

the book of
ACTS



devotional



*Christian
Centre*

Abbotsford

ACTS CHAPTER 1

Read Acts 1

Devotional

Crucified! Buried! Risen! Everything Jesus said has proven true! More than a good teacher, more than a wise friend, He is God of all! Fear evaporates and hope springs up as we encounter the risen Lord. Imagine the anticipation and excitement building among the first followers of Jesus as they waited together for the promised Holy Spirit. What an amazing time to be part of the Church!

The promises and commands of Jesus resonate with us today just as they did over 2000 years ago. Acts 1:8 says, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." The mission is not finished. God has called us and empowered us to take the gospel to the world.

Are you ready for God to move in your family? Do you anticipate an amazing move of God in your workplace? Are you eager for God to change your community? The time for waiting is over. God is moving! The local church is an unstoppable force. Its potential as an agent of change in our world is realized when those in the church begin operating with urgency for the gospel of Jesus Christ. Are you ready for change around you? If so, begin by asking God to do something new in your heart. Let's go!

1) What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?

2) Jesus tells the disciples in Acts 1:8 that they will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes. What comes to mind when you think of the word "power"? Does your life exhibit the power of God?

3) Who can you share the gospel with today? Who can you invite to church/community group?

Based on today's reading, what is one thing God is saying to you?

ACTS CHAPTER 2

Read Acts 2

Devotional

No matter how introverted or antisocial you might be, deep inside of all of us is a need for relationship. That longing is first for a relationship with God and second for a relationship with others. God never intended for us to go about our lives without a sense of community. We all need a group of people who live nearby and with whom we have things in common.

In Acts 2, Peter and the other believers shared meals and prayed together. Like Peter and the early Christians, we are to share what God is teaching us. That means sharing our hardships and our answered prayers. Through the local church, God has given us a way to connect with other believers, so we can love and encourage one another as we become more like Jesus. But just like our relationship with Jesus required a first step, relationships with other believers require a first step.

God is constantly working through groups to change lives and help people take next steps in their walks with Jesus. God helps us overcome sin in our life, and community is a great support system to help you overcome.

1) What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?

2) What are some things going on in your life that you need support from a Christian community? Are you willing to share those things? Why or why not?

Based on today's reading, what is one thing God is saying to you?

ACTS CHAPTER 3

Read Acts 3

Devotional

In Acts 3, Peter and John met a beggar who sat in close proximity to the temple at a gate called “Beautiful.” Everyone knew the beggar at the Beautiful Gate because he had begged there for many years. This man sat a few feet away from what should have been a house of healing, unable to enter because in this temple the sick and broken were unwelcome. This man watched for years as healthy temple-goers walked inside to worship and pray. The title “Beautiful” ironically describes this place because what happened there was not beautiful at all.

Where do you see yourself in this story? Perhaps you identify with the beggar—spiritually and emotionally broken. You’ve been stuck in the same place for weeks, months or maybe years. Others call your situation normal, reinforcing your cynicism. You know deep down that definitive change is needed, but how?

Or perhaps you identify with those walking by the beggar. You know something should be done, but what? What can just one person do? What can one church do? No matter where you find yourself in the story, know that hope is found in the name of Jesus. Through Him healing happens, religion evaporates, communities transform and lives completely change. Through Him, what is broken is made whole; what is ugly is made truly beautiful.

- 1) What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?
- 2) Are there any sins in your life that you have accepted as normal? What are they?
- 3) We see in verse 11 that the beggar held on to Peter and John as they stood by him. Who are some people in your life that you can hold on to in times of need, friends that will help you stand?

Based on today's reading, what is one thing God is saying to you?

ACTS CHAPTER 4

Read Acts 4

Devotional

Just months before the events in Acts 4, Peter and John denied any association with Jesus and fled into hiding. Now, in what seems to be a reckless disregard for their personal safety, we see Peter and John boldly speaking the name of Jesus and confronting those who ordered Jesus's crucifixion.

These uneducated fishermen stood confidently speaking truth to the religious, political and intellectually elite of their day. What they did seems to contradict who they were. This dramatic turnaround was noted by those who listened, "When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

For anyone feeling under-qualified, underprepared or in over their head, this chapter offers an abundance of hope. God will always do more through you than expected. It is not education, wealth, position or political influence that makes us competent or qualified to do great things for God. Rather, it is our time spent with Jesus that makes us ready for His purposes. Spend time connecting with Jesus every day instead of worrying about your level of preparedness for the task ahead. God will make you ready for all He wants to do through you as long as you seek Him!

- 1) What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?
- 2) What qualified Peter and John to stand before the Sanhedrin and present their case? What qualified them to preach to the crowd?
- 3) What does boldness look like in your life? How can you be bolder at work, school or home?

Based on today's reading, what is one thing God is saying to you?

ACTS CHAPTER 5

Read Acts 5

Devotional

The book of Acts is not for wimps. It's a direct challenge to our natural desire to play it safe. While some well-intentioned preachers say Christianity is about comfort and prosperity, the Bible paints a much different picture. Peter and John's trial before the Sanhedrin is just the beginning.

Members of the early church endured prison, beatings, exposure to death, stoning, shipwrecks, sleeplessness, hunger, thirst and nakedness as a result of proclaiming Jesus as Lord. Instead of quitting they rejoiced when they suffered for Jesus.

Most of us have never been flogged for our faith. We shouldn't feel guilty that we haven't endured that kind of persecution—rather, we should be challenged to stand up in our current circumstances. God placed us in this time and place so His name might be glorified now. Are we boldly carrying His name into every area of our lives or are we hiding behind apathy and comfort?

The reward of a life spent living boldly for Jesus far outweighs any temporary consequences we may endure. Who knows what the repercussions of sharing Jesus in your school, workplace or family will be. But we can be sure that whatever we face, Christ is with us. In any situation, we can boldly share the gospel.

- 1) What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?
- 2) Have you ever thought of persecution as a blessing or something you can rejoice about?
- 3) How is God challenging you to get out of your comfort zone today?

Based on today's reading, what is one thing God is saying to you?

ACTS CHAPTER 6

Read Acts 6

Devotional

Some people do well with change and some don't. What is the difference between those who can handle change and those who can't? It comes down to what we value. Some of us value our own ambition and self-preservation more than Jesus's mission. If personal comfort is our goal in life, we will fight against change. However, if Jesus is our ultimate treasure, change becomes an exciting opportunity.

In Acts 6, the apostles make a tough leadership decision that affected lots of people. Some people probably responded positively and others probably responded negatively. When change comes, we get to decide what kind of person we're going to be and what we value. Will we embrace change positively and allow growth to happen?

The apostles realized that without a drastic change, the gospel would not reach the world. Because the early church was willing to change, "a large number of priests became obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7).

Imagine what can happen in your walk with Jesus when you open your heart to change. Imagine what can happen in our church when we are willing to make the changes necessary to see more and more people hear the gospel of Jesus Christ.

- 1) What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?
- 2) Are there areas of your life where you are unwilling to change? Why?
- 3) Is God asking you to change anything in your life today? Anything you need to start doing or stop doing to take your next step of faith?

Based on today's reading, what is one thing God is saying to you?

ACTS CHAPTER 7

Read Acts 7

Devotional

Jesus said, “The thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy but I’ve come that you might have life and have it to the full” (John 10:10). How do we measure fullness? How do we know if we are experiencing the fullness Christ offers?

Stephen’s recorded ministry career consisted of delivering food to widows—the equivalent of a 1st century Meals-On-Wheels program—and a brief gospel message delivered to a group of stone-throwing religious types. In both ministries, Stephen gave everything he had to the task. He performed faithfully behind the scenes receiving the thanks of a few well-fed widows, and he performed just as faithfully on a more public platform when death seemed his likely end. No doubt Stephen was motivated by an empty tomb and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Stephen’s life was full despite its brevity. The measuring stick for fullness is not the length of our days, the number of our accomplishments or the frequency of our happiness. Stephen was boldly and faithfully obedient in every situation. He was all in. His life shows us that fullness is found in a life of Christ-centred purpose.

- 1) What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?
- 2) How does our culture measure success? What is the biblical definition of success?
- 3) How is God using you to accomplish His purposes? Is there anything distracting you from fulfilling God’s purpose in your life?

Based on today's reading, what is one thing God is saying to you?

ACTS CHAPTER 8

Read Acts 8

Devotional

Occasionally we encounter someone with incredible passion for the gospel, and we wonder what makes them different. We might think their passion results from the gift of evangelism or a powerful conversion story.

In reality, their enthusiasm stems from a deep understanding of what Jesus has done for them. This knowledge has transformed their behaviour. The believers in Acts were undergoing tremendous persecution. Their lives were threatened if they spoke of Jesus, yet “those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.” (Acts 8:4). Jesus is alive; He is the only way to God. Not even death could prevent them from sharing the gospel with the world.

To see the gospel spread and lives changed, we have to do more than pray. We have to go! In Acts 8, Philip was so passionate about the good news he ran alongside the Ethiopian’s chariot waiting for an opportunity to share the gospel. If you’re not running with the gospel, it’s time to re-evaluate what Jesus did for you. Our only reasonable response to all He’s done for us is to get moving!

- 1) What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?
- 2) How has the gospel changed you? How has it changed what you talk about?
- 3) Can a person know Jesus and not want to tell others about Him? Why or why not?

Based on today's reading, what is one thing God is saying to you?

ACTS CHAPTER 9

Read Acts 9

Devotional

Have you ever been to the top of Table Mountain or stood at the rim of the Grand Canyon? It's a powerful experience. The size of the canyon is almost more than you can fathom. It is difficult to even see the other side. The overwhelming feeling of standing on the rim can best be described as awe. There's no doubt the wide expanse between one side of the canyon and the other has been created by an incredible God. It is too big, too beautiful to have been made by man's effort.

The chasm between Saul and Jesus, seen in this chapter, is wider than the Grand Canyon. Saul's life was radically changed when he saw Jesus for who he really is. Everybody could see a difference.

Some people were excited and wanted to help Saul in any way they could. Some people wanted to kill him. The before and after in Saul's life was too big to miss. His life was dramatically affected by Jesus and that affected others. Nothing was the same for Saul and it never would be again.

- 1) What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?
- 2) Saul had been religious and kept rules well. He was an enemy of God before he met Jesus on the road to Damascus. Can we be good enough for God? Why or why not?
- 3) Maybe you didn't have a dramatic conversion experience like Saul. Think back on your decision to follow Jesus. What happened? How is your life different now than it was before you met Jesus?

Based on today's reading, what is one thing God is saying to you?

ACTS CHAPTER 10

Read Acts 10

Devotional

"I can't help it! That's just the way I am!" Have you ever used that excuse? It's so easy to use the way we were raised or the things we've been taught as excuses to hold on to the habits and attitudes God calls us to change. Peter would've understood. What God asked Peter to do went against everything Peter's family and culture believed. Jews didn't associate with "those" people—ever.

Verse 29 is such a startling response, "so when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection." Peter's attitudes and beliefs were passed down to him over many generations but Jesus's calling was bigger than any of that. Is that true for you? It doesn't matter if your past is filled with great memories or painful ones. You've inherited attitudes and habits that need to change. As the Bible shows you new ways to think and feel, how will you respond?

- 1) What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?
- 2) We are all works in progress. How has Jesus changed your perspective since you met Him? What is God changing in you now?
- 3) Many people struggle to accept that God loves all people and all races. Does your heart hold any prejudices that God wants you to overcome?

Based on today's reading, what is one thing God is saying to you?

ACTS CHAPTER 11

Read Acts 11

Devotional

The fact that God made salvation possible for people outside of Israel broke thousands of years of religious tradition. In this period, Jews would not even associate with non-Jews, who were called Gentiles. They were considered the low rung of society, cursed by God and unfit for interaction with a holy people. However, Jesus makes it clear He came to save the whole world, even those who at one time seemed unreachable.

The Jews had no reason to believe Gentiles were loved by God. But verse 23 says when Barnabas arrived in Antioch he saw people who had been changed by the grace of God. God was Active in Antioch long before Barnabas had even considered making the trip. God's saving power is not restricted by your sense of morality. God's résumé is full of converted murderers: Moses, David and Paul. By the way, we fit nicely on that list too, don't we? It was our sins that crucified Jesus.

Before we give up on others, remember that God didn't give up on us. "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Who do you know who seems too far gone? No one is too far for God to reach! It's time to reach out.

- 1) What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?
- 2) Is there anyone in your life who you believe to be too far from God? How can you reach out to that person this week?
- 3) Do you go out of your way to share the love of Jesus with those far from God? If not, what stops you?

Based on today's reading, what is one thing God is saying to you?

ACTS CHAPTER 12

Read Acts 12

Devotional

Chained to two soldiers and guarded by 14 others, Peter needed a rescuer. God rescued Peter from a hostile court and certain death by sending an angel to free Peter from his chains. The angel escorted Peter past the guards, and Peter walked out of prison unscathed.

Peter's escape was miraculous, but no more miraculous than God's work in our church today. Every day God offers people freedom through a group or a volunteer role. He storms prisons of loneliness, addiction, financial bondage, worthlessness and rejection. He sets people free with the love, fellowship, teaching and purpose-filled living.

Are you waiting for God to "beam you up" and out of your difficulties? Or are you willing, like Peter, to wake up, get up and follow God out of prison by taking your next step?

- 1) What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?
- 2) Write about a situation in your life where you need God to show up big. Ask Him to do just that.
- 3) Peter walked out of the prison unscathed, but it all started with his first step. What first step is God asking you to take today?

Based on today's reading, what is one thing God is saying to you?

ACTS CHAPTER 13

Read Acts 13

Devotional

In Acts 2, the early church movement starts with believers gathered in one room praying and seeking wisdom from God. A couple of chapters later, they gather for a prayer meeting and the room physically shakes with the power of God. In Acts 13, the Antioch church meets to pray and fast over their next step, and Barnabas and Saul are sent out on mission. The power of prayer is unmistakable in the life of the Church.

What are you praying for? Not the casual give-a-brief-thought-and-look-up kind of prayer. Not the “praying for you” post on Facebook but never follow through with. What are you desperate for? What are you asking for that without a miraculous move of God will never happen?

The good news is you don’t have to be perfect at prayer, just persistent.

- 1) What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?
- 2) Saul and Barnabas immediately responded with obedience when they knew what to do. Are you delaying obedience on something God has asked you to do? Why?
- 3) How did the persecution against the Church allow early Christians reach more people with the gospel?

Based on today's reading, what is one thing God is saying to you?

ACTS CHAPTER 14

Read Acts 14

Devotional

Do you ever feel that no matter what you say about God, people misunderstand you? Paul and Barnabas were misunderstood many times as they travelled and spoke about Jesus and salvation.

Some thought they were crazy. In synagogues, the Jews who refused to believe, “stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds” (Acts 14:2) and “the people of the city were divided” (Acts 14:4). Later in Lystra and Derbe, people thought Paul and Barnabas were gods because of the miracles they performed in Jesus’s name. God did amazing things and crowds of people still hated Paul and Barnabas.

God has not left us to face the world alone. Paul and Barnabas had each other’s back. When they returned from preaching, they came to the local church for encouragement and prayer. Don’t be afraid to live boldly even if others think you’re crazy. You’re not alone. We’re in this together.

- 1) What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?
- 2) Despite repeated threats, Paul and Barnabas continued to boldly and patiently share the gospel. Where did they get the strength to live boldly in the face of trouble?
- 3) Even after nearly being stoned to death, Paul got back up and went to Lystra and Derbe. What kind of adversity are you facing today? How can you be like Paul and boldly continue the mission God has given you?

Based on today's reading, what is one thing God is saying to you?

ACTS CHAPTER 15

Read Acts 15

Devotional

As the gospel spreads and grows in the early church, a diverse group emerged. What was once a small band of Jewish locals now included a large number of non-Jews or Gentiles. Differences in opinion caused friction among the church body. People hoped the church leaders would pick a side. But they didn't realize they were all working toward a common vision.

Our church must be on guard against division springing up from our different backgrounds, traditions and preferences. While we have many differences, our common denominator is salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone. Our mission to see the gospel spread throughout the world unites us!

Peter says in Acts 15:8 that the same Spirit lives in all of us; God has not made a distinction. Those in Christ are all under the love of God. We are the body and we each have a role to fill. Embracing our differences and focusing on our united mission will help us reach people faster. Let's be mindful that divisions in the church are cancerous to the body. We are one body.

- 1) What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?
- 2) What are the benefits of a diverse church? How can you help make our community the kind of church that welcomes those who are turning to God?
- 3) Jews and Gentiles were united by the recognition that they could not earn their salvation. The same is true for us today. Are you trying to earn God's approval through good works? Flip over to Hebrews 11:6. What pleases God?

Based on today's reading, what is one thing God is saying to you?

ACTS CHAPTER 16

Read Acts 16

Devotional

Finding people far from God was Paul's primary ambition. If you haven't picked up on it yet, Paul was obedient to this mission no matter the cost. Paul followed the Spirit's lead wherever he needed to go, even if that meant prison. After freeing a girl from an evil spirit, Paul is persecuted again. This time he was publicly humiliated in his own home country, flogged and imprisoned. Most of us would want to shout out, "Wait, I'm a citizen! What do you think you are doing?" And, in prison, I'm sure we wouldn't be singing hymns and praying— unless it was praying for a quick way out.

Through Paul and Silas's imprisonment, a whole family came to know the Lord as Saviour! Because Paul was obedient and faithful, he got to see God change hearts. Are we willing to get uncomfortable in order to see others come to know Christ?

- 1) What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?
- 2) Every one of us has experienced hardships in life. Think through some of the difficult times you have experienced. How have you seen God bring good things out of bad situations?
- 3) Are you willing to do whatever it takes to reach friends and family with the truth? What does that look like for you?

Based on today's reading, what is one thing God is saying to you?

ACTS CHAPTER 17

Read Acts 17

Devotional

Paul stood before a group and boldly proclaimed the truth.

How awesome is it that Paul's words exude confidence, not insecurity? Why was he able to speak with such authority? - Because Paul knew Jesus intimately. He had spent time studying God's word and committing it to memory. In Paul's speech, he quotes from the books of Isaiah and Deuteronomy. His confidence came from the knowledge of God's Word he had received through spending time in the Bible.

When Jesus changed Paul's heart, Paul experienced an extreme spiritual transformation. We grow in our relationships with the Lord by spending time with God each day, studying the scriptures and praying.

Maybe you've made a decision to follow Jesus, but you've never taken that next step of reading the Bible regularly and doing whatever it takes to get to know Him better. Acts 17:27 says God is not far from any of us. That is great news!

- 1) What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?
- 2) What about your life has changed since coming to know Jesus? How has time with God contributed to that change?
- 3) What is your next step in spending time with Jesus daily?

Based on today's reading, what is one thing God is saying to you?

ACTS CHAPTER 18

Read Acts 18

Devotional

Paul left Corinth, setting sail for Ephesus with these final words, "I will come back if it is God's will" (Acts 18:21).

That phrase—"if it is God's will"—punctures our hedge of comfort. Paul was sailing toward more persecution and suffering. Soon he willingly journeyed to Jerusalem knowing he would likely be arrested and put to death. Why? Because it was God's will, spoken to Paul, and there was no other decision but joyful obedience. How often do we make plans and purchases assuming that God is with us?

Do we really want to know God's will for our lives? What if it means discomfort or worse? What if God wants us to leave our city, province or even country? It is easy to make decisions based on personal comfort instead of purpose. You are created on purpose for a purpose. God has a plan for you. Are you ready to obey no matter the cost?

- 1) What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?
- 2) What next step is Jesus asking you to take today? Is there a big decision you have been praying over recently? Are you ready to obey?
- 3) Hardships never seem to slow Paul down. Do you think Paul's attitude is a result of positive thinking or something more? What helps us to move forward even when we're discouraged?

Based on today's reading, what is one thing God is saying to you?

ACTS CHAPTER 19

Read Acts 19

Devotional

In Ephesus, people had strong emotions about the silver statues of their goddess, Artemis. The silversmiths knew if people started believing in God instead of their man-made idols their income would suffer.

While silver statues may not be the objects of our affection, we have plenty of false gods of our own. One of our most prevalent gods is the unquenchable desire for more—more income, a bigger home or maybe just a cooler phone.

Solid biblical principles can help break the idolatry of more, bigger and better. Learning to steward our resources God's way can bring peace to our finances and break the hold of idolatry in our life.

- 1) What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?
- 2) What does it mean to value God more than material possessions and money? How does your budget and your priorities need to change to make God your most valued treasure?
- 3) Is it possible to be close to Jesus and talk about Jesus without ACTually knowing Jesus? What does this look like in the modern day Church?

Based on today's reading, what is one thing God is saying to you?

ACTS CHAPTER 20

Read Acts 20

Devotional

Sometimes we all feel like giving up. We make promises to do better, we pray more or try harder in hopes of finding our way out of the mud. When even our best efforts don't seem to work, God reminds us of the truth. He loves us and will never abandon us.

This is the message of Jesus: while we were still sinners, he came to save us. Nothing we do will ever separate us from the love of God.

Paul battled through tears, overwhelming opposition, loneliness and weariness, but he never gave up on his calling to follow Jesus. He did not attempt to do it alone. Throughout his ministry, Paul was surrounded by a community of believers. Some encouraged and helped him, others let him down, but he never gave up.

- 1) What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?
- 2) How does Paul's testimony in verses 18–35 encourage you to share your faith? Has discouragement kept you from telling someone else about Jesus?
- 3) Paul says in verse 24 that he counts his life as nothing, except to finish the mission God has given him. Can you say that? What calling has God put on your life? What can you do today to obey God's call?

Based on today's reading, what is one thing God is saying to you?

ACTS CHAPTER 21

Read Acts 21

Devotional

Paul didn't play around. He took his commitment to Christ seriously. So seriously, he insisted on walking boldly in obedience, even when facing prison and hardship. Despite the persistent warnings of other believers, he could not be deterred from what God had for him next.

Why was that? Because Paul had a personal encounter with Jesus that proved to him that God can be trusted.

God's foresight is perfect and His plans are always ripe with purpose. God's way is rarely easy because easy never results in a spiritual profit. If there ever was a definition of committed, it lives in verse 13, "...I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." Paul's resolve was well-guarded by his courageous faith. He did not entertain fear or self-interest.

- 1) What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?
- 2) In your gut, what is really holding you back from courageous faith and bold obedience like Paul's?
- 3) Has there ever been a time when influential people tried to dissuade you from doing what you felt God was directing you to do? If so, how did you decide what to do? How can you know what God wants you to do?

Based on today's reading, what is one thing God is saying to you?

ACTS CHAPTER 22

Read Acts 22

Devotional

There are few things more powerful and disarming than a story, particularly the story of how Jesus changed someone's life. Paul could have argued the finer points of the law with anyone in the crowd. He could have expounded on Christ's fulfillment of every nook and cranny of Old Testament prophecy. Instead, he shared his story of transformation with a vicious mob. A murderer of Christians became a preacher of the gospel—that's compelling stuff!

Every Christ follower has a story to tell. All of us have been rescued from a life of sin and disobedience, set free to follow Jesus. God does not call us to be articulate salesmen or well-educated theologians. He has equipped us better than that. God has given each of us a story of life change and the power of the gospel. Who are we sharing our stories with?

- 1) What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?
- 2) In Acts 22, Paul gives a great example of how to share your story. Have you ever told anyone how you met Jesus? Who can you prACTice sharing your story with today?
- 3) How do you feel when faith comes up in mixed company? Do you shy away from talking about Jesus with friends, family and co-workers?

Based on today's reading, what is one thing God is saying to you?

ACTS CHAPTER 23

Read Acts 23

Devotional

Paul shared his story before a violent crowd of people. Perhaps a few hearts were softened, and maybe even changed by his message. But mostly his message was greeted with resistance.

Paul could've been bitter about his circumstances. He could have been angry with God. Beaten, attacked, pulled on and almost torn to pieces, Paul was aware of the purpose behind his hardship. In verse 11, the Lord tells Paul, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome." (Acts 23:11)

Paul could have seen his circumstances as a series of bad days. But through each twist in Paul's trial, God made a way for Paul to share his story with as many people as possible. Paul pressed on to finish the race to which he was called. Comfort, safety and personal preference were not considerations. The good news was ever on his lips and the gentle encouragement of a compassionate Father in his ear saying, "Take courage!" Paul had eyes to see the Lord at work in his circumstances and ears to hear God's consistent reassurance of His certain faithfulness.

- 1) What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?
- 2) How do you see God wanting to use your current circumstances for spiritual benefit, whether it's your own or someone else's?
- 3) What hypocrisy does Paul call out in the high priest in verse 3? Why is it dangerous to say one thing yet do another?

Based on today's reading, what is one thing God is saying to you?

ACTS CHAPTER 24

Read Acts 24

Devotional

Convenience is not something we should expect from God. It may feel poorly timed, perhaps even prickly, sharp and uncomfortable. The paradox is this: God's Word is always perfectly timed—just by a different timepiece.

Any attempt to schedule growth—to wait until life isn't so busy, to wait until the children are older, to wait until God's commands feel less confrontational—will mean missing out on what God is doing now.

Felix, though "well acquainted with the Way," (Acts 24:22) missed out on a relationship with Jesus because God's truth felt like a spur in Felix's indulgences. He tried to take God in small doses. Felix sent for Paul frequently then dismissed Paul when he had enough.

It can be easy to slip into comfortable religion, consuming morsels of truth sporadically so as to dilute its impact. Growth and change require a daily diet of God's word—not appetisers of scripture served up on special occasions.

- 1) What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?
- 2) What do you think frightened Felix about Paul's message on righteousness, self-control and judgment to come (Verse 25)? How is it possible to hear truth and remain unchanged by it?
- 3) Is your commitment to growth and change more like Paul or Felix? How?

Based on today's reading, what is one thing God is saying to you?

ACTS CHAPTER 25

Read Acts 25

Devotional

South Africans are passionate about sport! During non-Covid times, this passion is on display every weekend in stadiums all over the country. Fans have no problem losing their minds in excitement for their team. They identify with their side and have a passion to see them succeed!

Passion is a powerful thing. When you are passionate about something, you have no issue in being bold to support it. Paul was passionate about spreading the Gospel, and his boldness goes on display in Acts 25.

Paul responds to Festus in verses 10-11 saying, "I am now standing before Caesar's court, where I ought to be tried. I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well. If however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!"

Notice the tone that Paul uses to end his statement. He is on trial and could be sentenced to death, but because he believes in his actions and his purpose, he speaks boldly. Paul's passion for spreading the message of Jesus made him passionate and willing to face even death. When we catch on to this kind of passion for the Gospel, we can gain a boldness that will change not only our communities, but a boldness that could spark a movement of God that will change the world!

- 1) What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?
- 2) How can you display passion for the Gospel of Jesus Christ in your life?
- 3) Who do you need to be bolder with, so your passion for Jesus shows?

Based on today's reading, what is one thing God is saying to you?

ACTS CHAPTER 26

Read Acts 26

Devotional

After finally receiving an opportunity to plead his case before King Agrippa, Paul instead chooses to share the story of his miraculous conversion to Christ. Why would he do that?

Jesus is the hero of Paul's story. His life focuses on the message of the cross, offensive to some and unbelievable to others. Through it all, Paul focuses on Jesus and the eternity Christ offers rather than the temporary consequences of this life. It is all about Jesus!

Paul's attitude and focus is most clearly revealed in Acts 26:29—"I pray that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains." Paul understands that light and momentary trials achieve an eternal glory far outweighing any hardship he faces. That's why, given this opportunity, he shared the gospel instead of begging for his life.

When given an opportunity, do you promote yourself or speak about Jesus? We are here to make Him known!

- 1) What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?
- 2) How do you react when people respond negatively to you? What can you learn from Paul's response to Festus and Agrippa?
- 3) Think back over your conversations and stories the past few weeks. Who is the focus of your attention and hero of your stories?

Based on today's reading, what is one thing God is saying to you?

ACTS CHAPTER 27

Read Acts 27

Devotional

Paul's journey to Rome was frustrating. Transferring from ship to ship, he was hauled across international waters, chained as a prisoner at the mercy of poor decision makers.

Although Paul warned the captain that pressing forward would be disastrous, the captain listened to other advice and the ship crashed, splintering into pieces. If everyone on the ship had perished but Paul, he would have been a free man. Instead, Paul accepted his role as prisoner and instructed everyone how to survive after the storm. Instead of bitterness, Paul saved lives.

How many of us can say we would have responded the same way? Paul valued the salvation of others more than his own comfort. Do you value others' salvation more than your own comfort?

- 1) What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?
- 2) Have you ever listened to the wrong people and made a wrong decision you regretted? How has God been faithful to you in spite of that decision?
- 3) How has God proven trustworthy in your life? Are you more concerned with others or your own preservation?

Based on today's reading, what is one thing God is saying to you?

ACTS CHAPTER 28

Read Acts 28

Devotional

Acts 28:31 is an incredible epitaph to Paul's life and ministry: "Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 28:31)

Paul faithfully completed all God called him to do. He faced difficult and challenging times in his life, but he never gave up and never let his circumstances deter him from serving his Saviour. God accomplished His purpose in Paul's life because Paul said "yes" to God.

Will you surrender to God's purpose for your life even before you know what God will ask of you? Make this commitment to the Lord: "God, whenever you say 'move,' I'll move. Wherever you say 'go,' I'll go. Whatever you say 'do,' I'll do."

The story of God changing the world through the church doesn't stop in Acts 28. His work continues today through passionate people like yourself who surrender everything to God and say with confidence, "Yes, count me in!"

- 1) What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?
- 2) What desires has God put in you? What is your next step to be faithful to what God has asked you to do?
- 3) What do you want people to write about your life one day? Would people say, like Luke did of Paul, that you were focused on Jesus?

Based on today's reading, what is one thing God is saying to you?