

Acts: Multiply (Acts 21:1-22:29)

For the week of July 10, 2016

Spiritual Discipline Checkup

Spiritual disciplines can be described as those behaviors that help our spiritual growth and enable us to grow to spiritual maturity. The process of spiritual growth and development begins to take place the moment a person encounters the risen Christ and comes to Him for salvation. How are you doing in the following disciplines?

- Quiet time – Spending daily time alone to be with God.
- Study – Spending daily time reading the Scriptures and meditating on its meaning and importance in our lives.
- Prayer – Daily talking to and listening to God about your relationship with Him and about the concern of others.
- Fellowship – Mutual caring and ministry in the body of Christ.

Discuss in your group.

Acts 21:1-26

- Read the story in Acts 21:1-26. As a group, rebuild the story.

Observation: One of the spiritual disciplines is fellowship (see above). What do we learn about the strength of Christian fellowship and the ways it was expressed and carried out? Can you share examples of how Christians have provided support and hospitality to you and/or your family?

Application: After reading this passage look at Romans 12:13, Titus 1:8 and 1 Peter 4:9, 10. What do they tell you about the importance and expression of hospitality among Christians? How can you practice it if you don't have a family or a spacious home?

Application: This passage highlights the leading of the Holy Spirit and knowing God's will in your life. How can we know God's will in our life? Here are four practical helps:

1. Seek good advisors.
2. Spend time with God regularly (one of the spiritual disciplines!).
3. Realize that God's will may not be what you want.
4. If we know what God wants us to do, we must do it.

Discuss in your group.

Acts 21:27-40

- Read the story in Acts 21:27-40. As a group, rebuild the story.

Observation: If you were attacked as viciously as Paul was attacked, would you care enough to want to share your faith with them as Paul did? Typically, the emotion Paul may have had at this time was enormous fear and/or enormous anger. What does it tell us about Paul that he would turn and speak to the mob when he did? When is it appropriate to speak to people who are clearly against Christ? When is it appropriate to not speak to people who are clearly against Christ?

Acts 22:1-29

- Read the story in Acts 22:1-29. As a group, rebuild the story.

Observation: Paul's speech was well designed for its audience and the situation he faced. Here are four reasons. Discuss each one.

1. Paul's defense does not consist of a reasoned talk or even a general sermon – it's a very personal testimony. Personal stories have power to hold the attention of people.
2. The use of Aramic, rather than Greek was wise and even cagey. It calmed the crowd. How we speak can have a huge impact on our audience.
3. Everything about the early part of the testimony serves to show the crowd how much Paul is "one of them." Identifying with people can impact people's attention.
4. Paul tells the story of his vision and encounter with Christ. This is dramatic and underscores how someone who was fanatical against Christians is now one of them. How God changes lives is powerful to those considering faith in Christ.

Observation: Paul's speech is very instructive to us today. Here are two reasons. Discuss each.

1. Paul showed amazing boldness. We, as Christians, must take the initiative. Some Christians won't take the initiative unless there is a clear invitation. We need to be bolder than that!
2. Even the greatest effort at gospel communication can fail. Be ready for that. Paul tried to avoid offending the crowd, but they literally ignited and got worse. Some people (e.g. family members) will reject our message and may even be very hostile to us. If we get through our lives as Christians without ever upsetting or offending anyone, we have not ministered with integrity.

Application: Put yourself in Paul's shoes but let's bring it to July 2016. You are in the USA and you are having a discussion with a few people who are obviously anti-Christian. Using Paul as an example, what would you say to them? What would be your "defense"?

Pray

- For our country
- For our community
- For RiverLakes Community Church
- For our families
- For you to be firm in your daily bible reading, quiet time with God, daily praying with God and fellowship with others