



THE BOOK OF ACTS  
DEVOTIONAL



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## Intro to Daily 20

Northplace is so excited for what God is going to do in the life of our church as we study what He did in the life of the early church. Before you is a devotional written by the staff of Northplace. For the next 28 days we present you with a devotional from each chapter of the book of Acts.

We have laid each day out to coincide with the Daily 20. If you are not familiar with this concept, it is taking 20 minutes of each day and spending it focused on God.

Every day for the next 28 days you will be encouraged to spend five minutes in each of these four areas:

**Worship.** We have a suggested worship song that goes along with the devotion for the day (look it up before you start your Daily 20 time). If you do not have the ability to listen to it read the lyrics. If you cannot find the song, just spend the time focusing on God, quieting the distractions and cares of life and preparing yourself for what God is going to speak to you.

**Bible Reading.** We have an easy format of reading one chapter of the book of Acts each day. After reading the chapter, the Northplace staff has selected a smaller passage to examine more closely. This is followed by a short explanation of the passage and a way to apply it to your life.

**Prayer.** During this time spend five minutes praying and asking God how to apply what you read to your life. We have tried to give you some probing questions for you to focus on. Do not make prayer something difficult. Instead, just talk to God and listen to what He is saying.

**Listening.** During these five minutes write down what God is saying to you and your response to what He is speaking. Many of us do not put into practice what God is saying because we do not remember it. That is why we encourage you to journal what you hear from God and what your response is. That way you can go back to it and be reminded of how God has spoken to you.

Again, we are excited for you to join us as Northplace Church Durban journeys through the book of Acts.

Northplace Staff

## Acts 1: A Promise For All Believers

**Worship (5 minutes):** As you think about God's faithfulness in your life, begin to worship Him for who He is. Look up the lyrics or listen to the song "Faithful to the End" by Bethel.

**Bible Reading (5 minutes):** Read Acts chapter 1.

*"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." Acts 1:8*

As we read the book of Acts, we notice the prominence of the Holy Spirit in the life and work of the church. During Jesus' earthly ministry He encouraged His disciples to ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit which the Father would give to anyone who asks (Luke 11:13). In Acts, He once again emphatically instructs the disciples to wait for this gift, which is a promise from God. Jesus was returning to heaven and the disciples needed this gift to carry on the work entrusted to them. Jesus knew the importance of the Holy Spirit in the life of all his disciples for He himself was able to accomplish the will of His Father through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Children are quick to remind parents of the promises that are made to them. They hold their parents to it. Equally so, a child cannot wait to open a gift that they receive. There is an anticipation in its reveal as well as in its use. God has promised the gift of His Holy Spirit and the promises of God are true. As a Christian, your Heavenly Father wants to give you the power through the Holy Spirit to live an abundant life which is a witness of God's kingdom. Do you want to live a life full of the power of God? Do you want to be a powerful witness for Jesus?

**Prayer (5 minutes):** Ask the Holy Spirit to come upon you and to fill you according to the promise of God in Luke 11:13 and Acts 1:8. This is something that you must be asking God every day because we need His presence every day. Pray for others also to receive the





## Acts Chapter 2: Own Your Actions

**Worship (5 minutes):** As you think about God’s faithfulness in your life, begin to worship Him for who He is. Look up the lyrics or listen to the song “Where You Go I Go” by Jesus Culture.

**Bible Reading (5 minutes):** Read Acts chapter 2.

*“Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” Acts 2:38-39*

Acts 2 is one of the most significant chapters of the Bible because it describes the moment when the disciples received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. This infilling of God’s Spirit was a fulfillment of Jesus’ promise to never leave them. It also empowered the disciples to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus to a captive Jewish audience. As Peter spoke about Jesus being raised from the dead, these Jews had many questions. The most important question was “what must we do?” Peter responded that they needed to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. Here we see that God’s forgiveness is for every person as these men were from different cities and regions. God was not saving His forgiveness for a specific group of people but wanted to freely offer it to all who would receive it.

Ownership requires action. The Jews knew that in order to respond to Jesus, it required action on their part. When we start actively looking for ways to respond to Jesus in our life, it shows that we are maturing in our relationship with Him. Repentance is humbling ourselves before God and showing that we need Him as our Savior. God responds by forgiving us of our sins. Be bold like Peter to proclaim to everyone around you the good news of what Jesus has done. But also, be humble like the Jews to take ownership of your



## Acts 3: God Works With What You Have

**Worship (5 minutes):** We worship God with what we have. Even in our brokenness we can come to God in worship. God accepts worship that comes from a heart that is authentic. Look up the lyrics or listen to the song “I Give Myself Away” by William McDowell.

**Bible Reading (5 minutes):** Read Acts chapter 3.

*“Then Peter said, ‘Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.’ Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk...he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God...” Acts 3:6-8*

The story of the healing of the crippled man is a beautiful one that demonstrates faith, willingness, and testimony. Peter and John were en-route to the temple to pray and encountered a crippled man at the gate. The disciples were focused on prayer and this encounter was an activation of their faith. Although they did not have the physical means to bless the cripple, they had something far greater. The result not only presented itself in worship and glory to God, but a witness of the power of God.

There is a song by William McDowell that says, “I give myself away...so that you can use me.” Sometimes we think we have nothing to contribute to the Kingdom of God. We often think of giving in terms of monetary value. We must use the new life and His abiding presence and power in us to be a blessing to others. Use what God has given us to reach out to others through encouragement, prayer, and support. Like Peter and John, it requires us to put our faith into action. It requires us to believe who we are in Christ, what He has entrusted us with, and to action that which He has given us to extend His kingdom. In the end, all glory must be His.

**Prayer (5 minutes):** Pray for someone whom God impresses upon your heart. It may be someone who has physical, spiritual or emotional struggles. Ask God to show you how you can help that person.

**Listening (5 minutes):** What responses do you feel God is leading you to, regarding the above need? Act on it and you will see how God works through you and in others as you respond to the need.

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## Acts 4: The Holy Spirit Gives Us Boldness

**Worship (5 minutes):** As you think about God's faithfulness in your life, begin to worship Him for who He is. Look up the lyrics or listen to the song "Set a Fire" by United Pursuit.

**Bible Reading (5 minutes):** Read Acts chapter 4.

*"Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness." Acts 4:29*

The religious leaders and elders were not happy that Peter and John were preaching about resurrection power. They wanted the message of the gospel to be silenced, so they threatened the disciples, telling them not to teach in the name of Jesus. When Peter and John relayed their experience to the other believers, everyone realized that this journey wouldn't be easy. Herod, Pilate, Gentiles, and Jews were united against Jesus. If people tried to stop Jesus, would they not also try to stop his followers? The early believers recognized they needed God's help and began to pray. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and set out to proclaim the gospel with boldness.

Just like the early believers, we can anticipate opposition to the Good News in our lives. Preaching and teaching in the name of Jesus is not only the job of the pastor. It is all our responsibility to share the truth of God's word with everyone around us. Not everyone will listen or take our side, but that doesn't mean the message shouldn't be shared. The Holy Spirit is the one who gives us the boldness to speak truth despite our circumstances. Is it hard for you to talk about Jesus? Do you lack the boldness it takes to speak up when it's not easy? The Holy Spirit is with you and wants to empower you to proclaim the word of God.

**Prayer (5 Mins):** Ask the Holy Spirit to give you boldness when it comes to sharing the gospel.



## Acts 5: Our Motivation

**Worship (5 minutes):** As you think about God's faithfulness in your life, begin to worship Him for who He is. Look up the lyrics or listen to the song "First Love" by ALM UK.

**Bible Reading (5 minutes):** Read Acts chapter 5.

*"The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade. No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed." Acts 5:12-16*

At the close of chapter 4 we see the early church praying together for there to be signs and wonders. Their purpose behind this prayer wasn't simply for notoriety and fame for themselves but rather to make Jesus Christ known. The Lord continued to add to their number those who were believing in Jesus Christ as the Messiah, God's Son. We can see from reading all of chapter 5 that the early church had purity of motives. Observe the desires of Ananias and Sapphira in the beginning of the chapter. Their motive of self-gain led to deceit which resulted in judgement. This is why we see in our passage that some people "dared not join them." Nevertheless, the church continued to experience growth.

As Christians, we should strive to keep our motivation the same as the early church: to love Jesus Christ and make him known. Does Jesus Christ have the space in your life today to make his name known? He may choose to do that through using you in supernatural ways. He may choose to simply use your character traits of honesty

and integrity in your workplace. However He desires, let's make ourselves available to Him today. As we do, we too will see "more and more men and women believed in the Lord and added to the number."

**Prayer (5 minutes):** Pray for the motivation of your heart to be that Jesus Christ is known. Pray for opportunities today to share Him with others around you.

**Listening (5 minutes):** Journal your response to this passage and what the Holy Spirit is saying.

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## Acts 6: We Are Part of One Body

**Worship (5 minutes):** As you think about God's faithfulness in your life, begin to worship Him for who He is. Look up the lyrics or listen to the song "Tremble" by Amanda Cook/ Bethel Worship.

**Bible Reading (5 minutes):** Read Acts chapter 6.

*"In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word. This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also, Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith." Acts 6:1-7*

The Church and the number of disciples was growing every day. During this time of growth, the widows were being overlooked in getting their daily food. In Acts 4 we see that the believers were sharing all their possessions. They were sharing, providing, and loving each other with not only spiritual teachings but also with practical possessions.

The early church was a diverse body made of people from many different backgrounds. With the quick growth the early church was experiencing and the diverse background of believers it didn't take long for issues to be arising. To solve this problem the twelve disciples came together and gave specific roles. Some would teach

the word of God and some would wait on tables. They came together and chose seven Holy Spirit filled men to wait on the tables.

Our specific verse of the day follows after that. "So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith." Acts 6:7

As we see in the text the Holy Spirit is at the center of everything. He fits the church body together (1 Corinthians 12:12-30) where each member has a role. Like a human body, the church is to be united, to love each other with excellence and holistically. As the church we have different roles, and if we embrace our roles and our gifts, we can better love the world. Notice in this passage that serving the widow is just as vital a role as speaking the word of God. When we fulfill the specific role that the Holy Spirit has for us it gives freedom for Him to use us to advance the work of the church.

**Prayer (5 minutes):** Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what role you have in the body of Christ. Where are you serving in the church and the world and how does that make you feel?

**Listening (5 minutes):** Journal your response to this passage and what the Holy Spirit is saying.

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## Acts 7: A Greater Purpose

**Worship (5 minutes):** As you think about God’s faithfulness in your life, begin to worship Him for who He is. Look up the lyrics or listen to the song “Bigger Than” by For All Seasons.

**Read (5 minutes):** Read Acts chapter 7.

*“You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him—you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it.” Acts 7:51-53*

If you’re looking for a quick summary of God’s relationship with his people, this is it. Stephen is being confronted by the Sanhedrin on the validity of his claims that Jesus is the Messiah. His response is pretty amazing. Basically, Stephen lays out the entire history of God’s people. Now every person who was listening knew this. They had heard these stories repeatedly their whole lives. They were probably a bit annoyed. I could see them rolling their eyes and tapping their feet waiting for Stephen to get to his point. When Stephen does get to his main idea, it’s a bit of a “mic drop” moment.

The Sanhedrin had a choice. They could take the rebuke and change, or they could do what God’s people have always done. They chose to harden their hearts and Stephen became the first martyr.

Stephen followed the voice of God. He was bold and didn’t hold back, but he was killed in the process. What Stephen understood was that God’s plan for his life was greater than his own. He saw the pattern of disobedience in God’s people and realized that every single time, God’s plan was better. In a moment where he could have saved himself with human wisdom, he chose to trust God instead.

And God gave him a great gift. Even as he was being killed, he was given a vision of God's glory that gave him the strength to stand strong, to remain faithful.

Stephen's life, and death, served God's greater purpose. If you pay attention, the story says that those who stoned Stephen layer their cloaks at the feet of Saul. Saul is better known as Paul, and he ended up becoming one of the greatest apostles of all time and is responsible for writing a large portion of the New Testament. Although some time passed before Saul turned to Christ, we can never know what seed was planted in his heart that day. Are you willing to be used by God, to be bold and to trust him even when your human wisdom tells you to do something else?

**Prayer (5 minutes):** Pray to have an increased trust in God and his plan. Pray for humility and peace in your heart with what God has called you to.

**Listening (5 minutes):** Journal your response to this passage and what the Holy Spirit is saying.

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## Acts 8: We Represent Christ in Our World

**Worship (5 minutes):** As you think about God's faithfulness in your life, begin to worship Him for who He is. Look up the lyrics or Listen to the song "For the Cause of Christ" by Kari Jobe.

**Bible Reading (5 minutes):** Read Acts chapter 8.

*"Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said."* Acts 8:4-7

The early church was in the mist of what we would call revival today. People were being saved and the church was growing exponentially. The Holy Spirit was moving supernaturally and there were healings and other miracles being poured out on a regular basis.

Yesterday in chapter 7 we read that Stephen was stoned and now in the first few verses of chapter 8 we see that the persecution of the church has increased. While in the natural we would think the church would go into hiding and that the revival would begin to end. Instead what we see is God uses the scattering of the people to preach the gospel in more places. In our passage today we are told that Philip went to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Gospel message there.

As believers we are commissioned to be Christ's witnesses (Matthew 28:19-20) wherever we go and in whatever circumstance that we are in. It doesn't mean when we feel like it or when we think we know enough. How do you allow the Holy Spirit to lead you and use you as Christ's witness? Are you willing to let Him? Take a few moments to let the Holy Spirit speak to you on this idea.

**Prayer (5 minutes):** Pray for the church, myself, and others to have boldness to proclaim Christ in all circumstances.

**Listening (5 minutes):** Journal your response to this passage and what the Holy Spirit is saying.

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## Acts 9: God Will Use Anyone

**Worship (5 minutes):** As you think about God's faithfulness in your life, begin to worship Him for who He is. Look up the lyrics or listen to the song "Shattered Things" by Christ for the Nations Worship.

Spend a few minutes in worship.

**Bible Reading (5 minutes):** Read Acts chapter 9.

*"At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. All those who heard him were astonished and asked, 'Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?' Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah."*

*Acts 9:20-22*

Saul had a reputation. He was violently against the spreading of the Way. People knew that he went from house to house dragging out men and women to throw in prison (8:3). He was determined to destroy the church. But God had other plans. It's a pretty dramatic story. Saul is blinded and must wait for three days before a stranger comes to pray for him. Then Saul listens to God and to Ananias and immediately changes his ways. After spending time with the disciples in Damascus, he starts preaching about Jesus. Wait. Wasn't he the one who wanted to throw Christians in prison? And now he's preaching? It's understandable that early believers were initially skeptical. Their biggest enemy had become their biggest advocate.

Bottom line: God can use anyone. It doesn't matter if you are a cheater, a liar, or a murderer. God can change the life of even the worst sinner! If you've sinned big time, God still has plans for you. Repent of your sin, be baptized, and get after it! God's power is not defined by what you've done. He takes those that others dismiss and uses them in ways we could never imagine. Maybe you need to do a

180° turn today. Maybe you need to remember that your past does not define your future. Are you ready to step into the plans God has for you?

**Prayer (5 minutes):** Take a moment to recognize the sin in your life. Allow God to wash you clean. Ask God how He wants to use you today.

**Listening (5 minutes):** Journal your response to this passage and what the Holy Spirit is saying.

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## Acts 10: Listening

**Worship (5 minutes):** As you think about God's faithfulness in your life, begin to worship Him for who He is. Look up the lyrics or listen to the song "Word of God Speak" by Mercy Me. Spend a few minutes in worship.

**Bible Reading (5 minutes):** Read Acts chapter 10.

*"Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven." Acts 10:13-16*

Peter was a Jewish man who had followed the Mosaic Law his whole life. Peter has this vision which goes against his commitment as a Jew, which was to never eat anything except kosher foods. His vision told him that it was now acceptable to do so. Peter's response is interesting, "Surely not, Lord!" For Peter, his religious tradition took precedent over the voice of the Lord!

While that is happening, Cornelius, a man who feared God but was a Gentile (not of Jewish decent) also has a vision and an angel tells him to go and find Peter and bring him to his house.

Peter wondered what the vision meant. As he was pondering it, messengers from the house of Cornelius come to find Simon Peter. Peter goes with them in obedience to the voice of the Holy Spirit. As a result of his obedience, Peter shares the good news of Jesus Christ with the entire household of Cornelius and they are all saved!

God may choose many ways to speak to us. In this chapter alone we see God speaking through an angel, we see Peter having a vision and a voice speaking to him, as well as the Holy Spirit speaking to him. God has chosen his written word, the Bible, to be the primary way



## Acts 11: Invest in Others

**Worship (5 minutes):** As you think about God's faithfulness in your life, begin to worship Him for who He is. Look up the lyrics or listen to the song "Simple Conversation" by Jon Thurlow. Spend a few minutes in worship.

**Bible Reading (5 minutes):** Read Acts chapter 11.

*"...and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So, for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." Acts 11:26*

Barnabas was a peacemaker. In fact, his name means encourager. He was sent to see what God was doing in Antioch as a pivotal moment had just occurred: Gentiles had been baptized in the Holy Spirit. God confirmed that forgiveness and His Spirit were for everyone. Barnabas knew that the newly converted Saul (who would later be renamed Paul) was called of God to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. He went looking for him and brought him to Antioch to see the great things happening there. He mentored and encouraged Saul for an entire year as they were teaching people because he saw the calling on Saul's life. This helped form the foundation of Saul's ministry as he became one of the most influential apostles to ever walk this earth.

Mentorship is vital in the lives of young believers. The act of a more mature Christian coming alongside a younger Christian, investing in them and teaching them on what it means to be a follower of Christ, is a process that is unfortunately becoming rarer. Mature believers are to be like Barnabas and seek out younger believers for the sole purpose of investing in their lives to develop the calling and gifts of that young believer. Mentorship requires a lot of time as well as emotional and physical strength but is something that reaps a harvest greater than we could ever anticipate.



## Acts 12: Honor's Reward

**Worship (5 minutes):** As you think about God's faithfulness in your life, begin to worship Him for who He is. Look up the lyrics or listen to the song "All the Poor and Powerless" by All Sons & Daughters.

**Read (5 minutes):** Read Acts chapter 12.

*"Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were hoping would happen." Acts 12:11*

*"Immediately, because he did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died." Acts 12:23*

When you first read through this chapter, the stories of Peter and Herod can seem a bit disconnected, but they're actually two sides of the same coin. Peter was defeated. He was in the lowest position he could possibly be in, about to be made a public spectacle. But both he and the church chose to trust God and because of that, Peter was rescued. Here's the most important part though: Peter *immediately* gave credit to God.

Herod's story ends a little differently. Herod has it all. The Jewish people are happy with him. Other nations are coming to him and begging for peace because they are completely dependent on him. They praise him and call him a God. He's probably feeling pretty good about himself.

God honors those who honor him. When we understand that everything we have is because of God, He is able to work in our lives, to use us for His will and to elevate us to places we otherwise would never have been. We see it all throughout the Bible. Joseph was elevated to Pharaoh's right hand. Daniel had a voice of influence in

the court of Nebuchadnezzar. On the other hand, we can make ourselves feel as secure and powerful as we want, but we are not God. God has the power to bring down the strongest person. But He also has the power to raise up and use the forgotten, the broken, and the insignificant. Nothing is too big for God. He has an important purpose for each, and every person and He can use any situation to bring Him glory.

**Prayer (5 minutes):** Pray that God would show you how to use the trials you have gone through or are currently going through to bring Him Glory. Spend some time thanking Him for everything He's done in your life and all that He's given to you.

**Listening (5 minutes):** Journal your response to this passage and what the Holy Spirit is saying.

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## Acts 13: Set Apart For a Reason

**Worship (5 minutes):** As you think about God's faithfulness in your life, begin to worship Him for who He is. Look up the lyrics or listen to the song "Never Going Back" by David and Nicole Binion.

**Bible Reading (5 minutes):** Read Acts chapter 13.

*"While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So, after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off." Acts 13:2-3*

It is interesting that in this passage Barnabas and Saul were just going about their normal activities. And during what would seem to be a normal gathering of the church in Antioch God spoke to the group to set apart Barnabas and Saul and to send them out. The church prayed for them and obeyed.

I have had the opportunity to have this happen to me. Our family served as missionaries in Tanzania for three years. While our term was drawing to a close, we felt lead to come to Durban and help plant what is now Northplace Church. I was at a meeting with the national church and had the opportunity to share with them what we felt God was calling us to do. The leaders of the church gathered around me and prayed for us and for Northplace. They then blessed us and sent us out to move to South Africa.

Because of the obedience of the church in Antioch, Barnabas and Paul the mission of the church (the Great Commission) was carried throughout the known world. Northplace's obedience to what God has called us to, as well as your obedience to what God has called you to as a believer should have an impact on your family, city and our world.

**Prayer (5 minutes):** Ask God what role He has for you. What areas has He called you to impact?





## Acts 14: Glory to God

**Worship (5 minutes):** As you think about God's faithfulness in your life, begin to worship Him for who He is. Look up the lyrics or listen to the song "Not in a Hurry" by United Pursuit. Spend the remaining time in worship.

**Bible reading:** Read Acts chapter 14.

*"Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead. But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe. They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch." Acts 14:19-21*

In this chapter Paul and Barnabas are growing in popularity and influence. They are going to cities like Lystra and Derbe and performing miracles. Jesus is using them to reach many people. However, they are facing much persecution because they are influential wherever they go. Their influence has grown so much that people are even trying to worship them! In the verses above we see that Jews are jealous and that they organize a riot and a stoning. They thought they had killed Paul. However, he got up and preached the next day!

Jesus gives us the power not only to perform miracles but to withstand any attack on us. Paul and Barnabas were tempted in many ways, but they stood in humbleness and continued to do what God had called them to even when things got hard. If people start boasting about you and not God, are you going to give God the glory? Our job is to do God's will and be secure in who He says we are. This security will carry us through even when we are beat physically, emotionally, and spiritually. The gospel not only changes an individual forever, but changes cities, countries, and the world! When people compliment you on doing a great thing how do you respond? In the very core of your soul how does it make you feel?

**Prayer (5 minutes):** Ask God to reveal to you if you have unholy pride. Take a few minutes and respond to what the Holy Spirit reveals to you.

**Journaling (5 minutes):** Journal your response to this passage and what you feel like God has spoken to you.

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## Acts 15: Grace Above the Law

**Worship (5 minutes):** As you think about God’s faithfulness in your life, begin to worship Him for who He is. Look up the lyrics or listen to the song “Mercy” by Amanda Cook.

**Bible Reading (5 minutes):** Read Acts chapter 15.

*“It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things. Farewell.” Acts 15:28,29*

The church at Antioch was multi-ethnic, Spirit-led, and mission focused. However, a group from the Jerusalem church came to Antioch and were advocating that the non-Jewish believers be circumcised according to Jewish custom in order to be saved. After much debate with this group, the church sent Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to sort out this matter that was creating dissension in the church. It was at this Jerusalem Council where Peter reminded the church of God’s acceptance of Gentiles without the requirement of Jewish law upon them. The result from this Council is the decision not to impose unnecessary rules upon the Gentile believers but the directive recorded in Acts 15: 28, 29.

Rules are important because they provide a framework for living within a society. Without rules there would be chaos. However, we must not allow our personal preferences and guidelines for living to be imposed on others. We must be guided by what the truth of Scripture teaches about our walk with God. Our relationship with Jesus begins with a conviction of who He is, acceptance of what He has done for us, and confession to make Him the Lord and Savior of our lives (Romans 10:9-10). In our relationship with Jesus, we surrender daily to His way that leads to holy living.

**Prayer (5 minutes):** As you pray, think about things that you thought were necessary to have a healthy walk with Jesus but were man-imposed rules and regulations. Any Number of Rules can't make us perfect. We grow into a deeper relationship with Jesus as we surrender daily to Him. Allow the Holy Spirit to help you in personal struggles instead of feeling judged and inadequate.

**Listening (5 minutes):** What is the Holy Spirit saying about what you see as imposed requirements to your relationship with Jesus?

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## Acts 16: Immediate Obedience

**Worship (5 minutes):** As you think about God's faithfulness in your life, begin to worship Him for who He is. Look up the lyrics or listen to the song "Everything and Nothing Less" by Jesus Culture. Spend a few minutes in worship.

**Bible Reading (5 minutes):** Read Acts chapter 16.

*"During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them."*  
Acts 16:9, 10

Paul and Silas were traveling and encouraging the church as it was growing daily in stature and in number. Paul wanted to go to the province of Asia; however, the Holy Spirit did not allow them to travel there. In the passage above we see that Paul had a vision of a man begging him to come to Macedonia and in the next breath Paul got ready and went.

In our lives we have plans. There are things we want to do and places we want to go. In this passage, Paul has a desire to go to Asia. We see the Holy Spirit, in a vision, direct Paul toward a place that was not his desire. Paul could have awakened, poured himself a large cup of coffee and proceeded to have a discussion with the Lord. He could have presented the pros and cons list, the financial burden of going a different way, as well as all the reasons why this was not the best idea. Sound familiar? Have you ever done this? Every day we have a choice to say, "Yes Father, Your will, Your way." We do not know what the outcome would have been if Paul would have been disobedient. The one thing we do know, is that in immediate obedience to the Father lives were touched and changed by the power of God.

I have personally lived this out where I have made the list, had the long discussion and missed out on what God was asking me to be a part of and the blessing of immediate obedience. I have also lived the obedience side where I stepped out and followed the promptings of the Holy Spirit and it was AMAZING!!! From sending a text to let someone know God put them on my heart and that I am praying, to buying groceries for a family, to just giving of my time to listen, God knows what they needed.

**Prayer (5 minutes):** Repent for those times you have not followed the leading of the Holy Spirit. Pray to be immediately obedient in all circumstances as well as for God to give you opportunities to follow His leading.

**Listening (5 minutes):** Journal your response to this passage and what the Holy Spirit is saying.

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## Acts 17: God Chose You

**Worship (5 minutes):** As you think about God's faithfulness in your life, begin to worship Him for who He is. Look up the lyrics or listen to the song "You Saved Me" by Ryan Ellis. Spend a few minutes in worship.

**Bible reading (5 minutes):** Read Acts chapter 17.

*"Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship — and this is what I am going to proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And He is not served by human hands, as if He needed anything. Rather, He Himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else." Acts 17:22-25*

Paul was speaking before philosophers in Athens. Athens was a city full of philosophy, wisdom, and art. Paul was preaching and they didn't understand the gospel. This is him explaining God's divine power, true wisdom, and who they should really worship. He makes the comment that God didn't need anything and gave His life for us! God is the incredible the maker of all the world and yet He still chose to die for us! Paul was sharing the Gospel and goes on to explain that this Gospel is for everyone on the planet!

Realize God died for you! Realize that the God of the universe chose you! Let this reality sit in your heart. As you experience this reality go and share with your friends the good news. Go and share to the hopeless that there is hope. Go share to the anxious that there is peace. Go love on someone who thought they were unlovable. This is what this Gospel demands of us.

**Prayer (5 minutes):** As you pray let the reality sink in that God, who created the heavens and the earth, chose to love you. Reflect on how this reality makes you feel and thank God for choosing you.

**Journal (5 minutes):** Take five minutes and journal about how God choosing you makes you feel. Listen to the Holy Spirit utter that thought to you and respond to it.

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## Acts 18: Where You Go

**Worship (5 minutes):** As you think about God’s faithfulness in your life, begin to worship Him for who He is. Look up the lyrics or listen to the song “No Doubting You” by River Valley Worship.

**Read (5 minutes):** Read Acts chapter 18.

*“Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.” Acts 18:9, 10*

Throughout this chapter, we see Paul travel to many places to preach the Gospel, but he isn’t always met with open arms. In the beginning of the chapter, Paul is in the city of Corinth in an area called Achaia. The Jews there don’t want to hear what he has to say. They rejected that Jesus was the Messiah. It seems like he is fighting a losing battle, but Paul doesn’t give up. He has a word from the Lord in Acts 18:9, 10.

Eventually, he does move on from Corinth, but again, he continues to speak the truth of the Gospel wherever he goes. Later in the chapter, Paul meets a man named Apollos who is well-educated and passionate about preaching the Gospel. Interestingly enough, he had been discipled and instructed on the scriptures and felt called to go to Achaia, the very place Paul had tried to speak to the Jews. It says in Acts 18:27-28, “When he arrived, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. For he vigorously refuted his Jewish opponents in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.”

Paul could have given up. He could have left Achaia defeated. But instead he trusted in the word from the Lord and continued to plant seeds that eventually grew into a harvest that Apollos was able to reap. God has a role for each of us to play. Sometimes we get to be the Apollos and see the fruit of the church’s labor. But sometimes

we are called to be the Paul. Sometimes we seem to be fighting a losing battle, to be getting nowhere. But God wants us to keep on speaking, to keep on planting seeds even if we never get to see the harvest. We can trust Him that He is working, that He has a plan, that His ways are higher than ours.

**Prayer (5 minutes):** Pray that God would show you what He has for you to do right now. Ask for wisdom and increased trust in His plan.

**Listening (5 minutes):** Journal your response to this passage and what the Holy Spirit is saying.

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## Acts Chapter 19: Being Rejected for Sharing the Gospel

**Worship (5 minutes):** As you think about God’s faithfulness in your life, begin to worship Him for who He is. Look up the lyrics or listen to the song “Oceans” by Hillsong.

**Bible Reading (minutes):** Read Acts chapter 19.

*“Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.” Acts 19:8-10*

Paul visited Ephesus on his third missionary journey. As he did with most cities, he began his ministry in the Synagogue, the place of worship for the Jews. He moved on from there to meeting in a lecture hall for two years. Paul had a very successful ministry in Ephesus and would later write the book of Ephesians to address the church that he had successfully planted. What if Paul would had left the region of Ephesus after his three months of trying to persuade those in the synagogue? Paul was faithful to preach the word of the Lord for two years.

No one likes to be rejected. Especially when it comes to sharing our faith in Jesus Christ. Yet Paul gives us a great example here of what to do when we attempt to be bold in our faith and we are rejected. Paul wasn’t just rejected nicely, the people became “obstinate, refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way (Christianity).”

How faithful are you to share your faith in Jesus Christ, even when you are rejected? Remember, our motive must always be for the glory of Jesus. He desires all people to come to salvation. Today, allow the Lord to use you. Keep loving the unlovable, persistently

Speak truth in love to those around you today even if it is rejected. It's all for His glory!

**Prayer (5 minutes):** Pray today for the ability to keep sharing your faith through actions and words. Pray for those that reject you today. Ask the Holy Spirit to draw them to the Father through faith in Jesus Christ.

**Listening (5 minutes):** Journal your response to this passage and what the Holy Spirit is saying.

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## Acts 20: Helping Those in Need

**Worship (5 minutes):** As you think about God's faithfulness in your life, begin to worship Him for who He is. Look up the lyrics or listen to the song "Go Light Your World" by Chris Rice.

**Bible Reading (5 minutes):** Read Acts chapter 20.

*"In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Acts 20:35*

In this passage, the apostle Paul is talking to the leaders of the church in Ephesus before he leaves to go to Jerusalem. Paul has worked very hard for three years to plant several churches in Ephesus and throughout Asia. In his farewell speech, he reminds them that he not only taught them to serve others but has **shown** them how to do it. Paul is exhorting them (and us) to walk the walk instead of just talk the talk because of their faith in God and their love for God.

We resemble Jesus when we joyfully serve the weak, poor and infirm. Our call to humbly love and serve others is radical. Our love for God gives us the motivation to love and serve people without concern for recognition or personal gain. This choice is radical because it is not worldly love. This kind of love expects nothing in return. We receive the joy of obedience when we choose to be like Christ and serve others with His unconditional love.

Helping people doesn't have to be complicated. Start small with those around you. For example:

- Visit shut-ins. Better yet, bring and share a meal with them.
- Offer to drive someone who doesn't have transport.
- Pay for someone's groceries while you are shopping.
- Offer to stay with someone who is sick or incapacitated, so that their caregiver can take a break.

- Look for opportunities to invite those who live alone for a meal or a holiday at your home.
- Remember, Jesus said that if you offer a cup of water to a thirsty person, you are offering it to Him. In other words, a little kindness matters to God!

**Prayer (5 minutes):** In your prayer time, ask God to pour His love into you so that you can extend His love to others. Ask God who it is you are to help today or this week. Remember: helping people includes praying for them!

**Listening (5 minutes):** Journal your response to this passage and what the Holy Spirit is saying.

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## Acts 21: Follow Your Convictions

**Worship (5 minutes):** God wants to speak to us every day. We need to take time to listen. He wants to lead us to life in Him. Worship Him who, being the creator of the universe, takes time to guide our steps. Look up the lyrics or listen to the song “So Will I” by Hillsong Worship.

**Bible Reading (5 minutes):** Read Acts chapter 21.

*“...‘For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.’ And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, ‘Let the will of the Lord be done.’”*  
Acts 21:13b-14

The Apostle Paul felt the conviction of the Holy Spirit to travel to Jerusalem after a final farewell to the church at Ephesus. This would mark the end of his third missionary journey. At Jerusalem he would face imprisonment and finally be sent to Rome as a prisoner. At Caesarea, there is a prophecy by Agabus regarding Paul’s imprisonment (Acts 21:10-11). Both Paul’s traveling companions and the believers at Caesarea urged Paul not to go to Jerusalem. Paul, however, affirms the prompting from the Lord to go to Jerusalem and no amount of persuasion would deter him from what he believed was a directive from the Lord (Acts 20:22-23).

There may have been times when you felt a deep conviction about something and did not follow through with it. As you look back you realize that if you did, things would have turned out differently. Often God speaks to you regarding a decision or action that you need to follow but because of other influences and doubt, you miss out on what God wants to do at a specific moment. When your convictions are aligned to God’s Word and the voice of the Spirit, then following them, contrary to what others may be saying, will lead to God’s will for that specific issue in your life.

**Prayer (5 minutes):** Pray that you will learn to hear God’s voice above everything else. By developing a deeper relationship with God daily, you will be able to know His heart. Pray for God’s peace to validate any decision you need to make in your life so that you will not question the convictions He impresses in your heart.

**Listening (5 minutes):** The Holy Spirit may be strongly influencing you in a specific area in your life. By listening to Him you will find the peace He is giving you in your decisions.

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## Acts 22: A Transformed Life

**Worship (5 minutes):** As you think about God's faithfulness in your life, begin to worship Him for who He is. Look up the lyrics or listen to the song *"Unstoppable God"* by Elevation Worship. Spend a few minutes in worship.

**Bible reading (5 minutes):** Read Acts chapter 22.

*"And when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.' Then the Lord said to me, 'Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'" Acts 22:20, 21*

Paul is sharing his testimony to a crowd after being arrested. By this time Paul has been beaten, gone to jail, and persecuted for the name of Jesus. Paul was there for the stoning of Stephen. Paul even mentions that he was a killer of people who followed the Way. Can you imagine how this must have haunted Paul? Yet God used Stephen's death as a part of Paul's testimony later on in ministry and even to show Paul that he would go and minister to the Gentiles. The Gentiles were the people Jews hated. God knew Paul was once so full of pride as a "zealous follower of the law." It's ironic that God used Paul to minister to the people he never thought were good enough for the true Gospel.

God has a plan and a purpose for us. He will use all our mistakes, and even our sin for His glory if we allow Him to transform our lives. Jesus died and took the keys from death so now you can live your life with freedom and without fear of death. If you allow God to use, you He will. Just like Paul you are called to love everyone on the planet. Everyone is now worthy of the true Gospel.

**Prayer (5 minutes):** Let the Holy Spirit speak to you and show you what areas of your life still need transformation. Ask God to show you how you can use these areas of weakness to share God's love with people.



## Acts 23: Comforted During Tough Times

**Worship (5 minutes):** As you think about God's faithfulness in your life, begin to worship Him for who He is. Look up the lyrics or listen to the song "Take Courage" by Bethel Music & Kristene DiMarco. Spend a few minutes in worship.

**Bible Reading (5 minutes):** Read Acts chapter 23.

*"The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, 'Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.'" Acts 23:11*

Just two chapters before this one, Paul is arrested in Jerusalem. In the previous chapter he gave his entire testimony to the religious leaders of the Jewish faith. In the next few chapters he will have the opportunity to give it to the government leaders of his day as he is on trial for being falsely accused by the Jewish leaders.

In the first part of Acts 23 Paul is punched in the mouth for speaking boldly and then is thrown back in jail. Verse 12 is where the Jews begin to plot to take Paul's life. But I want you to focus in on verse 11 today. Think of what it must feel like for Paul to be standing there in chains and being punched in the face for speaking the truth. How discouraging must that be? But it is during this dark time in Paul's story we see Jesus appear to him and comfort him.

It wasn't that long ago that I was sitting in the holding cell in O.R. Tambo Airport being sent back to the USA for having a fraudulent visa in my passport. I remember lying on that cot wondering if I would ever be able to return to South Africa, or even worse, what would happen to my family when they tried to fly home to the USA from Durban. As I laid there, I prayed to God this prayer: "Lord I am not sure what is going to happen. But God I trust you and know you have the best for us." After that prayer I felt the peace of God like I have never felt before.

In John chapter 14 Jesus prepared his disciples that He would be leaving soon. Even though He was leaving, He promised that He would send them the Holy Spirit and one of His roles would be to comfort the disciples. This promise was now being played out in Paul's life.

I am not sure everything that is going on in your life. But I do know God has given you the Holy Spirit to comfort you during this difficult time.

**Prayer (5 minutes):**

Take this time to be comforted by the Holy Spirit in your situation. Focus on the peace that He has for you, your family and your circumstances.

**Listening (5 minutes):**

Journal your response to this passage and what the Holy Spirit is saying.

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## Acts 24: Standing in Boldness

**Worship (5 minutes):** As you think about God’s faithfulness in your life, begin to worship Him for who He is. Look up the lyrics or listen to the song “Only Jesus” (Instrumental) by Brian & Jenn Johnson. Read Psalm 95 to inspire worship in your own words.

**Bible Reading (5 minutes):** Read Acts chapter 24.

*“However, I admit that I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, and I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.”*  
Acts 24:14-16

In chapter 23 they had tried to kill Paul but failed. In chapter 24 Paul is accused of some serious offenses by the Jewish leaders. They bring Paul to Caesarea, the Roman center of government, to be tried before Felix the Roman governor. Paul refutes each of the accusations made by the Jewish leaders. Paul’s accusers were not able to present specific evidence to support their accusations against him. Paul does admit to worshipping God as a follower of “the Way.”

Several days later Paul is able to talk with Felix again about his case. Paul took the opportunity to “speak about faith in Christ Jesus.” (v.24) Paul would never shy away from an opportunity to be bold about his faith in Jesus Christ.

It’s sometimes easy to shy away from being bold in our faith when we are challenged. Especially when those around us may come from different faith backgrounds. May we follow the example of Paul. He was bold enough in his faith that when he was asked by Felix, a non-Christian Roman governor about “the Way”, Paul talked with him



## Acts 25: Living With Integrity

**Worship (5 minutes):** As you think about God’s faithfulness in your life, begin to worship Him for who He is. Look up the lyrics or listen to the song “Before Your Eyes” by Jon Thurlow. Spend a few minutes in worship.

**Bible Reading (5 minutes):** Read Acts chapter 25.

*“Paul answered: “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! After Festus had conferred with his council, he declared: You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!” Acts 25:10-12*

Paul has been in prison in Caesarea for two years now. Festus replaces Felix as the new governor. The Jewish leaders in Jerusalem see the change in position as an opportunity to strike again. They try to manipulate Festus to transferring Paul to Jerusalem so they can kill him along the way. Festus holds a trial there in Caesarea, and the Jewish leaders throw accusations at Paul. When Paul makes his defense, he simply tells the truth. He didn’t do any of these things! The accusations are false, and the Jewish leaders can’t prove otherwise. Festus wants to grant a favor to the Jewish leaders but isn’t sure what to do. How can you punish a man who has done nothing wrong?

When we live our lives with integrity, humility, and transparency, we have nothing to hide. We are to be representatives of Christ in all that we do. No one is perfect, but because we love the Lord, we want to be more like Him every day. Let’s aim to live blameless lives. Then even when people dislike us, they won’t be able to find anything wrong.





## Acts 26: Our Testimony Matters

**Worship (5 minutes):** As you think about God’s faithfulness in your life, begin to worship Him for who He is. Look up the lyrics or listen to the song “Overcome” by Jeremy Camp. Spend a few minutes in worship.

**Bible Reading (5 minutes):** Read Acts chapter 26.

*“At this point Festus interrupted Paul’s defense. “You are out of your mind, Paul!” he shouted. “Your great learning is driving you insane.” “I am not insane, most excellent Festus,” Paul replied. “What I am saying is true and reasonable. The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.” Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?” Paul replied, “Short time or long—I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains.”” Acts 26:24-29*

Have you ever prayed for God to remove you from a difficult situation or that He would deliver you from a tough season of your life? It is a tempting prayer because our human nature doesn’t like it when things are problematic. But this was not a prayer that Paul prayed. Instead he prayed that God would use him as he was going through difficult times. And it was in those difficult situations that God used Paul the most. Here in chapter 26, while imprisoned, Paul has the opportunity to tell two kings about what God has done in his life and about Jesus being the Messiah. God brought favor and promotion to Paul because Paul saw what was possible in his problems instead of asking God to remove them.

Challenging times in our life are the perfect opportunities for us to declare the faithfulness of God. Don’t be so quick to ask God to remove your annoying friends, persecution in your family because

of your faith, or your overbearing boss. See these as opportunities to present what God has done in your life so that others may become what you are – a child of God, forgiven of sin, with hope in an eternal future with the God of the universe. Giving that same future to others is worth enduring any difficult situation.

**Prayer (5 minutes):** God, who have you put in my life that I can mentor? Help me to invest my life for the betterment of others.

**Listening (5 minutes):** Journal your response to this passage and what the Holy Spirit is saying.

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## Acts 27: Keeping Perspective

**Worship:** As you think about God's faithfulness in your life, begin to worship Him for who He is. Look up the lyrics or listen to the song "Even If" by Mercy Me. Spend a few minutes in worship.

**Bible Reading (5 minutes):** Read Acts chapter 27.

*"After they had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up before them and said, "Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss. But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me and said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.' So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me. Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island." Acts 27:21-26*

In Acts 27 Paul is in the process of being transferred from Jerusalem to Rome to stand trial before Caesar. They were in the midst of a huge storm and were starving. In Paul's very direct way of speaking he reminds everyone what his advice was.

Do you have anyone in your life that likes to remind you of your mistakes, and the times when you didn't listen to their advice? The good thing is Paul doesn't stop there (which is where most people like to stop). He goes on to encourage them that their lives will be spared. He knows this because once again God appears to him, this time by sending an angel. He is reminded again that God is sending Paul to stand before Caesar.

Paul took comfort in the fact that God had a plan for his life. Even during this time of lacking faith and preparing to be shipwrecked he knew God's plan for him.

Just like Paul you can take comfort in the fact God has a plan for you. God's first plan for your life is for you to have a relationship with Him. His secondary plan for your life is that you be His witness for Him no matter where you are and how difficult life might be.

**Prayer (5 minutes):** Think of a time God has been faithful to you. Now spend the next few minutes thanking Him for that faithfulness. Ask God to continue to remind you of those times throughout the day.

**Listening (5 minutes):** Spend a few moments journaling your response to what God is saying to you. Make a list of all the times God has proven to be faithful to you in your life.

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## Acts 28: What is the Cost?

**Worship (5 minutes):** As you think about God’s faithfulness in your life, begin to worship Him for who He is. Look up the lyrics or listen to the song *“Lead Me to the Cross”* by Hillsong UNITED. Spend a few minutes in worship.

**Bible Reading (5 minutes):** Read Acts chapter 28.

*“For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!” Acts 28:30-31*

In this passage, the apostle Paul is under house arrest for spreading the gospel. Yet, God continued to use him powerfully for two years as he obediently did the job God gave to him. God gives us the same command to boldly preach the gospel! Paul is in prison and facing execution. We know from the gospel account of his conversion that Paul was a wealthy and influential religious leader before he became a follower of Christ. We know that Paul gave up everything that used to be important to him to follow after the only One who really matters!

When we celebrate Good Friday and Easter, my family and I always watch the movie, *“The Passion of the Christ”* together. It is a painful and powerful reminder of the extreme suffering that Jesus endured for us. This always causes us to ask ourselves, is there anything that God has asked me to give up that even comes close to what He gave up for me? My dreams, my plans? God gave up His throne in heaven to come to the lowest and darkest place on the cross for us. It causes our sacrifices to pale in comparison. Jesus asks us for radical obedience because He chose radical obedience for us when He went to the cross for our sins.

I love the powerful illustration that helps us grasp this principle:

Picture yourself standing before God. He says to you, "*Give me your hands, child.*" You slowly raise your hands, but suddenly realize that they are full. When you look down at your hands, you see that they are full of many things including your own desires, hopes, dreams, worldly pleasures and comforts.

He gently says, "*My child, you must put those things down so I can give you what I want to give you.*"

What are you holding on to today that can be given to God to free your hands and prepare them to receive what He has for you?

The Bible tells us that God is a good Father who only gives good gifts to His children. Let us receive those good gifts without hesitation! Martyred missionary Jim Elliot put it so well when he said, "*He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.*"

**Prayer (5 minutes):** Pray and ask God, what is it that you are asking me to do? Ask God to give you the strength to obey. Ask God to take away any fear or lack of faith that might be holding you back from surrendering everything in your life to Him.

**Listening (5 minutes):** Journal your response to this passage and what the Holy Spirit is saying.

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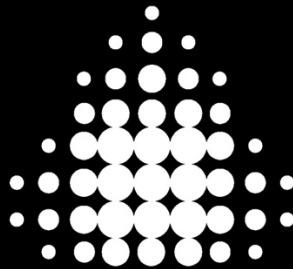
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# NORTHPLACE CHURCH

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