

## **Mission of Paul** **Various passages in Acts**

May 21-28, 2000  
Chapter Camp 2000

### **To self: A reminder in teaching Scripture**

*Manuscript studies with IVCF are wonderful times of studying the Scripture with new intensity, as if we were focusing the beams of the sun through a magnifying glass. It's been a source of great joy and understanding of the Scriptures for me, and I've appreciated greatly the truths I've learned through the manuscript study format.*

*However, in our love and thirst for the new Biblical insight or connection, perhaps we've been a little lax in application. Or, in its application, we haven't honored the integrity of the text as a whole. We come close to the edge of dangerous exegesis by making obscure applications from discrete details while missing the entire point of the passage. Perhaps we can help the students grow in love with Scripture, while maintaining the integrity of the passage and by helping them make the connection to everyday life.*

### **To the students: Learning from Scripture**

*First, take a look at the passage, and try to make connects to your life as soon as possible. In your thinking, focus not only on the details of the passage, but how this may affect your life. Too few people try to make the connect from Scripture to their own lives, and I want you to be conscious to see how these passages may actually affect your life.*

### **List of supplies needed**

- Map of Paul's Missionary Journeys
- Oaktag
- Markers
- "Braveheart," 2 copies of the video
- "Mr. Holland's Opus"
- Truth-telling worksheet from *Empowering Leaders*

### **Study #1: Conversion and Vision** **Acts 7:54-8:4, 9:1-19a, 22:1-21**

*Show "Braveheart clips," Desire for farming and Speech.*

William Wallace wanted to be a simple Scottish farmer. But, when the English finally kill his wife, his life is radically changed. He is in rebellion against an unjust system; he goes from protecting himself to challenging a King.

Movies like "Braveheart," "Gladiator," and other movies are truly inspirational. We see how the honor and passion of a downtrodden person beats the system. In all these movies, we're given a glimpse of life before, then a picture of the life-changing moment, and the eventual victory. It's inspiring! And our hearts pound, our nerves are on edge, and we wait excitedly for the outcome of the plot.

And, I believe we connect so vividly because we too want to be inspired. But, few things truly inspire us today, particularly in our love of God. Maybe we're scared of the cost that comes from an impassioned life.

In our study of Acts, we'll tell the story of a changed life. We'll catch a sense of the life before, of life changing events, of the life afterward. We will see a life impassioned for Jesus.

But, we'll have to take it one step at a time. Today, we'll study the very foundations of Paul's life: what got his pulse moving at the start of the day!

**Questions: (Need posterboard)**

- In what ways do Stephen's words reflect his character? Compare with Lk 23.
- What was Paul like (gifts, personality, passions)?
  - Before his conversion?
  - After his conversion?
  - What stayed the same?
  - What was different?
  - What made him change?
- Why would God choose Paul?

**Main Points:**

1. **When people follow Jesus, they become more like Him (7:56, 59).** It's a theme that will be picked up throughout Acts. They may start out like a Paul, but in the end, true followers start looking more and more like Jesus. (Ex. Swimmers, runners, wrestlers, basketball players). In this passage:

- Stephen talks like Jesus at his death ("do not hold this sin against them" (cf. Lk 23:34), "receive my Spirit" (cf. Lk 23:46)) and goes through the same experiences (persecution, and dies a violent death (7:58-60).)
- Paul, too, starts hanging out with Gentiles (22:21).

1. **Sovereign foundations: God made Paul for His purposes (9:15-16).** Our spiritual gifts, our personalities, our abilities, our passions and our experiences all shape us. God wants to take all these things and not merely throw them away, but to redeem them for his purposes.

We see Paul with all of his personality (zealousness, passion, etc. (9:1-3)) and his experiences (openness to travel (9:1), witnessing the murder of Stephen (7:58), meeting God on the road to Damascus (9:8)), and God redeems these once "bad" traits into "good" traits. All of our traits are either good or bad. (Ex. Am I rebel or a prophet?)

1. **Telling your story (22:1-21).** Was Paul convincing? Why? What made his speech so compelling? He told a story that no one could refute, a story that gave shape to the rest of his sold-out life! What turned Paul around? It was his experience on the road to Damascus. How had that one event affected the rest of his life?

**Applications:**

- Ask yourself: what honestly inspires you these days? Is there any causes that I would lay down my life for?
- Learn to tell your story. Take some time to prepare and share your story within three to five minutes.
- During your retreat of silence, think about your SHAPE (Spiritual gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality and Experiences). Make a timeline of your life and see what God has brought you through. What has following Jesus meant to you so far?
  - What past events have influenced you greatly?
  - What are the personality traits that are always you?

- How will God use what you've been through for His purposes today?
- What "purposes" has he placed on your heart

**Study #2: Introduction to Mission**  
**Acts 9:19b-31, 13:1-12, 13:42-52**

Last time, we were inspired; tonight, we're looking for answers. Inspiration can only take you so far. Last time, we felt good and emotional; tonight, we want to know how to make this concrete. If last time was the Sunday service, tonight is the Monday morning. Tonight, we'll see the beginnings of this inspiration lived out.

**Questions:**

- How could Paul start preaching "immediately"?
- How did the community make decisions? How would that look for your fellowship?
- What's the role of Barnabas in Paul's ministry? What risks did he take?
- How effective was Paul's ministry? How was his first time out in ministry?

**Main Points:**

1. **A life of sponsoring: looking for Paul (9:27).** Barnabas puts his own reputation on the line to sponsor this hot-headed new convert. He even takes him to the Apostles for approval, and puts his approval behind him. Where would Paul be without Ananias and Barnabas, people who took risks to bring him in ministry. *Show "Mr. Holland's Opus."* Sponsor leaders not in the organization. Don't be greedy with leaders; be willing to send people out as well (13:1).
2. **Ingredients to guidance: prayer, worship and fasting – in community (13:2).** It makes sense that the Spirit of God would move while the community is seeking Him. It would make great sense to include more of these activities in our corporate structures, particularly in leadership meetings.
3. **Speaking truth against the opposition (13:1-12, 42-52).** The speaking of truth for those who are opposed; this is for their sake! When young, it's easy not to confront and challenge. We want everyone to like our leadership. However, there is a great need for truth-speakers in our post-modern, relativistic society. Josh McDowell once wrote, "It's great to be open-minded, but not so open-minded that your brains fall out!"

**Applications:**

- **Who are some people you can sponsor? Make a list. Think of two people that you will actively sponsor next year, so that person will come to know Jesus better. (Ex. Danny).**
- **How can you be a champion of worship, prayer and fasting in our fellowship? We will take some time in the worship session to do some**

- **worship and prayer for future guidance.**
- **Give truth-telling sheet. To whom do you need to speak truth?**

### **Study #3: Sharpening of Mission** **Acts 14:1-15:22**

We see the sovereign foundations of Paul's life. We see how he had been groomed for the work God had called him too. We see what turned his life around. We see what inspired Paul, and what would forever last as the literal "cross"-roads of his life. Second, we saw Paul put into concrete action what he was inspired and called to do. Now, in our third study, Paul is already on his way with some success, but it could have easily gone to his head. In this study, we'll see how he progresses in his maturity. And how he happens to tackle some tough issues along the way.

#### **Questions:**

- How do Paul and Barnabas grab people's attention?
- How would you have reacted to the crowd in Lystra?
- Why was the outcome of the Council of Jerusalem so important? What implications would this have for our communities of faith?

#### **Main Points:**

1. **The "worship-me" temptation: worshipping the messengers as "gods." (14:12-13).** The temptation for people around us is to worship success. In an upstart culture like America, we fully respect and desire to worship those who made it to the top on their own hard work and effort. We don't really admire the spoiled kid who's rich by inheritance, but we admire the pioneers.  
It's very scary how easily that can be translated into ministry. Christian leaders who are "successful" are sought out for wisdom and counsel; they are often "worshipped." (Ex. your pastor or staffworker, Bill Hybels.) So, we replace one idol-worship for another, and ministry can be another tool to focus on the self; "worship-me" is just the flip-side of "I'm-no-good." They point people back to Jesus (14:15).
1. **(Sponsoring, pt. 2: need to appoint leaders, elders (14:23).** A model of self-sustaining ministry: it needs to reproduce itself! (Ex. PKT). Paul was not merely interested in bearing fruit for himself, but also lasting, reproducing fruit. He's becoming more like Jesus (cf. Jn 14:12)).
2. **We need "new wineskins" in thinking about ethnicity, race and culture (15:1-22).** Paul made it his aim to reach the Gentiles; Peter, the Jews. But, the Council's job was important because it figured out who was in or out of the Christian community. Ethnic specializing was always used to make outreach easier, not more difficult. What is the cost of inclusivity? (Ex. KCF).

#### **Applications:**

- What would it mean to be pointers to Jesus in failure and success?
- How can we sponsor new leaders for the long-term growth of the Christian community.

- Is ethnic-specific ministry Biblical? Is being an ethnic-specific ministry helpful or hurtful to our outreach?

#### **Study #4: Society and Mission** **Acts 16:16-40, 18:1-11, 19:1-22**

If you've ever seen "Outbreak," you have an idea of how viruses can destroy communities. They start with an individual, a host if you will, and begins to spread to other people, spreading as a vicious plague. Christianity is supposed to work through the warp and woof of our society in the same way. C.S. Lewis called Christianity the "good infection." The mission begins its affect on individuals, and if Christianity is doing what it's supposed to, we can expect changes on societal levels as well.

#### **Questions:**

- Examine the various uses and abuses of money and power.
- How do Paul and Barnabas respond to hard times? What happens?
- Make a list of reasons Paul might be tempted to quit sharing the Gospel. How do you see God caring for Paul?
- Look back at Acts up until now. What seems different about the early church when compared to today's church?

#### **Main points:**

1. **Costly choices could mean life for others (16:28).** Paul and Barnabas are wrongly imprisoned, but end up singing and worshipping. (Miracles happen during worship?) Instead of fleeing the prison when God shows up, Paul and Barnabas decide to stay in jail. This selfless action results in the salvation of the jailer and his family. What costly choices could we make that would result in life for others.

2. **Christians threatened the status quo (16:19, 19:18-20).** Paul and Barnabas also managed to threaten pocketbooks. Paul cast out a fortune-teller's ticket to money (16:19), which brought a huge reaction from the business community. Christianity freed the slave of the economic oppression. Later, people give up the most devoted things to them, costing a total of 50,000 silver coins (19:19). Not only did people cast away their worthless beliefs, but there was an embracement of downward mobility by the citizens of Ephesus. Christianity has a way of upsetting the balance of power, so that those who held power in society now feel threatened. And, this is what Jesus did in his time, elevating the status of women and Gentiles, even prostitutes and tax collectors. Jesus is the great equalizer.

Christianity has failed to hit the pocket books, and the idea of justice as a whole of Evangelicalism has been lost for too long. How can Christians make a difference in society today? (Ex. Tufts Christian Fellowship and the right to exercise freedom?).

1. **The power of the Holy Spirit dwells in the community of believers!** (19:11-17). The Spirit shows up in power! We are neglecting an all-too important part of our witness. Do you believe in miracles? (Ex. Spirit life.)

#### **Applications:**

- In what ways is Christianity threatening to our society today? How can

- Christianity affect society today?
- In the light of Jesus, people threw away their worthless beliefs. What are some worthless beliefs we are to throw away?
  - What are some costly choices for us that would mean life for others?
    - Monetary sacrifices, budgeting
    - New student outreach
  - Think of a time you were tempted to quit this past year. How has God encouraged us to continue?
  - Do you believe in miracles? Can they happen today? Pray for them!

### **Study #5: Legacy of Mission** **Acts 20:1-38**

It's nearing the end of the movie. The hero is dying the arms of his friends, and he starts to explain what needs to happen next. Paul too is near the end of his ministry, and he has no regrets. He's in afterglow. But, even though his work on earth in drawing to an end, he has other concerns that go beyond his own life. He is concerned for much more.

#### **Questions:**

- How does Paul describe his own ministry?
- How did Paul relate to his disciples?
- What did Paul do to make disciples?

#### **Main points (Need posterboard):**

1. **Pour into the lives of others (20:18-35).** He is concerned about the growth of the Church and the cause of Jesus, even more than his own life. And without begin dishonest or manipulative, he's intentional about raising up new leaders.
  - Intimate, "you yourselves know" (20:18, 34). Howard Hendricks, "You can impress people from far away, but you can only impact them up close." In Korea, I heard all the time that I didn't act like a pastor...
  - Compassionate, "all humility and tears" (20:19). Paul's heart is in it. He cries with people. Do we cry with others (20:19)?
  - Giving of himself, "did not shrink from doing anything helpful" (20:20, 27; cf. Jn 15). He had a deep pocket. Are there helpful things that I won't do because it doesn't feel like my job? He wasn't scared.
  - Use his gifts well, "proclaiming the message... teaching you... testified..." (20:20). Paul's way of helping was proclaiming the message. What's yours?
  - Holy Spirit and foresight, "Holy Spirit testifies..." "I know that after I have gone..." (20:22, 25, 29; cf. Jn 16). Acting like Jesus again.
  - Healthy sense of responsibility, "I am not responsible for the blood of any of you" (20:26). Responsible *to* not responsible *for*.
  - "Keep watch" (20:28). Yourself and the flock. How are ways we watch out for others, but not of ourselves?
  - Holy Spirit made them overseers (20:28). God is the owner of the church, and he paid for it in blood. How am I tempted to see ministry as mine?

- Do my warnings come with tears (20:31)? Or simply with impatience or annoyance? Or do I shrink back from warnings altogether?
- He entrusts people to God (20:32, also back in 14:23).

1. **Modeling is not enough; explain your actions (20:18-35).** If you're going to lead and influence, you have to tell why you're doing the things you do. Paul is willing to call attention to his model, so should you. We may risk something in not doing so: people may conclude that I am truly a servant, instead of realizing that I've come across a key insight of Jesus', it's better to give than to receive.

2. **Be walking inspirations (20:24)!** Paul, like Jesus, was willing to do anything it would take to live according to his purpose! "But I do not count my life any value..." (20:24). Everything else was rubbish (cf. Ph 1), compared to following Jesus. All-out. Everything that made sense doesn't anymore. And, there's great power when there's nothing else to lose. For example, one night I was playing Risk with the brothers at my church... William Wallace was alluding to it, "They may take our lives, but they cannot take our freedom!" A person who has nothing to lose has everything to gain! That's inspiration!

And his stories are not merely about the past, but about the present! Inspiration doesn't merely come from what *has* happened, but what *is* happening today! I hope and pray for a community of walking inspirations. (Ex. You). We are in need of more people who are willing to give it all for Jesus!

### **Applications:**

- What would it mean to be sold-out? Is this attractive or intimidating?
- Pick a few characteristics from Paul that you would like to work on? How will you seek to grow in these areas?
- What would it mean for you to "explain your actions?"
  - Practice interpreting. Take some time to explain your actions of the past year to each other.

### **Overall themes:**

- The followers of Jesus are becoming more and more like Jesus as they go along.
- God uses most effectively those who are sold-out for him, holding nothing back.
- The power of the Spirit is evident in the community of believers. (Optional: During worship, we can expect the Spirit to guide us and to perform miracles.)