

MeadowBrook Church | March–April 2020

lifeGROUP

Life together for the Kingdom of God



ACTS



MeadowBrook CHURCH

MeadowBrook seeks to CONNECT people to Christ and His church, GROW them as disciples to be disciplers, and equip them to SERVE through missions, ministry, and worship, all to GLORIFY God.

Christ Centered | Community Driven | Kingdom Focused

ACTS

As we pick up in Acts, we are seeing the effects and outworkings of the door being opened for the gospel to spread throughout the Gentile world. It's a time of excitement, controversy, and opposition. The focus shifts from Peter to Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. Though Paul is the human focal point, the Spirit of the Lord still remains center-stage. He is leading the apostle every step of the way. The Spirit emboldens the church, protects the unity of the church, and mobilizes multiple gospel workers to participate in the multiplication of ministry throughout the Ancient world. The Spirit is not done working today. He is still leading, strengthening, protecting, and mobilizing disciples of Jesus Christ around the world.

The question is: *is he working in your life?*



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Special thanks to Taylor Hindsman, Mike Niemi, Devin Williams, Heather Clough, Kristi Nichols, and Chip Tucker for contributing to this curriculum in either their writing or editing.

If you are interested in writing or editing in the future, email hunter@mbchurch.com today.

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Spirit-Led

Acts 13:1-12 | March 01, 2020

Has there ever been a time when you had to lead a group or your family through a crowd in a city or an amusement park? Did your group follow you? What did it look like?

Read Acts 13:1-12 and then highlight what stands out to you, explain what the author is saying in context, and then apply it to your life.

Sons and daughters of God are led by the Spirit of God.

Acts 13 marks a significant transition in the book of Acts. The gospel has gone throughout Jerusalem. The gospel spread throughout Judea and all of Samaria. Peter made a disciple of Cornelius, a gentile, and unknown Hellenists made disciples of Gentiles in Antioch. Now it was time to multiply the gospel effort and begin taking the gospel to the ends of the earth (review Acts 1:8) (paraphrased from John Stott, Acts, 215). After at least a year of ministry and fellowship with the disciples at Antioch, the Spirit was leading Barnabas and Paul—children of God through faith in Jesus Christ—into new ministry with new people. Acts 13:1-12 describes what it looks like for us today to be led by the Spirit of God.

Cultural and Ethnic Diversity

“The cosmopolitan population of Antioch was reflected in the membership of its church and indeed in its leadership...” — John Stott

Our goal as a church should be to reflect the diversity of our community. However, we will never achieve the God-glorifying diversity in the church without pursuing, as one author put it, “diversity at the dinner table.” We must seek out those different than us in culture and race and minister to them the same gospel that saved us and can save them from their sins.

H: Highlight

E: Explain the Text

What do we learn about God?

What do we learn about ourselves?

What is the good news of this text?

A: Apply the Text

R: Respond to the Text

Additional Passages:

Rom. 8:9-14; Jn. 16:13-15

Eph. 4:11-14; Rev. 22:10-17

Spirit-led sons and daughters worship the Lord (13:2a).

Being led by five leaders in the church, the church was worshipping the Lord when the Spirit set apart Paul and Barnabas. Worship, or gladly ascribing to the Lord the glory due his name, is the foundational response of the disciple of Jesus Christ. The deliverance brought about through the gospel, the hope revealed in the Word of God, and the truth about the God we serve move us to worship him—both individually and corporately. The Spirit glorifies the Son, and leads the children of God to do the same.

Spirit-led sons and daughters fast and pray (13:2a, 3).

Fasting may be a neglected aspect of Spirit-led living. When Jesus was preparing for his public ministry, the Spirit led him into the wilderness for forty days to fast. And when it was time for the gospel to go to the nations, the Spirit led the church at Antioch to fast and pray.

Fasting is not a demonstration of strength and self-willed determination; fasting is an admission of need. Fasting reminds us that “man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.” And fasting never stands alone. Christian fasting is the “abstinence from food or other distractions for the sake of worship and prayer” (Stott, 217). In fasting, we are reminded of our desperate need for the Lord, so we pray, aided by the Spirit (Rom. 8:26), and the Spirit reminds us of the all-satisfying nature of our God and his Word, so we worship.

How can you incorporate fasting into your life?

Spirit-led sons and daughters rely on the Word of God.

Before the revelation of Christ was completed, God spoke through the apostles and the prophets (what we now have as the New Testament). During this time of seeking the Lord, the Spirit revealed to this church his will, and the church relied on what was the Word of God and responded to it with obedience.

Today, thanks to the work of the Holy Spirit through these prophets and apostles we have the whole counsel of God’s Word (John 16:13-15). The Spirit continues to work by gifting the church with pastors, teachers, and evangelists to proclaim the Word, equipping all the saints (all believers in Jesus Christ) for the work of ministry (Eph. 4:11-14), while also teaching individual believers as they read and study God’s Word.

Pause and Discuss

Spirit-led living involves both corporate and individual expressions of devotion. How is this text challenging you to grow in both areas? What action steps do you need to take this week to submit to the leadership of the Spirit?

Spirit-led sons and daughters are a part of the community of God and submit to one another.

Paul and Barnabas were sent out both by the church (the congregation gathered with its leaders; see Stott, 218 and Bock, Acts, 439) and the Spirit. Both were important, and they worked in tandem. Paul and Barnabas did not step out in a mission of rugged individualism; the church affirmed it was indeed the Spirit moving them in this direction. And the church did not have authoritarian power devoid of the Spirit; the Spirit called Paul and Barnabas and the church obeyed.

Disciples of Christ are not made to exist apart from the church. The individualistic, overly spiritual approach to life and ministry is not the picture seen in Acts 13. Paul and Barnabas were both submissive to the Spirit and to their brothers and sisters at Antioch. They recognized their need for both. We should as well. We need the community of God’s people at MeadowBrook

What ministry is the Lord calling you to at MeadowBrook?

www.mbchurch.com/ministries/local-missions/

Spirit-led sons and daughters perform the ministry God has called them to.

Paul and Barnabas had been a part of the church of Antioch for over a year when the Spirit called them. They had grown comfortable in the area and with the people, but when the call to different ministry came, they went and ministered, while those who stayed continued to use their giftings in the ministry the Spirit had called them to.

Every disciple of Christ has been gifted by the Holy Spirit and set apart for ministry.

Those who are Spirit-led recognize their gifts and use them in the service of the kingdom, often forfeiting comfort and routines. Life Groups are a wonderful place to live this out. Life Groups are where we minister to one another and seek to expand the influence of the kingdom of God. This comes, as it did at Antioch, through multiplication—sending out those to continue God’s work elsewhere. Yet, groups are often hesitant to move in this direction. They don’t want to forfeit the comfort-zone, but the Spirit-led recognize that the Lord is calling the group to more significant ministry and step forward in faith.

How can you begin to model a reliance on God’s Word, prayer, and worship in your home to your family?

Strategy for Family Worship: Start with the book of James. Pick a time to meet as a family (breakfast, after dinner, or before bed). Read one paragraph and say a couple sentences about it. Be vulnerable if you struggle with what the text says (and let’s be real it’s James... we all do!). Pray together for each other and friends or family. Sing the chorus “O Come let us Adore Him” and you’re done.

Pause and Discuss

Is it time for your group to multiply? Are there those with the gift of teaching not using it? Is your mindset self-focused or kingdom-focused? Is it time?

Elymus the Magician and Today

With the rise of social media, another philosophy has capitalized on its “meme” culture has risen with it—astrology and horoscopes. Elymas likely practiced something similar in his so-called ministry. Astrology is a refusal to look to God for purpose and meaning but to his creation and the stars. It’s idolatry, and it leads nowhere but to self-obsession and death.

Spirit-led sons and daughters stand for truth against false teachings.

In the last, section we see Paul full of the Spirit proclaiming the gospel and standing firm in truth against the false teacher. This was a Jewish false teacher. He probably said things that were at times true, yet he’d mix his worldly and demonic teachings in with them disguised as half-truths.

The enemy works the same way today. He uses popular teachings and music to slip in deceitful half-truths, that at times sound ok, but ultimately lead people away from the faith.

The Spirit-led stand for truth. They know that mostly true is not good enough. This discernment does not come through knowing the ins and outs of every bad theology out there, but knowing the Bible well enough in its context to be able to easily recognize when falsehoods are taught in sermons or sung in music.

RESPOND

Father,

Help us to be led by your Spirit. Give us a hunger for your Word, a love for the church, and a heart that overflows with Worship. May we be sensitive to your Spirit’s leading, and give us your wisdom to discern His will. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Fulfilled

Acts 13:13-52 | March 08, 2020

Why is studying the Old Testament intimidating?

Read Acts 13:13-52 and then highlight what stands out to you, explain what the author is saying in context, and then apply it to your life.

One of the oldest false teachings in the church was simply this: The Old Testament is not important. The Old Testament God was unjustly wrathful, vengeful, and cold. The New Testament God is the God of grace, love, and mercy. Marcion, the condemned heretic, actually went so far as to create a new “Bible” that ditched the Old Testament and cut out any references to the Old Testament in the New Testament. But Paul’s sermon at Antioch in Pisidia, however, paints a very different picture of the Old Testament. In fact, his gospel message does not make sense apart from the Old Testament—even his movement toward the Gentiles was a fulfillment of Old Testament Scripture. While no one at MeadowBrook would go as far as Marcion did, we still might feel the urge to shy away from the Old Testament. It may seem far-removed from our lives, hard to understand, and out of step with preconceived notions we might have about God. We cannot neglect the study of the Old Testament—the Old Testament speaks of our King!

Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament.

For the disciple of Jesus Christ to have a full understanding of the blessing of salvation offered them in Jesus Christ, he must understand the Old Testament and how it points to and is fulfilled in Jesus.

H: Highlight

E: Explain the Text

What do we learn about God?

What do we learn about ourselves?

What is the good news of this text?

A: Apply the Text

R: Respond to the Text

Additional Passages:

Matt. 5:17-20; Jn. 5:39-40

Rom. 8:29-30; Phil. 2:12-13

Fulfilled: *The Stories anticipate Jesus*

The Exodus. The Exodus narrative anticipates God raising up a Savior from his people to lead them out of the bondage of their sin into the promised land of eternal life in the New heavens and the New Earth.

The Judges. The judges anticipate a righteous judge who would fight on behalf of his people, executing justice and avenging his people who had suffered at the hands of the wicked.

King David. King David anticipates the true king, Jesus Christ, whose kingdom will be established in righteousness and peace and have no end.

John the Baptist. John the Baptist represents the last of the Old Testament prophets where God spoke to his people through intermediaries anticipating the day where he would speak through his Beloved Son, the prophet greater than Moses (Deut. 18) and John the Baptist.

Fulfilled: *The prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus' death and resurrection.*

Jesus was prophesied about numerous times in the Old Testament—many already fulfilled, some yet to be fulfilled. The Old Testament told of his rejection from his own people, yet also his innocence throughout his life. The Old testament prophesied that the messiah would be the Son of God. It prophesied of his death and the manner in which it was carried out by crucifixion (see Ps. 22). Lastly, it prophesied of his resurrection.

The gospel must be responded to. You can sinfully reject the gospel (13:45-46). You can foolishly delay your response (13:42). Or you can surrender with wholehearted faith (13:43, 48).

How have you responded?

What does this mean? It means that every aspect of Jesus' life was foretold and happened according to the divine will of God. Even in the midst of all of Satan's attacks and Judas' betrayal, nothing took God by surprise. Everything happened as a part of God's sovereign plan to redeem his people from their sin.

Fulfilled: *The promises are given through Jesus.*

The covenant requirements outlined to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and the Prophets are ultimately fulfilled by Christ, and thus the blessings of the covenants are freely given to Christ, who shares his blessings with all those who turn from their sins and believe in the gospel. For Old Testament saints, their faith was in a future Messiah. For us it is in the Messiah who has come and will come again. Through Jesus, we receive forgiveness of sins and cleansing by his blood. We are set free from the bondage from sin revealed by the law, so that now by the Spirit, we can walk in the newness of life given us through Christ's resurrection. Lastly, through Jesus, we are freed from the curse of death and judgment. The price has been paid, and all who believe in Jesus—turning from their sins and surrendering to him as Lord—will not perish but will enjoy eternal life with him as our God. Each of these promises are foretold in the Old Testament, but realized in part through faith in the New Testament, ultimately to be experienced in our resurrection at Christ's return.

Pause and Discuss

How does Paul's sermon change the way we approach the Old Testament?

How do the promises offered us through Christ change the way we live each day?

At Work

How does the gospel promises given through Jesus Christ change the way you approach your profession?

At Home

The Old Testament stories make for great family devotions. However, if we are not careful we could miss the point entirely, either strictly moralizing them or never showing them how Christ is foreshadowed. So, when reading stories from the Old Testament, help your children see how it ultimately points to and is fulfilled in Christ.

Apply: Read the story of David and Goliath talk about how it points toward Christ defeating sin on our behalf.

In salvation, God has his responsibility—to save and to keep. We have our responsibility—to respond in faith and to persevere in the grace of God.

Luke presents a tension that has caused much, and often unneeded conflict, between disciples of Jesus Christ—the sovereignty of God in salvation and the free responsibility of man. Luke doesn't neglect either one, nor does he explain one away to fit preconceived notions about God. Both God's

Every born-again member is an evangelist, called to make disciples. Which ministry at MeadowBrook can you plug into to aid in the disciple-making efforts of the church?

sovereignty and human responsibility are evident. Only those who were appointed to eternal life believed; however, at the same time, those who rejected the gospel freely thrust it aside, while those who believe freely accepted it. The point is this: God has his work in salvation, we have ours. Ours is simply to repent and believe the gospel (cf.

John 5:24; 6:29), responding in faith to the Spirit's call through the proclamation of the gospel—God's responsibility is to open eyes of those he appointed for eternal life. To diminish one—whichever one might be inclined to diminish—can lead to eternally dangerous practices & teachings.

The tension however is not only seen in the initial salvation experience, but even in the salvation experienced through sanctification. Those who believed received eternal life. Once someone possesses eternal life they cannot lose eternal life or they never had eternal life to begin with. Believers are securely kept by God, and the work he begins in believers, he will bring to completion. However, Paul urges these new disciples to continue in the grace of God. The Christian life is active; it is lived out through the empowerment of

the Spirit given through the grace of God, but God does not keep you apart from your perseverance. He works through it. Those whose actions exploit the doctrine of eternal security to continue living in sin reflect a heart that has not been set free by the gospel. Eternal security is meant to produce within us a confidence in Christ as we see his work manifested in our lives, not a false confidence in our sin.

Pause and Discuss

How does God's sovereignty give us confidence in our ministry, in our parenting, and in our work?

How do we let the work of God move us to greater holiness and ministry, not less?

Apply

- 1. Work hard to share the gospel with others, passionately praying for and pleading with others that they might be saved, leaving the results up to God.*
- 2. Actively seek to continue in the grace of God empowered by the Spirit, resting in the work of Christ and the eternal life he has given you.*
- 3. Rejoice in the gospel of Jesus Christ!*

RESPOND

Father,

Thank you for working throughout history for the salvation of your people revealed in Jesus Christ. Strengthen us by your Spirit that we might continue in your grace with your gospel on our lips and your joy in our hearts. Amen.

Persevere in Hope

Acts 14:1-28 | March 15, 2020

Has there ever been a time when the odds were stacked against you, and it looked like you weren't going to keep going, but somehow you managed to pull through and keep on going?

Read Acts 14:1-28 and then highlight what stands out to you, explain what the author is saying in context, and then apply it to your life.

Share the gospel wherever you go, regardless of the cost.

Just in the first 7 verses of Acts chapter 14, we read about Paul and Barnabas proclaiming the gospel in every city they travelled to. Regardless of their surroundings, they were intent on sharing the good news of the gospel with anyone who would listen. Sharing the gospel was of the utmost importance to Paul, that even after he was stoned and dragged outside of the city left for dead, he got up, went back into the city with the disciples, and travelled to several other cities proclaiming the same message that almost had just cost him his life on earth.

Paul & Barnabas vs. Herod

Acts 14:11-22	Acts 12:20-25
Humbled themselves by denying deity. (v11-13)	Accepted their worship as a god. (v22)
Gave God glory. (v14-15)	Gave God glory. (v14-15)
The people tried to kill them but failed. (v19-20)	God killed him. (v23)
God was glorified and the faith of believers was strengthened. (v21-22)	God was glorified and faith increased and multiplied. (v24)

We might have opportunity to respond exactly as Herod did, but any time we embrace pride, we act with the same heart as Herod, not Paul and Barnabas. *Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility... (1 Pet. 5:5a)*

H: Highlight

E: Explain the Text

What do we learn about God?

What do we learn about ourselves?

What is the good news of this text?

A: Apply the Text

R: Respond to the Text

Additional Passages:

Acts 12:20-25; Jn 15:20;
Phil. 1:21-26; 1 Pt. 5:5-11

May MeadowBrook be filled with people who love God and his message so much, that we cannot help but to share of the powerful work of the gospel that has radically changed our lives, knowing that it has the power to change others' lives in the same way. If we have experienced freedom from the bondage of sin, hope in our future glorious resurrection, and peace throughout life's most difficult days— isn't the most loving thing we can do for a person in need of those exact things is share with them Christ, who is our freedom, hope and peace?

We interact with lost people everyday— whether at work, with co-workers or clients, at school, at home, in your neighborhood, on airplanes, at restaurants, etc.

Imagine the genuine life change that could happen if we had Paul and Barnabas' mindset to share the gospel everywhere we went, no matter the social, financial, or physical cost we may suffer. Not only are people's eternity hanging in the balance, but we get to be a part of watching God's glory fill the earth one soul at a time.

Pause and Discuss

What fears that hold you back from sharing the gospel? Take time to pray over those fears and ask God for boldness to speak the Word of God to the lost.

What areas in your life has God given you opportunity to have gospel influence?

Share the gospel in a way your audience will understand.

When Paul and Barnabas realized that the Lystran people were sacrificing to them, they immediately tore their garments (an act done in Jewish culture when blasphemy occurred) and began to share the message of salvation in a way their audience would understand. Although Paul was not able to finish before the Lystran people began making sacrifices to them, it is important to note how he was prepared to share the gospel to people who were not Jews, therefore, had no knowledge of who God has revealed himself to be in his Word. "Nevertheless, although the substance of his message was invariable, he varied his approach and emphasis." (Stott, 232). In doing this, Paul worked hard to present the gospel so that they would repent and believe in the gospel.

Local Legend Explains Locals' Reaction

"The crowd's superstitious and even fanatical behavior is hard to comprehend, but some local background throws light on it. About fifty years previously the Latin poet Ovid had narrated in his Metamorphoses an ancient local legend. The supreme god Jupiter (Zeus to Greeks) and his son Mercury (Hermes) once visited the hill country of Phrygia, disguised as mortal men. In their incognito they sought hospitality but were rebuffed a thousand times. At last however, they were offered lodging in a tiny cottage... Here lived an elderly couple called Philemon and Baucis, who entertained them out of their poverty. Later the gods rewarded them but destroyed by flood the homes which would not take them in. It is reasonable to suppose both that the Lystran people knew this story about their neighborhood and that, if the gods were to revisit their district, they were anxious not to suffer the same fate as the inhospitable Phrygians."

— **John R. W. Stott, "The Message of Acts"**

Pause and Discuss

*How can we grow in sharing the gospel in a variety of ways? What are different techniques that your Life Group knows right now? How can the 3-Circles Gospel presentation be adapted to a variety of situations? ****Get Practical** Practice with one another.***

Sharing the gospel with people and meeting needs points others to the life and ministry of Christ. Meadowbrook's Open Hands ministry does exactly that. Families are counseled and given food and clothing and you can join in Christ's work throughout Gadsden in this way. **Email Elona Morgan at Elona.morgan@gmail.com to serve as a counselor, help distribute food and clothing, or both.**

The ability to faithfully persevere is empowered by the hope we have in the future glory that is to be revealed.

The thought of potential financial loss, social isolation, or blatant rejection can seem intimidating when focused on yourself and your current situation. However, like Paul says later in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, So we do not lose heart. Though our outward self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for

us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. No matter what the earthly cost is for our faithfulness to the Lord, our eternal reward will always be far greater. It is important to note that Paul was not acting recklessly. He was purposeful in the way he shared the gospel, so that as many people as possible would hear the reconciling message of Christ Jesus. It was his faithfulness - not foolishness – that led to his stoning, but it was his hope in future glory that empowered him to get back up.

A great way to disciple your children in sharing the gospel is practicing it with them and have them with you when you share it with others. A practical way of doing this is inviting lost neighbors over to your house for dinner and share the gospel with them across the table with the entire family with you.

- *Begin praying now for conversations you'll have in the future with the lost.*
- *Invite your family into the entire process, beginning with prayer, moving to the dinner invitation, and finally to the gospel presentation.*

Pause and Discuss

How does our future glorified resurrection give us hope for the difficulties of today? Open this time up for discussion, encouragement and prayer.

What are ways that you know your co-workers are struggling who needs the encouragement of eternal life with Jesus. Purpose this week to have a conversation with them that directly points them to the hope found in Christ Jesus.

- What is keeping you from engaging your co-workers with the gospel?
- Who can pray with you for those conversations, as well as hold you accountable?

RESPOND

Father,

You are the God of restoration. You restore what was broken in your creation and we know there is coming a day when the old will be completely wiped away and the new will come, and it will be there that your children will be glorified as Christ is glorified and will be able to live in perfect harmony with you forevermore. Forgive us for when we lose sight of that and allow the business of life and distractions of the world keep us from living life with a focused mission of making your name great. Strengthen us, by your Spirit, to share your life transforming gospel with those you have specifically placed around us. Embolden us, renew us according to your image, and grant us the joy of seeing people enter into your Kingdom. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Grace Alone

Acts 15:1-35 | March 22, 2020

Has there ever been a time in your life where you had to make a decision between two completely opposed paths? Was that a crucial time in your life and what were the effects of the decision?

Read Acts 15:1-35 and then highlight what stands out to you, explain what the author is saying in context, and then apply it to your life.

Is Salvation by Grace Alone?

After their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas returned to the church at Antioch to report how things had gone and how the Lord had worked among the Gentiles to bring them to salvation and establish churches. Some men had come from Judea and began to teach among the church members in Antioch that the Gentiles must be circumcised in order for their salvation to be effective in the eyes of God. Paul and Barnabas engaged them in serious argument and debate, but they came to no agreement. In effort to bring clarity to the confusion, the apostles and elders met in Jerusalem to determine the debate about this teaching, yet influenced by their old ways, they still struggled to come to conclusion. “

“The issue was immense. The way of salvation was at stake. The gospel was in dispute. The very foundations of the Christian faith were being undermined.” – John Stott

The question is not should those who are saved live righteously. Paul, Peter, and James each answer that question decisively (See Romans 6:1-14; 8:11-14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 4:1-11). Those who persist in unrepentant sin after a so-called “salvation experience” reveal they are still dead in their sins. The issue at hand is simply this: was Jesus’ work on our behalf enough? And the answer to that question is a resounding yes! “We have two things to offer God... our sin and our lives, nothing else.”—Randy Gunter.

Our works do not merit or earn salvation. Circumcision (or baptism or church attendance or Life Group involvement or helping the poor or any other work we do) does not make someone a disciple of Christ. We are saved by God’s grace through faith in Christ alone.

H: Highlight

E: Explain the Text

What do we learn about God?

What do we learn about ourselves?

What is the good news of this text?

A: Apply the Text

R: Respond to the Text

Additional Passages:

Eph. 2:1-10; Rom. 3:10-31

Isa. 64:6-7; 2 Tim. 2:1-13

Pause and Discuss

Why is the argument between these two parties such a serious matter? What is at stake?

Take some time as a Life Group to Review the Doctrine of Salvation

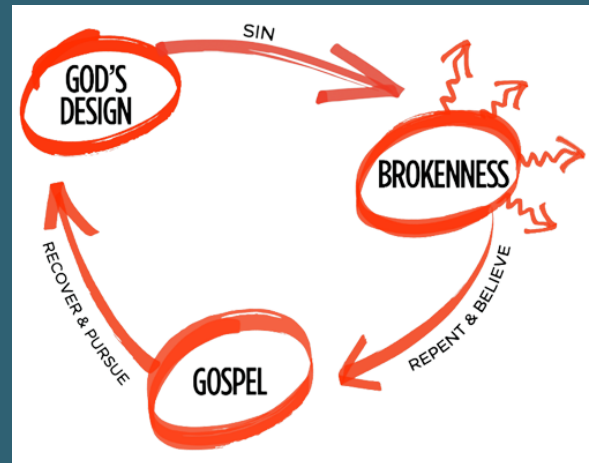
Salvation is an unmerited gift of God's grace toward mankind, and it involves the redemption of the whole man (body and soul/spirit). It is obtained through our turning from sin and turning in faith to Jesus Christ, putting our full trust in his completed work on the Cross and his resurrection. Salvation is not gained or secured by works, and there is no salvation apart from Jesus Christ. In its broadest sense, salvation includes...

Regeneration—made alive by the Spirit, “born again.”

Justification— being legally declared righteous by the Father on the basis of Jesus' work and righteousness on our behalf, his substitutionary death in our place, and his resurrection.

Sanctification— the lifelong process of being conformed into the image of Christ by the Spirit.

Glorification— the culmination of salvation and the blessed eternal state of the redeemed.



Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God.

Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Savior.

Salvation is by Grace Alone (Acts 15:6-21).

After the leaders debated the necessity of circumcision for salvation, Peter (supported in subsequent statements by both Paul and James) gave this convincing statement, putting to silence the disagreement:

⁷"Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. ⁸ And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, ⁹ and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? ¹¹ But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will." (Acts 15:7b-11 ESV)

Pause and Discuss

How does Peter's statement guide us today?

Discuss this quote attributed to Martin Luther: "We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone." What does it mean, and how is it demonstrated in the decisions made in Acts 15?

It is important to develop good biblical doctrine so that we might be able to lift up truth in the darkness, recognizing false teaching when we hear it, and humbly lead those around us in the truth. If you have never read the Baptist Faith and Message 2000, it takes 20 minutes and will help you formulate thoughts about the beliefs most central to our faith. <http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp>

Salvation by grace alone encourages and strengthens the church.

The whole church unified under this truth. The Spirit won out over the lies that were creeping into the church. In one accord, they wrote a letter to the new Gentile believers affirming their salvation by grace through faith in Jesus and encouraging them with some instructions in the Christian life in order to help them grow as disciples. The Gentile believers rejoiced and were greatly encouraged by the new. These new believers anchored themselves in the works of Christ, not in the filthy rags of our own works. As a result, the church was strengthened.

Pause and Discuss

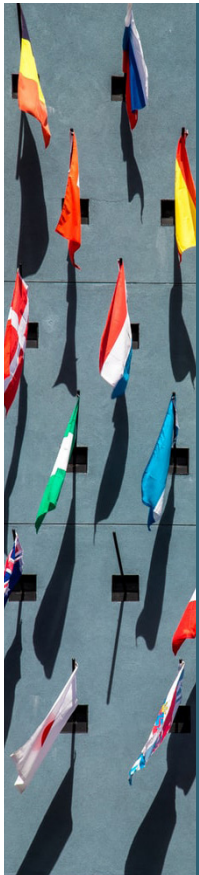
How do false teachings weaken the church?

How does the gospel message strengthen and encourage us in our daily lives?

RESPOND

Father,

We are grateful for the truth of the Gospel and the sure hope we of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus. May we live this truth and hope out well in our families, in our places of work, in our neighborhoods and as we are out in the community for the sake of your great name being known and worshiped in this place. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.



Go on Mission Together as a Life Group

Acts 15 was a turning point in the mission of the church to the Gentile nations. Christianity could not be mistaken for another sect of Judaism. The gospel was being unleashed to the world. Could it be possible for members of your Life Group to go on mission together? Maybe 3 or 4 together? Consider these partnerships:

Evangelism in Cuba	Partnering with a Local Church and a Doctor in the Middle East
The doors for the Gospel have opened in Cuba and opportunities for us to partner with the local Baptist Convention and churches in country are available. We have opportunities to come alongside the local churches there in order to help them evangelize their people.	The Middle East is home to many unreached people groups, and they need the transforming work of Jesus. Both our partners seek to be a light in a dark place, and we have a great opportunity to help them deliver the good news to those desperate for it.
Next Trip Date: September 2020	Next Trip Date: October 2020
Estimated Cost: \$1500 - \$1800	Estimated Trip Cost: \$1800 - \$2000

If you would like to be a part of the continuing mission of the church to bring the gospel to the ends of the earth, **email mike@mbchurch.com to get involved.**

For the Sake of the Gospel

Acts 15:36-16:10 | March 29th, 2020

What drives you to do what you do in your life and to make the choices you make?

Read Acts 15:36-16:10 and then highlight what stands out to you, explain what the author is saying in context, and then apply it to your life.

An unfortunate split, but a sovereign God.

Paul desired to revisit and strengthen some of the churches they had planted, but Paul and Barnabas disagreed about whether to bring or leave John Mark. This highlights the reality that those in the church still wrestle with the effects of brokenness of sin. Conflict still arises. Was Paul in the right, or was Barnabas in the right? We don't know. We do know, as in all disunity, sin is involved and it is not God's desire for his church. Yet even in the midst of this sinful disunity, God revealed his sovereignty over the enemy's plans.

Barnabas wanted to take John Mark, who had deserted them previously (Acts 13:13). Paul was concerned John Mark was not ready and would abandon them yet again. Instead of one missionary team, there were two (v. 39-41), and the churches were strengthened. Satan's attack did not stop the advancement of God's kingdom. However, as John Stott points out: "this example of God's providence may not be used as an excuse for Christian quarreling." Thankfully, later on, Paul and Barnabas reconciled and even John Mark became "valuable" to Paul in his ministry (2 Tim 4:11).

Redeeming Broken Relationships

As bad as the brokenness was in Paul and Barnabas's split, the brokenness felt by a child in the foster care system is worse. The good news about Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark is that through Christ, reconciliation and restoration was achieved. Through our church partnership with foster families, we can help bring gospel reconciliation to those who desperately need it.

In our ministry, we show and speak the gospel in the context of relationships. We build relationships with foster families throughout the year by conducting CPR training classes and monthly Parents' Night Out events.

Will you commit to living out the gospel with these families and kids? For more information, reach out to Andrea Simmons at asimmons1972@yahoo.com

H: Highlight

E: Explain the Text

What do we learn about God?

What do we learn about ourselves?

What is the good news of this text?

A: Apply the Text

R: Respond to the Text

Additional Passages:

Jn. 13:34-35; 1 Cor. 9:19-23;
Matt. 18:15-20, 22:37-40,
28:18-20

God desires for his church to dwell in unity. It is a sweet thing that encourages the brothers and sisters in Christ and moves the gospel forward. The gospel is what empowers us to look over differences. Sometimes the gospel forces us to divide, as it did with those who continued the circumcision false teaching (see Galatians). Most of the time, however, the gospel encourages us and moves us to live in unity with each other despite our differences, forgiving one another as God forgave us in Christ Jesus.

Pause and Discuss

Conflicts are inevitable in both our families and in the church. How does the gospel help us to overcome conflict and dwell in unity with one another?

Read Ephesians 4:17-32 & Matthew 18:15-20 to help frame the discussion.

Become all things to all people.

Paul returned back to Lystra and Derbe where he had been stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19-20). There he asked a young disciple named Timothy to join him in his travels and ministry. The local Jews knew Timothy was half-Jewish and had not been circumcised. Because of this Paul circumcised Timothy to remove a potential stumbling block that could have compromised their interaction with the Jewish Community. The end result was that the churches were strengthened.

Like Paul, we want to understand the culture in which we live, and minister effectively to those around us. The gospel is offensive enough and a stumbling block on its own. We do not want to add to it by being unnecessarily offensive or by being rude. This is particularly important in cross-cultural settings such as a mission trip or with international students. We engage others with the truth of the Gospel in their context, proclaiming the gospel with respect of the people in front of us.

If the Bible teaches that the aim of our lives as individuals is to know and make Christ known, it should be the same in our families. Paul and Timothy went to great lengths to enhance their witness among their audience.

How do we put this into practice in the home with our spouse and children—particularly when their interests do not align with our own?

How can we daily be practicing the presence of Christ with those with whom we are closest?

Pause and Discuss

Why did Paul fight so hard not to circumcise Titus, but encourage Timothy to be circumcised? What was the difference?

How can we engage the culture effectively with the message of the Gospel in our daily lives and how we live out our faith corporately as MeadowBrook?

If you want to make an impact for the Kingdom in your workplace, practice what Tim Keller calls the ministry of competence. Glorify God by doing your job excellently. If you are a teacher, find joy in teaching children with excellence. If you work in a plant, find joy in working hard during your shift. If you sell insurance, sell it unto the glory of God. Whatever you do, do it excellently. Laziness and shoddy work diminish your witness to the lost in your profession.

If there is someone you are seeking to evangelize at work, pray, share the gospel with him, and be the best worker you can be so that your work ethic does not become a stumbling block to someone receiving Christ in the gospel.

Walk in the will of God.

Paul and his companions knew the Lord had called them to preach the Gospel, start churches and disciple believers in unreached areas. This mission required them to go to these areas, some of which would deny their admittance. If they were in fact unable to enter they knew it was The Lords' will they go elsewhere. In a vision Paul saw a Macedonian man who was asking for his assistance. The missionaries saw this vision as a definitive call for them to go and preach there.

So, what if we don't get a vision? God's will for our life is not something we need mystically revealed to us. the Lord has revealed to us what His will is for our lives in His Word. This revelation is actually much more practical than mystical. He tells us plainly what He wants us to do with our lives; namely, to love Him (Matt 22:37-38), to love others (Matt 22:39-40), to love the Church (John 13:34-35), to make disciples (Matt 28:18-20), and to pursue holiness (1 Thess. 4:3-7. All believers/disciples are called to do these things in all areas of our lives! What we can learn from this story is to embrace both the closed and open doors in the path of obedience to God's Word as we live for the sake of the gospel.

Walking in the Will of God by His Word

In order to know the will of God, we must begin in His Word. We should deeply engage our Father in His Word daily, expecting to taught by the Spirit.

Don't read it to just to say you did, and don't rely solely on the teachings of men or commentary notes—as helpful and good as they may be. Feast on the Word of God for yourselves. Read it with a pencil in hand and a note pad nearby. Read the Word to know the God it reveals and his will for your life. Then live it out!

Be patient with yourself. This practice develops over time. The Lord will use his Word to be the lamp to your feet and the light to your path. (c.f. Psalm 119:105)

Pause and Discuss

How is God calling you to better live out his will for you? (Record below)

How are we helping others among our family, our friends, and co-workers to know and live out the Lord's will for their lives?

Life	Family	Work

RESPOND

Father,

As we go out from this place today, help us to know you more deeply and to be driven by a deep desire to make your great name known in this world. If there be any grievous way in us that is a stumbling block to others receiving Christ, reveal it to us and give us the strength to put it to death. May we live out every area of our lives for the sake of the Gospel. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

God's Great Power

Acts 16:11-40 | April 5th, 2020

When has someone displayed great compassion toward you? How did it encourage you or change your circumstance?

Read Acts 16:11-40 and then highlight what stands out to you, explain what the author is saying in context, and then apply it to your life.

God alone saves.

How amazing is it that the Lord allows us to join him in the salvation process? He works through broken, yet renewed creation to redeem other people still broken in their sins. May we never lose our wonder at this truth. In verse 14 we read that The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. This is a perfect example of how obedience and God's saving power go hand in hand, all empowered by God's grace. In one hand you see God's grace being extended to Paul as He empowers him, through the Holy Spirit, to speak the word of God and the message of salvation. On the other hand, you see God's grace demonstrated to Lydia in the way He powerfully opens her heart to hear the message of salvation so she may respond to it in faith. After Lydia and her household repented and believed in the gospel, she invited Paul and company to her home so she and her family might be disciplined in truth.

God empowered Paul to obey; God opened Lydia's heart to the gospel. God sovereignly worked in both of their lives, and Lydia was saved from her sins and given a desire to grow as a new disciple of Jesus Christ. God gets the glory. God established His first church in Europe: the Philippian church.

H: Highlight

E: Explain the Text

What do we learn about God?

What do we learn about ourselves?

What is the good news of this text?

A: Apply the Text

R: Respond to the Text

Additional Passages:

1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Pt. 1:3-9;

Rom. 10:9-13; Jn. 6:29-48

Believe

When the Jailer asked Paul and Silas, "What must I do to be saved?", their response was "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved".

Believing in Jesus...

1. Admits that I cannot save myself due to my sinful nature.
2. Trusts that Jesus' sacrifice was fully sufficient to cover all of my sin.
3. Submits to Jesus as Lord. In Philippi, the emperor cult was massive. Caesar was Lord. The jailer, while in the service of Caesar, came under his new master through faith in the good news of Christ.

Believing in Jesus is never entirely passive, but it moves us to love God and others with our life.

People notice how you respond to life's circumstances.

As Paul and company were on their way to a place of prayer, they were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. After some time of her shouting as she followed them around town, Paul cast out the demon from within her. Her owners were furious when they realized their hope of gain was gone. The owners then brought Paul and Silas before the magistrates, distorting the truth so they would be beaten and thrown into prison.

Despite the bleakness and unpleasantness of prison, Paul and Silas did not respond in complaint, desperation, or hopelessness. They responded by praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them (v25). Do not skip over that – the other prisoners heard Paul and Silas' response to their difficult circumstance. People watch us as we experience the joys and hardships of life. Will we respond with the hope we have in Christ? Will we pray and sing hymns to God in our darkest days? May we cling to our hope of salvation, the presence of Almighty God with us, the promise of restoration, and glorification in the life to come.

Unity in the Gospel

It would be hard to imagine a more disparate group than the business woman, the slave girl and the jailor. Racially, socially, and psychologically they were worlds apart. Yet all three were changed by the same gospel and were welcomed into the same church... It is wonderful to observe in Philippi both the universal appeal of the gospel—that it could reach such a wide diversity of people—and its unifying effect—that it could bind them together in God's family.

Of course the gospel divides a community, because some reject it, but it unifies those who accept it and are led by the Spirit. We sometimes experience tensions—the Philippians did—nevertheless, in Christ, we all belong to the one fellowship of Christ. As we live in an era of social disintegration, we need to exhibit the unifying power of the gospel.

Pause and Discuss

How does the gospel bring joy and hope during our most difficult and trying days? Share an example from your life of how the Lord was faithful throughout it all.

People see the way you work. They see your work ethic, your integrity, and your compassion for others.

- Does the way you do business glorify and honor the name of Jesus, or does your business reflect the magistrates—abusing those made in the image of God to turn a profit?
- How do you respond in stressful or undesired situations? Is your demeanor that of Paul and Silas'?

When difficult times come, and we know they do come – how are we modeling trust in the Lord? Our kids, neighbors, and other family members listen to and see our responses to trials we face. Welcome others in to see how faith in God's sovereignty and trust in His goodness gives us hope and peace amidst the worst of circumstances.

- What are ways you can model Acts 16:25 to your family?
- How can you invite others into your life—the ups and the downs—to disciple them?

Salvation leads to displaying the compassion of Christ to others.

After the miraculous earthquake that unlocked all the prison doors and unfastened the prisoner's shackles, the jailor saw what happened and assumed the prisoners had escaped. Knowing the punishment that awaited him, he attempted to take his own life. Paul shouted and explained that everyone remained where they were. The unexpected events coupled with seeing the genuine faith of Paul and Silas during their stay in prison overwhelmed the jailor to the point he longed to have the hope they had. After repenting and believing in the gospel his heart was immediately transformed. He cared for Paul and Silas' wounds, gave the food, and rejoiced in his faith in God.

Paul and Silas displayed the compassion of Christ in their actions toward the jailor, while the jailor displayed the compassion of Christ to Paul and Silas, rejoicing as he met the needs of his brothers. Today, we should model the same compassion to those outside the faith, and especially to the brothers and sisters at MeadowBrook. We are to weep with those who weep, rejoice with those who rejoice, serve one another, forgive one another, and bear one another's burdens. We are to love one another.

Pause and Discuss

Are you modeling the compassion of Christ in your life?

What keeps you from displaying the compassion of Christ to others, especially those in the household of faith?

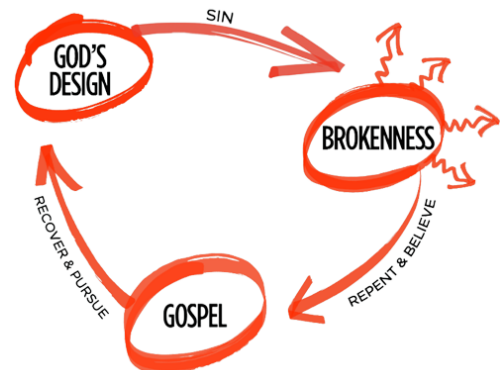
Repent and ask that God would sanctify you in showing compassion to others.

The Philippian church began with someone sharing the gospel, another responding in faith, and still another developing a group of young believers.

A way to implement this in a similar way would be to be a part of launching a new Life Group. Whether you have a gift in teaching, hospitality, evangelism, or compassion, you can be a part of expanding the Kingdom of God through multiplying a Life Group. Contact Hunter Hindsman at hunter@mbchurch.com to discuss what it might look like to join in the multiplication efforts at MeadowBrook.

Paul and Silas were ready to share the gospel and their reason for faith. Are you equipped to share the gospel and the reason for your faith with others?

- What are ways that you're equipping yourself to share the gospel?
- Who will you share the gospel with this week?



RESPOND

Father,

Thank you for the grace that you have shown me by opening my rebellious heart and allowing me to hear the truth of the gospel. You are my rescuer, you give me hope throughout my darkest hours, and you have given me a heart of compassion toward others. Forgive me when I have been more focused on my circumstance than on your glory. God help me to see ways you are working and to suffer as you did. Thank you for the hope we have in Jesus, amen.

Responding to Jesus

Acts 17:1-34 | April 19th, 2020

What is an important choice you've had to make recently? How did you come to your conclusion?

Read Acts 17:1-34 and then highlight what stands out to you, explain what the author is saying in context, and then apply it to your life.

Who is your King?

Full of encouragement from the newfound church at Philippi, Paul and Silas continue on in their missionary journey, accompanied by young Timothy. When they arrived in Thessalonica, Paul immediately began preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, reasoning with them using the Old Testament Scriptures. God blessed their efforts and some Jews and many Gentiles repented and believed the good news. However, just as the Pharisees were envious of Christ, the Jews at Thessalonica seethed in jealousy. Just as the Pharisees did with Christ, these Thessalonians violently and maliciously opposed Paul and Silas. But the text reveals the real issue: they actually were opposed to Jesus.

In effect, Jesus – the King of the Jews – is neither recognized nor embraced by His people overall in Thessalonica, but He is received by the Gentiles there who do embrace Him as Lord. In the end, the jealous

Fear of rejection keeps many from sharing the gospel, but we must not be surprised at rejection, for Jesus said it would be this way. They need the Spirit to open their eyes for “the natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Cor. 2:14) Thus, we should not be shocked when we are misheard, misrepresented, misjudged, and rejected by the world, and we should be fervently praying for the Spirit to open people's eyes to the truth.

Jews and those who embraced Jesus as Lord represent the two types of people in this world—those who follow Jesus and those who don't. Which are you? Jesus never created two categories of believers. All his disciples, all Christians, all who are truly saved and possess eternal life in him, they are those who have embraced Jesus as Lord through faith. He is their master. He guides their life. He is their Lord. Have you embraced Jesus as Lord, denying yourself, taking up your cross, and following him? If not, will you today? He will change everything. Truly, he will turn your world upside down—and you'll never look back!

⁹ if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. (Romans 10:9-10 ESV)

H: Highlight

E: Explain the Text

What do we learn about God?

What do we learn about ourselves?

What is the good news of this text?

A: Apply the Text

R: Respond to the Text

Additional Passages:

Ps. 19; 1 Jn.4:1-6; 2 Tim. 3:16

Rev. 19:11-16, 1 Cor. 1:18-31

Study like a Berean!

Escaping in the night, Paul and his company move onto Berea. Still focused on their mission, even after the episode in Thessalonica, Paul and Silas go into another synagogue to preach the same gospel message. However, these people “were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men.” The Bereans have become famous for their faithful study of Scripture—what we know now as the Old Testament. As they pored over the scrolls from their synagogues, they tested Paul’s words according to the Word of God. Did everything match-up between the Old Testament Messiah and this Jesus? Did anything match up? Could it all be true? What would it mean, if it were true? For the Bereans, it changed their whole life. They embraced Jesus as Lord and submitted their lives to him and his Word.

God is sovereign even over the chaos and is working all things according to his purposes.

The chaos experienced in Thessalonica—chaos certainly marked by the devil himself—could not overcome God’s sovereign purposes. God was still in control, working even in the chaos to bring about his good purposes and expand his kingdom. The gospel trumpeted onward—even after they ran Paul and Silas out of Berea. no matter how furious they were, they could not stop Jesus from building His church, and those who still oppose Christ today are just as powerless. The best attacks of the enemy—even the full force of the gates of hell—are not powerful enough to overcome our Sovereign King, Jesus!

In the chaotic times and trials of life, in the persecution, in the pain, that is when we need to remind ourselves of this truth. Because in those times, we tend to only see the chaos, not the ways God is working. It is during these times that...

- We better learn of God’s comfort and how to rely on the grace of God, so we may grow more in our reflection of the image of Christ. (2 Cor. 1:3-9; Job 42:1-6)
- The gospel goes forth in ways otherwise unseen. (Acts 8)
- Eternal glory is being prepared for us. (2 Cor. 4:16-18)

What can we learn from the Bereans?

- **Test every teaching.** Anything Randy or Hunter or anyone else teaches—test it according to the Scriptures to see if it’s true.
- **Pursue the teaching of God’s Word.** The Bereans recognized the importance of listening to the instruction of God’s word, so they put themselves in positions to hear it taught. The congregational preaching of God’s word is God’s gift to the church. Through it he equips saints for the work of the ministry, sanctifies us, and teaches us through Spirit-equipped service.
- **Let the Bible determine your theology and worldview.** If we are to be good students of the Bible, we have to let it shape the way we approach life in the world and what we believe about God. We make a grave error when we bend the Scriptures to fit our lives rather than our lives to fit the Scriptures.
- **Receive the Scriptures with eagerness, daily.** The Word of God should excite us. We should love being in it, if not, don’t be discouraged. Eagerly pursue time in the Word each day. Over time a love for God’s Word will gradually begin to shine forth in your life like a morning sunrise. Sooner or later, your love will radiate like the noon sun on a clear, sunny day.

Pause and Discuss

*Are you engaging in Randy’s sermons, your Life Group lessons, and your daily time in God’s Word with the same eagerness as the Bereans did the preaching of Paul?
If not, why not and how can we grow in our intake of the Word of God?*

The wisdom of the world does not lead to salvation.

Athens was the hub for education and intellect. People would travel from all over to learn under the teaching that took place at the Areopagus (or Mars Hill), a group of scholars named after the hill they operated on who oversaw the teaching in the area (MacArthur). Luke mentions two philosophical schools: The Stoics and the Epicureans. Stoics were more spiritual and Epicureans were more materialistic,

but neither philosophy had power to save. All the intellect of the world cannot fix man's biggest problem—their sin and alienation from their Creator and Judge. Logic and reason are important in the evangelism process—Paul reasons with them from Creation—but the Spirit must make men aware of God's wrath and convict them of sin through the proclamation of the Word of God in the gospel message.

The same is true today. Philosophies and worldviews abound. The gospel message is still “folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18). If you think the gospel message or the Word of God is outdated and needs to adapt with the culture, you are just as foolish as the Athenians and have embraced the mindset of the world which ends in judgment, not life. You, then, have the responsibility to respond. You can scoff at the gospel, you can continue in captivity to the ever-evolving (and ever-contradictory) philosophies of the world, or you can repent and believe the gospel, surrendering to Christ as King and living out your days unto his glory.

Start in the Home!

The home is a great time to train your kids or grandkids to study the Bible with eagerness as the Bereans did and formulate a biblical worldview in this crazy time. It is both caught—learned by observation—and taught—learned through specific instruction. Both are necessary and help produce disciples who know how to handle the Word of God and correctly apply it to their lives.

What will it be for you? _____

Pause and Discuss

The man or woman of God stands on the firm foundation of the unchanging principles and doctrines of the Word of God—even in their work. Whether you are retired, a stay at home mom, or headlong into the workforce, does your “work” and life reflect a biblical worldview, founded in the truth of Scripture or the wisdom of the world?

RESPOND

Father,

we give ourselves to the diligent study of your Word, though we live in a world that does not understand or obey it. Help us to live each day surrendered to your Lordship and your Word. Thank you for giving to us the wisdom that comes from the Spirit, and we pray for those still held captive by the philosophies of this world. Lord, open their eyes to the truth. Amen

Making the Most of Freedom

Acts 18:1-23 | April 26th, 2020

How do we steward the religious freedom we currently possess in this country?

Read Acts 18:1-23 and then highlight what stands out to you, explain what the author is saying in context, and then apply it to your life.

As depraved as Athens was, Corinth was worse. John MacArthur notes that “even by the pagan standards of its own culture, Corinth became so morally corrupt that its very name became synonymous with debauchery and moral depravity.” In spite of the debauchery, the Lord uses Paul to establish a church even there! Despite the wickedness of the surrounding culture, God, in his sovereignty, blessed Paul with an extended season of peace so he might labor unhindered amongst a people that needed a worldview overhaul. Present-day America is not much different. Our culture is enslaved to the same sensual and depraved mind that leads to all sorts of debauchery. Pornography finds its way into most every household. Marriage is on the decline, while cohabitation and other perversions of sexuality are on the rise. Sensuality is displayed in the shows, movies, and advertisements our culture consumes daily, and unfortunately so do disciples of Christ. The drinks are stronger, drugs are rampant, and no one can question the ever-directing, yet ever-enslaving, desires of the flesh. America is Corinth. Like Corinth, however, Christians have been blessed with a freedom to live and minister unhindered by the government—a reality basically unheard of throughout church history and in many places still around the world. What should we do with this freedom?

Capitalize on the freedom we have in this country to teach the Word of God at work, at church, and in homes.

At Work...

After an early persecution of Jewish Christians in Rome (see Bock, Acts, 577), Aquila and Priscilla flee Rome and end up in Corinth, where Paul partners with them in their common trade of tent-making. In this working relationship, largely occurring behind the scenes, a deep bond was formed. Through Paul’s investment into them, Aquila and Priscilla became “fellow workers in Christ Jesus who risked their necks for my life [Paul speaking], to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well.” (Romans 16) Paul capitalized on his trade to disciple others.

We are disciple-makers in every aspect of life. Whether you are a teacher, a lineman, a police officer, a firefighter, a judge, a doctor, a Honda employee, a financial adviser, a vocational minister, retired, or a stay-at-home mom—you are to be a disciple-maker through your trade.

What would it look like for you to be a disciple-maker in your trade?

H: Highlight

E: Explain the Text

What do we learn about God?

What do we learn about ourselves?

What is the good news of this text?

A: Apply the Text

R: Respond to the Text

Additional Passages:

Col. 1:15-23, 3:18-4:1;

Deut. 6:1-15; 1 Pet. 4:7-19;

How does the power and sovereignty of the Christ in with us encourage us to not be afraid?

Tent-Making

“Tents were originally made from skins; only later were the skins replaced with goat’s hair...The smell of the work was so bad that the tanner had to work outside the town in the direction of the prevailing wind.” (R. Gower) Paul, the apostle of Jesus Christ, embraced smelly, wearisome, blue-collar work with joy, a determined work ethic, and humility!

Regardless of one’s profession, this should be an encouragement. We should never despise our work or be discouraged in it, rather we should find joy in doing our job well, viewing our labor, whatever it is, as God’s provision rather than God’s curse.

If the the predominant human author of the New Testament joyfully worked as a smelly tent-maker, how should our attitude toward work be?

At Church...

As Paul and company were on their way to a plaPaul made it his practice to teach God’s word in the synagogues—where Jews, proselytes, and God-fearers gathered to hear the word of God read and taught. Now synagogues are not churches, but God in his sovereignty, used them as seedbeds for planting churches throughout the entire ancient world. Today we gather to hear God’s word, to pray together, and to worship our Lord together in local churches like MeadowBrook.

Those with the gift of teaching, specifically, should seek out opportunities to teach God’s Word at MeadowBrook. Whether it be a Life Group with the Preschool, Children’s, Students, or Adults, a Breakout Group on Wednesday Nights, or as a substitute Life Group Leader, God gifts us with abilities so we might use them for the upbuilding of the church. To allow his gifts to lie dormant robs you of fulfillment in ministry, withholds encouragement from your family in Christ, and ultimately, is disobedient to the will of God for your life as revealed in Scripture.

However, even if you do not have the gift of teaching, you can still teach the word of God at church in your conversations. For in these personal conversations, where the struggles of daily life are being shared, there is great opportunity to point people back to the truth of God’s Word. Whatever the situation, whether it be grief, a diagnosis, a struggling marriage, a wayward child, discussions about life plans, or hopes, we can be used by God to teach one another the word of God in these gatherings.

Pause and Discuss

How can your Life Group develop this type of environment of teaching one another the Word of God each week and throughout the week in personal conversations?

Multiply Your Ministry

After a couple years of deep relational investment, partnering in ministry, and spiritual growth with each other, Paul multiplied his ministry and deployed Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus. And even though the Ephesians wanted Paul to stay, he knew his mission and continued onward strengthening the churches. The Kingdom of Christ triumphed over personal comfort.

- How are you multiplying your ministry into others?
- Are you cherishing personal comfort over the kingdom of Christ expanding?

In homes...

Lastly, Paul used the home as an opportunity to bring the gospel to the Gentiles living in Corinth. Leading both the Jewish leader of the synagogue and the Gentile God-fearer to faith in Christ.

Home to home evangelism has declined in our culture for a variety of reasons, but it can still be a means for sharing the gospel with those who we do not personally know, yet still need to hear the gospel. But where do we begin in this type of ministry? Let's start with a couple suggestions.

- **View your home as a base for ministry.** After his conversion, Titius opened his home to Paul, where he used it as a base to reach the synagogue ruler next door. God worked through that situation to bring the Crispus and his entire family to faith. So today, start by inviting the lost into your home and practice Christian hospitality for the purpose of evangelism.
- **Get to know your neighbors.** Because our culture has increasingly become more isolated from one another, we likely don't even know who lives two doors down from us. Intentionally make a point to get to know your neighborhood and see if there be any opportunity for evangelistic ministry.

Pause and Discuss

How can we as a Life Group be intentional in this endeavor of using our homes to advance the kingdom of Christ?

Christ reigns supreme over the temporary authorities of this world held captive by Satan.

Since the fall of mankind, there has been constant war, constant vying for positions of power and constant disagreement over which lineage, nation or empire (or ideology, for that matter) should possess the right to reign. But the Bible answers that question as to whom truly belongs on the throne, and the answer is unmistakable—it is Jesus Christ the King. But the breathtaking reality for the disciple of Christ is that he shares his authority with us and sits us on the throne with him. So, even though Aquila and Priscilla were driven out by Claudius as one sweeps away filth with a broom and while Sosthenes (another synagogue ruler converted to Christ) was beaten and viewed as insignificant by Gallio, we must remember that Claudius and Gallio's authority was only temporary and they will perish. Aquila and Sosthenes, along with all those in Christ, are the ones who will sit with Christ on His throne one day in his Kingdom (cf. Rev. 3:21-22)!

In the midst of the political craziness around the world and a major election coming up this fall, we must always remember that the authority of this world is temporary. Ultimately, all governments will align with the beast and his false prophet one day against the people of God, but Christ will destroy them all and establish his kingdom! So, our hope is not in an election, it's not in the Supreme Court, it's not in the House or the Senate, it's in Jesus Christ the King who will establish us in his kingdom.

RESPOND

Father,

what have we to fear, knowing that You are with us even to the end of the age? Through Your Son we are overcomers who cannot be conquered even by death. We truly have victory in Jesus! You are able to save even the worst of men. Spiritual darkness will permeate the whole world until the very end, but nevertheless the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. Lord, let your light shine through us. Amen.



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