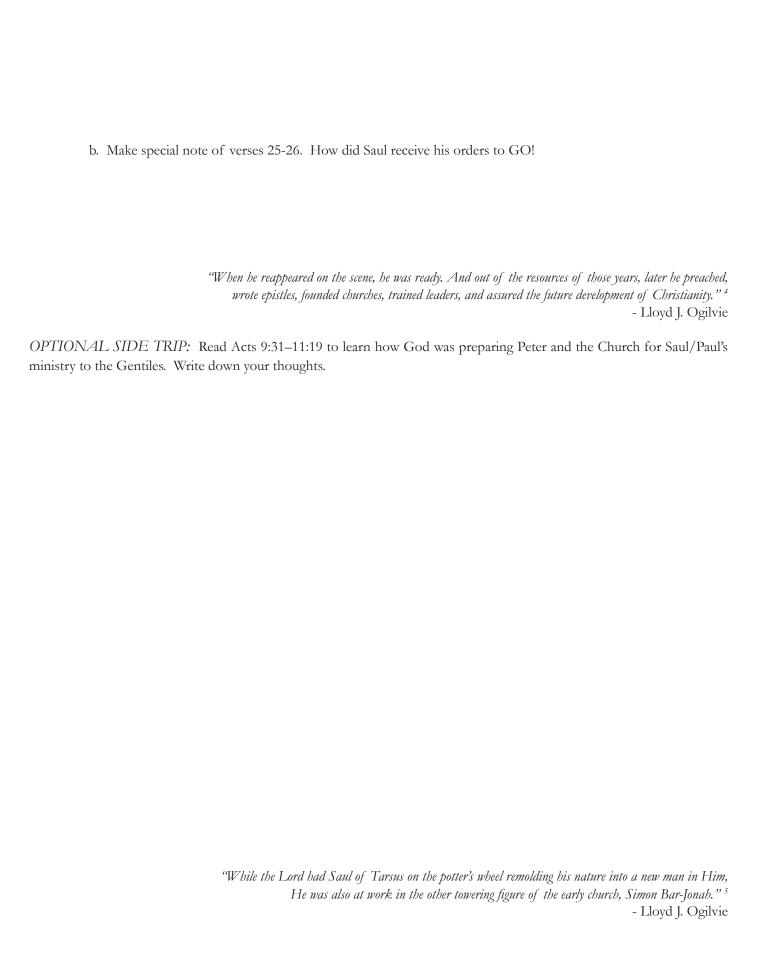
afflicted ones, they too shall one day step from their prisons to their thrones." 2

- Charles H. Spurgeon

"The iron fetters were preparing him to wear chains of gold, and making his feet ready to stand on high places. It is even so with all the Lord's

3. After 25 years of waiting for the promised son, Abraham was given his final exam.
a. Read about this in Genesis 22:1-19. Summarize the exam and outcome.
b. Read Hebrews 11:17-19 for a New Testament commentary on the event. During Abraham's 25 years in the school of WAIT changes had taken place in his character. What had he learned?
"Faith is unutterable trust in God, trust which never dreams that He will not stand by us." <sup>3</sup> - Oswald Chambers
4. Have you experienced a time in the school of WAIT? If you feel comfortable doing so, prepare to share your story with your small group. It may be just what someone in your group needs to hear.
a. Was there a promise(s) that you held onto during your time of wait?
b. What lesson(s) did you learn from your time of wait?
5. Saul sets sail for Antioch. Read Acts 11:19-26.

a. What had been happening while Saul was in the school of WAIT?



# My Fourney

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"
Was there anything that:
C onvicted me
O pened my eyes
U rged me to
R eminded me
S tood out to me
E ncouraged me
Write about it here:

# DAY

### Home—PERSONAL PREPARATION

5

Hebrews 12:5-13 selected (MSG)

"... why not embrace God's training so we can truly live?... don't sit around on your hands! No more dragging your feet! Clear the path for long-distance runners so no one will trip and fall, so no one will step in a hole and sprain an ankle.

Help each other out. And run for it!"

## Prayer

Lord God, prepare me as you did Saul. May I submit willingly and joyfully to the preparation you have designed for my life so that I may Stay the Course and finish strong. It is my heart's desire to hear from You,

"Well done My good and faithful servant." Amen.

Welcome Home Fellow Travelers,

Saul has been sent on to Antioch where he will begin his ministry to the Gentiles. But you have a few things to do before you complete this week's journey.

When you do continue on this journey, the life and ministry of the apostle Paul, you will again and again see these themes played out: delays, detours, opposition, humiliation, rejection, suffering, waits and more. Again and again you will see Saul/Paul rely on God's POWER, God's PRESENCE, God's PEOPLE, and God's PROMISES in order to STAY the COURSE. Look for these in the weeks ahead.

These are themes you see in your own life as well - and you too have the same resources as Saul. Your ability to STAY the COURSE will be realized daily as you rely on the POWER of His Spirit - spend time in His PRESENCE - interact with His PEOPLE - and trust Him, holding on to His PROMISES.

"You're blessed when you stay on course, walking steadily on the road revealed by God. You're blessed when you follow his directions, doing your best to find him.

That's right - you don't go off on your own; you walk straight along the road he set.

You, God, prescribed the right way to live; now you expect us to live it.

Oh, that my steps might be steady, keeping to the course you set;

Then I'd never have any regrets in comparing my life with your counsel.

I thank you for speaking straight from your heart; I learn the pattern of your righteous ways.

I'm going to do what you tell me to do; don't ever walk off and leave me."

- Psalm 119:1-8 (MSG)

The question I leave you with is, "will you submit to the preparation course the Lord has designed especially for you?"

WORSHIP SONG: The Road Home by Brenda Harp

Brenda Harp was worship leader for our women's ministry at my previous church. She is a gifted and accomplished singer, songwriter, worship leader and music teacher. She teaches piano, guitar, ukulele, and voice. As a worship leader she frequently joins Bill Glass (Behind the Walls) and takes her talents to prisons across the United States.

Spend some time reviewing each day of this week's journey. you plan to do with what you have learned.	Write down what you will take away	from each day and what
DAY ONE - Damascus		
DAY TWO - Arabia		
DAY THREE - Jerusalem		
DAY FOUR - Tarsus		



Write a prayer to God in response to this week's journey.
ADORATION:
CONFESSION:
THE ANALYS CONTINUE
THANKSGIVING:
SUPPLICATION:

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WEEKthree

... Lesson Notes

# VISION: Where are You Going?

"For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known." - 1 Corinthians 13:12

Clouded. That's how I felt about everything in my life. Something was missing. I didn't feel confident in my job or volunteer positions or general direction in life. Maybe I wasn't doing something right? Or maybe I needed to scrap it all and start over? Where was I even going? All I knew was that I lacked clarity in my life. I felt aimless.

By grace I have been raised in a Christian home and so I knew where to go for answers in my life, but, of course, I asked a million other people what I should be doing with my life instead of going to the source of my life. I asked my mom and my grandmas, I complained to my husband, I wrestled my thoughts and feeling with my friends. They all had great advice. However, I didn't feel peace from all of their "sage advice." Finally, I prayed. I even got on my knees. Not even a week later, I was walking on the dirt trail along San Clemente's coast talking through everything with my husband. He nonchalantly said a few things, and, I am telling you, it was as if the clouds had parted and God spoke to me himself! Direction! Vision! I knew where I was going and what I had to do to get there. Seriously. Mind. Blown.

Paul also experienced this type of God given mind blowing sense of direction on the road to Damascus. As we will see this week again and again, Paul will return to God to receive vision and direction from the Holy Spirit. In Acts, Chapters 11 through 14, we are going to read about some methods early Christ followers used to hear from the Holy Spirit. Methods like prayer and fasting, ministering to the Lord, and prophecy. These spiritual disciplines were used to gain the clarity needed to complete the vision God had for the Church. We can adopt these spiritual methods into our daily practices to also follow the Holy Spirit's direction and see God's vision for us come to fruition.

Charles Swindoll points out that "When we study the journeys of Paul in the book of Acts, we're not just reading the travel log of a man; we're observing the redemptive plan of God unfolding as He promised. Through the ministry of Saul of Tarsus, God's mission to reclaim His creation from the death grip of evil would move to its next stage." That is moving beyond Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria to the ends of the earth.

Acts 13 is the beginning of the unfolding of the fulfillment of Jesus' last words, "...but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." (Acts 1:8) Paul's first missionary journey takes him to "the remotest part of the earth."

This week we will follow Paul's first missionary journey. On this journey Paul made stops in Antioch, Cyprus, Pamphylia, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe and returned to Antioch at the end. Each day we will be looking to glean principles from Paul's life by which we might learn to STAY the COURSE in our own journey. On our final day we will head home and focus on our own journey and how we can put to use what we have learned throughout the week.

Day One: God's Vision for Us

Day Two: Holy Spirit Provides the Vision

Day Three: God Speaks Through Visions

Day Four: Our Vision is Eternal

Day Five: Fasting and Praying for God's Vision in Your Life

Note: Questions are based on the New American Standard Bible, unless otherwise stated.

DAY

1

Acts 13:47

"For so the Lord has commanded us, I have placed You as a light for the Gentiles, that You may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.""

## Prayer

Father God give me your vision for my life and the Church, just as you gave Paul a vision for the Church. Help my life to be guided by your vision.

t would be foolish to start a journey without knowing the destination. Therefore, it is foolish for us to move through this life without a vision of where we are going. "For the waywardness of the naive will kill them..." (Proverbs 1:32) As Christians we believe we are Heaven bound. How do we know this to be true? Paul outlines God's vision for us in his first sermon. We would be wise to treasure this sermon in our hearts as it gives us confidence in where we are headed at the end of this life and how our destination impacts our actions today.

#### READ Acts 13:16-25

During Paul's introduction of his sermon he recaps the Old Testament. Notice how Paul makes God the main character of the history of Israel.

"The God of this people Israel chose our fathers..."

"When He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan..."

"He raised up David to be their king..."

After King David, Paul jumps straight to Jesus, who descended from David. Take note how Paul points out that even John the Baptist pointed away from himself to Jesus (v. 24-25).1

1. How can we make God the main character in our life? What does that look like?

READ Acts 13:26-37

Paul explains how Jesus' death and resurrection fulfills all the Scriptures about the Savior.

"And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus."

- Acts 13:32

2. Pulling from what you know about the prophecies of the Savior in the Old Testament and the stories about Jesus in the Gospels, how would you defend Jesus is the Messiah to the Jesus?

#### READ Acts 13:38-41

At the end of his sermon Paul gives his listeners an ultimatum. Choose life or choose death. Martin Luther wrote, "We must all be justified alone by faith in Jesus Christ, without any contribution from the law or help from our works." <sup>2</sup> Paul issues a solemn warning to those who reject the offer of forgiveness and justification by faith in Jesus Christ alone. "Therefore take heed, so that the thing spoken of in the Prophets may not come upon you…" Verse ref.13:40

3. Have you chosen life or death? How can you be so sure?

#### READ Acts 13:42-52

The Jews begged to hear more from Paul and Barnabas and seemed open minded to hear more about the good news. Unfortunately, the next day jealousy takes over and they contradict what Paul was saying. Therefore, "Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles." - Acts 13:46.

Salvation was a gift to the Jews first but by God's great mercy he has extended it to us (Gentiles) as well. God wants both the Jews and everyone else to put their faith in Christ alone and join him in Eternity. "They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God" - Luke 13:29.

In one of his letters, Paul summarizes God's vision for all humanity. "... God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." - 1 Timothy 2:3-4

OPTIONAL SIDE TRIP: "When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the Word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. And the Word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region." Verse ref. 13:48-49 Let us rejoice! Take time to praise God for his mercy and grace represented in Jesus our Savior. Write your exaltations below.

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was th	ere anything that:
	C onvicted me
	O pened my eyes
	U rged me to
	R eminded me
	S tood out to me

Write about it here:

E ncouraged me

### Holy Spirit Provides the Vision

DAY

Acts 13:2-3

"While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."

## Prayer

Heavenly Father, it is said that the steps of a righteous man are ordered by the Lord.

Thank you for guiding my steps through the Holy Spirit.

Give me peace and confidence in your vision when I don't have all the details.

In Our Daily Bread, David C. McCasland relates this passage to this story.

"A restaurant in Spain is so popular that customers must reserve a table 6 months in advance. But noted Spanish chef Ferran Adrià decided to close the doors of his award winning restaurant for 2 years so he and his staff could have time to think, plan and improve. Adrià told a magazine, "If we are winning all the prizes, why change? Working 15 hours a day leaves us very little time to create." In the midst of great success, they took time out for what is most important to them.

The first century church in Antioch experienced a time of exciting growth when "a great number believed and turned to the Lord" (Acts 11:21). As a result, Barnabas and Saul came to teach the new believers (vv.25-26). But along with the hard work, they took time to seek the Lord through prayer and fasting (13:2-3). Through this, God revealed His plan for taking the gospel into Asia.

Few people can take 2 years off to think and plan. But all of us can build time into our schedule to talk to the Lord through prayer. As we open our hearts and minds to God, He will be faithful to reveal the steps of life and service He wants us to take to honour Him."<sup>1</sup>

When we receive our directions from the Lord, we can have confidence that we are going in the right direction. In Acts 17, Paul explains that it is God who directs our steps, "...and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation..."

God guides our comings and goings through the Holy Spirit. We see multiple examples of this in Acts (Examples: Acts 8:29, 13:2-3, 16:6). In Acts 13, we see how serving the Lord and participating in prayer and fasting provides space for the Holy Spirit to speak to us.

Dr. Jack Arnold points out, "The fact that they were serving (ministering in the present tense) and then received the missionary call has great significance. While these men were performing their spiritual gifts, busy serving Christ in Antioch, the Spirit of God spoke to them... They did not sit around and wait for a bolt of lightning to hit them from heaven. They did not hole up in a cave in order for God to speak to them. They were carrying out their ministries faithfully as unto the Lord and God spoke to them." 2

Jack Andrews on the Holy Spirit said, "It is interesting to note that when we get serious about seeking the Lord Jesus that He will speak to us and we will discern His will. They were serious about seeking the Lord and they were sensitive to the Spirit. They were busy ministering to the Lord and fasting and it was during that time that the Lord clearly spoke to these men about His will." <sup>3</sup>

Notice in this passage that fasting is never done alone. It is always accompanied with prayer and acts of service/ministering to the Lord.
1. What could be the significance of this pairing? (For example: fasting and praying, fasting and ministering to the Lord.)
2. Has there ever been a time in your life when you were serving the Lord through ministry or in a time of fasting and prayer and you experienced the Holy Spirit speaking to you, maybe even calling you out by name as He did for Paul and Barnabas?
Do not expect a vision with all the details ironed out or a complete picture. Charles Swindoll comments that "Not unlike the Lord's call of Abram, 'Go forth from your countryto the land which I will show you' (Genesis 12:1), He gave the men enough information to take the first step. After they responded in obedience, God would reveal the information they needed next in due time." <sup>4</sup>
READ Acts 16:6 to see how the Holy Spirit again guides Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journey.
3. Do you feel like you are missing information from the map of your life? What "information" do you feel like you are missing?
OPTIONAL SIDE TRIP: Take time today to pray for any "missing information". I encourage you to fast and pray to hear direction from the Holy Spirit. If you feel confident in all of your directions take time to thank God for your "blessed assurance".

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was	there	anything	that:
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C onvicted me

O pened my eyes

U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

Write about it here:

# DAY

## God Speaks Through Visions

1 Corinthians 14:1

"Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy."

## Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come to you today knowing that you communicate truth to us in many ways. We invite you to speak to us using the gift of prophecy. Give us the tools of discernment so that we continue to walk in the light.

There was a particular moment in my life right after college when I was feeling brokenhearted. The church I was attending at the time had a prayer and worship night and I decided to go so that I could find rest and refreshment for my weary soul. The worship that night was powerful. It really felt like "Heaven touching Earth." The worship leader invited people to come up for prayer. I went up needing clarity and comfort. A woman, a part of the prayer team, joined hands with me and we stood in silence for a while letting the music and presence of God wash over us.

She said that God had given her a vision. She started to describe a beautiful garden with stunning blooms and luscious trees. The trees had long deep roots. She said that God was there in the garden and he had the tools of a gardener. He was going to uproot the trees. She said that it was going to be painful because the roots had grown deep for so long. However, when God was done the result would be freedom and rejoicing.

I walked away that night feeling uplifted and hopeful for the work God was doing in me.

WORSHIP SONG: You Said, Hillsong Live

Today we are going to look at an interesting story in the book of Acts about the gift of prophecy.

"Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius. And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders."

- Acts 11:27-30

Prophets are mentioned elsewhere in Acts.

READ Acts 13:1,15:32, 21:8-14.

Notice how prophecy is used in these passages. "To encourage and strengthen" (Acts 15:32). The role of Christian prophets in the New Testament was to edify and encourage the Church as they spoke things revealed to them by the Holy Spirit. However, prophecies come from human lips and the Bible warns us about false prophets. Can you imagine how foolish everyone would have felt if the disciples had sent contributions to Judea and no famine had come?

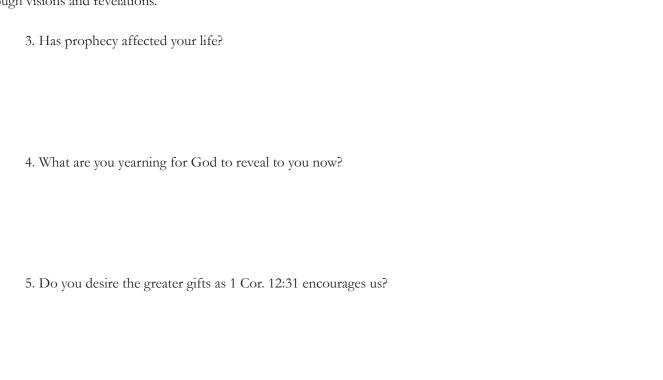
catches your attention.	, 0
1 Corinthians 14:3-4	
1 Corinthians 14:24-25	
1 Corinthians 14:29-33	
1 Thessalonians 5:20-21	
1 John 4:1-3	
There were times in Paul's life when he had to use the discernment of the Holy Spirit to evaluate prophecie and about him. An example is Acts 21:8-14. Paul knows he is called by the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem ecy is spoken by Agabus about potential danger to Paul if he goes to Jerusalem, the church at Caesarea b They want Paul to be safe and feel that the Holy Spirit is warning him. However, Paul rebukes them becau directions are from the Lord.  How is it that there were conflicting messages? Seemingly Agabus and Paul were getting their information.	After a prophegs Paul to stay. se he knows his
Spirit. Some believe that there are two potential problems with prophecies. First, there could be mistakes we cies themselves. Second, there could be mistakes in the prophet's own interpretation. This story could be a one or both. Which is why Paul commands that prophesies be tested. <sup>1</sup>	ith the prophe-
1. How can we be certain that a prophecy spoken to us is true?	
2. Have you ever witnessed a prophecy in conflict with the Truth? How do you know it wasn't tru	e?

Read the following passages about testing or evaluating something reported through prophecy. Write down anything that

It is important to note that prophecy in the Old Testament is separate from prophecy in the New Testament because we have the Holy Spirit. Sam Storm explains:

"A prophet's primary function in the Old Testament (OT) was to serve as God's representative or ambassador by communicating God's word to his people. True prophets never spoke on their own authority or shared their personal opinions, but rather delivered the message God himself gave them. Several texts make this explicit. God promised Moses, "Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say" (Exod. 4:12)... The Lord said to Jeremiah, "I have put my words in your mouth" (Jer 1:9). God commissioned Ezekiel by saying, "You must speak my words to them" (Ezek. 2:7). And many of the OT prophetic books begin with the words, "The word of the LORD that came to . . ." (Hos. 1:2; Joel 1:1; Micah 1:1; Zeph. 1:1; cf. Jonah 1:1). Amos claimed, "This is what the LORD says" (Amos 1:3)." <sup>2</sup>

I want to encourage you sisters, whether you have the gift of prophecy or you have been encouraged by someone in the church with the gift of prophecy, that the Lord wants to encourage you, strengthen your faith, and comfort you in times of need, as the vision of a garden spoken by the woman did for me many years ago and how God spoke to the early church through visions and revelations.



OPTIONAL SIDE TRIP: Write about a time you have prophesied or witnessed prophecy and how it brought about either encouragement or edification.

My Fourney

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was	there	anything	that:
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C onvicted me

O pened my eyes

U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

Write about it here:

### Our Vision is Eternal

DAY

Acts 14:21-22

4

"After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to

Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples,

encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying,

"Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

## Prayer

Holy Father, teach me how to find comfort and confidence in the tribulations I will face in this life. Help me to know you are near and that in the light of the Kingdom of God I will have no fear. For you are my rock and my refuge.

That when we all reach heaven everything else will melt away.

n what ways can focusing on the Kingdom of God give you perspective in trials and tribulations?

Even as a young woman of 28 years old I have endured tribulations. Certainly not as many as some of you... and certainly not as many as the Apostle Paul. However, the times I reflect on as tribulations in my life really challenged my trust in God's divine plan. Specifically, I think back to my freshman year of college. I was 400 miles away from my family and having the time of my life. One night I was at *In-N-Out* with some friends and I got a phone call from my dad. His voice wavered on the other side of the line as he explained my mother had been hospitalized after going in for a checkup about some large bruises on her legs and arms.

I drove home as fast as I could that night. The next few days were a whirlwind of tests and doctors coming in and out to explain procedures. My mother was diagnosed with ITP a rare autoimmune disease of the blood. Her blood platelet count was minimal to the point of the possibility of bleeding in the brain. She was sent home after a few days with a case full of new medications to take and warnings to be extremely careful as she could bleed out with a simple knife prick. Mind you she was infamously clumsy in the kitchen so the warning was not far-fetched. For years I lived in fear of that phone call that might come to tell me she was gone.

The writer and Christian scholar Thomas More, in his 1534 work *A dialoge of comforte against tribulation*, defined the title word as "every such thing as troubleth and greueth [grieveth] a man either in bodye or mynde." <sup>1</sup> These days, however, the word tribulation is typically used as a plural noun, paired with its alliterative partner trial, and relates less to oppression and more to any kind of uphill struggle.<sup>2</sup>

WORSHIP SONG: God I Look to You, Bethel Church

It is evident in Paul's life that he believed the tribulations of this life were worth going through in light of the Kingdom of God. On his first missionary journey, Paul endured much for the sake of spreading the Good News. Paul battled with division among his own friends (Acts 13:13), he faced opposition and persecution from the crowds in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:45, 50), in Iconium attempts were made to mistreat and stone him (Acts 14:5), at Lystra Jews stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city leaving him for dead (Acts 14:19). After all that and more he then returns to all of the same cities to strengthen and encourage the new believers!

So speaking from his experiences, what does Paul say about tribulations?

#### READ Romans 5:1-5.

1. What is the hope that Paul is talking about?

In Romans 5:1 he talks about peace in Christ. Paul's peace perhaps came from Jesus' own words: "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." - John 16:33

#### READ Romans 5:6-11

2. How can reconciliation with God through Christ give us peace and hope when we are facing tribulations?

#### READ Hebrews 10:32-39.

3. How do you personally "not shrink back to destruction" when times get tough?

Our destination is the Kingdom of God. God's vision for all men is for them to be saved by knowing the truth of Jesus Christ and joining him in eternity. Tribulations are not eternal, though they may feel like it when we are going through them! God is eternal. Our Hope is eternal. We can endure the tribulations of this world when we keep the vision of the Eternal at our forefront.

O for a faith that will not shrink, Though pressed by every foe, That will not tremble on the brink Of any earthly woe.

- Bathurst

OPTIONAL SIDE TRIP: Following Paul's example, how can we encourage others to continue in the faith despite tribulations? What are some scriptures of truth we can use as words of life?

# My Fourney

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was the	ere anything that:
	C onvicted me
	O pened my eyes
	U rged me to
	R eminded me

E ncouraged me

S tood out to me

Write about it here:

5

Matthew 6:5-8, 16-18

### Prayer

'Our Father who is in heaven,

Hallowed be Your name.

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

'Give us this day our daily bread.

'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

[For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.']

"When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you."

"And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him."

"Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you."

- Matthew 6:5-8, 16-18

This week we saw how the idea of vision affected Paul and his first missionary journey. Day One we saw how Paul had God's eternal vision in mind as he preached the Gospel to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles. Day Two we saw how the Holy Spirit gave Paul direction while he was ministering, praying and fasting. Day Three we read through Paul's commands about evaluating and testing prophecies and saw how the Holy Spirit gives direction through visions and interpretations. Day Four we saw how Paul "Stayed the Course" during tribulations and how we can be encouraged to do the same. This week I hope you walk away with clarity about God's vision for you and how to live life in light of His Eternal promise. I hope you feel encouraged this week to Stay the Course!

# My Tourney

I encourage you to set some time aside today or in the next few weeks to include a time of fasting and prayer. Keep in mind Jesus's commands about prayer and fasting as laid out in Matthew 6. Ask God to provide you with His vision to guide your life's journey just as we see Jesus did in The Lord's Prayer, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven."

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#### DAY FOUR

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- 3. William H. Bathurst. Oh, for a Faith That Will Not Shrink (Public Domain, 1831)



...Lesson Notes

### Introduction

# Striving for Unity

"Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ you are all sons of God, through faith."

- Galatians 3:23-25 The Apostle Paul

As you can imagine, after Jesus rose to heaven many new converts were left wondering how to live out this new faith they had in Him. The Apostles and Elders were left in charge to continue Jesus' ministry in His absence. This was a tough task because for the last 600 years the Jews had followed the commandments in the Torah. This was their way of life and their Jewish faith, morality, and purity. These laws didn't disappear the day Jesus died on the cross. Instead, Jews slowly left their old ways for the better, new ways that Jesus had taught...not to mention the incredible revival beyond the Jewish community of Gentiles coming to faith in Jesus. Some newly converted Pharisees, who had been especially strict about keeping the laws, wanted the new Gentiles to keep the law of Moses.

Paul, a new convert himself, takes a trip to Jerusalem to see Peter and James to gain some wisdom and clarity over the matter. The unity of the Jews and Gentiles was at stake and Paul didn't want to make the wrong call on this one.

This week we will be looking at the disruption to unity over obedience to the law and how the decision at the Jerusalem Council promoted the unity of the Spirit between the Jews and Gentiles. Then we discuss our need to seek unity in Christ in our lives and rejoice in unity. To "Stay the Course" in our journey it is vital to look inward and assess how we can be better promoters of unity within our community.

\*All Bible verses will be in the English Standard Version unless noted otherwise.

#### Disruption to Unity

DAY

1

Galations 5:2

"Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace."

#### Prayer

Dear Lord, please help me to gain wisdom and insight today as I study the Jerusalem Council. Open my eyes to see your heart for the Jews and the Gentiles uniting as adopted sons and daughters.

WORSHIP SONG: Grace to Grace, Hillsong Worship

READ Acts 15:1-5

"But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question. So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the brothers. When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them. But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses."

Some men from Judea, believed to be the Pharisees later referenced in verse 5, came down from Judea to Antioch to tell the new Gentile believers that they must be circumcised to be saved. Paul and Barnabas did not agree and had "no small dissension and debate" so we know that they passionately disagreed. Because they could not agree, and the Gentiles salvation was at stake according to these men from Judea, Paul and Barnabas were sent by the church to Jerusalem to talk to the apostles and elders about this question.

These men from Judea were obviously very passionate about continuing to keep the law of Moses alive including circumcision. Pharisees were pros at following the law...or so they wanted everyone to believe. In fact, the Pharisees were scolded by Jesus for being like a cup that is cleaned on the outside but the inside is full of greed and wickedness. He said they neglected others by not showing the justice and love of God. Their "rule-keeping" had turned their hearts sour and their goal was to enslave people to the rules they acted like they were following so perfectly. The Pharisees were legalistic which means they were dependent on moral law rather than on personal religious faith.

- 1. Have you ever experienced legalism in your Christian walk? If so, write down an example.
- 2. How do you think this has impacted you?

So fast forward a bit some of these Pharisees actually became believers, but their old ways didn't die easily. They wanted
to prove that Paul and Barnabas had been wrong in not teaching the new Gentile believers that they had to keep the whole
law. David Guzik puts it this way, "These Jewish Christians (often called "Judaizers") came to the congregation in Antioch and taught that
Gentiles may become Christians, but only after first becoming Jews, and submitting to all Jewish rituals, including circumcision."

3. We do not hear of Christians today pushing circumcision on new believers. What do today's legalists push on other believers?

4. How does this harm the body of Christ?

In the Hebrew Bible, there were about 613 laws given to the Jewish people. "The most commonly accepted breakdown was done by Maimonides in the 12th century AD. Maimonides further divided the 613 commandments into positive, 'do this' commandments, numbering 248, and negative, 'do not do this' commandments, numbering 365." The point of the law was to show the Jews that no one can keep all the commands perfectly and therefore, needed a Savior to rescue them from the burden that they couldn't bear.

But because this way of rule-following was engraved in the Pharisees since childhood, they didn't want to stop, and possibly, because of the great pride they took in it, they wanted to show their rule-following skills to others. (It's always nice to be better at something than someone else!) They also seemed to miss Jesus' teachings while He was still alive in His new way of doing things.

Dear Lord, if You don't make distinctions between people, help me not to also.

May I be sensitive to your Spirit and love others well today.

My Fourney

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was 1	there	anything	that:
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C onvicted me

O pened my eyes

U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

DAY

2

Galatians 3:28

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ."

ßrayer

WORSHIP SONG: Give Me Faith, Elevation Worship

READ Acts 15:6-11

"The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter. And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."

In the Gospels, Jesus is walking by the Sea of Galilee and calls for Simon (known as Peter) and his brother Andrew to leave their nets and follow Jesus to become fishers of men. Without hesitation, they left their occupation as fishermen and followed Jesus as his disciples. Peter went on to become one of Jesus' closest friends in the inner circle of Peter, James and John. In the ESV Study Bible, it says, "Peter heads all the lists of the Twelve and serves as their spokesman." And in Matthew 16:18 Jesus tells Peter, "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

We see in Scripture, Peter once again as acting spokesman for the group of apostles and elders. A debate had taken place over circumcision and the law of Moses being a requirement for salvation. "This important theological issue in the early history of the church was not decided by a sudden decree spoken by a prophet but by careful reasoning and thoughtful argumentation based on Scripture." Peter stands and references how God had made a choice among them that the Gentiles would also get to hear the Gospel and believe. Scholars believe Peter is referencing his time at the house of Cornelius nearly ten years prior to this meeting known as the Jerusalem Council. In Acts 10 Peter fell into a trance and God showed him that the old clean vs. unclean traditions were not to keep him from a relationship with the Gentiles. God was no longer showing partiality, but every nation that believed in Him and receive Him by faith could come into His family.

1. Share a time you found yourself or others unaccepting of believers because of their race, social status or background?

Peter explains how God had given the Gentiles the Holy Spirit "just as he did to us." In the book Irresistible, Andy Stanley says, "Again, it's impossible for us to comprehend the significance- the seismic shift- associated with those last three words: 'just as he did to us'. Standing in what everyone considered to be the epicenter of the world, the city the Jews had bled and died for, and perhaps a stone's throw from the holy of holies, Peter declared that God had thrown open the doors of the Jesus movement to outsiders. Divine approval once reserved for the Jewish race was not available to everyone." <sup>3</sup>

Then Peter acknowledges what all Jewish people had felt for hundreds of years.

"Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?" -Acts 15:10.

No one had been able to keep the law of Moses perfectly and it had felt like a burden to them as it pointed out their sins and shortcomings. Now the converted Pharisees wanted to impose these laws on Gentiles who had grown up in pagan homes and customs. Imagine having to learn about 600 laws and then keep them all because of your salvation and acceptance by the Jews depended on it!

2. Does following Jesus sometimes feel like a burden to you like the Jews had felt with the laws? How so?

3. The Jews felt the	burden of being under	the Law. Their lea	ders taught the wa	ay to heaven was	to keep their list

of rules. Jesus came and gave them an answer to their burden. What was His solution in Matthew 11:28-30?

Without ever using their names, Peter defended Paul and Barnabas' missionary journey clearly showing that God had chosen the Gentiles. The converted Pharisees felt Paul and Barnabas had been wrong while on their previous missions, not telling the Gentiles that they needed to obey the whole law in order to be saved. And in verse 12, Paul and Barnabas retell all the signs and wonders done through them among the Gentiles. Surely, there would be no doubt in this group that both Jews and Gentiles were saved through the grace of the Lord. It was a free gift for all, no matter how hard this truth was to accept.

4. In what ways do you find it hard to accept this free gift of grace for yourself? Or extending grace to others?

Dear Lord, give me a desire to walk in unity with my brothers and sisters and to have patience towards them.

Please fill me with Your truth as I read Your Word today.

My Fourney

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was	there	anything	that:
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C onvicted me

O pened my eyes

U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

## DAY



#### Ephesians 4:1-2

"I, therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

## Prayer

Worship Song: How Can It Be, Lauren Daigle

Read: Acts 15:12-21

"And all the assembly fell silent, and they listened to Barnahas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders
God had done through them among the Gentiles. After they finished speaking, James replied, "Brothers, listen to me.

Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name.

And with this, the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written,

"After this, I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen;

I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord,
and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these thingsknown from of old."

Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood.

For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues."

The next man to speak is none other than James, the brother of Jesus. James grew up in the same family and home as Jesus. Can you imagine James' possible feelings of inadequacy in comparison to a brother who never disobeyed? We know from the Gospels that James never came to know Jesus as Lord and Savior until after the death and resurrection of Jesus. In the book of James, he calls himself "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." (James 1:1). Scholars note that there is no greater argument for Jesus being Lord in that his own brother came to believe in him. And now we see him here as a leader of the church in Jerusalem.

James begins by pointing out, just as Simon Peter had, that God was now including the Gentiles and taking a "people for His name". Then he quotes from Amos a verse supporting the reasoning that the Gentiles who are called by God's name may seek the Lord too. Basically, James is saying that the Prophet Amos wrote about it and now we are seeing for ourselves God's plan of inclusion unfold. The time is now people!

And then James says something very, very important.

"Therefore my judgment is that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God."

- Acts 15:19.

So what does it mean to make it difficult or trouble a Gentile turning to God? We know that being a Christian isn't easy and not something to take lightly. We are guaranteed suffering, persecution, and told in Matthew that "the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few will ever find it." (Matthew 7:14). But here James is speaking to Jewish Christians and telling them not to make it difficult on their fellow Gentile Christians. Essentially, don't make it hard for the outsider coming in who wants to accept and walk with Jesus. Christians are guaranteed enough hardship that they don't need their fellow believers making it hard to even want to be a believer.

1. Do you feel like the church, Christians or yourself make it unnecessarily difficult for people (that's everyone who is not a Jew) turning to God? How so?

Then James offers a proposal of four things that Gentiles should be told to abstain from out of the 613 laws, "...write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood." (Acts 15:20). It begs the question of why these four restrictions were chosen.

"Those four imperatives had nothing to do with keeping the law and everything to do with keeping the peace. Specifically, peace in the church. Peace between Jewish and Gentile believers... James was simply asking Gentile believers to be sensitive to Jewish sensitivities." Andy Stanley explains the instructions regarding food restrictions were to keep peace with the Jews who still cared a great deal about their dietary laws. But why the law about sexual immorality? Is this referenced because one law out of the 613 should still be kept? No, Stanley believes that the New Covenant is about loving others the way that Christ has loved us...and that includes sexual morality. As Christians, we keep sexually pure because we are loving others the way Christ has sacrificially loved us and put Himself before us.

- 2. Do you agree with Andy Stanley's thoughts on the reasons these four requirements were chosen? Why or why not?
- 3. How can you be more sensitive to other personal convictions and sensitivities in order to maintain unity?

The ruling at the Jerusalem council was huge for every Gentile in surrounding cities waiting to hear if they had to be circumcised and adopt hundreds of laws that seemed foreign to them. And these men decided that "Congregational unity trumped ceremonial purity." [2] The unity of the Jews and Gentiles in AD 49 was of utmost importance and the unity of the church today should still be of utmost importance.

4. In what ways can unity be promoted or encouraged in your life and in your church?

Dear Lord, may I seek you in my life so I can confidently say You are guiding me.

Please let me unite with other believers as I seek You.

WORSHIP SONG: Another in the Fire, Hillsong Worship

# My Fourney

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was th	ere anything that:
	C onvicted me
	O pened my eyes
	U rged me to

S tood out to me

R eminded me

E ncouraged me



"The defining characteristic of the Old Covenant was circumcision. The defining characteristic of the New Covenant is faith expressing itself through love." 
Andy Stanley

Jrayer

READ Acts 15:22-35

"Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brothers, with the following letter:

"The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the brothers who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings. Since we have heard that some persons have gone out from us and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions, it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell."

So when they were sent off, they went down to Antioch and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. And when they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement. And Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words. And after they had spent some time, they were sent off in peace by the brothers to those who had sent them."

A fter a decision had been made it "seemed good" to the apostles, the elders, and the whole Jerusalem congregation to choose some men to go back with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch to deliver the news. The ESV Study Bible says, "Mature Christian wisdom and reasoning, in dependence on the Lord, resulted in a unanimous corporate decision." <sup>2</sup>

It is easy to overcomplicate the process of making godly decisions and second guess yourself. Here we see an example that we can follow when making decisions in our own life. Paul and Barnabas didn't have all the answers but certainly felt that the Gentiles didn't need to follow the law. They went to wiser leaders in the church and debated back and forth what they thought was right. And through this process, with the Jerusalem church in attendance, they came to what they felt was best in accordance with Scripture and what God was doing through Paul and Barnabas' ministry to the Gentiles. They were so convinced that their decision was "of the Lord" that they also wrote in the letter that it seemed good to the Holy Spirit as well, meaning these men really felt like the Holy Spirit was guiding their decision-making process.

1. Do you include the Lord in your decision-making process so as to feel confident that you are in agreement with the Holy Spirit?

Judas, called Barsabbas, and Silas were chosen amongst the group because they were leaders and could testify about the

decision made as well. The letter addressed to the Roman province of Syria including Cilicia and Antioch, the capitol. In the letter, they immediately addressed how the Christian Pharisees had troubled the Gentiles and unsettled their minds. This shows that neither Paul nor the Jerusalem leadership agreed with the Pharisees. Then the good news came that the Jerusalem leadership would not lay on the Gentiles the burden of following the law and instead they had to observe the three dietary laws and one moral law. And again, this was to be sensitive to the Jews who needed time to adapt to the New Covenant ways. And when the letter was read the people rejoiced because it was so encouraging. It was really true that salvation is by grace alone, not by works or obedience to the law!

2. We can rejoice that we no longer have 613 rules to follow. Jesus has given us only two. What are they?

The letter had a huge impact on the Gentiles, but it was also very meaningful for the Jewish believers as well. No longer did Jewish Christians need to take trips to the temple and sacrifice animals to be right with God. They had the same free grace as the Gentiles had. That would be mind-boggling, a total paradigm shift for the Jewish Christians. I'm sure some had an easier time adapting than others. The Jews who didn't believe in Jesus continued following the Mosaic Law, sacrificing animals for the forgiveness of sins, and circumcising. And the Jewish believers now had freedom from these things which were wonderful though they didn't know how to live differently. It was sort of like moving to a foreign country and not knowing how to act and needing to learn a new way of life and adapt for these Jewish Christians.

We can see that this was God's desire for the Jews and Gentiles to unite into one family under a New Covenant. The New Covenant was simpler but harder to live by. It says this:

"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind."

This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: Love your neighbor as yourself."

The entire law and all the prophets are based on these two commandments."

- Matthew 22:37-40

Loving God and loving others is synonymous. We love God by loving others. He has no greater joy than one of His children loving another one of His children. Or as Andy Stanley says, "To refuse to love a brother or sister is to forgo the opportunity to love God." This New Covenant requires true sacrificial love.

3. How do you respond when God puts a "more grace required" kind of person in your path? Do you rejoice in the opportunity to love God by loving this person?

4. Share with the Lord and your small group how you feel about the freedom you have in the Lord.

This is a time for rejoicing! If you are feeling creative, you might write a poem or draw a picture to express the joy you feel.

Dear Lord, sink these truths into my heart. May I sacrificially love as You do and by my love may others know I am your child.

# My Fourney

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was	there	anything	that:
-----	-------	----------	-------

C onvicted me

O pened my eyes

U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

DAY

5

1 Corinthians 9:19

"Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible."

### Prayer

he law was a wonderful tool for the Jewish people to see their sin and need for repentance, but it never could provide lasting righteousness and justification before God. They knew this and were reminded every year they took a trip to Jerusalem to make bloody sacrifices for their sins. Many Jews longed for a Savior who would rescue them from their enemies and free them from the burden of the law.

But once Jesus came and did just that, not everyone was fully convinced that they could lay aside the law and walk in the new freedom Jesus provided. Those that believed Jesus was the Christ, still wanted to keep bits and pieces of the law. And not just for themselves but for the newly converted Gentiles as well. Paul had preached that following the law wasn't necessary and neither was circumcision, but he came under fire for those claims.

Just to be sure, he visited Jerusalem and in their meeting, Peter and James agree with Paul but also want to be sensitive to all the Jewish believers that have been taught the Law their whole lives. They came up with the fabulous four requirements and everyone seemed to be pretty happy with it in light of what they could have decided. They may have needed to learn 613 laws and go straight into a painful surgery. But God cared more about unity than ceremonial purity and He wanted His people to live by the new covenant standards. No more tit for tat and if you do this, then I'll do that. It was all about faith expressing itself through love!

In ending this lesson, there are two major takeaways for us. We don't want to make it unnecessarily difficult for people turning to God and we want to do everything we can to win people to Christ. Journal about what God has taught you through these takeaways and how they will ultimately help you Stay the Course in your journey toward being a better promoter of unity within your community.

My Fourney

# Week Four References

2. Got Questions, What are the 613 commandments in the Old Testament Law? (https://www.gotquestions.org/613-commandments.html).

#### Day 2

- 1. ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Good News Publishers, 2011), 1839.
- 2. ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Good News Publishers, 2011), 2115.
- 3. Andy Stanley, Irresistible (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 122-123.

#### Day 3

- 1. Andy Stanley, Irresistible (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 127.
- 2. Andy Stanley, Irresistible (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 130.

#### Day 4

- 1. Andy Stanley, Irresistible (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 207.
- 2.ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Good News Publishers, 2011), 2116.
- 3. Andy Stanley, Irresistible (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 230.



...Lesson Notes

#### Introduction

## With Full Courage

"As it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that With Full Courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death."

- Phillippians 1:20 (ESV)

Do you think of yourself as a woman of courage? It's easier to think of the bigger circumstances in our lives that call for us to be courageous, but what about the daily dealings? Do these carry the same call to courage?

- Being obedient to the Lord's guidance when it's not what you expected or wanted
- Committing to being on your knees in prayer for that constant struggle you are facing
- Disciplined to be in the Word, anywhere, anytime, no matter the distraction or environment
- Sharing the gospel without watering down the truth

Do these take courage? The answer is a resounding Yes! Our lives are filled with opportunities to live with Full Courage. Throughout the Scriptures, we are told to "take heart", "Be of good cheer", and "fear not." These words, spoken in the bible are for our strengthening, they are a command for courage.

In this week's study you will be following the Apostle Paul on his second missionary journey. As zealous as Paul was in his plans to visit and strengthen the churches he had previously planted, we will see that "the Spirit made clear to him that he would have the Gospel carried forward by larger leaps and bolder marches." Paul's courageous heart is on display as he ventures out in faithful obedience.

May we be women With Full Courage like the apostle Paul and heed this command for courage that we too may Stay the Course. (Most scripture references in this weeks study are from the ESV translation)

Day One: Courage to Count on the Holy Spirit

Day Two: Courage to Continually Pray

Day Three: Courage to Not Compromise the Word

Day Four: Courage to Commit to the Call

Day Five: Courage Cultivated

Courage Challenge: Memorize Philippians 1:20 as it appears at the top of each day's homework

#### Courage to Count on the Holy Spirit

DAY

1

Philippians 1:20

"As it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death."

## Prayer

O Lord God, thank You that the very Spirit of Jesus lives in me. Help me to not only be sensitive to the work of the Holy Spirit in my life but also to respond promptly. Open my heart through Your Word today and give me the courage to count on Your Holy Spirit as I Stay the Course. In Jesus' name, Amen.

READ Acts 16:6-16:14

The definition of *Courage* found in the dictionary means:

Mental or moral strength to venture, persevere and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty.

Fill in the blanks for Acts 16:6-8 (Look up in the ESV)

"And theyt	through the region of P	hrygia and Galatia, h	paving been forbidden by the Holy Spin	rit to speak the word in Asia.
And when they had		Mysia, they		into Bithynia, but the Spirit
of Jesus did not allow then	m. So	_ by Mysia, they	down to Troas."	

These are action words. After that first forbidding of the Holy Spirit in verse 6 they chose to keep moving. Thinking back on that definition of courage, we can see that it is clearly being demonstrated in these verses by Paul and his companions. They continued to venture and persevere being obedient to each divine detour.

- 1. What does it look like for you to trust in the Holy Spirit?
  - a. Look again at Acts 16:6-8 above, circle the cities mentioned. How many cities did Paul try to take the gospel to?

#### READ Acts 15:36.

We learn at the end of Acts chapter 15 that Paul's plan was to visit and strengthen the churches he had planted in the Asian province of Galatia during his first journey. After that he hoped to take the Gospel to unchurched regions. Paul had it in his mind to go one way but God hindered those plans and re-directed.

2. Look up some synonyms for *Discourage* in the dictionary and write them below.

Paul must have felt discouraged at each door that closed. I think we can all relate. It is easy to lose heart when things are not going as we had hoped or planned. Discouragement can steer us off course and combat our courage to trust in the Holy Spirit.

a. What opposition are you coming up against? And how has that combated your courage to trust in the Holy Spirit?

Courage Commanded: "If we [claim to] live by the [Holy] Spirit, we must also walk by the Spirit [with personal integrity, godly character, and moral courage- our conduct empowered by the Holy Spirit]" - Galatians 5:25 AMP

Just as God closed doors He also opened them and gave Paul the clear direction that he needed through the vision in Acts 16:10 (ESV). Fill in the blank below.

"And when Paul had seen the vision, \_\_\_\_\_ we sought to go on to Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them."

It is evident that these early missionaries were sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. The route they took relied heavily on the direction of the Spirit and on prayer. Had they followed their original plans, their work would have been confined to Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). Up to that point in history, the gospel had been limited to Asia, and many historians credit Paul's heeding the Macedonian Call in Acts 16:9 with the spread of Christianity into Europe and the western world. <sup>1</sup>

3. Paul exemplified courage in his readiness to respond to the Holy Spirit. Can you think of a time where you responded immediately to the Holy Spirit, what was the outcome?

"Do what the Lord bids you, as He bids you, as long as He bids you, and do it at once." <sup>2</sup>
- Charles Spurgeon

OPTIONAL SIDE TRIP: Don't lose heart. Throughout Scripture we are encouraged to not lose heart. In order to Stay the Course we need to rely on God's Word. Look up these verses and answer the question below.

John 16:33

1 Corinthians 15:58

2 Corinthians 4:16

What do you see in these verses that would help you to be emboldened?

Prayer: Lord God I pray that I would be a woman with full courage, like Paul, and that I would step out in faith, embracing Your extraordinary guidance through the Holy Spirit. In Jesus name, Amen



As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was there anything that:

C onvicted me

O pened my eyes

U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

## DAY

# 2

Look up these verses for reference:

Matthew 6:9-13

#### Philippians 1:20

"As it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death."

## Prayer

Dear Lord, thank You for the privilege of prayer. Please stir up my heart through Your Word today and give me the courage to continually pray. Help me not to be led off course by my present circumstances but instead help me to Stay the Course through prayer. In Jesus' name, Amen.

but instead help me to Stay the Course through prayer. In Jesus name, Amen.
Fill in the blanks for Acts 16:13 (ESV)
"And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come there."
Evidently, the Jewish community in Philippi did not have a minimum of ten men required to form a synagogue, so the group met near the riverside. Paul and his companions had it ingrained in them to go and seek out the "place of prayer." <sup>1</sup>
While exercising their habit of prayer God's work was being done.
READ Acts 16:14:
"One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God.  The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul."
1. What does it look like to be in the practice of prayer? How can we more practically live this out in our daily lives?
Christ is our best example of how to have the courage to continually pray. He Himself was a man of prayer, and He taught
His followers to pray. If the Son of Man saw a personal need to pray, how much more should we see the same need in ourselves? <sup>2</sup>

Matthew 14:23

Mark 1:35

Luke 6:12

Circle the phrases "As we were going" and "we were met" in the verse below.

"As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling."

- Acts 16:16

Being in the practice of prayer doesn't only create a good godly discipline in our lives it also produces courage for what we may encounter. As Paul was going to that place of Prayer he encountered a young woman with a demonic spirit of divination. In verse 17 we are told that this young slave girl kept shouting out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." What seemed to be free press for the Kingdom of God was recognized by Paul to be of the Devil and was an annoyance that had to be dealt with in the name of Jesus.

Look at Acts 16:18 below

"Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the Spirit, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.' And it came out that very hour."

Being in the practice of prayer is preparing for ourselves a foundation of trust and reliance on the Lord. We need to be in that habit so that we are equipped both in mind and heart to face whatever might threaten to carry us off course.

#### READ Acts 16:19-25

In these verses, we see the injustice of the situation, that Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown into prison for no real crime at all. These men were not just barely beaten and put into a jail cell, they were bloodied and left with open wounds and tossed in the most unsanitary cell with their legs not just fastened but fastened spread apart in uncomfortable positions.<sup>3</sup>

How many of us would pray and praise God in a time like that? In a time of not only injustice but in physical pain too. Look at verse 16:25 again and recognize the courage they had to continually pray and praise God in the midst of affliction.

"About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them."

- Acts 16:25

2. Look up these verses and match with the correct context.

1 Peter 4:16 Suffers as a christian

Hebrews 12:3 Joy in trials

James 1:2-3 Does not grow weary

a. What do you learn from these few verses as it pertains to courage and prayer in a trial?
3. Suffering can steer us off course and combat our courage to continually pray. In a season of affliction, what can you praise God for? And how has suffering combated your courage to pray?
4. Based on your knowledge of scripture, to whom did Jesus warn would suffer for knowing Him?
Pharisees and sadducees Jews Gentiles His Disciples Rulers
Courage Commanded: "I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have [perfect] peace. In the world, you have tribulation and distress and suffering, but be courageous [be confident, be undaunted, be filled with joy]; I have overcome the world." [My conquest is accomplished, My victory abiding.] - John 16:33 AMP
READ Acts 16:26-32
In this scripture we see that God's power is clearly revealed through prayer. We see His power in the physical miracles like the earthquake and the prison doors opening and everyone's bonds were unfastened and then we also see His power in the repentant heart of a Philippian jailer.
Paul and Silas were in the midst of a prayer and praise meeting in their prison cell, with other prisoners listening in. That is when God stepped in and another soul was swept into the Kingdom. <sup>4</sup>
5. Where has God's power been revealed in your life through prayer? Is there anyone in your life for whom you can battle in prayer?
"The key to rejoicing always is to pray continually- to lean on God all the time and to call to Him often." <sup>5</sup> - John Piper
Prayer Prompt: Consider this question again, "Where has God's power been revealed in your life through prayer?" Take the time to write out your own prayer of thanksgiving and praise here:



As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself,	"What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

C onvicted me

Was there anything that:

O pened my eyes

U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

## DAY

### Courage to Not Compromise the Word



#### Philippians 1:20

"As it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death."

## Prayer

Father God thank You for Your word which is truth and life. Speak to me today, revealing more of who You are and empowering me to have the courage to not compromise Your word as I strive to stay the course.

In Jesus' name, amen.

#### READ Acts 17:1-9

Ook up some synonyms of the word *Compromise* in a dictionary and write them here:

People who become accustomed to making their biblical and doctrinal judgments not based on what they see in Scripture, "these folks will — as Ephesians 4:14 says — be blown off course by the various winds of doctrines that blow in our culture. This produces people who are loose and careless in their moral judgments." 1

Look back at the definition of *Courage* found in day one and write it below:

- 1. Take a look at this scenario below where someone might compromise the word, think of 2 others yourself and write them below.
  - Love means tolerance of ALL things

\_

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What steps can we take to Not compromise the Word?

Courage Commanded: "Be on guard; stand firm in your faith [in God, respecting His precepts and keeping your doctrine sound]. Act like [mature] men and be courageous; be strong." - 1 Corinthians 16:13 (AMP)

Fill in the blanks below

"And Paul went in,	as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he	with them from the Scriptures,	and
tha	at it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead	d, and saying "This Jesus, whom I	to
you, is the Christ." -	- Acts 17:2-3		

Paul reasoned from the Scriptures and challenged people to look at what the Scriptures said. We need to be equipping ourselves in order to have the courage to not compromise the Word. As followers of Christ, we are called to be in the bible daily, seeking to know the Lord more and to grow in the knowledge of the truth.

Write out your own definition for the word Equip below. And look up a few synonyms in a dictionary.

2. Looking at your life, how have you had to equip yourself?

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Now Look back at Acts 17:2-3

Paul was "Explaining" - The first thing Paul did was to explain the Old Testament passages on the Messiah. He gave a verse by verse explanation of the key texts on the Messiah. Paul was persistent in persuading without watering down the truth. <sup>2</sup>

Paul was "proving" - In the Greek, this literally means "placing before" or "to sit down by the side of." What Paul did was open up the Old Testament texts and then showed from the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ that He was the fulfiller of all these predicted prophecies concerning the Messiah. <sup>2</sup>

Paul was prepared to make a defense and he did that by using Scripture as his guide and as the proof he needed to persuade others about Jesus.

#### READ 1 Peter 3:15-16 below.

"But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect."

Paul took no other books but the Bible, he believed in the inspired Word of God and so did the Jews, and they would recognize no other authority. He stuck to the Scriptures. We need to follow this example when sharing the Gospel with others. Depending on Scripture and trusting in its complete sufficiency is truly having the courage to not compromise the Word. The example that Paul left us is one of deep conviction and belief that God's Word was and is enough, and by following his courageous lead we will stay the course.

Lack of knowledge can steer us off course and combat our courage to not compromise the Word. We make a defense by knowing the Word of God and living obediently to Him.

3. What steps are you taking to know the Word of God?

In Acts 17:4 we see that some were persuaded and joined Paul. And then in 17:5 we read, "But the Jews were jealous."

READ Acts 17:6-7 below.

"And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also," and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus."

Underline the phrase above that the Jews were shouting out. And then rewrite it here:

Turned... upside down - (greek) anastatoo - to stir up, excite, unsettle

"Considering that Thessalonica is only the second city in Europe to hear the gospel, this is a bit of an exaggeration.

But in a way, it's quite a compliment too. What does the world say about you?" 3

OPTIONAL SIDE TRIP: Considering Acts 17:7 which says "...and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." Take a moment to read John 19:1-3, 19:12-16 below and meditate on the scripture marveling at the courage and sacrifice of our true King, Jesus. Wherever you find a blank fill it in with the title KING.

'Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a
purple robe. They came up to him, saying, "Hail, of the Jews!" and struck him with their hands From then on Pilate sough
to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a oppose.
Caesar." So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Stone Pavement, and
in Aramaic Gabbatha. Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, "Behold you
!" They cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your?" The chief
priests answered, "We have no but Caesar." So he delivered him over to them to be crucified."

"Courage must be coupled with the proper content if a believer is to shake the world. To have the right message, but not the boldness to proclaim it, renders it useless. On the other hand, to boldly proclaim error, as the cults do, causes even greater harm. Proclaiming the truth with great boldness, as Paul did, cannot help but change the world." 4- John MacArthur

Prayer: Holy God thank You for the conviction that You instill in my heart through the gospel. May I be a woman with full courage, as Paul and have the courage to not compromise Your Word. Help me to stay the course as I seek to stay true to the Scriptures. In Jesus name, amen.



As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was there anything that:

C onvicted me

O pened my eyes

U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

#### Courage to Commit to the Call

DAY

4

Philippians 1:20

"As it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death."

## Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for the call You have on my life, help me to live for You and seek Your will daily. Give me clarity today through Your Word that I might have the courage to commit to the call and stay the course.

In Jesus name, Amen.

READ Acts 18:1-24

esus said, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." - Acts 1:8 (NLT)

In this verse we see a picture of what our call is as believers in Christ Jesus. Circle the word 'witnesses' above.

God has called us and equipped us for that calling. The Holy Spirit has been given to each of us who have put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit is our helper as Jesus Himself has said in John 14:6. What does it look like to be a witness to Jesus Christ? And are we willing to step out in courage and commit to the call that God has on us? Let's continue to look at Paul in Acts 18 and see how he exemplified this courage to commit to the call leaving us a model for Staying the Course.

"...Paul spent all his time preaching the Word." Acts 18:5 (NLT)

Paul was occupied with the Word. Underline the Word 'all' in verse 18:5.

Some synonyms for the word *occupy* found in the dictionary are: busy, engage, engross, enthrall, immerse

1. What does it look like to occupy oneself with the word? Do you know anyone like that? What does their life look like?

Paul had a deep concern for others. While Paul was reasoning to the Jews and Greeks in the synagogue at Corinth he faced opposition and rejection from the Jews. Paul, of course, wanted to see his own brethren the Jews come to Christ and in his persistent concern for them, he also had to come to a point of surrendering those Jews in Corinth. Having a concern for others in spite of opposition helped the apostle Paul stay the course and through his "reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath" he was showing courage to commit to the call.

"And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads!"

I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

- Acts 18:6

4. What are you afraid of and is it causing you to be silent and to not keep speaking? Is there anyone trying to silence you?

OPTIONAL SIDE TRIP: Take a moment to read this commentary on Acts 18:9-11

Do not be afraid: The implication behind this message was that Paul was afraid, fearing that here in Corinth his work would be cut short by either opposing Jews (as in Thessalonica and Berea) or by the highly-charged worldliness around him.

But speak, and do not keep silent: The solution to Paul's fear was for him to obey Jesus' command to not be afraid; and to speak and not keep silent, that is, to keep getting the Word of God out.

For I am with you: This promise was the basis for God's command to not be afraid and to keep preaching. When we understand what this means, and Who says it, this is enough.

For I have many people in this city: This additional promise was a constant assurance to Paul, who must have often had doubts about the survival and health of the Corinthian church.<sup>2</sup>

Courage commanded: "He said, "O man, highly regarded and greatly beloved, do not be afraid. Peace be to you; take courage and be strong." Now when He had spoken to me, I was strengthened..." - Daniel 10:19 (AMP)

"The grace of God always arrives from the "throne of grace" on time. Nothing can hinder God's plan to send grace when it will be best for us." <sup>3</sup>
- John Piper

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank You for Paul's example of full courage in his commitment to the call. Let me commit with courage and live for You with this same conviction and boldness. And help me to be encouraged to stay the course as I look to You for everything I need. In Jesus name, amen



As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was there anything that:

C onvicted me

O pened my eyes

U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

Write about it here:



#### Philippians 1:20

"As it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death."

### Prayer

Perfect Lord You have shown yourself faithful time and time again. Cultivate Courage within me, giving me a deeper sense of conviction and a deeper desire for You and Your word. Thank You that you transform me by Your word and that I can be a woman With Full Courage. In Jesus' name, amen.

hope that this week's study on Courage has helped you desire more of a pursuit for courage in your life as a Christian. With Paul's example along with the many more models of courage in the bible including the Lord Jesus, may you develop better obedience to God's command for courage.

Be encouraged once again with these words from Jesus spoken to Paul:

"Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you..." Acts 18:9-10

In each of the areas that you studied this week, try and think of one practical, but personal way related to your life right now, where you can exemplify Courage.

Courage to Count on the Holy Spirit
Courage to Continually Pray
Courage to Not Compromise the Word-

# My Fourney

## Week Five References

#### **INTRODUCTION**

1. Frank E. Allen, The Acts of the Apostles (http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com)

#### DAY ONE

- 1. What is the Macedonian Call? Got Questions (https://www.gotquestions.org/Macedonian-Call.html)
- 2. Charles Spurgeon, Quote

#### DAY TWO

- 1. John MacArthur, MacArthur Bible Studies Acts (2000, Oct. 12), 220.
- 2. What does the bible say about Prayerlessness? https://www.gotquestions.org/prayerlessness.html
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- John Piper, 6 Common ways preachers dishonor God's word https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/six-common-ways-preachers-dishonor-gods-word
- 2. Dr. Jack Arnold, Ideal Evangelism Lesson #41 http://www.cleartheology.com
- 3. Calvaryfullerton.org https://www.preceptaustin.org/acts-17-resources
- 4. John MacArthur, Quote

#### DAY FOUR

- 1. How can I overcome feelings of rejection? https://www.gotquestions.org/overcome-rejection.html
- 2. Commentary on Acts 18:9-11 https://www.preceptaustin.org/acts-18-resources
- 3. John Piper, Quote





...Lesson Notes

#### Introduction

## Truth of God's Word

"For I decided that while I was with you I would forget everything except Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified."

1 Corinthians 2:2 NLT

(Let's try to memorize it this week! Write it on an index card and look at it throughout the week)

Dear sisters in Christ, it is my pleasure and privilege to embark on this adventure of exploring with you the Truth of God's word as Paul and his companions lived out and passionately taught. It is my heart's desire that you come alongside of me to experience how Paul was a living example and role model for us. Let's ask God to motivate and spur us on to a deeper desire for Truth; to know it, live it, and passionately and boldly express it to the people God has put in our lives.

The apostle Paul's life may have been difficult, as difficulties arise from standing on a truth that is severely opposed to the cultural norms, as it was in his day and ours. But there is somewhat of a simplicity to his life's mission, always making "the main thing," He was single-minded, never forgetting his life purpose to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This little simple quote is one that I have never forgotten, used by my attorney in a case with many extraneous details threatening to deter one from the path of truth. However, justice was won by his repeated admonishment to keep one's eyes on "The main thing." I have often repeated that as a mantra in my life, as I so easily make too much out of insignificant events, getting easily overwhelmed and burdened by life concerns that are not important in the long run, and especially in terms of eternity with Jesus.

As I fell in love with Jesus and His Word, "The main thing" became very obvious and steered my course to one of a lover of the truth of the Gospel. And that clarity makes life simple in regards to the decisions I make and how I spend my time and money as accomplishing or furthering my purpose of knowing and loving Jesus more and making Him known. This was Paul's main goal, and I am so inspired by how he let nothing steer him from that course.

Four themes "jumped out" from this week's Scripture reading which encompasses Paul's mission: Paul's single-minded, purposeful focus on the goal that all would hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ; Paul was compelled by the Holy Spirit with passion and endurance to continue his powerful and bold witness and teaching, while guided and protected by the Spirit; Paul's response to evil as confronting Truth or moving location with a continuance of his mission; and finally to encourage and build up those new believers as the Lord encourages Christians through the truth in the Holy scriptures. Out of these themes, emerge our daily titles and focus.

Day One: Teaching the Truth.

Day Two: The Holy Spirit compels Truth.

Day Three: Attacks to the Truth.

Day Four: The Lord encourages Christians through Truth.

Day Five: The Truth steers our course.

O.K., sisters, let's start our journey!

Teaching the Truth

DAY

1

Psalm 119:18

"Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in your instructions."

#### Jrayer

Dear Jesus, thank you for giving me Your Holy Scriptures that teaches me who You are as Creator and Redeemer with a plan to bring this broken world back to You. And that plan is the Gospel of Jesus Christ! Help me to learn from Paul's single-minded, purposeful focus that all would hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ so that I can play a part in spreading the Gospel to our generation. Amen.

Write out memory verse for the week: 1 Corinthians 2:2

swald Chambers points to Romans 1:1 when discussing Paul's mission as should be the Christian's mission. "A servant of God....separated unto the Gospel." "Our calling is not primarily to be holy men and women, but to be proclaimers of the Gospel of God. The one thing that is all-important is that the Gospel of God should be realized as the abiding reality. Reality is not human goodness, nor holiness, nor heaven, nor hell; but Redemption; and the need to perceive this is the most vital need of the Christian. God can not deliver me while my interest is merely in my character. Paul is unconscious of himself, he is recklessly ahandoned, separated by one purpose - to proclaim the Gospel of God."

This "reality" that Oswald Chambers is discussing is the Truth of who God is and His plan to save the world through his son Jesus Christ. So the application to us is how are we abiding in this reality, thus staying on the same course as Paul; recklessly abandoned to God, separated by God to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus.

WORSHIP SONG: Song of Truth by Mark Shelton/Jonathan Malone

READ our passage in Acts 18:24 - 20:12.

We see many people, namely Paul, but also Apollos, instructing others - Jew and Greeks that Jesus is the Messiah, (Savior of the world.) Let us read about their evangelical techniques and ponder what we can take-away.

- 1. From Acts 18:24-28, list qualities of Apollos as well as his preaching style that made him an effective teacher of the Gospel:
  - a. Who was his audience and how important is it to know our audience?

0	to those we would lik their spiritual back				you know where they a	.re
	nore accurately. It sees				ce to explain "The Way" continued to preach bold	
We need to be careful would be steering our	_		nholding any pa	art of truth because	of fear, for failure to do	so
3. Pray for w	isdom and to not fear	man! Fill in from	Matthew 10:28	(ESV) "And do not	those who	
thebi	ut cannot kill the	Rather	_ HIM who can _	both	and in	
who faithfully plant th	e seed while the Holy	Spirit causes it to :6 (ESV) 'Jesus said	take root, if th	ey are destined to be	we are only the messenge ecome a child of God.  the, and the	
b. 1 John 5:	11,12 (ESV) "that	gave us		_, and this life is in H	Iis Whoever has i	the
ha	s; whoever do	oes not have the	of	_ does not have	·	
	on 20:15 (ESV) "And ij		ot found written is	n the	, he was	
READ Acts 19:1-10.						
4. What are so	ome evangelical techni	ques that you not	ice Paul use?			
As Jesus did, Paul utilizhis baptism of repenta	_			_	wers the difference between the Holy Spirit.	en

What was the crux of his message?

b.

120

a. How do you think asking questions can be effective?

b. What questions can be employed in a discussion of the Gospel?

Perhaps what we most need to become a more effective proclaimer of God's Truth is to cultivate a stronger love for God and His Word, and a firm belief that this is the Truth that the world desperately needs. And as that happens, we love His people more and want them to be saved.

5. Study the following three qualities which our role models in Acts possessed in their message of the Gospel: Write ideas and look up the following scriptures to identify which quality it can be matched with by drawing a line to it.

Accuracy -	Romans 1:16
Boldness -	1 Peter 3:15
Enthusiasm -	Matthew 5:19
	Romans 3:3,4

OPTIONAL SIDE TRIP: Do you believe that you have a responsibility to express this Truth to your world? Write out Jesus' parting words to his disciples in Matthew 28:18-20.

Circle the following words: disciples, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then underline from vs. 20, "teach" and "obey all the commands". This scripture is called "The Great Commission," because when Jesus saved us, we, in every generation, became appointed for this mission as we are called disciples if we are followers of Jesus.

Now, look at what we are proclaiming or teaching; two things: Jesus is God, and to obey "All the commands I have given you."

Henry Morris states of vs.19, "The Lord here explicitly teaches the doctrine of the Trinity-one name, yet three names; each equally and fully God, and always presented in the logical order of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." He goes on to ask, from the KJV of v. 20 "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," "Therefore, how can anyone profess Christ while rejecting any of His teachings (eg. biblical inerrancy, literal creation, global flood)?"<sup>2</sup>

I think that, in the light of simplicity, this passage in Matthew spells it out: Who the mission is for - God's children, and what we are proclaiming - the Truth of God's Word. For the Christian who abides in Truth, the Bible is our compass and thus our reality. But as we see today as well as in Paul's day of ancient Asia and Macedonia/Greece, there were many false realities with their various gods prying for allegiance. However, in the midst of this ignorance and idolatry, Paul and his co-workers fulfilled this Great Commission.

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was	there	anything	that:
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C onvicted me

O pened my eyes

U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

Write about it here:

DAY

2

Acts 1:8

"But You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere-in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

#### Jorayer

Dear Jesus, Thank You for indwelling in me Your Holy Spirit that instructs, convicts, and encourages me through Your amazing Word that comes alive as I read Your Truth, and while I pray and worship You. Fill me more and more so I can be a blessing to Your people. Amen.

Review of mem	ory verse: 1 Corinthians 2	2:2 (NLT) Fill in:	"For I	that while I was with	, I would	everything
except	, the one who was					

A.W. Tozer states, "The Spirit-filled life is not a special, deluxe edition of Christianity. It is part and parcel of the total plan of God for His people." We that are saved and called children of God have just as much of the Holy Spirit as the Apostle Paul had. Yes, Jesus had a dramatic mission for his life. But I believe what made Paul so effective is that he was unaware of himself and totally abandoned to Jesus, thus completely attuned to the Holy Spirit in him. And, he was in the practice of immediately obeying. What a powerful combination! That is how He stayed the course and how we can as well.

WORSHIP SONG: In Your Midst by Allie Paige

Paul was compelled by the Holy Spirit with passion and endurance to continue his powerful and bold witness and teaching of the Gospel, while he was guided and protected by the Spirit along his journey. Let's study together some of these amazing benefits of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

- 1. Let's again read Acts 18:24 20:12 and identify the many outworkings of the Holy Spirit.
  - a. From Chapter 19:2-6, what happened to these disciples of Jesus once the Holy Spirit came upon them?

It sure sounds like the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit first made His power known in Acts 2.

2. In Acts 19:11-20 God performed many miracles through Paul. Make a list of the miracles you read, as well as the miracle in Acts 20:7-12.

- a. Did you find five? Now, write down the effects of that supernatural power that verses 17 20 make note of.
- b. Why do you suppose God worked those miracles, and what does it show of the nature of God?

I believe that all of God's amazing works, whether its miracles, prophesies, beauties in creation or art and music is to create an awareness in us of God's various characteristics. We experience Him as we draw near to Him.

- 3. We see then and today that when we are filled and carried away with the Holy Spirit powerful things happen. Write about a time you were aware of the Spirit's presence and any gifts that He is developing in you.
  - a. How do these amazing gifts of the Spirit keep us on course?

My thought is that whatever gift God has given you is for the purpose of accomplishing His mission and building His kingdom on earth.

The Holy Spirit convicts: Notice in Acts 19:18,19 how when those formally involved in witchcraft came to believe in Jesus, they confessed and even burned their scrolls publicly.

4. Ponder how since becoming a member of God's family, you experience conviction of sin. Do you feel the Spirit's constant nudging you to repentance? Explain or provide an example.

A profound reason for this conviction is God's purpose of helping us pursue and understand Truth in order to stay the course of holiness. And, of course, because He desires closeness with us without the separation and distance that sin produces.

*Powerful preaching:* The Holy Spirit gave Paul the tenacity and passion to preach boldly amid persecution and late into the night. (See Acts 20:7) We spoke in day 1 about the effectiveness of Paul's teaching and evangelism.

We all can identify teachers in our lives who exuberate the presence of the Spirit, and that makes such a difference in helping us to Stay The Course to a closer walk with Jesus and pursuing Truth.

The Spirit makes Scripture come alive to us. Charles Spurgeon stated, "If you do not understand a book by a departed writer you are unable to ask him his meaning, but the Spirit, who inspired Holy Scripture, lives forever, and He delights to open the Word to those who seek His instruction." <sup>4</sup>

5. Read John 5:31-39 keeping in mind that these were Jesus' words to the Pharisees. What is Our Lord Jesus' point?

It seems that part of Jesus' message to them was that the Truth of who God is was not in them. And they were definitely off course!

In this same vein of needing the Holy Spirit to be able to ascertain meaning out of scripture, Martin Luther said, "In spiritual and divine things, which pertain to salvation of the soul, man is like a pillar of salt, like Lot's wife, yea, like a log and a stone, like a lifeless statue, which uses neither eyes nor mouth neither sense nor heart. . . . All teaching and preaching is lost upon him, until he is enlightened, converted, and regenerated by the Holy Ghost."

OPTIONAL SIDE TRIP: Guidance and protection: How does the Spirit guide and protect you?

Some ways that I see His supernatural guiding in my life is by providing me with people in my life and their guidance at the right time. He opens up His Word to what I need at the right time, making It come alive to me. So, He keeps me on the course of maintaining a life that is consistent and representative of His Truth. For Paul we see how his friends redirected him when there were plots against his life, as well as providing direction and guidance to fulfill his mission as he traveled.

READ Acts 20:1-3.

How did The Holy Spirit guide and protect Paul in this passage?

It wasn't the first time friends had warned or helped him escape persecution.

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was	there	anything	that:
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C onvicted me

O pened my eyes

U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

Write about it here:

DAY



Jonah 2:8

"Those who worship false gods turn their backs on all God's mercies."

#### Prayer

Dear Jesus, help me to remain strong in my faith and single-minded devotion to You. May You guard my heart that I would love nothing more than You. Please give me wisdom and courage to stand up for You against a culture that has turned its back on their creator. Amen.

Memory verse fill in: 1 Corinthians 2:2 (NL	T) "	I	that	I was with	_, I would
except, th	be	who was	•		

Paul was often confronted with evil people and scoffers to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I see a huge similarity today to life in Ephesus. The name of Jesus threatens people then and now. When people feel that their income, worship, or pleasure is opposed, they become angry. Both in Ephesus and our modern era, people have made "self" an idol and turned away from their creator. Timothy Keller stated, "An idol is anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God." That definition really convicts me! What about you? The serious nature of this worship or devotion to "things" above God is that it steers our hearts away from God and toward the material world. Thus our senses are dulled to the spiritual and close fellowship with Jesus.

WORSHIP SONG: Is He Worthy? by Chris Tomlin

- 1. Can you identify areas in your life that may have become, or are in danger of becoming an idol?
  - a. Considering those possible idols, list some ways you can set up boundaries for yourself in order to protect your heart.

Like Pastor George tells us; they are often good things, but we are attached to the point that we have elevated their status to an inappropriate place in our hearts.

It seems that Proverbs 4:23 was the theme verse for the summer series on idolatry.

2. Write out Proverbs 4:23

Doing a study on the heart is so amazing as God has a lot to say about protecting this vital organ which influences our spiritual welfare. (By the way, this makes for an awesome study for your little ones!)
a. Challenge yourself to look up at least three of the following verses about the heart:
Matthew 6:21
Proverbs 3:5
Proverbs 23:26
Psalm 24:4
Psalm 51:10
Psalm 73:26
Philippians 4:7
Matthew 5:8
Next, I would like us to look at Paul's response to evil people opposed to the Gospel of Christ, as we can learn how to handle scoffers in our current culture. We may not experience plots against our life, but we will experience persecution in terms of making people angry, being shunned or laughed at if we stand up for Jesus and speak up for the Truth.
3. I am greatly encouraged by Paul's example of praying and asking others to pray for his boldness and wisdom on how to share the Truth. Read Ephesians 6:19 and fill in (NIV):
"also for me, that whenever I, may be given me so that I willmake known the mystery of the"
Paul's response to evil, whether it was witnessing idolatry, hypocrites, liars, or scoffers was confrontation with the Truth.
4. For example, what did he tell the Ephesians in Acts 19:26? (NIV) "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 made by are at all."
5. Sometimes it was necessary for him to change location as seen in Acts 19:9. Read it and fill in (NIV):  "But some of them became : they refused to and publicly the . So Paul them.

Nevertheless, Paul continued his mission as he was steadfast in his passion and perseverance to preach the Gospel and demonstrate the power of the Kingdom of God.

He took the disciples with him and had \_\_\_\_\_daily in the \_\_\_\_\_ of Tyrannus."

OPTIONAL SIDE TRIP: Making it personal - Explore any persecution you may have experienced for the sake of Jesus? Have you suffered any shame, humiliation, or isolation for making it known that you are a believer? Or are you fearful of speaking up?

If so, discuss your feelings with a brother or sister in Christ. Hold on to your community of fellow believers and strengthen each other! Tomorrow we will explore how God has given His Word and Christian community to uplift and strengthen us.

We need to realize that God has not intended us to reach everyone and continuing to share the Gospel with non-responsive naysayers is similar to Jesus' words in Matthew 7:6 - Read and fill in (NIV):

"Do not	dogs what is	; do not	your	to pigs. If you do, they may	them under
their feet, and tu	rn andyou to	pieces."			

So, sometimes we need to just get out of the situation, just like Paul did.

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was	there	anything	that:
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C onvicted me

O pened my eyes

U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

Write about it here:

## DAY

Ephesians 1:4-6

### The Lord Encourages Christians Through His Truth

Hebrews 3:13

4

"But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

#### Prayer

Dear Jesus, thank You for the Truth of Your Word that strengthens and encourages me, while establishing my identity in You. You have given me everything I need to live a Holy life that honors You with the Holy Spirit,

Scripture, and community to guide my course. Amen.

"Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing." - 1 Thessalonians 5:11 ESV Memory verse fill in: 1 Corinthians 2:2 (NLT) "\_\_\_\_\_ I \_\_\_\_ that \_\_\_\_\_ I was with \_\_\_\_\_, I would \_\_\_\_\_ except \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_ who was \_\_\_\_\_. od's promises, His description of who He is and who we are uplifts and strengthens us so we can build others up. When we find our identity in Him, we can lighten our grip on the steering wheel because the wheel will navigate automatically towards God. He has given us His Word and community to strengthen us along the path of staying on course to living for Jesus. Much of Paul's 3rd missionary journey as well as his entire ministry was to encourage and build up the disciples of Christ. He persistently, against much adversity, traveled to, sent fellow workers, and wrote letters to newly set up churches in order to pour out his love, strengthen, exhort and convict believers; all in order to maintain the integrity of the Truth of God's Word. WORSHIP SONG: My Savior My God by Aaron Shust 1. Since a profound part of remaining on the course of accomplishing God's will is a clear vision of our identity in Christ, look up the following scriptures and write them out: Colossians 3:12 1 Peter 2:9

There are so many great verses that speak to this; I encourage you to use your Bible concordance or google, "My identity in Christ," to do a more thorough study.

In our passage for the week, we have seen fellow workers in Christ encourage each other in their work.

- 2. From Acts 18:27, how is Apollos encouraged, and how does he in return encourage others? a. How has someone in your life helped you in overcoming or sustaining a life hurdle? b. Or perhaps educating or correcting you when needed, as Priscilla and Aquila did for Apollos? (vs.26) 3. Read Acts 20:1-2 and fill in (ESV): "After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after\_\_\_\_\_\_ them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia. When he had gone through those regions and had given them much \_\_\_\_\_, he came to Greece." We see that it was Paul's practice to provide encouragement to the new believer and churches as he traveled through Corinth, Ephesus, Macedonia, Greece, and Troas, correcting, educating, and building faith. a. Identify someone who encouraged you in your faith as a new believer; what did they do, and what did that mean to you? b. Brainstorm who might need some encouragement and what you can do that would increase their faith.

  - 4. Paul encouraged others by preaching in homes for extended amounts of time as seen in Acts 20:7-11. Re-read vs. 7 through 11 and jot down what stands out to you.

I think that it is interesting and telling about Paul's heart that he spoke late into the night or early dawn encouraging these believers despite travel plans for the next day, and despite the taxing emotional energy of recently experiencing a death and then healing the man. Paul's desire to teach and encourage was paramount to his own feelings; exhaustion, etc...

As a wife, mother, and/or friend, we are accustomed to putting the interests and concerns of others before ourselves.

1. How have you put the spiritual interests of others above your own feelings and needs?

a. Describe a time when someone spiritually poured into your life sacrificially?

Another form of encouragement we see in our passage (Acts 20:3) as well as throughout Paul's ministry is how his friends provided for his safety, warning him of plots against his life. Paul's friends helped him to stay on his course and accomplish the ministry that God had given him.

- 5. How have your friends helped you to stay on course toward a faithful and obedient life for Jesus?
  - a. Describe a situation in which you were able to help a family member or peer stay on the course of their ministry or faith?

Following the Truth of God's Word encourages our faith walk, warning and exhorting us, thus helping us stay on course to accomplish our life ministry. C. S. Lewis illustrates this point well in The Silver Chair, part of The Chronicles of Narnia series. Just as remaining close to God and knowing and absorbing God's word guides our path, helping us to live purposeful, Aslan, the lion who symbolizes God, emphasizes the importance of the children remembering the signs which serve as clues to find the lost prince.

"But, first, remember, remember, remember the signs. Say them to yourself when you wake in the morning and when you lie down at night, and when you wake in the middle of the night. And whatever strange things may happen to you, let nothing turn your mind from following the signs. And secondly, I give you a warning. Here on the mountain, I speak to you clearly; I will not often do so down in Narnia. Here on the mountain, the air is clear and your mind is clear; as you drop; down into Narnia, the air will thicken. Take great care that it does not confuse your mind. And the signs which you have learned here will not look at all as you expect them to look when you meet them there. That is why it is so important to know them by heart and pay no attention to appearances. Remember the signs and believe the signs. Nothing else matters."

"Courage, dear heart." 6

My Fourney

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was ther	e anything	that:
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C onvicted me

O pened my eyes

U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

Write about it here:



### Prayer

Dear Jesus, thank You for Your instruction and encouragement through Your Holy Scriptures. Please help me to be consistent in reading and absorbing Your Word, and to be bold so that I would be a person who never sways to the left or to the right of Your Truth as I stand up for You. Amen.

Write our verse for the week from 1 Corinthians 2:2:

What was your biggest "take away" from this week's study, and how is it practical to your life? Is there any changes or mental shifts you will make?

In order to jog your memory, you may use the following points of our days.

- Teaching/sharing the Gospel
- Using/tapping into the power of the Holy Spirit that lives in us
- Our response and protection from opposition to the Gospel of Jesus, and living amongst temptation to idolatry
- Use the Truth of God's Word to encourage ourselves and others

## My Fourney

Thinking about the apostle Paul's journey during our passage, if he had an Instagram account, what photo/photos would he take during that particular time frame off his life?

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Dav	one
Day	OHC





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...Lesson Notes

#### Introduction

## Dependence

This might seem like a funny question to ask you but...

Where will you be in 100 years from now?

Most of us would immediately jump to "I won't be around." But sweet sisters, because someone cared enough about us and obeyed God's call to share the gospel, our answer will be "we will be rejoicing in heaven!"

Paul wrote, "However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me - the task of testifying to the gospel of grace." - Acts 20:24 NIV

That dear sisters is what we will be studying this week! Jesus called Paul to go and share the Gospel - the Great Commission. How would Paul accomplish this task? He knew that staying the course would require total and complete dependence on our Lord. Dependence is our word for this week!

We will study:

- Dependence sees Christ as all sufficient
- Dependence is an expression of our faith
- Dependence is confidence in God
- Dependence makes disciples

Our study will take us on a boat trip, to the temple in Jerusalem, to a violent mob, jail, two assasination plots and Paul's defense given three times (must be something significant for us to learn in his defense!).

Paul's dependence was based on trust, faith and hope of the righteousness of Christ. Paul was the light in a dark world! This sweet sisters is my hope, that we are bright lights for Jesus, as we take our voyage with Paul this week!

SIDE TRIP: We will be covering Chapters 20-26 in the Book of Acts.

Early manuscripts refer to this as "Acts of the Apostles." The author was Luke a physician who was Paul's companion and traveled with him on his second and third missionary journeys. As we depart on our journey this week, we will be Paul's companions on his third missionary trip!

READ: Colossians 4:14, 2 Timothy 4:11, and Philemon 20:24.

#### Dependence sees Christ as all Sufficient

DAY

1

Acts 20:22-23 NIV

"And now compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me."

#### Prayer

'Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken, My salvation and honor depend on God. He is my mighty rock, my refuge. Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge." Psalm 62:5-8 NIV

With any travel, there would be cause for concern-a reason to worry-maybe even some fear. And to be told that hardships and suffering would be facing you at every stop, that could be paralyzing. It would certainly test your dependence on God. And yet, Paul tells us he was compelled by the Spirit to go. He was relying on God. Since his conversion he knew the righteousness of Christ was all sufficient. And sweet sisters, we must see it as all sufficient for us! Paul was confident in the Spirit's divine guidance and knew his divine purpose-- to testify to the Gospel of grace. He set sail to Jerusalem calmly, determined and admirably purposeful!

WORSHIP SONG: All I am, Phil Wickham

READ: Our Scripture reading may be a bit different this week from the previous weeks. Below is a summary of Paul's voyage to Jerusalem with the verses italicized. Our reading is from Acts 20:13-38, 21:1-16.

We begin with Paul catching a ship at Asso (in Turkey) meeting his disciples on board to begin his voyage to Jerusalem. It is April and Paul is in a hurry to reach Jerusalem if possible by the day of Pentecost (Acts 20:16). The weather would be in Paul's favor and the coastline from Turkey to Jerusalem would be beautiful in the springtime-green hills and flowers blooming. The ship would stop each evening at sunset when the wind would die down and the sea became calm. Passengers would disembark at each port but would be back on board soon after midnight in order to be ready to sail with the first breath of wind from the north.<sup>1</sup>

Five days and five ports later, Paul arrives in Miletus and sends for the Ephesus church elders (Acts 20:17). Paul tells them they will never see him again but they are to "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." - Acts 20:28.

Paul then knelt and prayed with them and they embraced and kissed him and were deeply grieved that they would never see him again. Luke journaled, "After we had torn ourselves away from them, we put out to sea..." - Acts 21:1 NIV.

We read that Paul and his companions continued down the coast and sailed on to Syria and landed in Tyre where the ship unloaded its cargo. (Acts 21:3) They found the disciples of Tyre and stayed with them for 7 days. "Through the Spirit they urged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem." - Acts 21:4.

But when the ship was ready to depart, Paul continued on, so all the disciples and their wives and children followed Paul out of the city and on the beach they knelt to pray. (Acts 21:5-6)

#### READ Acts 21:7-15

Everywhere Paul went, he strengthened and encouraged the body of Christ. Luke records how hard it was to leave each place, you can hear the agony in his voice and feel the sadness in his heart as goodbyes were said. But compelled by the Spirit, Paul continues and with each departure, he always prayed with them.

- 1. Who was Paul dependent on?
  - a. Who was he not dependent on?
  - b. What is your tendency?

Paul travel's modeled a pattern for us to follow in our lives. He listened and obeyed the Spirit. He listened to God versus listening to people. He always built up the body of Christ and prayed with his brothers and sisters in Christ.

God's desire is for us to live moment to moment in total dependence on Him. He wants to be involved in every aspect of our lives. Our dependence must be based on Christ being all sufficient in everything.

- 2. What are some things that preoccupy your mind and consume your time and resources?
  - a. What areas do you find that you do something and afterwards thought maybe I should have asked God?
  - b. Do you think you are you relying on self in these areas?
  - c. What can you do to actively recognize Christ as all-sufficient in every area every day? Read Matthew 16:25

If we want to have a life in the Lord, we will need to surrender our plans and say "Not my will, but Yours be done Lord".2

OPTIONAL SIDE TRIP: Paul prayed over everything and acknowledged God in all things. The Holy Spirit directed Paul's path. Dependence sees God as all sufficient. Spend some time in prayer acknowledging your dependence on God. Pray for faithfulness. If we learn to depend on God in the little things when the trials and tests come we will be calm, faithful and assured that God is with us.<sup>2</sup>

## My Fourney

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE." Was there anything that:

C onvicted me

O pened my eyes

U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

W rite about it here:

## DAY

### Dependence is an Expression of Faith

2

Acts 22:15-16 NLT

"For you are to be his witness, telling everyone what you have seen and heard. What are you waiting for?..."

### Prayer

Father God, open the eyes of my heart to see the people you would have me witness too. May the Gospel message be always on my tongue, ready to share with love. For "I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.

The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God." Galatians 2:20 NIV

Acts 21:17-22:21

Paul's devotion to the Gospel message is clearly seen in his actions. Paul wanted to make Christ known and that is what drove his daily life. If he was with Jewish believers he conformed to their customs--observe their food laws, observe their holy days. He wanted to be careful to avoid offending anyone unnecessarily. He needed to observe the customs of both the Jews and the church of God in Jerusalem or his ministry would offend their moral sense. They would be shocked and appalled and think his behavior scandalise. 1

WORSHIP SONG: Oceans, Hillsong United

READ Acts 21:17 to 22:21

Paul has arrived in Jerusalem. Luke wrote that the brothers and sisters in Jerusalem welcomed them warmly.

"Paul greeted them and reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

When they heard this, they praised God."

- Acts 21:19-20 NIV

Paul was meeting with James (Jesus' half-brother; Galatians 1:19) and the elders of the church. They praised God together after hearing all that Paul had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. BUT the elders were afraid that Paul's presence in Jerusalem could cause trouble. There were rumors that Paul advised Jewish Christians to stop observing the law and traditions of their ancestral customs, including the circumcision of their children. Many Jewish Christians strictly followed the ancient customs and would be hostile to the idea if they thought Paul was teaching that the law did not have to be followed. They would also resent the fact that Gentile Christians are not required to observe the law of Moses (Acts 21:20-21).

So you can see how controversy and trouble could be associated with Paul and why James and the elders were concerned for Paul's safety. James and the elders came up with a practical plan for Paul to stop the rumors and show that he was a practising Jew. They asked Paul to participate in the purification rites with 4 men in their Nazirite vow (Numbers 6:1) and to pay for their expenses. Paul agrees to take part in this ancient Jewish vow to publicly demonstrate his faithfulness to God and to stop the rumors that he was teaching Jewish believers to give up their customs. <sup>2</sup>

After Paul had completed the sacrifices and purification rites, "the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law and this place. Moreover, he even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place." - Acts 21:27-28 ESV

These men had previously seen Paul with Trophimus a Gentile from Ephesus in the city and assumed that Paul had also brought him into a forbidden area of the temple. Gentiles were allowed in the outer court but they were prohibited from entering the inner courts, the sacred area. Barriers separated the courts warning Gentiles not to enter with the penalty being death if Gentiles were found in the inner court.3

Please read Acts 21:30-40.

Paul stands beaten, bloody and bruised before a mob that wanted to kill him and yet he wants to address this violate crowd. He gives his defense to the people in Hebrew as a sign of respect...yes respect!

Paul loves these people, he wants them to come to faith. He shares the story of his conversion on the road to Damascus and reminds the people that he lead the persecution of the Christian movement. Paul personally supervised Christians being bound, beat and he delivered both men and women to prison and watched and approved as Stephen was killed. And yet, God has called him to be an apostle, to be a witness for Him. Paul's transformation is gospel driven. His powerful testimony teaches how a life can be changed through the gospel message. His dependence on God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit allowed him to fulfill his calling to share the gospel. Faith was Paul's supernatural resource!

- 1. Do you look at your faith as a supernatural resource?
- 2. What keeps you from sharing the Gospel?
- 3. Do you have Paul's compassion and concern for the lost? If not, why?
- 4. When was the last time you gave your testimony to someone?
  - a. Do you do your daily activities with an eternal perspective? Ecclesiastes 3:11 "He has put eternity into man's heart..."
  - b. Do your activities have an eternal value?

Your faith will keep you spiritually anchored and remind you of what God's promises are. Sweet sister, faith is an expression of your dependence on God.

OPTIONAL SIDE TRIP: Read Matthew 6:20-21. Where your treasure is your heart will follow. God's treasure to us is the gospel message. Spend some time praying and asking God who He wants you to share the Gospel with!

# My Fourney

As we close today's lesson,	think back and ask yourse	lf, "What did I learn	to help me STAY	THE COURSE."	Was there
anything that:					

C onvicted me
O pened my eyes
U rged me to
R eminded me
S tood out to me
E ncouraged me
Write about it here:

## Dependence is Confidence in God

DAY

3

Acts 23:11 ESV

"...the Lord stood by him and said, 'Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome."

# Prayer

Ask God for confidence today in prayer-ask Him to speak to you through His Word.

Paul is going to need a lot of confidence this day to stay the course! There are storms brewing ahead. A real possibility of a catastrophe. But Paul doesn't let his ship drift off course. He is always intentional. He never panics. He never succumbs to fear. His actions always reflect his confidence in the Lord.

WORSHIP SONG: Do it Again, Elevation Worship

READ Acts 22:21-30

Can you imagine a crowd so hostile they are shouting to rid the earth of you! You are not fit to live! How terrifying that would be! We see the tribune, wanting to get to the bottom of why the crowd was shouting order Paul to be brought into the barracks. He wanted to examine Paul by flogging him. Scripture tells us flogging or the Roman scourge was a whip of leather though loaded with bits of metal or bone; it could maim or kill.<sup>1</sup>

Just as the soldiers stretched Paul's arms around a pole to expose his back, Paul asks, "Is is lawful for you to flog a man who is a Roman citizen and uncondemned?" - Acts. 22:26 ESV

It was not. It was unlawful to bound or flog a Roman citizen if they had not been convicted of a crime. The tribune was afraid. He could face the death penalty.

Trying to understand the reason the Jews are so against Paul, the tribune commands the chief priests and all the council to assemble and had Paul stand before them.

"Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience today" - Acts 23: 1 NIV

The high priest was outraged! He ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth! Paul knowing that one part of the Sanhedrin council were Sadducees and the other part Pharisees continued "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial." And when he said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spririt, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all." - Acts 23:6-8 ESV

An uproar ensued--The Pharisees said they found nothing wrong with Paul and argued vigorously. The dispute became so violent that the tribune thought Paul was going to be torn to pieces. He ordered the soldiers to take Paul by force back to the barracks.

The very next day 40 plus Jews took an oath to neither eat or drink until they had killed Paul. But guess what? God protects Paul...let's pick up the story in Acts 23:16, "Now the son of Paul's sister heard of the ambush, so he went and entered the barracks and told Paul."

The tribune's response is quick and mighty! He orders 200 hundred soldiers, with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to take Paul to Caesarea 60 miles north by night and deliver him to Governor Felix.

And this is the letter The tribune Claudius Lysias wrote to Governor Felix.

READ Acts 23:26-30

And so Paul's trial before Felix begins in Acts 24. Ananias the high priest along with some elders and a lawyer Tertullus lay their case before Governor Felix. Tertullus begins with flattery - stating the foresight of "most excellent Felix" that the nation was enjoying much peace and reforms with Felix as their governor. (Now remember the Jewish people hated the Roman occupation and Felix was known for his brutal and ruthless tactics in putting down any Jewish rebellions) Tertullus then launches into his attack on Paul saying "we have found this man a plague, one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world and is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him. By examining him yourself you will be able to find out from him about everything which we accuse him." - Acts 24:5-8 ESV

Remember who your advocate is sweet sisters. We have the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. Our advocate is Christ! Christ in us! As Paul gives his defense to the Roman council, he gives the gospel message again - he always stays on course - never caught up on his own need to survive - willing to "go down with the ship" in order for others to be rescued.

- 1. Paul chose his testimony and ministry over his physical freedom. In nautical terms, a captain will perish or go down with his ship to rescue his crew...Ever wonder if it is worth it?
- 2. Have you ever thought about what impact your life will have on others?
- 3. Paul was accused of being a plague or pest. Why?

Sisters, we need to be a plague or pest as well!	We can't just drift with the culture.	We need to navigate with intention to stay
the course for Jesus!		

- 4. Take a moment and think about this past week. Are you frequently or infrequently staying the course? Why?
  - a. If infrequently, is your confidence in God also infrequent?
- 5. Paul's whole life was one extraordinary risk after another. What about you? Are you willing to take risks for the cause of the gospel? What would that look like?

OPTIONAL SIDE TRIP: Read Acts 24:22-27

Paul is still held captive but look who he is speaking frequently with about his faith in Christ Jesus!

# My Fourney

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was the	re anything that:
	C onvicted me
	O pened my eyes
	U rged me to
	R eminded me
	S tood out to me

Write about it here:

E ncouraged me

## Dependence Makes Disciples

DAY

Acts 26:28 NIV

"Then Agrippa said to Paul? "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?"

# Prayer

Dear Father, so much to learn! Through Paul we see that dependence produces works of grace.

His heart was to go and share the gospel message no matter where he was.

Help us to be obedient and intentional with your Word in reaching out to others. Amen!

We will see Paul give his testimony today to a king! Who by the sound of it almost became a Christian. Sweet sisters, may no one go away from this Bible study an almost Christian! May we in Christ speak the truth so all may come to the saving knowledge of Christ. Paul's desire was to make disciples and his mission still goes on today through US! Paul's life shows us that he consistently stayed the course...not infrequently...not almost...but was constantly, with intentionality. He listened and obeyed the Spirit and has such a deep love of Jesus he couldn't help but overflow and pour into those around him the love of Christ.

WORSHIP SONG: G₀, Hillsong United

Paul stays the course no matter the test! "But I have had God's help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen - that the Christ would suffer and as the first to rise from the dead would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles." - Acts 26:22-23

So our story continues with a new governor, Festus. His first action is to go up to Jerusalem and meet with the chief priests and principal men of the Jews. And do you know what the Jews first request is? Yes, you guessed it, they asked Festus as a favor to have Paul summoned to Jerusalem so they could lay out their case against him. Here we go again!

READ Acts 25:1-12

Several days later King Agrippa and his wife Bernice arrived in Caesarea to congratulate Fetus on his new governorship. Festus shared Paul's case with the king telling him that Paul's accusers brought no charges of evil. "Rather they had certain points of dispute with him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus who was dead, but whom Paul asserted to be alive." - Acts 25:19 ESV

Festus went on to say he had nothing to write to the emperor about this man because He thought Paul had done nothing to deserve death. (to refer a Roman citizen's case to the emperor, rather than resolving it locally, entails some political jeopardy for a provincial governor.) <sup>2</sup> Agrippa agreed to examine Paul and said, "I would like to hear the man myself." - Acts 25:22 ESV

So the next day Agrippa and Bernice arrived in the great hall with GREAT POMP complete with a military tribune and the prominent men of the city.

will be disciples and disciples will make disciples!

Fruit of Being A Christian"

Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?" Paul replied, "Short time or long - I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am except for these chains." - Acts 26:28-29 NIV
2. King Agrippa was almost persuaded, almost became a Christian. What are some almost moments in your life? And how different would your life be?
3. King Agrippa chose darkness over light. Why would one want to stay in darkness?
4. What do you do with the sin in your life?
It is all about a changed life isn't it? Paul's defense shows a changed life. His eyes were opened by Christ, he repented-making a radical turn from sin to Christ. His defense was built on the work of Christ.
We read this past week that fellow believers wept and embraced Paul as he departed from them. Paul had developed meaningful relationships with them. It wasn't just give a sermon and move on. He shared his life with them. Paul was all about building up the church and making disciples.
If we are dependent on Him, He will fill us up and allow us to reach out to others. Sweet sisters, by knowing and depending on the Word of God, asking, seeking and listening to the Holy Spirit in prayer, repentance, and sharing our faith in Jesus, we

1. Who do you think had the real power, King Agrippa, Governor Fetus or Paul, a prisoner in chains? Why?

OPTIONAL SIDE TRIP: Listen to this video on youtube by Francis Chan and David Platt called "Discipleship Making,

My Fourney

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was	there	anything	that:
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C onvicted me

O pened my eyes

U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

Write about it here:



# Prayer

Heavenly Father, please press the gospel message into my heart daily! Help me to recite it to you each day in my prayer time with you. In Jesus precious name, Amen.

Our review for the week sweet sisters -

#### Dependence is:

- Believing Christ is all sufficient in everything!
- Letting faith be expressed in your life share the Gospel with others!
- Confidence that the Lord is standing with you!
- Being a disciple in Christ so you are able to go and make disciples!

"No one is more influential in your life than you are. Because no one talks to you more than you do.

In doing so, we need to daily preach the gospel to ourselves."

- Paul Tripp<sup>1</sup>

I wanted to finish our week with this challenge: preaching the truth of the gospel to yourself everyday. Martin Luther taught this and it has been a theme with many pastors since. Below is a quote from Tim Challies<sup>2</sup> on how he preaches the gospel to himself everyday with verses to help you.

"Since the Gospel is only for sinners, I begin each day with the realization that despite my being a saint, I still sin every day in thought, word, deed, and motive. If I am aware of any subtle, or not so subtle, sins in my life, I acknowledge those to God. Even if my conscience is not indicting me for conscious sins, I still acknowledge to God that I have not even come close to loving Him with all my being or loving my neighbor as myself. I repent of those sins, and then I apply specific Scriptures that assure me of God's forgiveness to those sins I have just confessed.

I then generalize the Scripture's promises of God's forgiveness to all my life and say to God words to the effect that my only hope of a right standing with Him that day is Jesus' blood shed for my sins, and His righteous life lived on my behalf. This reliance on the twofold work of Christ for me is beautifully captured by Edward Mote in his hymn "The Solid Rock" with his words, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness." Almost every day, I find myself going to those words in addition to reflecting on the promises of forgiveness in the Bible." <sup>3</sup>

I hope you will take up this challenge and meditate on the Gospel message daily. Here are some scriptures to help you... Psalm 103:12, Psalm 130:3-4; Isaiah 43:25 and 53:6; Micah 7:19; Romans 4:7-8; Romans 8:1; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 2:13-14; Hebrews 8:12 and 10:17-18.

# My Tourney

As you preach the Gospel to yourself each day--do you see your dependence shifting from the world/culture to the all sufficient righteousness of Christ?

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WEEK Cight

...Lesson Notes

# Believing in the Journey

"As you have therefore received Christ, [even] Jesus the Lord, [so] walk (regulate your lives and conduct yourselves) in union with and conformity to Him. Have the roots [of your being] firmly and deeply planted [in Him, fixed and founded in Him], being continually built up in Him, becoming increasingly more confirmed and established in the faith, just as you were taught, and abounding and overflowing in it with thanksgiving."

- Colossians 2:6-7 Amplified Bible, Classic Edition (AMPC)

Tim Tebow, an athlete known by the strong stand he takes for Christ in all situations, has written a book entitled Know Who You Are. Live Like It Matters. It is a guide to discovering your true identity in Christ. One of its marketing pitches is "Get ready to live bigger than ever before...with your faith and identify secured in a God who loves you beyond measure!" <sup>1</sup> After studying Paul's life and writings, don't you think the title of his teachings could be the same? Paul has been on quite the quest and at this point in his journey, he has truly been transformed by it and he knows without a doubt his worth in Christ. His life is a tireless demonstration of living like it matters. Do you believe in the life-changing journey that is available to you in, with, and through Christ?

As we near the end of our travels with Paul, we will examine how he "lives like it matters" in the most trying of circumstances. I've heard it said that people show their true colors when camping because of the perceived more difficult conditions. Well, how about sailing through bad weather on the deck of a crowded ship, surviving a two week superstorm and a harrowing shipwreck! By using his letters to the Ephesians, Colossians and Philippians that he wrote while imprisoned in Rome, we will study:

Day One - On Course: Believing in Your Position in Christ Day Two - In the Storm: Believing in Your Identity in Christ Day Three - Castaway: Believing in Your Life With Christ

Day Four - Landlocked: Believing in Your Strength Through Christ

Day Five - The Odyssey: Believing in the Journey

Part of our focus will be on the words "in," "with," and "through" Christ. These words are prepositions - remember those? Simply, they are words that show relationships or position between two nouns. For us, they will show the relationship between us and Christ!

\*All Bible references and questions will be based on the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise noted.

Before we get in the boat with Paul on Day One, let's get our bearings. In our narrative, Paul was arrested in Jerusalem about 2 years ago and invoked his right to a fair trial as a Roman citizen by birth. He goes before the chief priests and council, and they could only argue among themselves as to what he was guilty of. At that time, Jesus appeared to Paul and encouraged him that he "must" testify to the facts about Him in Rome - a promise! (Acts 23:11) The Jews plot to kill Paul, so the Romans transfer him to Caesarea, a Roman administrative city about 75 miles away on the coast.

Again, the Jewish leaders are given a chance to present their case but the governor puts them off and ends up keeping Paul in custody for these 2 years, still unconvicted of any crime. A new governor comes and re-opens the case with the Jews bringing many and serious charges against him that they cannot prove. At this point, the governor should have declared an acquittal, but instead suggests they all go up to Jerusalem to finish the trial there. Paul, probably knowing the Jews still want him dead, refuses to be given up to them and appeals to Caesar, his right as a citizen, for a trial by the imperial court. And so, to Rome, he goes.

DAY

## On Course: Believing Your Position in Christ

1

Ephesians 1:3

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

## Jrayer

PRAYER: Dearest Father, I want to understand my position in You. I love You and I believe that You love me so much that You sent your only Son so that I would not die separated from You! I thank you, and I ask that You teach me what it means to be in Christ. In Jesus Name, Amen.

I once heard that being in Christ can be likened to being in the ark of Genesis 7. Noah, his family, and the animals were enclosed in the ark by God's grace and kindness. They were saved from the judgment of God (the flood) because of their position in the saving vessel that God provided. I like the picture that gives to this concept that both Jesus and Paul teach.

WORSHIP SONG: Everything is Mine in You by Christy Nockels

READ Acts 27:1-12

1. As Paul and his co-workers - Luke, the beloved physician, and Aristarchus from the Thessalonian church - boarded the vessel that would take them to the Roman capital, what is your sense of what might have been going on in Paul's head? How do you picture him? Describe what thoughts or pictures come to mind.

I see a man at purpose and peace. Still a minister and a witness of the gospel of his Lord Jesus Christ, he is no longer able or impelled to go everywhere and do everything to advance the kingdom of God. The details and outcome of this leg of the journey are not up to him. Seemingly, that could make him restless and anxious, but I see a man assured of his destiny and confident that it will be accomplished. How is that possible? Because he knows who he is and whose he is (Acts 27:24). He is secure in his position in Christ.

READ Ephesians 1:3-13. Underline the phrase "in Christ" or "in him" each time it occurs.
Preposition: <i>in</i> Greek word: <i>en</i> Definition: expressing the situation of something that is or appears to be enclosed or surrounded by something else.
There are many ways the phrase "in Christ" is used throughout the New Testament and different nuances to the meaning in each case. For our purposes we are going with the most straightforward idea - to be "in Christ" is to be enclosed or surrounded by Christ! Oh, what a glorious picture that is! How do we come to be in this position? It is by the power of the gospel.
Galatians 3:26-27 says, "for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God by faith. For as many of you were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." By faith - by believing and accepting the sacrifice of Jesus as payment for our own sin, we are "baptized into Christ", born again into the family of God. That's the gospel in a nutshell, and how we come to be in Christ!
Ephesians 1:3 says we are blessed "in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places." A foundational truth and the key to Paul's faith and actions is what and where these blessings are - spiritual blessings in the heavenly places.
2. Read Ephesians 2:4-7. Where are we seated because we are in Christ Jesus (v.7) and what does that mean to you along with verse 1:3?
3. From Ephesians 1:3-12 write down the spiritual blessings we have in Christ. Why is it important to emphasize that these blessings are spiritual/heavenly as opposed to physical/earthly?
Let's get back to Paul. He's embarking on his voyage to Rome by getting onto an Egyptian grain ship along with other prisoners. He has a couple of friends with him and a seemingly kind Roman guard, so that's heartening. He's already logged 3500 miles of sea travel which includes 3 shipwrecks so, with some credibility he tries to convince those in charge that the coming winter weather brings dangers. They don't listen to him.
4. How do you think knowing he is in Christ, with all the perks (blessings) that come with that position, help him

to live with assurance in the outcome of the pending storm?

threshold and pass into the ark. Are you in? You may be close, but are you inside? The universal and terrible storm is coming. Are you ready for the Day of Judgment? By believing in Him, you are saved and inside the ark. The storm of judgment can break but it will never touch you, because you are in Christ Jesus. And 'There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus' (Romans 8:1)." <sup>1</sup> Billy Graham
5. Now, create a picture yourself in Christ. Is it in the ark (minus smelly animals!)? Or in the cleft of a rock, covered by His hand (Exodus 33:22)? One of my favorites from Proverbs 18:10 is being safely ensconced in a strong tower.
a. What do you see? Write a description or sketch it out.
b. Rest there a while. Let the reality of your spiritual blessings soak in. Is there music playing? What is your state of mind?
c. Write down your feelings and express your praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
d. Do you believe in your secure, redeemed, blessed position in Christ? How will you live like it matters?
OPTIONAL SIDE TRIP: Not only are we in Christ, but Christ is in us! Ponder the following verses and what they mean to your own journey: John 14:20, 15:5, 7; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 3:16-17; Colossians 1:27; 1 John 3:24, 4:13-16

"The ark is a symbol of Jesus Christ. In this day, when the clouds of judgment are beginning to gather, Christ is the refuge. You must cross the

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was	there	anything	that:
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C onvicted me

O pened my eyes

U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

Write about it here:

# DAY

## In the Storm: Believing in Your Identity In Christ

2

Ephesians 2:10

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

### Prayer

PRAYER: Dearest Father, thank You for the immeasurable riches of Your grace and kindness toward me in Christ Jesus. Teach me today to trust that You are doing good work in my life and that You will keep on until it is complete.

In Jesus Name, Amen.

Back in the day, I taught beginning sailing to little kids in little boats. All went fine the first week or two when the light breeze blew from the west as usual, but one day it was coming from the south and not so lightly. All the little kids in their little boats blew right up the bay! They weren't competent boaters yet and the unexpected wind gave us all a fright - yet we also learned more about sailing. It helped those little kids and their teacher become real sailors.

WORSHIP SONG: In Christ Alone by Hillsong

READ Acts 27:13-44, noting Paul's behavior during the storm and shipwreck.

Paul is on the ship, an unconvicted prisoner possibly chained, and probably living on the deck with 275 other prisoners, passengers, soldiers, and crew members. Not a good position to be in when hit by a violent, extended storm at sea! But Paul knows where he stands with God, sure of "the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2:7) Okay, but the storm comes anyway, right? His/our position in Christ is a spiritual position, so how do we translate that to this physical world? Paul shows us by being in relationship with God and listening to him (vv. 23-26), by being an encourager (vv. 21-22, 33-34), by using the gifts God gave (Paul was a smart man!) (v. 31), setting a good example (v. 35), and behaving in such a way that garners respect and credibility (v. 43).

By knowing his position in Christ, he allowed the truths he understood to become his identity - and learned to live like it mattered!

Ask yourself, "Who am I in Christ?" Take a minute and really think.

Based on what you studied yesterday in Ephesians 1:3-12, you should know that you are blessed, adopted into God's family, redeemed and forgiven through Christ's blood, chosen by God, and marked by God with the Holy Spirit. Take a moment to google "my identity in Christ" and you will find many lists that give more scriptures that tell who you are in Christ!

READ Ephesians 2:1-10. Underline the phrase "in Christ Jesus" each time it occurs.

What a beautiful passage of how loved we are in Christ Jesus! Our preposition today remains "in" because it is such a rich place to be. Adding the three additional identity descriptors from this passage, in Christ we are seated with Him in the heavenly places, recipients of God's immeasurable riches of grace and kindness, and we are God's workmanship.

So how does knowing these things translate to understanding them, thereby becoming who we are, our identity? How do we live like it matters - like it's real?

Well, it's a journey, isn't it? It's a lifelong process of maturing into these spiritual blessings. That process is called "sanctification." Our position in Christ is immediate and automatic when we accept him into our hearts - it is how God sees us, wrapped up in Christ's righteousness. Living within the awareness of that reality becomes our identity - who we believe we are in Him and acting like it.
1. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 2:10, and Philippians 1:6. Write a summary of what these verses say and/or what they mean to you.
2. How well do you identify with the truths of who you are in Christ? Write down some "good work" (Philippians 1:6) you have experienced that God is doing in you, helping to change you into that new creation.
"Living as a new creation is something God works in us, using our will and our choices. So, we must both receive the gift of being a new creation and be challenged to live the life of a new creation. All this is God's work in us that we must submit to." 1  - David Guzik
As he confidently believed, Paul and every person on board that doomed ship survived the raging storm and chaotic ship-wreck - as promised by God!
There's nothing like a storm in life - an unexpected south wind, a squall, or a raging hurricane - to bring out the best and worst in people. Perhaps you have survived a storm or shipwreck in your life, or you might imagine what it would be like.
3. Picture yourself washed up on shore, safe but exhausted and not knowing what might come next. From experience or imagination, jot down your answers to these questions.
a. How did you behave during the tempest that put you there?
b. Were you calm in the storm with your confidence placed fully in God?

c. Did you do your best to encourage and help others?	
d. How will you move forward now that you're onshore?	
4. What is your typical response when life happenings blow you off course? What's your go-to reaction?	
5. Write a "note to self" about how to survive a storm from an "if I knew then what I know now" point of vie Base it on your position/identity in the Lord Jesus Christ.	?W.
OPTIONAL SIDE TRIP: Study Ephesians 1-3. Note the occasions that Paul uses the phrase "in Christ". Take time absorb all the benefits available to you and ask God to keep working on you!	to

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was	there	anyt	hıng	that:

C onvicted me

O pened my eyes

U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

Write about it here:

DAY

Castaway: Believing in Your Life With Christ

Colossians 3:3

 $\Im$ 

"For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

# Prayer

PRAYER: Dearest Father, I thank You for Your Word that nourishes and sustains me. I want more of You, more of a life with Christ at the center. By Your Holy Spirit, reveal Your direction for my life today during this time with You.

In Jesus Name, Amen.

A while back, a friend spoke on how she pictured life with Christ to be. She explained how she always knew Jesus was present, available to help and guide her. She pointed to the side of the room and said he was more like, over there - sitting comfortably, ready for when she needed him. But, as she began to live more within the reality of her identity in Christ, she found herself going to him more and more for all kinds of reasons. Then she linked arms with one of her audience and paraded around the room saying, "I want Jesus here, with me and next to me all the time. I want to stay with him, share all my life, and learn all I can about his love for me." I will always remember that picture, and I say, let us all link arms with Jesus in close, intimate fellowship!

WORSHIP SONG: In the Garden (old hymn)

READ Acts 28:1-10, noting again Paul's behavior and the favor bestowed upon him and his companions.

Despite the crazy storm and terrifying shipwreck, where did Paul land? On an island inhabited by kindly people! Thank you, Lord. And what did Paul do as soon as he dragged himself onshore? He began to minister by joining in to build a giant bonfire to warm the 275 other survivors! No matter the cold rain and the poisonous snake bite - he just shook it off and carried on to help and bless everyone! By example, he shows us how to live in Christ and with Christ.

Preposition: with Greek word: syn

Definition: referring to union; together, beside, accompany. Biblical use of this word denotes close and intimate fellow-

ship.

We know that by faith we are in Christ, enclosed and surrounded by his saving grace. And because of it, we can now be with Christ - in close and intimate fellowship with him, and he with us! These are not separate positions, just different ways to describe our relationship.

1. Read Colossians 2:12-14, 3:1-4, underlining the phrase "with him" or "with Christ" each time it appears.
a. What is the main idea of verses 12-14? How does this correlate with Romans 6:8, Galatians 2:20, and Ephesians 2:5?
b. What do buried, dead, died, and crucified mean in these passages?
c. According to verses 3:1-4, what then should we do and why?
To be with Christ requires action on our part - we must actively believe in the gospel (Christ died for our sins) and submit our lives to him - die to ourselves and obey Jesus' commands (John 14:21). Then we are raised with him and receive the spiritual blessings of our position in Christ. It is our life hidden with Christ in God.
<i>READ</i> John 15:1-5.
In verses 4 and 5, the words "abide in" or "remain in" can also mean "stay with". In the last part of verse 5, the phrase "apart from" can also be "without." Without Jesus, we can do nothing. What then can we do if we stay with Jesus?!?!
2. Read John 15:7-11. What is the outcome of abiding in or staying with Jesus according to these verses?
3. From what you know about Paul's life and teaching, how do you see that he "stayed" with Jesus? Or another way to say it is, what did his intentional walk with Jesus look like and what was the outcome?

•	life to be hidden with Christ? Ware some of the things you have	•	
down, too. Dream big!			
or those times you feel wash	on your life "hidden with Chrined up? How will you demonstry you are staying with Jesus (Joh	rate your dependence on him	n as you live with and serve
In 1875, Hannah Whitall Smith wrot says,	e The Christian's Secret to a Happy	Life based on Colossians 3:3	, a life hid with Christ. She
act on it from this time forward. L acknowledge Him in all our ways,	Him we can literally do nothing. We et us make a hearty renunciation of a and do everything, whatsoever we do, a tness, and patience, and everything else	all living apart from Christ, and a as a service to Him and for His g	let us begin from this moment to lory, depending upon Him alone
OPTIONAL SIDE TRIP: We are stay with him by acknowledging him write down Jesus' promises to be w. 3:20.	and depending upon him alone	e. And Jesus is with us! Stud	dy the following verses and

My Fourney

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was	there	anyt	hing	that:
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C onvicted me

O pened my eyes

U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

Write about it here:



# Landlocked: Believing in Your Strength Through Christ

Philippians 4:13

"I can do all things through him who strengthens me."

Prayer

PRAYER: Dearest Father, thank You for the confidence You give us through Your Son, Jesus. Help me live my life by Your power as I study Your Word today. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Sometimes you just wonder, "How will I ever get through this?" Having gone through a recent family tragedy, I still don't know how we survived those early days of shock and grief. But, when it was hardest, I knew I could take the next baby step, do the next thing that had to be done and I could get through it. How? Because I have strength, peace, grace and victory in God through Christ Jesus.

WORSHIP SONG: I Shall Not Want, Audrey Assad

*READ* Acts 28:11-31 and Philippians 1:12-14, 4:22

Paul had known for certain he would make it to Rome because Jesus promised him twice (Acts 23:11 and 27:12), but it had been quite the journey and he was heartened by seeing the brothers who greeted him along the way. Placed on house arrest, he was chained (Ephesians 6:20) to a Roman guard and it was a time of suffering and trouble (Ephesians 3:13, Philippians 4:14). However, he did have the freedom to receive visitors and boldly speak of Jesus Christ. According to what he wrote to the Philippians, the gospel was being advanced and many were affected by Paul's imprisonment. These two years in Rome were also spent corresponding with churches he had served, including the letters to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians.

READ Philippians 4:11-13. Write out verse 13, underlining the word "through."

Preposition: through Greek word: dia

Definition: Moving in one side and out of the other; by way of. For our use, it refers to the channel of an act; Equivalent to "by the merit of anyone" (Christ).

Paul had suffered many hardships in his life (2 Corinthians 11:23-28) and was currently in his third or fourth year as a Roman prisoner. Yet he says he is not in need - he has learned to be content in whatever situation he is. Note that he has learned it. How does he face his circumstances? He goes through Christ. By merit of his sacrifice on the cross, Jesus has provided a way - a "channel" - through which we have access to spiritual blessings God has for us in him. So as Paul passes through Christ, he is empowered to live out his identity in Christ and to walk with Christ!

way - a "channel" - through which we have access to spiritual blessings God has for us in him. So as Paul passes throu Christ, he is empowered to live out his identity in Christ and to walk with Christ!	ıgh
1. For further examples, read the following Scriptures. What else do we have through Christ? What is your resport to Jesus for providing the way to these blessings?	ıse
Romans 5:1-2	
Romans 8:37	
1 Corinthians 15:57	
2 Corinthians 3:4	
"Not that I speak from [any personal] need, for I have learned to be content [and self-sufficient through Christ, satisfied to the powhere I am not disturbed or uneasy] regardless of my circumstances. I know how to get along and live humbly [in difficult time and I also know how to enjoy abundance and live in prosperity. In any and every circumstance I have learned the secret [of facing lip whether well-fed or going hungry, whether having an abundance or being in need a Philippians 4:11-12 AM	es], fe], d."
In the above passage, underline the words "content," "self-sufficient through Christ," and "satisfied." They come from the same reword in Greek meaning: a sufficiency of the necessaries of life; a mind contented with its lot. You could say, "through Christs, enough is enough!"	
2. Compare the following passages and write down what they say as a whole about contentment and sufficient through Christ.	тсу
2 Corinthians 9:8	
2 Corinthians 12:9	
Philippians 4:11	

3. I	Do you want to learn to be content in every situation? Answer these questions.
	. What are some of the ups and downs that occurred in Paul's life, and what did he do about them? What was attitude?
b	o. Are you ready for Jesus to be enough for you in all things? Write down how that might look.
c	. What is standing in the way of your satisfaction in, with and through Christ?
	an do all things [which He has called me to do] through Him who strengthens and empowers me [to fulfill His purpose - I elf-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency; I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him who infuses me with inner strength and confident peace.]' - Philippians 4:13 AMP
In her song	, I Shall Not Want, Audrey Assad writes this:
Fro	om the love of my own comfort
	m the fear of having nothing
	om a life of worldly passions
	liver me O God
	m the need to be understood d from a need to be accepted
	m the fear of being lonely
	liver me O God
An	d I shall not want, no, I shall not want
W.	nen I taste Your goodness, I shall not want <sup>1</sup>
	Contemplate the lyrics. Can you relate? From what do you need/want to be delivered in order to live a life of attentment through Christ?
V	Write your own lyrics by filling in the blanks:
Η	From
Η	From
r	
ŀ	From

#### Deliver me O God

Now spend some time praying over what you wrote, asking your dearest Father to deliver you and show you his goodness.

"Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!"
- Psalm 34:8

OPTIONAL SIDE TRIP: We receive guidance and power through the Holy Spirit. What can the Holy Spirit do through us to accomplish His will? In Romans 1:11-12 and 1 Thessalonians 3:2, Paul says that spiritual gifts are used to strengthen others. Look up the following verses about spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit and write down how each can be used to strengthen other believers through us: Romans 12:3-8; 1 Peter 4:10-11.

My Journey

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was there	anything	that:
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C onvicted me

O pened my eyes

U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

Write about it here:



## The Odyssey: Believing in the Journey

Ephesians 3:20

"Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us."

ßrayer

PRAYER: Dearest Father, I thank You for a man like Paul who gave his all for You. You made me who I am and I ask that Your power at work within me will help me to grow into someone who can demonstrate the life-changing power of the gospel and serve my brothers and sisters in the Lord. In Jesus Name, Amen.

WORSHIP SONG: Highly Favoured by Amy Grant and Michael W. Smith

odyssey / noun a long series of wanderings or adventures, especially when filled with notable experiences, hardships, etc.

That's life, isn't it! I hope you embrace the adventures, experiences, and hardships with equal assurance of who you are in Christ and the fellowship you have with him. On every step of the journey, I pray you will be strengthened and empowered through his grace and mercy. I encourage you to believe in the transforming process that is our lifelong journey with God.

READ Acts 27-28. As you recall Paul's last recorded journey, remember what God accomplished through a man who really believed that "in Him, we live and move and have our being." - Acts 17:28

Look back and review days one through four. Write down a "take away" idea or application from each.

Day One: Believing Your Position in Christ

Are you on course? What do you believe about where you are spiritually according to the Bible?

Day Two: Believing in Your Identity in Christ

How well are you navigating life's storms? What do believe about the reality of who you are in Christ?

Day Three: Believing in Your Life With Christ

Are you walking in fellowship with him, or stranded on a deserted island? What do you believe about a life hidden with Christ?

Day Four: Believing in Your Strength Through Christ

Are you strong and moving forward, or chained to your circumstances? What do you believe about how you are empowered through Christ to grow in your Christian life?

As a final exercise, read Paul's prayer for the believers in Ephesians 3:14-21. Do you see our prepositions in there (in, with and through)? How do they help you focus on your relationship to the Father, his Son, and his Spirit? Meditate on his love for you and his desire to bring you into abundant life. You are highly favored.

Highly Favoured
By Compassion Art

Who I have become in you
Is grace beyond all measure
In the light of who You are
Who am I to be found here?

Who I have become in you
Is grace beyond all measure
Raised to life and crowned with love
Jesus yours forever

Majesty and mercy meet me in this moment
How can it be that I have been chosen by the King?
There's no greater honour
There's no greater treasure
Than to be known and loved by you



I am highly favoured, I am highly favoured 1

When the angel Gabriel appears to Mary to tell her the good news of Jesus' soon arrival, he says, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" Later he says, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God." (Luke 1:28, 30) She later responds with a song of praise, known as the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55).

Do you believe that Gabriel could appear to you right now and say those same words? Not related to the birth of Jesus, of course, but just because they are true about you! Based on what we've studied and learned this week, what will you say back to God? (And don't say, "No way!")

# Week Eight References

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WEEK Rine



...Lesson Notes

# The Passion of a Pastor

Paul's Heart of a Pastor and Shepherd as expressed through his Prayers and Letters

"And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through

Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God."

- Paul, Philippians 1:9–11

Fellow travelers, God chose and equipped Paul with the heart of a pastor for a purpose! This week in our lessons we will look deeper into Paul's letters and prayers in order to understand his passionate heart for us in the church and for those not yet in God's family. God knew we would need to be reminded of His instructions and encouragement through Paul's words in order for us to "stay the course" and remain fully devoted followers of Christ.

Prayer: Lord God of the Universe, as You show us Paul's life, I'm reminded that You also know my past, present, and future. Please reveal Your timeless wisdom through Paul's words. Soften my heart so Your Word comes alive and finds its mark in my heart and mind. Please make me more like Jesus through the power of Your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name, Amen.

WORSHIP SONG: Ready or Not, Hillsong United

Thinking of Bible verses I've memorized over the years that have helped transform my life, it is most often God's words of wisdom and encouragement expressed through Paul that ring in my ears! John Piper wrote, "Not only could Paul think and write at the most demanding intellectual level, but he also could write poetically, beautifully, and with such universal appeal that some of his words are among the most widely quoted in the world, even by non-Christians." As we study and meditate on his letters and prayers, I hope God's words through Paul will come alive to us and ring true - like a compass knows "True North". You have learned so much in your study of Paul, and your faithfulness is a blessing to God – so keep pressing in for more!

Since we have been studying Paul's life and missionary journeys, can you summarize in a few words his motives for writing letters to the early churches?

It's clear from our study of Paul's life so far that his overarching priorities included teaching & ministry of the Word, prayers, and to reach all with the gospel. Frankly, we could study Paul's wisdom in solely the books of the Bible written by him and never exhaust all the goodness! I know many of you have studied at length an entire book of the Bible written by Paul, and I recommend this method for putting an author's message in perfect context. However, we have been studying the context of Paul's teachings through each of our previous lessons, and we don't have time to look at all of Paul's writings. So this week we will investigate a few significant topics corresponding to Paul's prayer for the Philippian church (Philippians 1:9-11) since this prayer of Paul's is my hope for us this lesson!

- Day 1 Paul's prayers ("And it is my prayer")
- Day 2 Paul's counsel and guidance ("with knowledge and all discernment")
- Day 3 Paul's cautions and corrections ("that you may approve what is excellent and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ")
- Day 4 Paul's comfort and encouragement ("that your love may abound more and more")
- Day 5 Navigating our own course through personal reflection ("to the glory and praise of God")

Our goal this week is to dig a little deeper and learn more about how he specifically expressed his heart as a pastor. So let's go!

\*All verses quoted in this lesson will be in the English Standard Translation (ESV) unless otherwise specified. 2

DAY

1

"What wings are to a bird and sails to a ship, so is a prayer to the soul." - Corrie Ten Boom 1

## Prayer

Almighty God, thank you for Jesus, our Good Shepherd. You say Your sheep know Your voice and they follow You, and only You. Let that be me! Please help me desire to know Your Word more so I learn to pray Your true words back to You in faith, trusting You.

Fellow travelers, if we were preparing for a sailing trip around the world, we would need to learn how to stay in contact via radio or satellite with those on the mainland! Communication is a necessity for our guidance and safety while navigating open waters, just as it is for us through life. For a Christian, prayer is like our 2-way communication with head-quarters – with God. We stay on course by navigating with the wisdom we receive from God in prayer and study, while He desires to hear our love expressed through thankful praises and requests.

In this lesson, Paul's prayers will be our model, showing us *what* he prayed and *why*. For more "*how-to*" pray, I've included lots of resources in the Optional Side Trip sections in order to strengthen and energize your prayer life. These resources are not meant to bury you or be used all at once – simply to help inspire your prayers over time. I am convinced to "Stay the Course" will require time spent in heartfelt prayer!

WORSHIP SONG: O Come to the Altar, Elevation Worship

READ Paul's Prayer for us: Colossians 1:9-12

Write it out, praying it as you write it. Try substituting your name for each "you" found in the verses, in order to hear Paul's prayer in a new way.

Thankfully, we have many of Paul's prayers recorded in the New Testament within the 13 books (letters) he authored. Even today they are profound, practical models for us. These prayers show Paul's shepherd's heart reflecting his love and concern both for people who don't yet know Jesus and for the Church.

Even as you write out examples of Paul's prayers each day in your lessons, you are being transformed as you focus on God's p: 1:

priorities. "Our prayers reveal what we believe about God and what we really value and desire." Paul's prayer for us today (Colossians 1:9-12) is an example for us of what to pray, showing us what he passionately desired for the church.
1. Re-read Paul's prayer in Colossians 1 in several different translations, even the Amplified Bible. What specific things did Paul pray for us as believers?
2. Was it enough for the believers just to know about God? What were their lives to demonstrate?
3. Since Paul wants us to "learn to know God better and better." (vs. 10), can you explain how praying about who God is (His character and attributes) might transform your prayers?
Why should we study and pray the prayers of the Apostle Paul? In a word: transformation. Our expectations, our minds and actions will be transformed as we learn from Paul.
As adapted from the book <i>Lessons from the Apostle Paul's Prayers</i> by Charles Spurgeon <sup>2</sup> , each of Paul's prayers was inspired by the Holy Spirit and gives a glimpse into the unsearchable wisdom of Almighty God. We see how the Holy Spirit wants us to pray. As we meditate on Paul's prayers and petitions, God's Spirit will illuminate the prayers and in turn shape the desires of our hearts, our priorities and outlook. Instead of just self-centered prayers for our circumstances, we can learn to pray for things like the filling of our minds with "the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him" (Colossians 1:9) <sup>2</sup>
4. Read Philippians 4:6-7 two times through.
a. Examine each instruction Paul highlights for us.
b. If we follow these instructions, identify more than one result that is promised to us.
In 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Paul told us to "pray without ceasing" and he demonstrated this through strenuous, persevering, and persistent prayer. Explore more about this type of prayer as you complete these sentences:
Colossians 1:9a [NIV] " since the day we hear about you, we for you."
Colossians 1:29 [NIV] "To this end, I with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me."

1Thessalonians 3:10a [NIV] "\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_ we pray \_\_\_\_\_ ..."

Persevering prayer requires faith that God is at work even when we don't yet see answers.

Persistent prayer also builds our faith, as we regularly look back, see God's answers and praise Him.

The practice of persevering in authentic prayer also builds in us the spiritual discipline to keep God as our focus and priority. This discipline develops spiritual maturity in us, resulting in obedience to God's ways but also a deeper, more intimate relationship with Him. The Puritans are credited with saying "Finally, pray until you pray." <sup>4</sup> That is, we should seek to pray long enough and authentically enough to move past formal pleasantries and our to-do list, and begin to enjoy God's presence and desire His will.

5. Do you "pray until you pray"? What might keep you from persisting in your prayers? What practical changes can you make to pray with more perseverance?

Again from the book Lessons from the Apostle Paul's Prayers <sup>2</sup>, the editors suggest another reason why we study and pray the prayers of Paul: "We can pray along with Paul confident of God's answers. Praying God's prayers according to God's priorities means we can be sure of God's answers. This doesn't mean He will answer as we expect, but it does mean God will answer prayers according to His will as He promises (1 John 5:14). Since Scripture is His revealed will, praying Paul's prayers guarantee God's answers. Let this sink into your soul. As you earnestly pray for God to strengthen your faith to grasp the depths and riches of Christ's love (Ephesians 3:14 - 19), God will answer you - He wants you to experience the profundity of Christ's love. Expect great things, expect things beyond all expectation,' (Charles) Spurgeon writes." The more we pray about God's priorities, the more they become our priorities.

"The one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray."

- Samuel Chadwick 5

WORSHIP SONG: Who You Say I Am, Hillsong Worship

OPTIONAL SIDE TRIP: For more on "how to" pray: I'd like to offer up a suggestion from Shoreline Church's Abide Bible study by Helen Steinkamp. <sup>6</sup> Here, Helen presents the PURSUE model for studying a devotional passage, and I believe it can invigorate our prayer lives as well. You can find the details for this method on the next page.

READ Ephesians 1:15-21 and use PURSUE as a tool to dig in..

P = Passage

Read through this passage. Open your heart and mind to the Word of God in this passage.

U = Underline

Personalize what you read by underlining, circling, and highlighting the things that impact you.

R = Respond

Did God speak something to you through His Word today? If so, write about it in your journal or in the space provided. Write down where you are in life and what you sense God is calling you to do or be in some area of your life.

S = Stand in Prayer

Stand spiritually in prayer. After you read, pray and journal, believe for great things in and around and through your life.

U = Unshakable Declarations

While you are in prayer, take some time to declare the Word of God over your life. (Is there a promise to claim, a truth to embrace, a blessing to thank God for?)

E = Eternal Goals

After you read, underline and respond in your journal and pray, now take the next step. As you close out your prayer and devotions write at least one eternal goal for today. This could be things like "I will keep my relationship with God first in your heart, or I intend to share my faith with a family member or friend," or I intend to serve in a ministry to the poor." Embrace an eternal goal - one you can latch onto by faith in God.

-Then end your prayer and study time by thanking God for this special time with Him-

My Fourney

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was	there	anyt	hing	that:
-----	-------	------	------	-------

C onvicted me

O pened my eyes

U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

Write about it here:

## Paul's Counsel & Guidance

DAY

"Never go into strange places on a falling tide without a pilot."

- Thomas Gibson Bowles<sup>1</sup>

Prayer

Faithful God, thank You for preserving Your Word over time for us. I praise You for teaching me through the power of Your Holy Spirit. Please increase my understanding so I can apply the truths of Your Word in my life and be sensitive to Your conviction, not letting anything separate us as You promise. Even when I am uncertain or fearful Your kindness is beyond measure, so thank You for Your faithfulness.

Hellow travelers, to prepare for our sailing trip around the world, our training would include textbook instruction plus learning how to read nautical maps. To us as Christians, Paul's letters help train and equip us for life as Christ followers. Our most trustworthy training manual is the Bible, and Paul is one of its greatest contributors!

WORSHIP SONG: Ever Be, Halley Heiligenthal

READ Paul's Prayers for us: Ephesians 1:15-21

Write it out... and pray it as you write it. Again, try substituting your name for each "you" in Paul's prayer.

Throughout this study, you have been exposed to Paul's manner of writing: direct and powerful; personal and challenging; not shying away from difficult topics. Our prayer today from Ephesians is an example how "Paul's soul was marked by the beautiful interweaving of enormous powers of reason and profound capacities for emotion, both of which he put in the service of others." We see in this prayer from Ephesians 1 how Paul's wise counsel is seamlessly interwoven with his prayers, just as his worship of God's attributes and his instruction overlap.

When reading Paul's letters, we hear his passion not to just see people saved, but also to see them built up in Christ. Paul's counsel is purposeful: for our sanctification; the glorification of God; and the spread of the good news of Jesus Christ to both the Jew and the Gentile – to the entire world.

1. Here are a few powerful examples of Paul's guidance. Take some time to thoughtfully examine these verses and
write out Paul's counsel in your own words.

Romans 5:3-5

Romans 12:9-12 (NLT)

Colossians 3:12-14 (NIV)

1 Timothy 6:17-18

## Living It Out

Paul again showed us the heart of a shepherd when he counseled the Philippians, "Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me - put into practice. And the God of peace will be with you." (Philippians 4:9 NIV) Just as an actual shepherd works for the good of his sheep, Paul showed his passion for the early church through his actions. He modeled the way for them through writing, teaching, praying, greeting, encouraging, correcting, rebuking, sharing his faults and fears, and even sacrificing his own freedom for them. "Though Paul could deal in the 'unsearchable riches of Christ', his burden was to awaken and sustain in all Christians 'a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.' So he "behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God." (Ephesians 3:8, 2 Corinthians 11:3, and 2 Corinthians 1:12)

Dr. Wayne Barber sums it up this way: "We see then the evidences of a genuinely converted individual. Just by looking at Paul and where he's been, we see a fearlessness to speak the word of God and a boldness to say what needed to be said. We see a consistent witness wherever he was. Whether it was in his hometown or whether it was over here, he was doing the same thing. The reports never conflicted. They said, 'This man, who used to want to arrest those who did that, is now preaching their Christ.' He also had a burden to see people equipped, not just to be saved... without prejudice, sharing the Word of God. There was no personal favoritism, whether Jew or Gentile. It made no difference. Paul just had a burden to get the message of the gospel to others." <sup>4</sup>

Reflecting on how Paul lived out his own counsel, let's bring this more into focus in our own lives...

- 1. Who has been like Paul (a shepherd or a model of God's counsel and guidance) to you? How did they help you "Stay the Course"?
- 2. Who is your "Timothy" or who are you mentoring and raising up in the faith?
- 3. Who is your church (your tribe) you could be writing to?

4. W	Vhat biblical	counsel or	r guidance l	nave you	received	that has	been very	helpful	to you?
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"Finally, dear brothers and sisters, we urge you in the name of the Lord Jesus to live in a way that pleases God, as we have taught you. You live this way already, and we encourage you to do so even more."

- 1Thessalonians 4:1 (NLT)

WORSHIP SONG: Rescue Story, Zach Williams

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was	there	anything	that:
-----	-------	----------	-------

C onvicted me

O pened my eyes

U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

Write about it here:

## Paul's Cautions & Corrections

DAY

"Who won't be ruled by the rudder must be ruled by the rock."

- Anonymous<sup>1</sup>

## Prayer

Gracious God, thank you for showing us the way, truth, and life through Jesus Christ. Please help me be open to your words through Paul today. Please soften my heart to accept your cautions and corrections - knowing they are for my henefit. Please help me live an authentic life that pleases You, wholly trusting in Your love and grace that saves and sanctifies me.

Pellow travelers, sailing requires course corrections, as what destination is ever a straight line directly from the starting point? Navigating the right course is essential, because navigating "just one degree" off of our target may seem like only a small departure at first. However, over the course of a long journey, we can miss our intended target by endless miles and miles. So, if course corrections are to be expected, why do we often get offended or defensive when someone cautions us against a pending mistake or a bad habit? Or am I just speaking for myself? :-) Let's learn a better way through Paul's lessons. This may be a bit lengthy, but it will be worth it.

"My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those He loves, as a father the son he delights in." - Proverbs 3:11-12 (NIV)

make us realize	is	in our lives. It	us w	when we are wrong and teaches us
"All Scripture is	by	and is	to	us what is true and to
First, let's think through	n 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (	(NLT) and fill in the blanks.		
Write it out and pray	it as you write it.			
READ Paul's Prayers f	For us: Philippians 1:9	)-11		
WORSHIP SONG: 1'1.	n Listening, Chris McC	Clarney		

As we immerse ourselves in reading the Bible, we often find passages that spring off the page to us! It may be a word of comfort or it may also be a sense of God's conviction. God's Word can bring cautions and corrections to our mind as clear as day – showing our true motives or intentions. The Bible is "living and active" (Hebrews 4:12) "sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." Cautions and corrections may also come from the conviction of the Holy Spirit or the words of a fellow believer.

Look up the definition of exhortation (or caution) and use a biblical dictionary if possible: (Greek: parakaleō)<sup>2</sup>

(For clarity: warning, strong encouragement, beseeching, urgent advice, pressure, persuasion) <sup>2</sup>

In 1 Thessalonians 3:2-3a, we read that Paul sent Timothy to exhort the church in their faith so they didn't fall away.

1. Later, Paul exhorted Timothy himself with some urgent advice in 2 Timothy 2:15-19. Describe at least five things that might have resulted if Paul did not caution Timothy?

Look up the definition of rebuke (or correction) and use a biblical dictionary if possible: (Greek: epitimaō or elencho)<sup>3</sup>

(For clarity: to express stern disapproval, reprimand; scold, admonish, censure, reproach) <sup>3</sup>

In his series on Leadership Qualities, 4 Ken Boa writes "occasionally a rebuke is the most loving assistance a leader can offer."

2. Summarize these verses showing how and when a correction or rebuke might be applied:

(epitimaō) 2 Timothy 4:2

(elencho) Titus 1:9, 13

Ken Boa<sup>4</sup> wrote, "In his book The Management Methods of Jesus, Bob Briner notes that the word 'rebuke' is an archaic term that we don't often hear today. Surely there are occasions in which an old-fashioned rebuke should be the action of choice. But we need to exercise wisdom so that our words build up others rather than tearing them down. ... Briner notes that not one of the disciples Jesus rebuked ever left him. Even Peter, to whom Jesus said, 'Get behind me, Satan!' (Matthew 16:23) stuck with him. In fact, the disciples whom Jesus harshly rebuked became his most vocal adherents. Yet Jesus didn't walk around with a loaded verbal gun, ready to fire rebukes at anyone who demonstrated arrogance. On the contrary, he first built the kind of relationship with his disciples that would prepare them to profit from a stern rebuke." <sup>4</sup>

- 3. Since the words used for correction and caution often overlap in different biblical translations, let's compare and contrast the concepts:
  - a. What similarities do you find between a caution (exhortation) and a correction (rebuke)?
  - b. What appears different between the two concepts?

I believe God's purpose behind both cautions and corrections is the same: to restore. Without manipulation or coercion, God seeks to restore us to full spiritual health and strength, set back on course to reach our destination. Through the grace of God and the conviction of the Holy Spirit, He leads an unbeliever away from sin, which can result in salvation! After trusting Christ, cautions or corrections help us recognize our mistakes or sin in our thoughts, motives, actions or words. Thankfully, we can confess them to our merciful God, repent, seek and receive His forgiveness. The goal of working through God's exhortation or rebuke is for our relationship with God first to be established, then restored as needed to ensure we are walking closely with Him in His power.

Paul's wise counsel to always "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15) reminds us there is a necessary balance in exhortation and rebuke. According to Ken Boa, we must be careful to speak with true humility, love from pure motives, and sensitivity.<sup>4</sup> As John Ortberg puts it: "There is a very important theological distinction between being a prophet and being a jerk." Volumes have been written on this topic, but it's wise to remember Paul's pastoral caution to us: "I, therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." - Ephesians 4:1-3

- 4. When everything in you may want to shy away from God's exhortation or rebuke, summarize why you should lean in instead.
- 5. Have you recently sensed God's exhortation or rebuke through an inner conviction, a verse from the Bible, or a fellow believer speaking truth into your life? How did you respond?

"There is but a plank between a sailor and eternity."

- Thomas Gibbons 6

WORSHIP SONGS: Even If, Mercy Me;

OPTIONAL SIDE TRIP: This may be a long week of study, but now I am simply offering resources (more tools for your toolbox) on "how to" pray. Depending on your circumstances, you may want to tuck these away for the future. But remember, we want to "pray until we pray", not just go through the motions which can keep us from actually praying.

In Shoreline Church's *Abide* Bible study,<sup>7</sup> Helen Steinkamp presents a guideline for "Hearing God in Scripture" adapted from Dallas Willard's book *Hearing God*. This method helps us set aside time for reflective reading and prayer as it empha-

sizes calming ourselves before the Lord and responding to His voice.

#### Relax:

Turn off/tune out distractions

Thank God for salvation through Jesus' sacrificial death and triumphant resurrection and for giving you His Spirit as a constant inner companion.

Close your eyes and take some deep breaths.

Ask God to open your eyes, heart, and mind to see, hear and receive what He has for you.

#### Read:

Read John 15:1-8 slowly . . . recognizing that you are actually in God's presence.

Read the text again. . "listen" for some key words/phrases that impact you personally.

Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in choosing these words and phrases.

#### Reflect:

Read the passage again. . . reflect on these chosen words/phrases.

Why do these words resonate with you?

Ask God how these connect with your life today.

What do you want or need to know or be, or do as a result of these reflections?

Whom do you most identify with in this passage? Why?

What do you learn about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit?

#### Respond:

Read the passage one last time.

How is God inviting you to respond?

Invest time conversing with God about what He revealed to you.

Thank Him, or ask Him for something.

Select and use some of the passage as your prayer.

#### Rest:

Follow God's lead. Wait on God. Simply "be with" Him.

Pay attention to God. Ask "what makes me want to worship Him?"

Rest in the companionship of the Triune God.

#### Relate:

Journal about the ways God's Word ministered to you through this passage.

Be open to sharing the impact of this passage with other believers.

"Each time, before you intercede, be quiet first, and worship God in His glory. Think of what He can do, and how He delights to hear the prayers of His redeemed people. Think of your place and privilege in Christ, and expect great things!"

- Andrew Murray 8

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was	there	anything	that:
-----	-------	----------	-------

C onvicted me

O pened my eyes

U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

Write about it here:

## Paul's Comfort & Encouragement

DAY

"The true peace of God begins at any point 1,000 miles from the nearest land."

- Joseph Conrad 1

## Prayer

Kind and Loving Father, I come today expecting to hear from You. Thank You for Your presence and the comfort You bring. Thank You right now for quieting any distractions and worries. Thank You for Your love that never fails - how encouraging it is! I put my trust in You, Lord.

Fellow travelers, through our study we want to learn more about the inspiration and hope that allowed Paul to pen these words: "So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light and momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison." (2 Corinthians 4:16-17) Today we will examine how Paul encouraged others to Stay the Course when hard times came. Also, we will learn the importance of paying it forward, as we share God's comfort and encouragement with our fellow travelers.

WORSHIP SONG: Whole Heart (Hold Me Now), Hillsong United

READ Paul's Prayers for us: 2 Corinthians 1:3-5

Write it out... and pray it to the God of all Comfort.

After living a life of extraordinary faith and prayer, one of my best friends recently passed away from cancer. Frequently and passionately, Deborah would pray and quote Ephesians 3:14-21 to those around her. In turn, we were comforted by "how wide, how long, how high, and how deep is the love of Christ" (NLT) as we saw it poured out in her life and in the lives of her family as they drew closer to God during her illness. We witnessed God do "immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us," (NIV) as He provided in many miraculous ways. He also encouraged us through Deborah as she lived out her faithful prayers in spite of her circumstances. I am not exaggerating... I saw these verses written by Paul come to life. They have become some of my favorite verses to pray into almost every situation, as they bring great comfort knowing the promises of God are true.

In 2 Corinthians 1:8b-10, Paul says "For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and He will deliver us. On Him, we have set our hope that He will deliver us again."

1. Applying this to your own life, can you recall a similar experience that involved a desperate hope in God? If you can, briefly summarize it here.
Would you agree to prayerfully meditate on this experience and be ready to share the reason for your hope with others when given the opportunity?
2. Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 again. How would you answer the burning question many people are asking: "What purpose could there possibly be in my suffering and pain?"
3. Going even further, in 2 Corinthians 1:6 (NIV), identify what can be produced when we go through suffering.
"Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word." - 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17
Good Works and Words -> Action Item for Looking <i>Inward</i>
4. On Day 2, you were asked to identify someone who has comforted, encouraged, guided or counseled you, like Paul - a shepherd. Have you ever let them know? Take a moment to encourage them with a call, text, or even write a letter like Paul.
Good Works and Words -> Action Item for Looking Outward
5. Do you know someone going through a storm in life right now? Is their proverbial boat taking on water while they appear to be far from shore? How can you encourage or comfort them as God has comforted you?
Pray about it - believing God will bring opportunities your way - then step faithfully into those opportunities to bring praise and glory to God, like Paul. Let the comfort and hope He has shown you continue to prove His goodness and faithfulness, as you bring that same comfort to others.

Dear friend... stay with me!

If YOU are the one in the storm at this very moment, don't turn the page yet. Sometimes it may even be too painful to hear another well-meaning person glibly quote "God works all things together for good..." even though it is true for those who love Him.

If you are having a hard time recalling God's goodness, right now simply thank God for His promise to never leave or forsake you. [Hebrews 13:5b "...for He has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."]

Please pray God will continue to reveal His character and His love to you right in the middle of your circumstances by the power of His Holy Spirit. [1Corinthians 2:10 "...these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God."]

Pray to see Him clearly. [Ephesians 2:7 "...so that in the coming ages He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."]

Then ask and thank Him for His provision. [2 Corinthians 1:10 (NLT) "And He did rescue us from mortal danger, and He will rescue us again. We have placed our confidence in Him, and He will continue to rescue us."]

Thank Him for wisdom from above which He gives freely without playing games to all who ask. [James 1:5-6 'If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting."]

I am praying for you as I write this. Trust that He is near and His love will never fail!

Try and share some of your situation and concerns with your small group and pray in faith together for God's wisdom and answers.

WORSHIP SONG: Goodness of God, Bethel Music & Jenn Johnson

OPTIONAL SIDE TRIP: Here are helpful resources to enrich your prayer life from the website MomsinPrayer.com From the home page of the website, select Resources, then Prayer Tools.<sup>2</sup>

Attributes of God

For example, God is Faithful

Definition: constant, loyal, reliable, steadfast, unwavering, devoted, true, dependable

Now read about and meditate on this attribute of God from one or more of the following verses:

 Deuteronomy 7:9
 Psalm 119:90
 Lamentations 3:21-24
 2 Timothy 2:13

 Psalm 33:4
 Psalm 145:13
 Corinthians 10:13
 1 John 1:9

 Psalm 89:8
 Psalm 146:5-8
 2 Timothy 1:12
 Revelation 19:11

Now use this attribute of God in your own prayer. For example: "Faithful God, you have shown your faithfulness by giving us your word through the centuries. In 2 Timothy Paul says "I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me." You have kept your church alive through trials and persecutions, all for your glory. Thank you that your faithfulness means you won't abandon me..."

From Momsinprayer.com, Resources, Prayer Tools, Attributes of God.<sup>3</sup>

Names of God

For example: Jehovah Raah - The Lord Our Shepherd. Raah is also translated as "companion" or "friend."

Now read about and meditate on this specific name of God from one or more of the following verses:

Psalm 23 Ezekiel 34:14-15 John 10:11, 27-28 Isaiah 40:11 Matthew 18:12-13 Revelation 7:17

Now use God's name in your own prayers, reflecting what you have learned. For example: "Lord, our Shepherd, You are good and a good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. Christ, You laid down Your life for us guaranteeing that we could be with You for eternity. You are my shepherd, caring for me so well, like when \_\_\_\_\_\_..."

From Momsinprayer.com, go to Resources, Prayer Tools, Names of God.<sup>4</sup>

Character of God

For example: Deliverer

Now read about and meditate on the character of God as Deliverer from one or more the following verses:

2 Samuel 22:17-20 Psalm 34:1-7, 15-19 Isaiah 46:3-4

Psalm 22:4-5 Psalm 91:9-16 2 Corinthians 1:8-10

Now use His character trait in prayer personalizing it for your situation: "Almighty God, I praise You for Your power and might that helps me when I feel overwhelmed and my situation seems too much for me to handle. You are bigger than all that. Thank you for delivering me from the power of sin and giving me new hope. I love how You demonstrated this when \_\_\_\_\_\_..."

From Momsinprayer.com, go to Resources, Prayer Tools, Character of God.<sup>5</sup>

My Fourney

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was	there	anything	that:
-----	-------	----------	-------

C onvicted me

O pened my eyes

U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

Write about it here:



## Navigating Our Own Course Through Personal Reflection

"To reach a port we must set sail... Sail, not tie at anchor.

Sail, not drift." - Franklin D. Roosevelt1

## Jorayer

Almighty God, You have the power to move mountains with just a word, but You choose to use me to change the world through Your love. I am blown away when I think how You chose me, You delight in me, and You love me unconditionally. Help me love You and Your church more as I live out all I have learned in this study.

I want to finish well!

"Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please "." God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more."

- 1 Thessalonians 4:1

Pellow travelers, today I'm so grateful to reflect back on Paul's persistent heart of a shepherd and his passion to help equip and train us. It's amazing how he sacrificed his personal comfort and position to bring God's Word to the early church and all subsequent generations - like us.

Since Paul's letters and prayers came from his heart of a pastor and shepherd, his goals were clear: the teaching & ministry of the Word, prayer, and to reach both the Jew and the Gentile with the gospel. Paul naturally incorporated his theology into his teaching and prayers as a model for us to live out daily and pray back to God in faith. We searched out some of Paul's wise counsel on how to live, love and serve others. Studying Paul's writings has challenged us to consider his cautions and corrections, while he also encouraged us to know the fullness of God helping us comfort others. And, as we have read, Paul's urgency was for the church to live out the gospel.

WORSHIP SONG: Highlands - Song of Ascents, Hillsong UNITED

As you conclude, ponder the questions below, and journal your thoughts.

- 1. This week, has God renewed your heart and passion in any way?
- 2. Can you identify a new discipline or practice you will develop in your life as a result of studying the counsel, cautions and corrections of Paul?
- 3. Think of yourself like Paul for a moment. Is there anything God is prompting you to say to your "Timothy" or your "Church" to help counsel, exhort, rebuke or encourage them?



Finally, like we practiced with Paul's prayers, write out your heart to God, reflecting on what you	have learned thi	s week
Thiany, like we practiced with Fact 5 prayers, write out your heart to dod, reneeting on what you	nave learned thi	o week
Dear friends, thank you for faithfully studying God's Word and allowing Him to guide you this we much He loves you! I am so grateful for your perseverance as you are almost there – with only or course. Well done		
"Do your hest to present your a worker who has no need to he ashamed, rightly	handling the word	
WORSHIP SONG: How Great Your Love Is, Red Rocks Worship		

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...Lesson Notes

## Introduction

# The Secret of Paul's Passion

To be loved by Christ. To Love Christ. To love like Christ. This is life.

Our journey together looking at the life of the apostle Paul has been an adventure. We've traversed many miles on sea and land with this man, boarding boats, battling waves and, surviving shipwrecks. We've seen him thrown out of cities and thrown into prison. The apostle retained his spiritual passion through many storms in his life, and this week I hope that we can discover a few more clues on how to 'Stay the Course'. So, like the apostle, we will be able to say at the end of our journey on this earth, 'Tve finished the race' (2 Timothy 4:7).

In this final leg of our journey, we are focusing on the last five years of Paul's life. During this time he wrote three personal letters to two young pastors, 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus. His final letter to Timothy would be penned during his final imprisonment shortly before his execution. Each of these pastoral letters are relatively short. If you can, try to read through each of them this week. You will be richly blessed if you do!

The life trajectory of the Apostle Paul was dramatically changed that fateful day on the Damascus road when he had an encounter with the living Christ. Through divine revelation, he was awakened to a new life that he could've never imagined. In a moment, what Paul had previously known as reality (his hatred towards Christians) took an astonishingly new direction. Paul now fueled with a passion for Christ that consumes his life, would later even die for the very one he opposed.

Passion is contagious but retaining it for the long haul is what we need to figure out.

Merriam-Webster defines passion as an "intense, driving, or overmastering feeling or conviction". This week we are going to look at four fundamental elements to Paul's passion that I believe will help guarantee (by God's magnificent grace) help us Stay the Course and see us over the finish line.

Day 1 - True North Paul's Passion for Christ
Day 2 - Internal Compass Paul's Passion in Priorities

Day 3 - Staying Afloat Paul's Passion for Building Strong People

Day 4 - An Anchored Hope Paul's Passion for Perseverance

<sup>\*</sup>All Scripture references are in the New International Version unless otherwise noted.

# DAY 1

## ßrayer

Heavenly Father, You are my Master & Commander and You have charted a unique course for my life. It is my greatest desire to keep my eyes fixed on You so that I will finish this life well. Awaken within me a passion for You that cannot be contained and the perseverance to Stay the Course. Open my heart and mind to Your Word today and so that I can hear from You afresh. I'm ready for an adventure with You into new places to be discovered.

I'm here and ready my Captain, let's cast off together!

WORSHIP SONG: Captain, Hillsong United

reetings Fellow Travelers,

Before the days of global positioning satellites, sailors used a device called a sexton to get their navigational positioning twice each day. At dawn and dusk, they would "shoot the stars" and get a position. Using the North Star or True North as their reference point they could determine the course from their current position. And invariably after having done that, there would need to be some minor course corrections. If this wasn't done daily (and sometimes twice a day) they could find themselves way off course. You and I also need a daily course correction.

Like a compass that guides us on the long and winding road to where, ultimately, we want to be, we will be looking at Paul's True North, his passion for Christ. I hope that we can glean some insights on how to keep our spiritual passion-fueled to Stay the Course. I believe it's one of the first essentials in keeping our passion alive and preventing us from drifting aimlessly.

What are you passionate about? What captures your allegiance and inspires your passion? Having a clear awareness of these as we begin our study this week will help get us to our intended destination.

1. Please read 1 Timothy 1:12-20. Share below why you believe Paul reminded Timothy of his testimony.

Paul and Timothy spent years together, yet Paul hardly greeted the young preacher before he recounted his testimony. He remembered like it was yesterday. Consistently in Paul's writings, we see a familiar theme, the Lord's lavish grace to Paul. Again and again, Paul recalled the story of how Christ rescued him. Just as we see this in his letters, I'm fairly certain this occupied his prayers as well. Jesus marked him and he never forgot the depths from which he was saved. Like Paul, if we cultivate the habit of remembering what Christ has done for us it will help to keep our hearts anchored securely and prevent us from drifting aimlessly. We do this through focused time with God remembering all He has done for us and having an awareness of our need for Him. Our time alone with God each day is an opportunity for His love to revive us and refuel our passion for Him. This is the first essential in keeping our spiritual passion alive so that we can Stay the Course and finish well. Drifting happens little by little. And if you and I don't pursue a daily time focused on Jesus and His Word, we will find ourselves off course and our passion waning.

· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	vill fail in his inner life. A believer not focused on or meditating on Chris. er outer life, a clear symptom of a lack of intimacy in his/her inner life." <sup>1</sup>
2. Looking back over 1 Timothy 1:1-17, please list and Jesus.	t out under each column what you discover as it relates to Paul
<u>Paul</u>	<u>Jesus</u>
a. Now in your own words based on what you j you.	ust listed out, write your own story of what Jesus has done for
3. Please read 1 Timothy 1:12 and fill in the blank	s below.
"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me _ me to His service." NIV	, that Heme trustworthy,
me to rus service. INIV	

The Apostle, overwhelmed with a flood of grateful memories expresses his deep thankfulness. That he of all people, who was once a blasphemer has been made new by the transforming grace of the Gospel. It was the thought of this great love, passing all understanding, and of such tender mercy bestowed upon him, that washed over him again and again like waves upon the shore.

a. Let's take a look at these three words more closely. The first one is to *strengthen*. Please look up the synonyms for this word and write out the ones that stand out to you.

This word *strength* denotes the giving of a peculiar power which was the gift of the Holy Spirit, and which was necessary for the work of an apostle to enable him to bear witness to Christ in the face of an adverse world. <sup>2</sup>

- Why do you suppose Paul listed this particular word first?
- How has God strengthened you?
- b. Now let's look at the second word considered. Please write out the definition below.
  - What comes to your mind as you reflect on Paul's life and that Jesus "considered" him?

The Tayer's Greek Lexicon<sup>3</sup> gives a particular definition to this word in this context is to *esteem on exceedingly*. Do you believe that God has considered you and that He esteems you exceedingly?

- c. Our final word to examine is *appointed*. Please look up the definition and list any synonyms that stand out to you.
  - Do you believe that you have been appointed by God? And if so, to what have you been appointed?

OPTIONAL SIDE TRIP: This grace that was given to Paul was not exclusively for him. For God has strengthened, considered and appointed each of us in Christ. (For deeper study Ephesians 3:7,10-11; 4:1,7-13).

God has called each of us to an extraordinary position and vocation. Remembering each day what Christ has done and what He has called us into will help to keep our passion fueled.

How can you apply today what you discovered and how can this fuel your spiritual passion? Is your passion for Christ like a sailboat with a gentle breeze blowing smoothly and slowly over the water? Or perhaps sitting still with little or no wind in your sails? Or has your passion for Christ capsized? Or are you at full sail with a powerful wind taking you at knot speed? Take a moment to journal to God where you see yourself today and maybe ask Him to chart a new course for you or to bring a fresh wind to your spirit again.

My Fourney

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was	there	anything	that:
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C onvicted me

O pened my eyes

U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

Write about it here:

DAY

2

## Jorayer

Heavenly Father, open my mind today and give me a deeper understanding of the riches in Your Word. I desire to hear from You and may a fresh revelation of who You are effect notable change in me. All glory to You!

WORSHIP SONG: The Cause of Christ, Kari Jobe

# Hello Travelers,

Yesterday we looked at Paul's life that was fueled by a passion for Christ. He had a clear well-defined philosophy that provided the guidelines and boundaries for keeping him on course. His connection to Christ was the internal compass that directed every decision and action. Today we will be looking at how Paul's passion for Christ was seen in his priorities, specifically in how he mentored and discipled others.

"Passion is not just something you care about. Passion is caring about the same ultimate goal in an abiding, steady way. Each day you wake up thinking of the questions you fell asleep thinking about. You are, in a sense, pointing in the same direction, ever eager to take even the smallest step forward than to take a step to the side, toward some other destination. At the extreme, one might call your focus obsessive. Most of your actions derive their significance from their allegiance to your ultimate concern, your life philosophy." 1

The reality of the Gospel and it's direct transformational effect on Paul drove all of his actions. His love for Jesus consumed him, and he never forgot who he was and what he was here for. He had his priorities in order.

May I ask you something? How do you want people to remember you? What would they say about your life that prompted them to live a better life? Take a moment a journal what thoughts come to mind.

Over these past weeks in our study, we have discovered many facets of Paul's character that hopefully inspire us to Stay the Course and finish well.

	1. Please take a moment and list out as many character traits of the apostle Paul that has stood out to you on this journey and that has helped him Stay the Course.			
	2. Please read Colossians 1:24-29 and fill in scribed in this passage?	the blanks with words from	rom verse 28. What is Paul's mission as	de-
	"He is the one we proclaim,	and	everyone with all wisa	lom,
	so that we may present everyone		in Christ."NIV	
faith. A faith. T	nission was clear; Preach Christ, and then contevery level, Paul was coaching, teaching, and this verse in Colossians states the motivation present every person complete in Christ.  3. So, if we are going to do this, what does	nd mentoring. All with the n for Paul's ministry, and i	e intent to see people become mature in it should be my goal and your goal that	the
	a. Do you have anyone in your life that me you see this lived out.	odels an extraordinary life	following Christ? Describe below the w	ays
You ca most in	ovides those in our lives that we can witness, nnot teach what you are not practicing any nportant thing you do to make disciples is to on. Modeling will be our most effective teach	more than you can come model the right kind of be	e back from where you've never been.	Γhe
	4. We will look at five essential elements of list out how Paul modeled Christ-likeness.	discipleship from Paul's li	ife. Below look up the following verses a	and
	Acts 20:32			
	2 Timothy 1:3			
	Acts 20:26-27 & 2 Timothy 1:13			

Acts 20:17-19 & 2 Timothy 3:10-12

Acts 20:20 & 2 Timothy 4:19-21

Paul's passion for Christ is seen through this snapshot of verses that give some insight into how he modeled a life on mission for God. What did you discover in these verses? Here are some of the things I discovered:

- Paul modeled the *heart of a servant*. In a world of users, takers, and consumers, God has called us to build up His people even at the cost of our very lives.
- Paul modeled *a lifestyle of prayer*. Paul's prayer for Timothy shows his heart for him. We cannot minimize the role of prayer to effect change and bring encouragement to those with whom we are in a relationship.
- He modeled a lifestyle of doctrinal purity. Paul was passionate about proclaiming the whole counsel of God. The basis of his innocence before the Lord was his faithfulness to the entire message God has entrusted to him. He did not speak on interesting topics that he thought might draw an audience, or pull out a verse here or there that might serve as a reinforcement for an idea that was popular. He taught all of the Scriptures as a framework for the Holy Spirit's ministry to the people of God.
- Paul *modeled a godly lifestyle*. It's not enough to teach the commands themselves; the issue of discipleship is obedience to those commands (John 14:21). As a disciple-maker, you must be a disciple yourself. We are not just to teach information, skills, and attitudes. We need to impart a lifestyle. The effect of modeling is so powerful and you can be sure that those whom you mentor will seldom go beyond your example. They may measure up to it, but they usually will not surpass it. Whatever you desire to plant in their life, you must be doing yourself.
- Paul modeled a lifestyle of Christian fellowship. Paul shared intimate relationships with his people. Earlier he said
  that he served with tears. Here he described the way he taught them publicly and from house to house. Paul was
  knowable, touchable, available and able to be moved deeply by their needs and their cries. Jesus never intended
  for Christians to operate alone. Part of a balanced Christian lifestyle will include loving relationships with other
  godly believers.
  - 5. What character traits of Paul listed above, or others that you discovered stand out to you? In what ways can you incorporate some of Paul's traits into your own life?

### OPTIONAL SIDE TRIP: Sailing with the Spirit

Another example we see in Paul's life worth modeling is stated in the last verse of Colossians 1:29 "To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me." Paul was able to Stay the Course because he was fueled by and filled with the Holy Spirit.

READ Ephesians 5:18, what is Paul exhorting us to do?

Paul tells us to be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18) and we nod approvingly. But what does this mean? How do we obey a passive verb? If someone tells me to "Call your Dad," I can do that. But what if someone says, "Be phoned by your Dad?" Now I'm confused. Not only is it unclear what I'm supposed to do next, it's not even obvious what the instruction means.

In the biblical languages, there is just one word for Spirit, breath, and wind (ruach in Hebrew, pheuma in Paul's Greek). In Paul's original wording "he filled with the Spirit/breath/wind" - would make us think of being filled with air. It reminds me of a trumpet or clarinet, which can only fulfill its purpose when it's filled with breath. Or a sailboat, which requires a power beyond itself (the wind) to go anywhere. Paul is using dynamic language, not a static one. A sailboat won't be useful without continual filling.

How do we do this? Reading the metaphor that way sheds new light on how to heed Paul's instruction. When sailing, you need to respond attentively to whatever the wind is doing. If you don't put the sails, pull the mainsheet fast, or adjust the jib, you won't go anywhere, even if the wind is blowing powerfully. We can respond attentively to what God is doing in and through us, and this capacity comes through awareness, skill, and practice.

- Paul mentions four such habits in the following verses of Ephesians 5:18-21 what are they?

Being filled with the Spirit is both passive and active; it involves both experience and habit. We are called to feel things and to do things. God works and we work.

What would it look like for you today to "catch the wind" of God's Spirit so that like Paul you can say "To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me?"

My Tourney

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

C onvicted me

O pened my eyes

U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

Write about it here:



### ßrayer

Father, I give you full access to do anything still lacking among the goals you have for me on this journey. May your Holy Spirit through Your living Word break every chain and unloose me to be a mighty servant of God. Lord, keep the truths that I've learned on this journey fresh in my heart as they are at this moment. Never let me forget.

WORSHIP SONG: I Will Trust, Red Rocks Worship

Treetings Fellow Travelers,

To sail a ship either short distances or far, certain things absolutely have to be done for the ship to make it safely to its intended destination. Spiritually speaking, if we want to keep our ship from capsizing there are going to be some things that we need to learn. To know, and to follow. In our context, the learning comes from watching the life of the apostle Paul. Not only did he live out these things he also taught them to his followers. In these pastoral letters, Paul is clear and direct with these young pastors on how to do ministry in such a way to keep their metaphorical ship afloat. Paul's passion is evident as he pours into these young men so that they will be equipped and strengthened, ensuring that they stay afloat and not have their ministries (and their lives) capsize or be shipwrecked.

Yesterday we looked at how Paul's passion for Christ was exemplified in a godly lifestyle worth modeling. Today we are going to look at the practical ways in which Paul instructed those following him. As a disciple-maker, we are to train those that the Lord brings into our lives to maturity. Our ultimate goal is to give them resources so that they can become responsible for their growth. We cannot cause growth, but we can create opportunities for the disciples to grow. Being a good model is the single most important factor in multiplying disciples, and multiplying disciples is the heart of the Great Commission.

"Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."
- Matthew 28:19

The only command here is "make disciples." You may be faithful to go, baptize, but if you do not make disciples who will teach others then your effectiveness will end with one generation.

Paul encouraged Timothy through expectation. The confidence that Paul expressed to Timothy made him aware of the potential he saw in his life and made him want to achieve that potential (2 Timothy 1:6). As you disciple others, you can make your expectations clear to them, believe in them, and continue to encourage them toward those expectations.

Paul admonished Timothy to pass on all that he had learned (2 Timothy 2:2). Every truth you receive adds to your responsibility to pass that truth to others. Notice the plurals in this verse: "many witnesses," "men," and "others." Multiple models develop more balanced disciples. The key to making effective, multiple disciples is to select faithful and able disciples. Paul exhorts Timothy emphatically to "preach the Word!" (2 Timothy 4:2). In Romans 10:14 Paul says "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" Preaching is about the proclamation of Jesus Christ, He is to be the center of our focus. Everything has to come back to Him.

God's concern for each believer is our spiritual maturity. To be transformed into the image of Christ Jesus. Whatever ministry God has called you to, your growth and your impact and influence will have a direct effect on the growth of others. This

should be of paramount concern. God isn't interested in us just going through the motions. As we become more like Jesus,
we begin to change and our motivations and decisions begin to change because we are being influenced by His Spirit and by
His Word to become a different kind of person.

3. Who are the mentors in your life? How have they influenced you?

a. Name two people whom God has assigned to you to mentor.

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was 1	there	any	thing	that:
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C onvicted me

O pened my eyes

U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

Write about it here:



### Prayer

Father, it is my greatest desire to Stay the Course and live this life You've given me for Your glory! Please forge within me a greater passion for You, and for Your Kingdom. Reveal any fraudulent attachments I have to this world and then give me the tenacity and determination to press into all that You have planned for me.

WORSHIP SONG: Beneath the Waters (I Will Rise), Hillsong Worship

## Hello Travelers,

Passion and perseverance aren't the same things. As we saw in our definition of passion at the beginning of this study the word passion is often used to describe intense emotions. What we have seen as we've looked at Paul's life is rather than intensity, what comes up, again and again, is this idea of consistency over time.

The common metaphor of passion is fireworks. But this doesn't make sense when you think of what passion looks like through the life of Paul. Fireworks erupt in a blaze of glory but quickly fade, leaving just wisps of smoke and a memory of what was once spectacular. Instead what we see in Paul is a passion for Christ that only seemed to grow over time with white-hot intensity.

How was Paul able to maintain such steadfastness in his life? Today we are going to be looking at Paul's passion for perseverance and how we can grow in our perseverance and Stay the Course.

Let's begin by getting a better idea of the word perseverance and compare it to another very similar word, endurance.

1. Please look up the definition for both *endurance* and *perseverance* as well as noting any synonyms that stand out to you.

Perseverance Endurance

a. Now please write out in your own words the difference between endurance and perseverance.

#### Enthusiasm is common, Endurance is rare

One of the synonyms for perseverance is determination. Paul's ferocious determination can be seen in two ways. He was unusually resilient and hardworking and knew in a very, very deep way what he was here for. He not only had determination, but he also had direction. It was this combination of passion and perseverance that made him special.

2. One of my life verses is found in Hebrews 12:1-2, please write out this verse below in the first person (ex. "Therefore, since I am surrounded...").

a. How do you see your life lining up against these verses? Is there anything in your life that could be adjusted to align with this passage?

"...and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us." The word perseverance in the Greek is hupomone. Paul was a "hupomone" kind of guy. And those who finish well are "hupomone" people. They have strength under control. They are tough when things are tough. They endure even when they are in the midst of all kinds of trials, suffering or persecution.

To finish "the race marked out for us," gifts, skills, discipline, and perseverance must be developed in keeping with the unique race that we are running. Each race is different, and each person needs to develop the areas and perseverance critical to her particular race. A synonym for this word "persevere" is discipline. Even typing this I'm reminded of so many conversations I've had with women about this word, discipline. Many times I hear "I'm not as disciplined as I should be or want to be." And then there are others who have a very strong aversion to this word. But regardless of where you land on this word, I'm sure we can agree that the apostle Paul was disciplined.

- 3. In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Paul stresses the importance of perseverance with discipline. Describe below how you could apply this metaphor spiritually.
  - a. What areas of discipline would you like to develop further in your life as it relates to the race in which God has called you?

In this race that is marked out for us, the goal is not discipline for discipline's sake, for that will soon turn to legalism and hardness. Rather we should pursue discipline for intimacy's sake. For the race's sake; for growth's sake, for ministry's sake, for Christ's sake. Discipline and perseverance in the right areas for the right reasons will sustain growth and help us Stay the Course and finish well.

Another aspect we see that works hand in hand with perseverance is hope. And we see this hope in Paul's final letter to Timothy.

4. Please look up 2 Timothy 1:12. Of what was Paul convinced?

Hope is a rising-to-the-occasion kind of perseverance. But hope does not define the last stage of passion. It defines *every stage*. Paul knew the One in who he believed. Paul had entrusted everything to Christ. No matter how difficult circumstances grew, he never lost his hope. Sitting in that jail cell he said that he was "convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day."

5. Please Hebrews 6:17-20. Please fill in the blanks below.

"We have this	as an	for the soul,
and	." Hebrews 6:19 NIV	

a. What is this hope that is being referred to?

Verse 18 says God did this so that "we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged." But how do we "take hold of this hope?" It means bank on that hope. Trust in it. Feel secure in it. Be satisfied with it. Long for it the way you long for the coming of the dawn after a long, dark night. Here are a few practical things you can do to move your heart toward "taking hold of your hope."

- 1. Remember what Christ has done for you on the cross to secure your hope.
- 2. Meditate on verses from the Bible on how sure your hope is in the presence of God.
- 3. Pray earnestly that God would open your mind and heart to this greatness and this certainty and incline you to hope in Him.

# My Fourney

As we close today's lesson, think back and ask yourself, "What did I learn to help me STAY THE COURSE?"

Was	there	anything	that:
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C onvicted me

O pened my eyes

U rged me to

R eminded me

S tood out to me

E ncouraged me

Write about it here:

"I have finished the race"

DAY

- 2 Timothy 4:7

This week we saw that Paul's passion for Jesus was his True North. In his letters, he would remind his recipients of the marvelous work of Christ on the cross. He recalled the depths from where he came and to whom he now belongs. At Paul's deepest level this was his fixed point in a spinning world that helped him Stay the Course. That internal compass that guided what was most important to him, his most cherished values, and motivation. And his greatest satisfaction in life.

Looking at his life I'm reminded of one of my favorite quotes: "The world has yet to see what God can do with a man [or woman] who is fully consecrated to Him". Indeed this was certainly true for the apostle Paul, who "turned the world upside down" for the Gospel (Acts 17:6).

The singular aim of Paul's life is clear. He navigated solely on this one singular thought: "To press on toward the goal for which Christ Jesus called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14). This was his goal for which he would stubbornly press toward, and his focused desire for everything he did. Throughout this 10-week journey, we have discovered much about this man through different snapshots of his life on how to Stay the Course and finish well. As Paul was nearing his last days on this earth I wonder if this thought went through his mind?

"We are convinced that even if these bodies we live in are folded up at death like tents, we will still have a God-built home that no human hands have built, which will last forever in the heavenly realm... And this is no empty hope, for God, Himself is the one who has prepared us for this wonderful destiny. And to confirm this promise, he has given us the Holy Spirit, like an engagement ring, as a guarantee. That's why we're always full of courage. Even while we're at home in the body, we're homesick to be with the Master— for we live by faith, not by what we see with our eyes. We live with joyful confidence, yet at the same time, we take delight in the thought of leaving our bodies behind to be at home with the Lord. So whether we live or die we make it our life's passion to live our lives pleasing to Him."

- 2 Corinthians 5:1,5-9 TPT

Paul had an unwavering eternal perspective and desired to live his life for the glory of God victoriously. Experiencing His power, doing His will, fulfilling His purpose, and engaging His priorities. And as a result, Paul saw His power, His presence, His handiwork move in his life in a marvelous way. This same life is offered to each and every one of us as well.

How do we have a life down here that will matter up there? The perspective of there transforms your life and my life down here. When our lives are over and this life is done we will stand before the throne. And on that day may we hear, "well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21).

We've looked at the apostle Paul's life, the depths, and the heights. The confidence in his calling and the unwavering tenacity in prioritizing his priorities all founded on his passion for Christ. This is his story.
Now it's time to write your story.
May you Stay the Course and finish well Traveler!

# Week Ten References

#### Introduction

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### Day 5

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