



A
**FRESH
START**
A Spirit-Filled Life

DAILY DEVOTION BOOK



The authors dedicate this devotional to all those who teach during the best and worst of times, especially our fellow servants at Trinity. Everyday you show up, you show the current and the future generations how God brings daily power and gives us a fresh start.

Week 1 Fresh Love

Day 1 Acts 1 :: Fresh Love - Witnessing Jesus

by Pastor Justin Krupsky

PRAY

God, thank you that every moment is a fresh start with you as I live in your mercies and forgiveness. I know that you have a plan, a path for me in this world to make a kingdom difference. Help me to depend on you and to persevere as I enter this new path. Amen.

READ

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.” Proverbs 3:5-6

As we move forward together through winter and into spring I can't help but believe God is bringing a new Kingdom path for each of us. A new opportunity to live a life of love. I believe there is a divine path that awaits us around the corner, maybe a new path that we have right now. Maybe it is a friendship, an opportunity to serve, a new job, a new neighbor, a new endeavor or something even more. Our Crucified and Risen Lord, is constantly bringing new life into our lives and through our lives. His mercies are new every morning and He has a plan for us. I wonder what your fresh path is or what it will be.

As we read Acts chapter 1 we learn about a man named Matthias. Now not a lot is said about Matthias the disciple that replaced Judas as one of the head 12 apostles who were witnesses of Jesus from His baptism to His ascension. However what we do know is that he was included as one who constantly prayed and he knew the new opportunity that he was placed into was an opportunity to witness Jesus by championing love.

As we begin our 40 day devotional journey through the book of Acts we do so by understanding that a fresh start, a fresh path, a new beginning must be bathed with prayer. Matthias knew this, the early church knew this, because Jesus lived this out and taught this. They witnessed Jesus. Do you know this?

I do not know what fresh start God is birthing in your life, but what I do hope is that you are praying about this fresh start, this new beginning, the new path that God is orchestrating for you, and that as it unfolds in your life you stay constant in prayer depending on God through the power of His Spirit.

LIVE

What fresh start is happening in your life? Where in your life do you need a fresh start?

Week 1: Fresh Love

Day 2 Acts 2 :: Witnessing the Spirit

Pastor Chris Troxel

PRAY

Jesus, thank you for sending your Spirit into your Church and into me. Spirit, help me to believe how you speak through God's word, through baptism, and through communion to give us everything we need. Grow my faith to believe you and your work in this world, and to be a part of it. Amen.

READ

Acts 2

What do you know about wind? While invisible we see its effect: its presence and absence. Life continues because it carries seeds and scents that trigger conception and growth. Flowers, fawns, and so many other living things depend on the wind. Wind leads to so many fresh starts.

God the Spirit did something new among those first disciples of Jesus: fire, and the sound of wind to reveal His blessing and presence. He followed this by loosening their tongues to speak foreign languages they had never learned. But the power was the message God gave them to speak. Peter spoke a very similar message to the crowd as he explained what was happening. As he spoke, the Spirit acted again, working conviction and contrition in the hearts of those who heard Peter. Through the words of life, Peter pointed out the death they caused, and the death in which they were living. Through him, God also revealed the healing for what "cut them to the heart": Jesus. Jesus on the cross. Jesus coming out of the tomb. Jesus coming to them through water and the Word. As they witnessed the Spirit at work, those first disciples received and saw God bring fresh love to themselves and to the thousands who believed the word about Jesus.

LIVE

How does the Spirit show you what he is doing?

How can you tell the difference between the Spirit's work and your own feeling?

What words does he give you to speak?

Week 1: Fresh Love

Day 3 Acts 3 :: Fresh Work

by Pastor Chad Wright

PRAY

Thank you God for the fresh work of faith which You have given me. Please continue to provide all that I need for my body and life. Amen.

READ

Growing up in the 80's, most of my Saturday mornings started with cartoons. Mixed in with the cartoons were commercials. The commercials often repeated and became earworms for the week. I can remember singing or humming some of the jingles. One I still remember was the commercial for Klondike ice cream bars. Remember? "What would you do for a Klondike bar?" Some people were willing to do some corny and crazy things for an ice cream bar!

In Acts 3, a man who couldn't walk, crippled from birth, was begging in Jerusalem. He did what he could to help provide for his daily needs: he asked others to help him. Imagine that. Reduced to asking others for help in order to survive. For some in our country this is their daily reality in 2021. God still provides through the kindness of others as He did for the man in Acts 3.

Notice how God did something new for the man in Acts 3: Peter healed him. His response? "leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God." (v. 8) God provided in a fresh way. The purpose of the miracle was to point him – and the crowd - to Jesus Christ as Savior.

God still provides for His people today by giving us the abilities to work and sometimes through the kindness of others. He still can provide in miraculous ways. His greatest work is still the powerful work of His Word and Spirit, calling people to believe in Jesus as the Savior. He gave us new life to live and reason to rejoice – leaping or not.

LIVE

How have you experienced God working in your life?

Week 1: Fresh Love

Day 4 Acts 4 :: New Pressure

by Pastor Lew Stier

PRAY

Father of Love, give me the courage and the strength to boldly confess my salvation is found only in the name of Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior even if it means I will not be liked, or worse, have my life and safety threatened. Let me always proclaim your redeeming love even under pressure. In Jesus' name, Amen.

READ

Do you find it hard at times to admit you are a Christian? Probably not too hard here at Church in front of other confessing Christians. But what about out in public—is that harder? How about in the workplace or in the Public School classroom? You probably do not even want me to ask about in the bar or sports arena, if we can ever go to those places again!

Being a Christian, living life as a Christian and professing to be a Christian can be a pressure filled experience at times. And we do not need any more pressure in our lives as we continue to live in the COVID era.

The new formed apostles were confronted with the same pressure after the Pentecost event and they did rise to the occasion. They were brought before the governing authorities and accused of proclaiming that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead and teaching the people about what a personal relationship with Jesus would do for their eternal life. Under great pressure they made this claim:

“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (v. 12).

That name is Jesus Christ. The name every Christian bears. The name you bear because you are a baptized follower of Christ. You do not have to handle the pressure of being a Christian on your own. Call on the name of Jesus and he will give you strength under pressure.

LIVE

How does the name of Jesus give you courage under pressure?

Week 1 Fresh Love

Day 5 Acts 5 :: Signs and Wonders

by Pastor Chris Troxel

PRAY

Jesus, teach me to be real. Help me to understand when “fake it till you make it” can help and when it can hurt. May your grace and unending love set my heart at ease, and grow in awe of you.

READ

Courage is a wonderful thing. It can help you be bold and confident, even when you are also feeling timid and uncertain. Courage can also have a dark side. Being courageous about bad directions will allow you to boldly go...the wrong way.

Ananias and Sapphira were confident in their faith, committed to their community, but struggled with greed to their own downfall. As people were selling all they had to support the Apostles and the mission of the Gospel, they too wanted to be seen as giving all they had, *and* still hold on to a bit more. When everything is going so well, what does a white lie hurt?

Because Christ has taken our punishment, sometimes we also struggle to take God seriously. The tragedy of Ananias and Sapphira is a warning to God’s church then and now. When we lie to God and others, the only ones we ultimately fool are ourselves. Ananias and Sapphira courageously conjure confidence to take a bold step of faith, *and* have some kind of ‘spiritual insurance’ just in case things don’t work out. The lie is not the amount they gave, but rather that they thought no one would know or care. As powerful as the God who sends angels to rescue from prison, who works through human apostles to heal the sick, who works His will because of your prayers, this same God is one to be awed and revered. This same One knows your frailties and faith, and supplies all your needs. So in faith, let’s repent of the times we wrongly used courage to try to fool God or someone else. Let’s receive the grace Jesus won for us, as he sets us free. Let’s live in light of the signs and wonders God delivers in love that is fresh each day.

LIVE

When are you tempted to downplay how serious sin is? How does God’s love for you in Jesus teach you about how serious God is about saving and loving you?

Week 1: Fresh Love

Day 6 :: Day of Kairos

All time belongs to God. Set aside this day to remind your soul of that truth, that His time is enough, and just what you need. Use this time as a moment to catch up on your reading, pray, and rest in the presence of the Lord. Pray this Word for yourself and your community:

They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

[Acts 1:14](#)

Week 1: Fresh Love

Day 7: Word of the Week

Memorizing scripture can be intimidating, a hard internal struggle, a joy, a blessing, and a tool to fight darkness and worry with light and peace. During these 6 weeks, make the step to memorize one verse a week, and by the end you will have the whole passage of Acts 13:26-31 written in your mind, and by His grace, on your heart.

“Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation.”

[Acts 13:26](#)

Write this verse down and post it on your mirror or at your desk, in your car or on the fridge—anywhere you’ll see it often.

We want to be a community that is intentional about scripture memorization. Will you join us?

Week 2: Fresh Strength

Day 8 Acts 6 :: Fresh Witnessing Opportunities

By Pastor Chris Troxel

PRAY

Holy Spirit, keep working in your church and in me to see opportunities for life and faith to impact this world. Amen.

READ

We use a metal filter to make coffee. It saves on paper, and helps bring out the best for our coffee. The downside is that over time, particles build up and it takes more and more time to make coffee. The more we use it, the worse it gets.

People are not like coffee filters. Our potential to be the worst does not build up over time. At any given moment we have the potential to be some version of our worst, our best, or some mix of both.

In Acts 6, the Church is at its worst *and* best. Throughout Jerusalem, more and more people hear the gospel of Jesus and believe. People openly share all they have with each other. At the same time, a strong element of racism rears its head via food distribution, and there is a shortage of leaders. The Apostles feel the tension between preaching the gospel and tending to the needs of believers. So, they do the stubborn thing and take on more than they can handle, right? No, they recognize their call, they recognize the need, and they recognize that God stirs his Spirit among his people for what his Church needs. When they lift up more leaders to meet people's needs, "the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem..."¹ Through all the worst: addressing racism, hunger, a lack of enough leadership, God continually works the best. God works so the gospel gets out. He adds witnesses and opportunities to be a bold witness for the work He is doing.

LIVE

What is God calling you to do: pray and preach, serve tables, or something else?

How is God opening your eyes and calendar to the needs around you?

As you put your faith in motion to meet some needs you see, how can you encourage someone else to step up and meet the needs you see but are not called to meet?

¹ Acts 6:7

Week 2: Fresh Strength

Day 9 Acts 7 :: Fresh Strength - Unstoppable Witness

by John Lucas

PRAY

May your words always be on my heart and in my mind. Give me the courage to share your Word in all situations, in all circumstances. Amen.

READ

"I wish I had the courage to do that!" That is the thought that went through my head several years ago in New York City during the 8th grade class trip. We were a block or two away from the World Trade Center Memorial, and there was a man standing on a bench and talking about the love of Jesus. Sometimes, street preachers like this have a negative connotation, but this man was not ranting or raving; he was calm and speaking nothing but truth. It sounded like a normal Sunday sermon, only in the middle of one of the busiest cities in the world!

If you are anything like me, it is not always comfortable to profess your faith in normal settings, much less the middle of a busy sidewalk. You might want to be a witness for Jesus, but simply shy away outside of "normal" faith times like church. You want to have the courage of the man I witnessed in New York City.

In Acts 7, Stephen had the courage to share Jesus facing certain death. He was an unstoppable witness. Stephen did not shy away when it mattered most. What did Stephen do? He quoted Scripture. Here is a perfect example of how to share Jesus, even in the most extreme circumstances. If you are unsure what to do or say, turn back to God's word! God's word has the words people need to hear; it tells us what to say. Simply share the love of Jesus!

LIVE

1. Do you feel you are prepared or willing to share God's word outside of "normal" faith times?
2. What can you do to put yourself in God's Word more?
3. How can you be an "unstoppable witness"?

Week 2: Fresh Strength

Day 10 Acts 8 – God’s New Witnesses Scatter

by Carla Hudgens

PRAY

Dear All-Knowing Father,

Please help me to be a witness for You today. Give me the wisdom and strength to know what to say and do so that I may share Your love with others. Amen.

READ

As Saul persecutes the early Christian church, men of God scattered to preach the Word of the Lord. (Saul later has a “come to Jesus” moment and is re-named Paul, who shared the Good News of Jesus with many people during his lifetime). After Stephen’s execution, the church is forced to do what it had been reluctant to do – get the gospel out to the surrounding regions. Those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the Word: The end result is for the glory of God, because the persecution simply serves to spread the message. We shouldn’t think that those who left as formal preachers. Most were “accidental missionaries” who talked about Jesus wherever they went.

We can be just like these early Christians! We can share the Good News of what Jesus has done in our lives. Most people don’t come to Jesus through a professional preacher or evangelist; they come to Jesus through people just like us. If we are good examples of Jesus’ love, in word and deed, we can be witnesses. Even though the early church was being persecuted – the word of the Lord spread. Do you see a parallel to today’s world? There is so much evil, hatred, selfishness and misery in our daily lives. We have to believe that Jesus knows what’s going on – He is in total control and He will be glorified above all else.

LIVE

Try this – at night before you go to sleep: think about your day and try to remember an instant when you were a witness in word or deed for Jesus. You might be surprised that – yes – you were!

Week 2: Fresh Strength

Day 11 Acts 9 :: Fresh Vision

by Michele Grupe

PRAY

Dear Lord, we know that nothing is too hard for You. You know how to get our attention anytime, anywhere. Paint a picture in our mind's eye of Your plan and purpose for our lives. Give us Your eyes to see. Give us Your vision, Heavenly Father. Amen.

READ Acts 9

During a visit of Mammoth Cave in Kentucky, the tour guide turned off the lights while we were deep in the cave. I remember the eerie feeling of not being able to see my hand right in front of my face. When it's pitch black, there's no visible difference between having your eyes opened or closed. You are completely helpless.

Saul's blindness caused him to understand that he was helpless before God, and that he needed God in his life. His outer physical blindness matched his inner spiritual blindness. He was blind to the Lord's call and to His loving-kindness. Spiritually, Saul needed to lose his sight in order to gain it. After living in complete darkness for three days, Saul was humbled and ready to surrender to God's will.

And aren't we all that way, too? Without the Lord opening our eyes, aren't we all blind, groping about aimlessly, trying to figure out how to live without sight? We all need to open the eyes of our hearts by surrendering to God's power and love and responding in obedience to His calling for our lives. Psalm 119:18 says, *"Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law."* Open our eyes, Lord, to the beauty of Your creation, to see how we may be a blessing to others, to see how much You love us. There are thousands of ways that our eyes need opening. Just like Saul.

LIVE

Saul wouldn't be able to clearly see God unless his old way of looking at things was taken from him. What are some things holding you back from seeing God in a new light and a new perspective?

Week 2: Fresh Strength

Day 12 Acts 10 :: God Keeps Doing New Things

by Josh Britton

PRAY

Jesus, please continually help us to surrender to your will and plan for our lives so that the world would know about your redeeming love and forgiveness. May it start with us in Jesus name. Amen.

READ

We find Peter's world being turned upside down in Acts 10 when God asks him to go against what is culturally, socially, and lawfully acceptable from a Jewish perspective. If you haven't read Acts 10 yet, please do that now.

You see, going to eat, recline, or be in close proximity to minister to others who were of another race was not a thing the Jewish people were encouraged to do. Peter is being completely stretched and challenged because this isn't what he necessarily signed up for, but it is what he was equipped for.

Jesus was always breaking the rules in the sense that he didn't do what the disciples or the people of the day expected, especially what you would expect a Jewish rabbi to do. Jesus often ate with the down and outs, the sinners and thieves, the untouchables from different ethnic backgrounds, and just about anyone else who was not welcomed among the popular people of the day.

Jesus' model for us shows us that God is in the business of doing new things, especially in unconventional ways that don't make sense to us from a worldly perspective. Rather, Jesus seeks to constantly make us more like Him so that His Kingdom continues to grow and that the world would know Him through us in our everyday words, thoughts, and actions.

LIVE

What is one way God has been trying to get your attention to better align your will with His? How can you take one practical step today to let God have more control of your life?

Week 2: Fresh Strength

Day 13 :: Day of Kairos

All time belongs to God. Set aside this day to remind your soul of that truth, that His time is enough, and just what you need. Use this time as a moment to catch up on your reading, pray, and rest in the presence of the Lord. Pray this Word from God for yourself and your community:

Therefore repent and turn back, so that your sins may be wiped out, that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord

[Acts 3:19](#)

Week 2: Fresh Strength

Day 14: Word of the Week

Memorizing scripture can be intimidating, a hard internal struggle, a joy, a blessing, and a tool to fight darkness and worry with light and peace. During these 6 weeks, make the step to memorize one verse a week, and by the end you will have the whole passage of Acts 13:26-31 written in your mind, and by His grace, on your heart.

For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize him nor understand the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him.

[Acts 13:27](#)

Write this verse down and post it on your mirror or at your desk, in your car or on the fridge—anywhere you'll see it often.

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Week 3: Fresh Joy

Day 15 Acts 11 :: Confirmation

by Pastor Chad

PRAY

Lord, help me not to become so entrenched in the way I think about carrying out the Great Commission that I miss opportunities to share the good news with the hurting of this world or wrongly judge my fellow believer's efforts. Use me to tell others about Your Son Jesus and bless the efforts of other believers who are trying to do the same. Amen.

READ

In psychology, there is a concept called confirmation bias. It is the tendency to look for information that supports, rather than rejects, one's preconceptions, typically by interpreting evidence to confirm existing beliefs while rejecting or ignoring any conflicting data. There were some in the early day of the Church guilty of this. They wanted to maintain the traditions and rituals of the Jewish faith, even getting hostile towards the Apostle Peter for the way he brought Gentiles the good news! They got "all judgey."

Acts 10 tells the story. Acts 11 shows how Peter confirmed what God was doing as he shared the good news with Cornelius and his household. They believed. As evidence that God accepted them by faith, they received the Holy Spirit and spoke in different languages just like believers on Pentecost. The result? "So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God's way?" When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life." (NIV Ac 11:17-18)

As a Christian, I have sought to share the Gospel in different ways. Sometimes, I have looked at how another Christian, pastor, or ministry is sharing the good news. While it may not be something that I would be comfortable doing, it does not mean that it is wrong. I should find fresh joy knowing that God is still saving people through that effort and give Him my praise.

LIVE

Is there a time in your life when you disagreed with how another believer was sharing the good news? If so, how did you address it?

Week 3: Fresh Joy

Day 16 Acts 12 :: Work, Pain, and Rescue

by Lisa Troxel

PRAY

Jesus, thank you for the joy you provide. When all hope seems lost, you refocus our faith and surprise us all over again how possible the impossible is with you. Put us in mind of the joy you bring that sustains us as we carry out your will. Amen.

READ

James is the first of the apostles to die for the sake of the mission. Jesus' followers are shaken by this. After his death, Peter, the beloved Peter, is taken prisoner and sentenced to death. Herod is attempting to show that he has the ultimate power over his kingdom. God shows up in a big way when he sends his angel to quietly & peacefully lead Peter out of prison. Peter was in such shock he didn't even believe it himself at first. He goes first to the home of Mary.

Here I relate so much to the servant girl Rhoda. In her joy, shock and perhaps disbelief, she forgets to even let him in! She runs to tell everyone in the house that had gathered to pray that Peter, the very one for whom they were praying, was at the gate! How many times have we been so shocked and surprised that it distracted us from the most important thing. Peter was an escaped prisoner and who they were covering in prayer and she forgot to let him inside. But Peter of course isn't bothered, he stays outside and delivers his message, tells them his amazing rescue story. At this time Peter's life is spared. Herod's, however, is not and we are told of how God deals with Herod's hate and anger. Leaders rise and fall but God's word always accomplishes its mission.

LIVE

Have you received a "yes" from God that was so surprising it took you awhile to believe it's real?

How does that help you with prayers that God has yet to reveal his answer?

Week 3: Fresh Joy

Day 17 Acts 13 :: What Missionaries Do Best

by Jenny Jaroneski

PRAY

Lord, you are an amazing God! Thank you for the plan that you have for my life. Guide me on the missionary path as I share Christ's love with others everywhere I go and help me to know when it is time to shake the dust from my feet. Fill me with joy and the Holy Spirit as your disciple. Amen.

READ

A Christian's mission is to go and make disciples who share Christ's story with love. We have a fresh opportunity every day to do this in our own homes, at work or even in the grocery store. We don't have to travel to faraway lands as a missionary - we can make disciples anywhere, even in our own community. Our mission can be in our children, in our hobbies or in our everyday life.

When Paul and Barnabas preach in the synagogue, I think about what it's like to be a teacher. As teachers, parents or mentors we have the opportunity to show someone something new. When our students finally take their first steps, ride a bike, solve a math problem or truly understand that Jesus died for our sins it is a shared moment of pure joy and accomplishment! There is joy in helping someone else reach their potential or realize their worth.

But isn't it frustrating when we try to teach someone something and they just don't get it? No matter how hard we try, it just doesn't click. We simply are not the right teacher for the job. God tells us to go and share the news of Jesus - He doesn't tell us to get a hammer and hit people in the kneecaps until they agree to listen! We are charged to be disciples on a mission to share Christ's Story and if that mission fails- its okay, another will follow closely behind.

Jesus preaches about "shaking the dust off your feet" as a command to do what you can and move on so we too can be filled with JOY and with the Holy Spirit that follows. As missionaries we need to "shake the dust from our feet" as Paul and Barnabas did so we can start fresh without carrying the emotional weight of those who might not have heard our message but take with us JOY of those who did!

LEAD

- Is there a situation that you need to "shake the dust from your feet" so you can be filled with joy and the Holy Spirit moving forward?

- What is ONE new way that you are able to find joy in being a missionary this week?

Week 3: Fresh Joy

Day 18 Acts 14: “In This World You Will Have Trouble...”

by Tim Siekmann

PRAY

Heavenly Father,

You are our Creator and perfecter of our life. May we always trust and lean on you when troubles arise in our life. Fill us with joy as we continue to go and serve you.

Amen

READ

Troubles?... Who has troubles? I have had various struggles and troubles in my life. I have had conversations with parents about some of the problems they deal with their young children. I tell them little children...little problems, big children, big problems. Raising children is just one area of one's life that can bring us trouble. One such incident comes to mind is when one of our children was in a serious auto accident. There are other areas that cause us trouble in this life such as financial struggles, loss of a job or losing a loved one. As Christians we know the road through life will not be easy as Paul tells us in Acts 14:22: “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.”

Paul certainly knows hardship first hand. Paul with Barnabus were on their missionary journey to Iconium, Lsytra and Derbe preaching to the Jews and Greeks and even healing a lame man. Many came to believe but there were also some that did not. He reminded them about God the creator and all that He had done for them and that He fills their hearts with joy! Some Jews stirred up the crowd and stoned Paul! As God protected Paul and allowed him to continue his ministry, Paul is filled with joy! He continued to share the Gospel despite all of his hardships. We can learn from Paul to trust in Jesus who gives us fresh joy each and every day. No matter the troubles or problems we face in our life, God will always be there with us and see us through. I know that in all the troubles in my life God has been with me. We can give thanks in all circumstances! Praise be to Jesus for giving us that everlasting joy when we are with him one day in heaven.

LIVE

How has God shown himself faithful in troubles and blessings?

What kind of hope does God's good faithfulness generate in you?

Week 3 Fresh Joy

Day 19 Acts 15:1-21 :: It's not fair!

by Andrew Brazeal

PRAY

Jesus , we thank you for the sacrifices and struggles that you faced so that we don't have to. Help us to have fresh joy knowing that this new beginning you've given us can be full of love and compassion. Give us the confidence and courage to also be willing to struggle and sacrifice in order to point others to you. Amen.

READ

"But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."

Acts 15:11

"When I was a kid, we had to walk to school, 2 miles, through wind, rain, and snow, uphill both ways!" Sound familiar? When I was a kid, I often heard this from my grandparents when I complained about school. Or how about this one: "When I was a kid, we had to look up how to spell words in the dictionary!"- I often heard from my dad as I right clicked the 'red squiggly lined' word on my computer to correct the spelling for me. Oh how much easier I have it, I was reminded. Don't get me wrong, now that I have kids, I'm coming up with all the ways my life was harder than theirs to make them feel guilty too.

Ok, I'm just (mostly) kidding, but this same attitude was being held back in the Book of Acts in regards to the faith of new Christians. Some of the Jewish Christians who had gone through all of the traditions and works that God had set up for them didn't like the idea that these new converts got the gift of salvation for free. "It's not fair, I have lived a life of devotion to God, and these guys are just getting grace for free?" Well, yes. And thank God that it's not fair. We all have sinned, and "the wages of sin is death", Romans 6:23 reminds us, "but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." This idea that 'because I struggled, you should too' is so far removed from what Jesus was showing us. Instead, Jesus says, 'because I took the punishment for sin, now you don't have to!' or in other words; "For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:21) Through the grace that God has freely given all of us, despite our mistakes, we've all been given a Fresh Start. A Fresh Start of Joy that can be shared with everyone! We can joyously proclaim " Thank you Jesus, it's not fair!"

LIVE

1. Recall a time when someone went through struggle (big or small) for your sake. What did it mean to you then? What does it mean to you now?
2. What gives you joy when you go through a struggle for others?
3. Is there a struggle that others are going through in your world- a friend, a stranger, as a society? How can you respond to their struggle in a practical way?

Week 3: Fresh Joy

Day 20 :: Day of Kairos

All time belongs to God. Set aside this day to remind your soul of that truth, that His time is enough, and just what you need. Use this time as a moment to catch up on your reading, pray, and rest in the presence of the Lord. Pray this Word from God for yourself and your community:

“Therefore, let it be known to you, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is being proclaimed to you, and everyone who believes in Him is justified from everything that you could not be justified from through the law of Moses.”

–[Acts 13:38-39](#)

Week 3: Fresh Joy

Day 21 :: Word of the Week

Memorizing scripture can be intimidating, a hard internal struggle, a joy, a blessing, and a tool to fight darkness and worry with light and peace. During these 6 weeks, make the step to memorize one verse a week, and by the end you will have the whole passage of Acts 13:26-31 written in your mind, and by His grace, on your heart.

*And though they found in him no guilt worthy of death,
they asked Pilate to have him executed.*

[Acts 13:28](#)

Write this verse down and post it on your mirror or at your desk, in your car or on the fridge—anywhere you'll see it often.

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Week 4: Fresh Grace

Day 22 Acts 15:22-16:40 Building the Kingdom

by Pastor Lew Stier

PRAY

Father of all Grace, thank you for giving me the greatest life changing event one could ever experience, being brought to faith in Jesus for the total forgiveness of all my sins. Thank you for giving me a Fresh Start through your amazing Grace. Amen.

READ

I am sure you are familiar with the term: “A life changing event.” Usually it is so amazing or unbelievable it cannot be ignored and a change in the way one lives must take place. Today’s reading is a record of one such event. This was how the Holy Spirit was building the Kingdom of God and the first Christian Church. Just as the jailer in the story knew he had experienced a life changing event it forced him to ask: **“What must I DO to be saved?”**

My feeling is if you have to ask the question then you probably are already saved! Scripture says the answer is to **believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved ((16:31))**. That is the way the Holy Spirit worked back then and still works today—through someone hearing about the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is that easy and I know it works because I was recently part of a life changing event for two women.

They came to me asking for a memorial service for their mother who had passed away. I did what the church always does for a committal service. We gathered in the chapel where the Gospel was read, the Apostles’ Creed was confessed and I explained why it was called the Creed of our baptism. We talked about how the Holy Spirit washes away all our sins through baptism and how we are adopted by God the Father into the family of believers of Jesus as Savior.

Obviously as a result of this funeral event their lives were physically changed but so were they spiritually changed. They said they were not baptized and I said **“we could change that right now? Do you want to be baptized?”** They did, so we went back to the chapel and they were baptized into the life and death of Jesus. They did not have to do a thing but confess and believe what the Holy Spirit already put on their hearts: **“Jesus is my Savior from my sins.”**

Faith is the only amazing life changing event that continues on into eternity and it only comes through God’s enormous Fresh Grace.

LIVE

How do you know you have been saved?

Thinking of someone else who needs his grace? Pray for them, and if you are able, ask them about their heart and faith. Keep looking for natural opportunities to point them to Jesus.

Week 4: Fresh Grace

Day 23 Acts 17 :: An Unknown God Unmasked

by Donna Angott

PRAY

Pray with me please. Dear Heavenly Father, give me the strength to share with others how great and loving you are. Help me to share Christ's story with love and be a true disciple. In your precious name. AMEN

READ

The devotion for today has been influenced by the author of Acts 17. We believe that the author of Acts was Luke, who was a companion to Paul.

What trying times we have had in the past year. Dealing with the COVID-19 Virus and then seeing our Government in a state of disaster. There is so much that is unknown. Paul and Silas also met many trials and tribulations when preaching the Good News that Christ had died and rose again for all mankind to have eternal life. He told the people that these were known facts. Just like today, there were many troublemakers. Men questioned Paul's known facts. Paul, put his trust in God and continued preaching the good news.

I realize that most of us are not going to shout from Van Dyke and Hall Road that Jesus is our Savior. We can live by example. All of us can share Christ's story by showing love and kindness to others. Be the hands and feet of Jesus. Help a friend in need or be a good listener. Maybe invite someone to church or tell them about our online services.

Paul told the people in Athens that we are all the offspring of God. We know that God created us and gives life to all his people. We know that God put us on this earth so that we would seek him and reach out to him. If we would only take the time to listen and trust in God, our life would be so much easier. Most of us are so busy, that we forget that God is in control. Stop, look around and listen. We know the answers are there. We just need to slow down and take the time to hear God's voice.

LIVE

Here are a couple of questions to think about. Is God living and moving in you? Are you setting an example so others can see that God's light is shining through you?

WEEK 4 Fresh Grace

Day 24 Acts 18 :: 1 Mission, More than 1 Trip

by Allie Carr

PRAY

Dear Jesus, help me seize every opportunity you have laid before me in my relationships to share and shine your light to those you know you and to those who don't. Help me to constantly remember that you go before me and continue to fill me more with your spirit so that I may not be afraid. And when I stumble, may I continually seek your forgiveness that you have so graciously given to me. Amen.

READ

Paul was a man on a mission! Actually, many missions, but each with the same goal, to share the Gospel with both Jews and Gentiles. Paul also faced constant adversity as he devoted himself to testify to the work of Jesus, the Messiah. As Paul is wrapping up his second missionary journey he was constantly going to the synagogues on the Sabbath. I'm not sure about you, but if I were trying to share the greatest news and was constantly being shut down, cast away, and attacked, I would be left discouraged and defeated. That seed of doubt would creep in and I'd have to wonder if all my trials were worth it. But in the middle of Acts 18, Paul gets a pep talk from the Lord, "Do not be afraid: keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city (v.9-10).

Jesus' promise recorded in Matthew 28:19-20 holds true for Paul, "I am with you always." Although Paul is on a mission, he has not gone alone. The Lord was with Paul, but we also get a glimpse of the many voices like Paul testifying to the truth and proclaiming Jesus on mission together! Silas and Timothy return from carrying out the same mission in Thessalonica. Priscilla and Aquila traveled with Paul and as they parted ways, the couple met Apollos and invited him into a relationship with them so that he might learn more fully of the mission at hand. Eventually they encouraged him to go out on his own mission to Achaia to prove and proclaim that Jesus is the Messiah.

Paul, Timothy, Silas, Priscilla, Aquila, and Apollos understood the gravity of the situation. They understood the magnitude of the message they were sharing and that Jesus' promises held true, just as they do today. As Christians, we are still on the same mission as Paul, taking many trips or opportunities to show and share the Good News that Jesus is Lord through all of our words and actions! We cannot be silent and need not be afraid as our everyday lives are mission fields. The same power that raised Jesus from the grave is living within each of us, so let us take every

opportunity to shine Jesus' light and share the grace he has so richly poured down to us.

LIVE

In a day and age of quarantines and staying inside, how can we continue to be on mission even from within our homes?

Week 4: Fresh Grace

Day 25 Acts 19 :: Faith and Its Opponent

by Pastor Chris Troxel

PRAY

Holy Spirit, you work faith in me. You open my eyes, mind, and heart to see, believe, and live in truth and grace only you can give. When my faith is challenged, keep holding me, instructing my soul, teaching me to trust and follow you. Amen.

READ

Everyone wanted to hear more about Jesus! Everyone except those who felt threatened by his message. One moment people are thronging to hear more. The next moment a crowd of people want the Jesus-followers dead. How does the gospel threaten? How do God's people exist in such a climate?

The gospel is only threatening if you don't believe it and if others who do believe directly affect how you live. In chapter 19, this dilemma pushes Demetrius and other craftsmen to the brink of a riot. These guys were idol-makers and worshippers of Artemis, a greek goddess. With the Gospel increasing, they saw their business, craft, and beliefs threatened. They just wanted things back the way they were. God's truth frees people from sin, but those who refuse the gift will strongly fight for *their* convictions. So we see Ephesus caught in the middle between the Truth of God and the will of men.

Ephesus as a community is not so different from you and me. If you know and love Jesus, you have God's truth living in you. You and I also have our sinful nature at work, daily resisting and actively rebelling against God's work within us. Our sinful selves believe that if we went back to how life used to be before God, everything would be fine. The lie of sin promises a better life, but in the end only gives death. Paul, the Ephesian believers, and countless others point to the truth God worked in them and now works in you. In Jesus, there is death *and* life. By baptism into him we daily die to sin and its promising lies. In Jesus, "we live and move and have our being."¹ Until Jesus returns, faith will always be opposed. But as we continue to see in Acts, "greater is the one that is in you than the one that is in the world."²

LIVE

Are you feeling opposition to follow Jesus from others or from yourself today? What truth and power is God giving to you to face these challenges? Who else needs this truth from God? What opportunity is God giving you to share it?

¹ Acts 17:28

² 1 John 4:4

Week 4: Fresh Grace

Day 26 Acts 20 :: Love and Good Deeds

by Rev. Chris Troxel

PRAY

Jesus, it's your kindness that moves me to call sin what it is, your love that turns me toward you. Give me vision to see you at work in me and your world to comfort me with your faithfulness, and to build that confidence with ones around me. Amen.

READ

More than ever, we know how much can happen between the last time we see someone and the next. If we know it's going to be a while or if we have no certainty that we'll see someone again, we want them to know everything we hold dear about them and about what's most important in life. We do this because people matter, to God and to us. So we use words and actions to convey the depth of that truth.

Acts 20 is Paul's farewell tour. Somehow he knew he would not pass this way again, so he did everything he could to encourage believers in these communities in the truth of Jesus that brings comfort, courage, and life. He raised back to life a sleepy worshipper who fell three stories, once again demonstrating the power of God. He warned his listeners about other would-be teachers who will come and twist God's truth. He humbly continued to point them to God, knowing that even though he cared deeply for all these people, they were not merely his listeners, they were God's people. So he trusts that God's grace will "build you up and give inheritance" among his saints (v. 32).

Receive a similar encouragement from those words. While you may not be saying goodbye to anyone right now, important relationships will always be a part of your life. God gives you opportunities to speak and show them what is most important in life and faith. Despite teachers twisting truth, despite fellow believers going after teachings that are not Jesus, despite sin and hardships, God desires all to have his "word of grace which is able to build you up and give you the inheritance among the saints".

LIVE

Who holds a special place in your heart today? How can you help them hear or see your love for them? How can you help them hear or see *God's* love for them?

Week 4: Fresh Grace

Day 27 :: Day of Kairos

All time belongs to God. Set aside this day to remind your soul of that truth, that His time is enough, and just what you need. Use this time as a moment to catch up on your reading, pray, and rest in the presence of the Lord. Pray this Word from God for yourself and your community:

“Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.”

—[Acts 16:31](#)

Week 4: Fresh Grace

Day 28: Word of the Week

Memorizing scripture can be intimidating, a hard internal struggle, a joy, a blessing, and a tool to fight darkness and worry with light and peace. During these 6 weeks, make the step to memorize one verse a week, and by the end you will have the whole passage of Acts 13:26-31 written in your mind, and by His grace, on your heart.

*And when they had carried out all that was written of him,
they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb.*

[Acts 13:29](#)

Write this verse down and post it on your mirror or at your desk, in your car or on the fridge—anywhere you'll see it often.

We want to be a community that is intentional about scripture memorization. Will you join us?

Week 5: Fresh Courage

Day 29 Acts 21:1-16 :: Missionaries, Witnesses, and Jerusalem

by Pastor Chad Wright

PRAY

Lord, I often feel unworthy and even cowardly when I have an opportunity to tell others about You. Fill me with Your Spirit and fresh courage, knowing that I am not alone. Give me words to tell others about Your love. Amen.

READ

Lions are courageous. At least, that is what the Wizard of Oz would have us believe. In fact, the reason the cowardly lion sticks out to Dorothy, the Scarecrow and the Tinman, is his lack of courage when confronted for scaring them. Yet, on the journey with the ragtag band to the Emerald City, he finds courage to fight for his friends.

In reading the book of Acts, I would have to say one of the Apostle Paul's greatest strengths is his courage. He stands before courts and kings and tells them about Jesus. He faced beatings, shipwrecks, and even betrayals, but did not give up on his mission. He was courageous for Christ. One might even argue that he was courageous to a fault. In our devotion text, toward the end of his Third Missionary Trip, the Holy Spirit warns him multiple times and in various ways that he should not go up to Jerusalem. In fact, the message came so frequently and with such intensity, Luke records: When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. (NIV Ac 21:12). Imagine that! The "we" included Luke, Timothy, and others who traveled with Paul from the areas he has courageously shared the good news! Paul's response? "Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, "The Lord's will be done.'" (Acts 21:13-14, NIV).

I don't know about you, but in my attempts to be courageous and tell others about Jesus, it has not yet led to needing that much courage. I do know that when I feel the butterflies in my stomach when trying to share the good news with someone, the Holy Spirit always gives me the words just like Jesus promised. Somehow, God gives this sinner fresh courage to tell another sinner about the Savior. He will give you fresh courage too!

LIVE

When was the last time you felt anxious about sharing the good news with someone but pushed through and shared the Gospel?

Week 5: Fresh Courage

Day 30 Acts 21:17-26 :: Witnesses and Warnings

by Pastor Chris Troxel

PRAY

Father, thank you for Jesus. Thank you that he is always enough, and because he is enough I never have to worry or wonder where I stand with you. Help me to see your calls and commands as opportunities to put to work the love you gave me: love for those around me. Amen.

READ

Paul knew something was up. The way he ended his third missionary trip, he knew his life after this moment was going to change. Not knowing exactly what that meant, he still pressed on for the opportunities and priorities God gave him. Visiting Jerusalem and the believers there topped his list at this moment. Giving his mission report, he shared about what God had done through him and what he had seen God do in the communities he visited. Hearing this, Jerusalem leaders were moved to worship. They also gave Paul clarity about attacks on his reputation - attempts to discredit his preaching, and steps to take to refute these false charges.

Paul writes, believes, and teaches that he and we are not under law but under grace. Why does he go along with this law-based ritual in 21:23? To show that Christ fulfilling the law does not mean we are *lawless*. Instead, since Christ is the one who purifies Paul, he can go through the ritual to show that what Christ has done we no longer do to appease God, but we *can* do to comfort our neighbor. I don't love God and love others because I think that makes God happy, but that love can inspire and comfort my neighbor. Christ satisfies God fully. So why still live by those rules? They help us understand how we can avoid sin and love our neighbor. Loving God - honoring him alone, his name, his word; loving others - honoring the authorities God has given, helping care for my neighbors, my family, their earthly gifts, and their reputations describe what God calls us to do each day. But those steps are not my comfort, nor were they Paul's. Our hope in the name of the Lord: Jesus. From that hope we see and act on the opportunities to love God by loving and serving our neighbors. Even the ones trying to kill us. But that's tomorrow's reading :)

LIVE

Why is it tempting to think that the good things we do earn us God's favor? What does Paul's trust in Jesus allow him to do toward those falsely accusing him? What does his example suggest you can do toward others who misjudge you?

Week 5: Fresh Courage

Day 31 Acts 21:27-22:29 :: Giving Witness

by Rev. Chris Troxel

PRAY

Jesus, when I offend someone and I am in the wrong, forgive me. When I offend someone and they are in the wrong, work patience, compassion, and wisdom in me to remember that you died and rose for them and me. Work courage in me to walk through my fears and nerves to speak your truth to whomever I meet. Amen.

READ

Paul was trying to show to those in Jerusalem how he was not a threat to the word of God. Instead he just got into more trouble. Lies have a way of corrupting how our testimony is received. Lies and rejection of the Gospel corrupted how Paul was treated at the temple: a misinformed and misunderstanding crowd *beat* him. Even the authority that “rescued” him thought he was an assassin. How does Paul handle this level of misunderstanding? Speaking of Jesus. Despite the lies and fear working against him, Paul seizes the opportunity to share what exactly God has done through him. In the end, the crowd still rejected him and the gospel. The crowd and those behind the misinformation held onto their conviction of something other than Jesus, attempting their own version of faithfulness.

Maybe you have never been physically injured for the name of Jesus, but maybe you have shared Jesus with someone who could not listen because of how they were mistreated at their last church, or because too many have argued about why they are right, instead of explaining that Jesus is real. Or perhaps someone else has spread something false about Jesus, so when you speak God’s truth, it isn’t received. Too often I listen for a chance to say something instead of listening for the person’s heart. I look for an opportunity to share what I know, instead of speaking of Jesus. May you and I both see Paul’s example of gentle yet bold courage to share Christ’s story. May the love of God always give us the courage to seek to understand the other person and share what they need to hear.

LIVE

What do you need to gently share Jesus with someone, whether they respond in faith or resist it?

Week 5: Fresh Courage

Day 32 Acts 22:30-23:11 :: Fresh Testimony for Old Hold-Outs

by Josh Britton

PRAY

Jesus, when troubles come my way, help me by God's grace to consider it pure joy knowing that you are strengthening me and developing endurance so that my faith might grow. Jesus, may you get all of the honor, glory, and attention in my life. Amen.

READ

Paul was someone well acquainted with suffering and very familiar with having his back against the wall from being in many sticky situations. Oftentimes, especially when we find ourselves in scenarios such as Paul did, it can be really hard to endure. It can be really hard to stand up and do the right thing, to speak the truth in love. Paul had everyone against him as the people that were supposed to be in his corner were literally abusing him both verbally and physically. Yet, Paul stayed faithful.

Often, when God brings us to really tough situations or into seasons with difficult people, we forget to see that it is so that His grace might abound, His will be done, and people come away knowing the saving truth of Jesus Christ. It is not always fun, but enduring by the power of the Holy Spirit is key. We see Paul hanging in there to the point where it says in verse 11 that the Lord came and stood by him and said, "Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome." God might be desiring to use you right now where you find yourself, no matter how hard the situation might be. May you endure by His promised Spirit's power and endurance so that people hear the saving news of Jesus Christ!

LIVE

What challenges has Jesus allowed in your life at the moment? How might Jesus be seeking to use these to make you more like Him and so other people know about Jesus through you?

Week 5: Fresh Courage

Day 33 Acts 23:12-34 :: “...In the Presence of my enemies...”

by Rev. Chris Troxel

PRAY

God, when it seems that everything is against me, help me to remember you are for me. When everything *is* against me, remind me soul to trust that you will walk every step of that road with me. You hold me in the middle of your hand, you surround me with mercy and love. You fill me with your Spirit. Guide my heart through darkness and light. In your name, amen.

READ

Sometimes it feels like everything's out to get you. What do you do when you're surrounded? When David wrote Psalm 23, he wrote “you prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.” For a time I struggled to understand what that meant. Why would God have someone eat when they're surrounded by enemies?

Forty men in Jerusalem were literally out to get Paul. Yet even in the midst of plots, deadly vows, spying, and secrets, God reigns. He made a way for Paul to survive everything stacked against him. He may not have miraculously led Paul out of prison as he did with Peter, but he provided for his survival and safety all the same. Jesus had something he was sending Paul to do.

Though you might have the many forces stacked against you, their power fails in the face of what God wills. Jesus has given you a call, too. Not to be the next Paul, but to be the next person who shares his story with those in need of safety and survival. As long as we draw breath, we have a chance to make known the God who kept giving Paul fresh courage to be his witness. The same Jesus fills all of your needs through His Spirit. That is why he prepares a table, why he invites you to feast even when surrounded. His presence and power bring peace and nourishment, despite what surrounds us.

LIVE

What truths of God speak comfort to your soul? Love? Power? What are simple ways to remind yourself of these life-giving, soul-restoring truths?

Week 5: Fresh Courage

Day 34 :: Day of Kairos

All time belongs to God. Set aside this day to remind your soul of that truth, that His time is enough, and just what you need. Use this time as a moment to catch up on your reading, pray, and rest in the presence of the Lord. Pray this Word from God for yourself and your community:

And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.'

[Acts 22:16](#)

Week 5: Fresh Courage

Day 35: Word of the Week

Memorizing scripture can be intimidating, a hard internal struggle, a joy, a blessing, and a tool to fight darkness and worry with light and peace. During these 6 weeks, make the step to memorize one verse a week, and by the end you will have the whole passage of Acts 13:26-31 written in your mind, and by His grace, on your heart.

But God raised him from the dead,

[Acts 13:30](#)

Write this verse down and post it on your mirror or at your desk, in your car or on the fridge—anywhere you'll see it often.

We want to be a community that is intentional about scripture memorization. Will you join us?

Week 6: Fresh Sacrifice

Day 36 Acts 24: Waiting to be heard

by Pastor Justin Krupsky

PRAY

Father, teach me to depend on you in times of stress. Teach me to pray. Please forgive me when I do not respond with gentleness and respect. Thank you for renewing me moment by moment and help me to always be prepared to share Your Story with Love through the power of your Holy Spirit in Jesus Name. Amen.

READ

“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.”
– 1 Peter 3:15

Have you ever been insulted for having faith in Jesus or even persecuted? As I read Acts 24, I could not help but see Paul responding with gentleness and respect as he defended himself and the Gospel of Jesus. Read it again if you missed it. He was prepared for this path God was leading him on. He was ready to be heard. I wonder how many of us when we are under pressure respond with gentleness and respect. Stress often brings the ugly out, but not for Paul in this moment.

I love what Paul says and certainly was in the business of practicing. It is recorded in Philippians 4:6-7, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” I have no doubt that Paul was praying and that it was the Spirit of God that enabled him to have the gentleness and respect once he spoke.

As I look at my own life as a husband, dad, neighbor, and pastor amongst other paths God has put me on, I am still learning the power of prayer as it pertains to stressful situations. What I do know is that there are trials in every path that God leads us down. Both new and old paths have trials. These trials need to be met with gentleness and respect, both virtues that Jesus lived out and that the Holy Spirit wants to manifest in our lives. These trials that call for sacrifice are new opportunities, beginnings that God wants to use to share His Story through me. Yes, there is forgiveness and new mercy for the times we fail under the trial, but there is also the Spirit of God living in us. Today may God give you a new opportunity to live out your faith with gentleness and respect.

LIVE

How can you bring gentleness to the trial in your life? How can you show respect through the trial?

Week 6: Fresh Sacrifice

Day 37 Acts 25 :: A Witness's Appeal

by Pastor Chad Wright

PRAY

Lord, help me understand all that You have done for me and my salvation. Help me to see the opportunities wherever You place me to share the good news. Bless those with whom I share your message of forgiveness in Jesus to hear, understand and believe it. Amen.

READ

"How did I get myself in this situation?" How many times have you found yourself asking that question?

I wonder if the Apostle Paul ever asked himself that question. In Acts 25, Paul had been held at Caesarea for almost two years. Felix had left him as a prisoner when he ended his term. Festus, the new governor of Judea and Samaria, wanted to start things right. When the Jewish leaders renewed their charges against Paul, Felix asked Paul if he would go back to Jerusalem to stand trial. Paul knew that this would give those who had plotted to take his life another opportunity to kill him. So, he used the one tool he had left – his Roman citizenship and his right to appeal to the highest court in the land. He appealed to Caesar himself! Felix was out of options at that point and could not appease the Jews. He had to send Paul to Rome.

Felix had heard what the dispute was about. "When his accusers got up to speak, they did not charge him with any of the crimes I had expected. Instead, they had some points of dispute with him about their own religion and about a dead man named Jesus who Paul claimed was alive." (Acts 25:18–19, NIV)" Felix had heard the good news about Jesus, but did not understand it. Because of the appeal, Paul would also be able to share that witness now with Caesar, the emperor of the whole Roman world. While Paul was being held, he did not shy away from sharing his faith. He was willing to sacrifice his freedom in order to share the good news in new ways.

LIVE

How do you reconcile incidents like Paul's unjust imprisonment and his martyrdom with the teaching of God's almighty power and rule? What does that teach you about the troubles and suffering in your life?

Week 6: Fresh Sacrifice

Day 38 Acts 26 :: Fresh Yet Familiar

by Pastor Chris Troxel

PRAY

Holy Spirit, you keep revealing more and more of Jesus' story. Help me to keep listening to you and to others as they share their stories with me. Teach my heart what to speak so that someone else would have a fresh start in you. Amen.

READ

We change how we tell stories depending on the audience. When I was a kid, if my siblings and I caused trouble, we told the story of what happened differently to each parent. Why? Because we knew mom would react one way, dad would react a different way. Even the times we told the truth (what?? Kids lie???), we still changed *how* we told the story depending on who was listening.

In Acts 26 Paul shares his story of Jesus all over again. He does this to explain why some voices in his own religion (Christianity was considered another part within Jewish faith, like the Pharisees or Saducees)¹ rose up against him. He also does this to testify about the power of God in his life, to bring that power to bear in King Agrippa's life. With King Agrippa hearing his case, Paul not only has a fresh opportunity to show his innocence, but also a new chance for the Spirit to work through him in the lives of others in that room. Paul may not share some different details that Luke previously recorded and leave out some others that Luke included, but these minor changes all point to the one truth: Jesus rose from the dead, and he called Paul to be a witness. He calls you, too. As you grow in learning all the pieces and parts of Jesus' story, your story, and the story of others, may God also help you discern and trust the Spirit as he prompts you to share those stories to provide others what they need from Him.

LIVE

When a whole story takes too long for the time you have, how do you decide what to share? How can that help you share Christ's story with love?

¹ Lutheran Study Bible, footnote on Acts 24:5

Week 6: Fresh Sacrifice

Day 39 Acts 27 :: Going Where God Sends Us

by Pastor Lew Stier

PRAY

Heavenly Father, you map out my life living in faith and sometimes you ask me to go to a place I may not want to go because it might mean I have to sacrifice something I want to keep. Give me the courage to listen for your voice and go with confidence you will protect me. In Jesus holy name, Amen.

READ

Growing up on the waters of Lake St. Clair meant I have seen many storms that seem to creep up out of nowhere. As a teenager I got caught in one of those storms. I had taken my sister, her friend and my best friend Darryl out in a 14 foot aluminum boat with an outboard motor. We went across Big Muskemoot Bay and went to the shipping channel where there is a beach on Sea Way Island. A storm seemed to pop up out of nowhere and we had to get back.

The waters had waves the size I had never seen and we judged that 4 people in the boat was too dangerous. So I left Darryl and took my sister and her friend back to our cottage and then returned for Darryl. It was two very tough trips. I was praying the whole time as I battled the boat hitting the waves. I was actually afraid. Well it turned out good for us; no one was hurt or worse, lost at sea. But I never want to go through something like that again.

This event for me and the one Paul was on in the text for this devotion is a lot like our spiritual journey living as a believer in Jesus. For the most part we choose where we will go. But there are times when God informs our heart of faith to “go” to where He wants us to go.” Now this might mean we end up having to go through a storm we think we cannot handle. So we have to stop and think God would never send us anywhere on our own to fend for ourselves.

Now an angel probably will not speak to us like Paul but in faith we will know our safety and protection comes from “the God to whom we belong and serve and He will be standing beside us the entire way” (vs. 23).

So keep your courage up and go where he sends you today.

LIVE

There are stories throughout God’s Word that show how God is with us in the midst of danger, how he leads us through, how he can do the impossible. Reflect on your own life: what has God brought you through? How does this give you courage to go?

Week 6: Fresh Sacrifice

Day 40 Acts 28 :: A Faithful Witness

by Pastor Justin Krupsky

PRAY

God, act through me. Give me boldness. Help me to overcome my fears with the gift of faith that you have given me. Thank you for fresh starts and new beginnings. In Jesus name, Amen.

READ

He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance – Acts 28:31

Today we are ending our 40 day devotional journey together through the 28 chapters of Acts. We have seen that Jesus' words to the disciples to go to all nations with the Gospel culminate in Acts with the start of the church in Rome. What happened in the early church is incredible. I will also say this is happening in the people of God today: His church now is also incredible. Your life and my life matter because He is still acting through us.

As we began our devotional time together we asked: What new kingdom path is God leading you down? So has it been or maybe still what will it be? Boldness is a great way to describe what we saw in Acts and boldness is a great word that I hope describes you and me. It is not obnoxious, but bold, which means courageous. Courage is staying faithful through the fear. Boldness that comes from the Gospel: our God lives. He rose from the dead! He is risen! Boldness that moves through fear and past failure filled with the hope of life. A bold life that God has created us to live out one moment at a time, one day a time. A bold life full of meaning and purpose as we love our neighbors through actions and words, words that give life, words spoken when we pray over people, and words spoken when we share the good news of Jesus. These are bold words. We are not separated from God. Jesus reconciled us through His death on the cross. God is with us!

There are still so many people, neighbors, co-workers, and family members that do not have the hope that you and I have. They have walked away from faith in Jesus, are barely hanging on to it, or perhaps have never heard it. God wants to use you and me to give the world the fresh start, the new beginning that comes every moment of every day through Jesus.

The Acts of the Holy Spirit have not stopped, they have only begun. May you be a faithful witness.

LIVE

Who is it in your life that you need to courageously share Jesus with?

Week 6: Fresh Courage

Day 41 :: Day of Kairos

All time belongs to God. Set aside this day to remind your soul of that truth, that His time is enough, and just what you need. Use this time as a moment to catch up on your reading, pray, and rest in the presence of the Lord. Pray this Word from God for yourself and your community:

He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

[Acts 28:30-31](#)

Week 6: Fresh Courage

Day 42 :: Word of the Week

Memorizing scripture can be intimidating, a hard internal struggle, a joy, a blessing, and a tool to fight darkness and worry with light and peace. During these 6 weeks, make the step to memorize one verse a week, and by the end you will have the whole passage of Acts 13:26-31 written in your mind, and by His grace, on your heart.

and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people.

[Acts 13:31](#)

Write this verse down and post it on your mirror or at your desk, in your car or on the fridge—anywhere you'll see it often.

We want to be a community that is intentional about scripture memorization. Will you join us?