

LIFE GROUP LESSON

When the Church was Young - Week of July 20

Introduction

What are you passionate about? What dream keeps you going when everyone around you wants to give up? Or have you become indifferent to your dream? Each moment of every day is a gift and an opportunity to enjoy fellowship with the Lord. And yet, many of us may live our whole lives without giving the Lord a second thought. Or perhaps that's just it... the Lord Jesus is a *second* thought ... or third or fourth on your list of priorities. Maybe the things of God come in around last place.

This was not the way of the early church. When the church was young, believers like the apostle Paul were bold. Why? They had been set ablaze by God's Holy Spirit as Jesus had promised in Acts 1:8. The apostles and later Paul were not encumbered with worldly distractions and limitations. Somehow God allowed the trailblazers of the early church to see from an eternal perspective. For example, Paul – before angry Jewish religious leaders and Roman authorities – didn't see himself in chains, but free (Acts 26:29, Romans 8:1-2).

Background

When Jesus met Paul, formerly Saul of Tarsus, on his way to persecute Christians in Damascus, Syria, the risen Lord redirected Paul from a path of death to a road leading to life and peace, along with suffering. The irony is, because Paul proclaimed the message of Christ, he lived much of his life being sought after, arrested and put in prison. Yet Paul learned through personal experience what each Christ-follower must learn: passion for the Lord Jesus Christ cannot be stopped! The more those who oppose Christ try to snuff out the Good News, the more the Gospel spreads. Forces of darkness will set traps for Christ-followers, but evil plans and schemes will eventually backfire (see Psalm 9:15-16, Proverbs 26:27). Though in chains, the Book of Acts closes with Paul in Rome *freely* sharing Jesus –

“... He welcomed all who visited him, boldly proclaiming the Kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ. And no one tried to stop him” (Acts 28:30b-31).

Read Acts 28:17-31

When Paul first arrived in Rome, he called together the local Jewish leaders and explained he was not guilty of any criminal offense. They said they had not received letters or reports from Judea, but they did want to know what Paul believed: “... for the only thing we know about this movement is that it is denounced everywhere” (Acts 28:22). A time was then set for many people to come to Paul's lodging so he could share how the Law of Moses and the writings of the prophets pointed to Jesus as Messiah (v23).

Discussion

- According to the following Scriptures, what do you learn about going to Jews first?

Matthew 10:5-15 Matthew 8:5-12 Jeremiah 50:4-6 Amos 9:11-15

- From the following texts what insight do you gain regarding Paul's passion to go to Gentiles?

Acts 13:46-52 Romans 1:1-7 Genesis 12:1-3 Luke 24:44-49

- What warning do we hear in the following Scriptures?

Isaiah 6:9-10 Matthew 12:38 w/ 1 Cor. 1:18-25 Matthew 13:11-23

The Holy Spirit was a witness to the events of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 5:32) and had told Paul suffering was ahead (Acts 20:23). Yet, just as the Holy Spirit had empowered the early apostles, the Holy Spirit now emboldened Paul to articulate with passion, intellect and clarity the fulfillment of Scripture through the Person of Christ. This was Paul's time to shine for Jesus! ... and he did.

- The Holy Spirit has a *NOW time* when we have a unique and divine opportunity to share the message of Christ. God has a time for your witness for Christ to be heard. Are you ready to share the message of Christ and witness to what God has done in your life? Has God in Christ done anything in your life?

- Psalm 107:2 says: “Has the LORD redeemed you? Then speak out! Tell others he has redeemed you from your enemies.” Being bold may not look the same for you as it did for the apostle Paul. However, as you resolve to be faithful, you will go through fire. Telling others about your Redeemer stirs up the forces of darkness. Discuss honest ways you stay the course while being attacked, tempted, tested, and refined. How is your witness emboldened through the fire? Give Him Glory!

In Closing

Though wrongly accused by Jewish authorities, Roman authorities in Caesarea found no reason to keep Paul in custody. Yet, Paul appealed to Caesar because he did not want to be turned over to the Jewish leaders. He knew they would kill him. The Lord had already told him: “Be encouraged Paul. Just as you have been a witness to me here in Jerusalem, you must teach the Good News in Rome as well” (Acts 23:11). Thus, as a Roman citizen, Paul appealed to Caesar. Paul’s witness in the imperial city seems to have been appointed by God, for he was able to share the message of Christ to many people for two years. “For the next two years, Paul lived in Rome at his own expense. He welcomed all who visited him, boldly proclaiming the Kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ. And no one tried to stop him” (Acts 28:30-31).

Close in a Time of Prayer

One Year Bible Reading For This Week:

July 20: 2 Chronicles 1:1-3:17, Romans 6:1-23, Psalm 16:1-11, Proverbs 19:20-21
 July 21: 2 Chronicles 4:1-6:11, Romans 7:1-13, Psalm 17:1-15, Proverbs 19:22-23
 July 22: 2 Chronicles 6:12-8:10, Romans 7:14-8:8, Psalm 18:1-15, Proverbs 19:24-25
 July 23: 2 Chronicles 8:11-10:19, Romans 8:9-25, Psalm 18:16-36, Proverbs 19:26
 July 24: 2 Chronicles 11:1-13:22, Romans 8:26-39, Psalm 18:37-50, Proverbs 19:27-29
 July 25: 2 Chronicles 14:1-16:14, Romans 9:1-24, Psalm 19:1-14, Proverbs 20:1
 July 26: 2 Chronicles 17:1-18:34, Romans 9:25-10:13, Psalm 20:1-9, Proverbs 20:2-3

When the Church was Young

Text: Acts 28:17-31

PLAIN TRUTH

Those who’ve been _____ by Jesus are
 _____ in helping others find
 _____.

1. Though some may _____, we need to
 _____ the moments to _____ Christ so
 others can say _____.
2. Do not _____ your heart in _____
 to Christ’s witness
3. Be available to _____ your testimony to all who
 will _____ in Jesus Christ

July 20, 2025