

Acts 22:18-21 NLT - 18 I saw a vision of Jesus saying to me, 'Hurry! Leave Jerusalem, for the people here won't accept your testimony about me.' 19 "But Lord,' I argued, 'they certainly know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. 20 And I was in complete agreement when your witness Stephen was killed. I stood by and kept the coats they took off when they stoned him.' 21 "But the Lord said to me, 'Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles!"

Is there anyone you have known who lived their life “sold out” for God? What effect did that have on your faith?

You may not feel like teaching is your gift, but if you have a relationship with Jesus, you can encourage and inspire others to draw close to God. It is your actions, more than your words, that they will remember.

WRAP-UP

Our testimony can be a powerful tool for winning the lost, but it is more than what we say that makes the difference. Paul knew how to speak a language that people could understand, and he related the story of who he was so that others might see themselves in him. But even more powerful was Paul's close relationship to Jesus and the way Paul lived a “sold out” life that made the greatest impact of all.

Memory Verse

21 "But the Lord said to me, 'Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles!" 22 The crowd listened until Paul said that word. Then they all began to shout, "Away with such a fellow! He isn't fit to live!" 23 They yelled, threw off their coats, and tossed handfuls of dust into the air.
-Acts 22:21-23 NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members' needs: _____

Challenge- Ask a friend to share their testimony and then share yours!

“The Word of Our Testimony”

Book of Acts – Week #16

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the book of Acts, we find Paul traveling far and wide to bring the message of Jesus to the world. The response to his messages was mixed; many were saved, but others were angry. Paul traveled through Corinth, Ephesus, Greece and Macedonia. Along the way, the work he did and the way he lived became his testimony; that is, the proof of his faithfulness to God's calling in his life. This study reviews the testimony of Paul's life, and how God used it to further His kingdom.

Key Passage

ACTS 19 - 23

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

1. Listening through a Filter

Paul returned from his travels to Jerusalem where he was confronted by a mob of angry Jews determined to kill him.

Why were the Jews determined to kill Paul? How accurate was the information they based that decision on?

Acts 21:28-29 NLT - 28 yelling, "Men of Israel, help us! This is the man who preaches against our people everywhere and tells everybody to disobey the Jewish laws. He speaks against the Temple- and even defiles this holy place by bringing in Gentiles." 29 (For earlier that day they had seen him in the city with Trophimus, a Gentile from Ephesus, and they assumed Paul had taken him into the Temple.)

When he was arrested, Paul had been observing a purification ritual as proof that he was observant of the Jewish customs. But somehow the Jews missed that and only heard what was being shouted by a group of

Jews from Asia. They were listening for and watching for the worst about Paul and missed the truth.

When they heard the accusations against Paul there was a city-wide response.

Acts 21:30 NLT - 30 The whole city was rocked by these accusations, and a great riot followed. Paul was grabbed and dragged out of the Temple, and immediately the gates were closed behind him.

Human nature hasn't changed much. Where do we see similar things happening in our current culture? Where do we hear the loudest, but not always accurate, voices and accusations? Where do we see angry mobs forming around controversial issues?

The Jews were zealous to defend God against what they perceived as a threat. But they didn't have all the facts. If we are going to represent Jesus in our world, we can't get swept up in angry mobs based on inaccurate or presumptive information. Paul used his testimony to bring light to the truth. We need God to remove the filters so we can see clearly and shine light on the truth too.

2. Sharing Our Stories

Acts 21:37, 40 NLT - 37 As Paul was about to be taken inside, he said to the commander, "May I have a word with you?" "Do you know Greek?" the commander asked, surprised. ... 40 The commander agreed, so Paul stood on the stairs and motioned to the people to be quiet. Soon a deep silence enveloped the crowd, and he addressed them in their own language, Aramaic.

When Paul stood to speak to the crowds, he spoke to them in their common language; Aramaic, but when he was addressing the Roman commander he spoke in Greek. Paul understood that the best way to be heard was to speak the same language as your audience.

Have you ever been around someone who was speaking about their specialty, perhaps their job or hobby, and used jargon that you simply didn't understand?

If we are going to connect with those who don't know Jesus, we need to begin by speaking in terms that can be understood. You might not even be aware of common Christian terms that are not understood by those who don't attend church.

See if you can think of some terms Christians use that might be misunderstood (like anointing or grace) and how would you make that term understandable to someone who doesn't attend church?

Acts 22:3-4 NLT - 3 Then Paul said, "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, and I was brought up and educated here in Jerusalem under Gamaliel. As his student, I was carefully trained in our Jewish laws and customs. I became very zealous to honor God in everything I did, just like all of you today. 4 And I persecuted the followers of the Way, hounding some to death, arresting both men and women and throwing them in prison.

Paul understood his audience because he had been one of them not long ago. The first thing Paul shared was who he was. We all have a background story of our lives before we came to faith. Some came from hitting rock bottom and others were raised in a loving Christian home. Whatever your story, there are people like you who need to hear it because it gives them hope for themselves.

How would you describe the person you were before you came to faith in Christ? Who are the people you know who can relate to that part of your story?

Paul then detailed his encounter with Jesus on the Damascus road. People need to hear that God changes lives. Not all of us have such dramatic encounters as Paul did, but it is good to remember how our relationship with Jesus began.

What was the story behind the first step in your faith journey?

3. Knowledge vs Relationship

As Paul shared his testimony, he related a direct conversation he had with Jesus (Acts 22:18-21). Paul had proven that he was well studied and understood the scriptures. He was able to explain how Jesus was the Messiah using Prophecies from the Old Testament, but he was not sharing that knowledge of Jesus in this situation, he was sharing a personal relationship. It is our relationship with Jesus and how it affects our lives that is the basis of our testimony.