

Acts: Multiply (Acts 25:13 – 26:32)

For the week of July 31, 2016

Spiritual Discipline Check-up

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 your life.
- 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 25:13 – 27

- Read the story in Acts 25:13 – 27. As a group, rebuild the story.

Observation: What was Festus' dilemma? Does the world struggle to understand Christianity? Does the world desire to understand Christianity? Why or why not?

Interpretation: Why would Paul believe he stood a better chance with a trial in Rome before the emperor Nero Caesar? What do Paul's actions teach us about our relationship to civil authority?

Application: Paul had spent two years in prison. Waiting and waiting can often be very difficult, especially in our get-it-now culture. How can you respond as you wait for God to help you in your situation(s)? Read the following passages: Psalm 37:7, Proverbs 3:5-6, 2 Corinthians 9:8.

Acts 26:1-11

- Read the story in Acts 26:1-11. As a group, rebuild the story.

Observation: Trace each stage of Paul's defense by giving a one sentence argument that summarizes his point in: vv. 2-3, vv. 4-8, vv. 9-11, vv. 12-16, vv. 17-21, vv. 22-23.

Application: Most of us do not have such dramatic testimonies such as this one, but what can we learn from Paul for our own sharing of our experience?

Acts 26:12 – 32

- Read the story in Acts 26:12-32. As a group, rebuild the story.

Observation: What does Paul tell Agrippa here about a) the need for salvation (our lost condition), b) the method of salvation (how to become a Christian), and finally, c) the grounds of salvation (the reason God can save us)?

Observation: What is Paul's question to King Agrippa (vv. 27-29)? What was the King's response? Why should your testimony also end with a question?

Observation: Is Paul's speech a legal defense or a personal testimony? What was Paul's goal in this?

Interpretation: So often the world's response to hearing the gospel question resembles the response of King Agrippa in verse 28. Why is the world so close to understanding but far from accepting Christ? Take a look at the following verses and list some of those reasons (Matthew 19:16-23, John 3, 19-21, 12:42-43, Luke 18:9, Acts 7:51). Discuss in your group what your response would be when sharing with those who fall into one of the traps mentioned.

Pray

"O God, help us to not worry about what people think of us – whether they respect us or think we are crazy. Rather, remind us daily of who you are and who we are in Christ. Give us the courage to speak the truth of the gospel to those who need to hear it so desperately. And may many of those to whom we witness truly turn to you and receive him in who is life eternal. In Jesus' name, Amen."