

GROWTH + GROUPS

NAVIGATE LIFE TOGETHER

Maranatha Chapel Sermon Based Study Guide SB 09.12.2021

THE POWER OF TESTIMONY: ACTS 22:1-30

Receiving the Message and Relating to the Study

What insights, principles, or observations stood out to you from this week's message? Discuss with your group.

One of the most effective tools in your evangelistic toolbox is your personal story. It is often called your testimony. Everyone who has put his or her faith in Jesus Christ has a testimony. Your testimony probably sounds like the following: "I was in rebellion against God because of my sin", "I heard the gospel", "I believed in Jesus and turned from my sin", "He forgave all my sins and gave me peace and purpose in life", and "Now, instead of going to Hell, I am going to Heaven". Even if you were raised in the church and never went out and tasted all the things this world has to offer, that is still a testimony. Every testimony is valid because there is someone out there a lot like you. You don't have to be an expert in theology to do so. The apostle Paul was a brilliant orator and extremely knowledgeable about scripture; however, he often used his personal testimony when he spoke. This is exactly what Paul did when he gave a defense to the Jerusalem mob while in Roman custody. Let's get into our study...

1. Have volunteers share their personal testimony.
2. Why should you not be intimidated by the testimony of others?
3. What stood out to you during this week's study?

Digging Deeper in God's Word: Life Lessons

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ Acts 1:1-11

As soon as Paul spoke, the mob was silenced. Paul then opens his defense with his roots as a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia; his education at the feet of a well-known Jewish teacher, Gamaliel; and his instruction in Judaism. He gave special emphasis to his zeal as a Jew. He had persecuted the Christian faith, filling the prisons with those who believed in Jesus. He even received documents from the high priest authorizing him to bring Christians back from Damascus for punishment. On his way to Damascus, a great light from heaven shone around him. He was struck down and blinded by the light. He then he heard a voice, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" Upon inquiry, Paul learned it was Jesus of Nazareth and he was instructed to continue on to Damascus blindly.

1. How did Paul try build bridges with the angry Jews? What are some ways we might build bridges with those who oppose us?
2. Paul called his speech a "defense" (22:1; Greek: apologia). Read 1 Peter 3:15. Paul was prepared to give a defense. Share some examples of times you may have had to give a defense. Why is it important we are always ready to give a defense for our faith in Jesus?
3. How does Paul's defense resemble the outline of a testimony?
4. Why might our personal story, or testimony be a powerful defense?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 22:12-21

Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having good testimony with all the Jews, came to Paul and his sight was restored. Ananias told Paul he would be a witness for the Lord to all men. He was to arise and be baptized, and wash away his sins, and to call on the name of the Lord. Paul was later told by Jesus to "Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles". Hearing this part of his testimony infuriated the mob against him again.

Visitation/Restoration in 2021

5. Ananias had a good testimony. In your opinion, what is a good testimony?
6. Ananias said, “Brother Saul, receive your sight”. In Luke 9:25, the blind man healed by Jesus testified, “I once was blind, but now I see”. We also once were blind, but now we see. How might this phrase be an important element of a powerful testimony?
7. Paul was to be a witness for the Lord to all men. The Greek word for witness means to be a martyr. In historical Christian circles, to be a witness was to be “witness unto death”. To what extent should Christians today be a witness for Christ?
8. Jesus said to Paul, “Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles”. Why did this enrage the Jews?
9. What aspects of the gospel or “good news” might seem offensive or even enrage people today? Why do you think this is?
10. Paul might have known the mention of Gentiles would infuriate the Jews. Why do you think he risked his life in his testimony, instead of just refuting the charge of defiling the temple?

Applying God’s Word

What did you learn from this study and how does this personally speak to you? Discuss with your group.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 22:22-29

Paul was to be scourged for giving his testimony. The scourge was a bundle of leather whips with pieces of lead or bone fixed to the ends. Scourging was far worse than a Jewish beating or the Roman beating with rods (see 16:22); victims often died from it. Therefore, it was legal to scourge slaves and non-Romans, but it was expressly forbidden to scourge a Roman citizen (22:25). Roman citizenship was not very easy to obtain in Paul’s day. A person could (1) receive it as a reward for military or other service to Rome, (2) receive it when freed from slavery to a citizen, (3) bribe key Roman officials, or (4) be born into a family of citizens. The fourth was the most prestigious way. Paul had birth rights as a Roman citizen. We, as United States citizens, also have Constitutional rights. We do not need to be a “doormat”; we have a right to share our testimony and stand for Jesus.

1. It’s been said, “There is one thing that believers and non-believers have in common: they are both uptight about evangelism”. Are you uptight about evangelism? How might you better embrace evangelism?
2. A testimony is a powerful evangelism tool. It cannot be refuted. Have you thought about your personal testimony lately? Will you make time this week to rehearse your personal testimony?
3. Jesus said, “Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone” (Mark 16:16, NLT). How might you take a stand this week, as a United States citizen, to share the Good News of Jesus?

PRAYER

Thank You for making us so wonderfully complex. We each have different experiences and backgrounds we bring to Your divine purpose. Help us to take our everyday, ordinary life and place it before You as an offering. We ask that you give us the courage and boldness to tell our personal story, our testimony of the marvelous work You have done in each of us. Thank You for restoring our spiritual sight and for the saving grace we have through You.

“Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone” (Mark 16:16, NLT).