

Never Ending Story
Acts 28:11-31
Small Group Guide

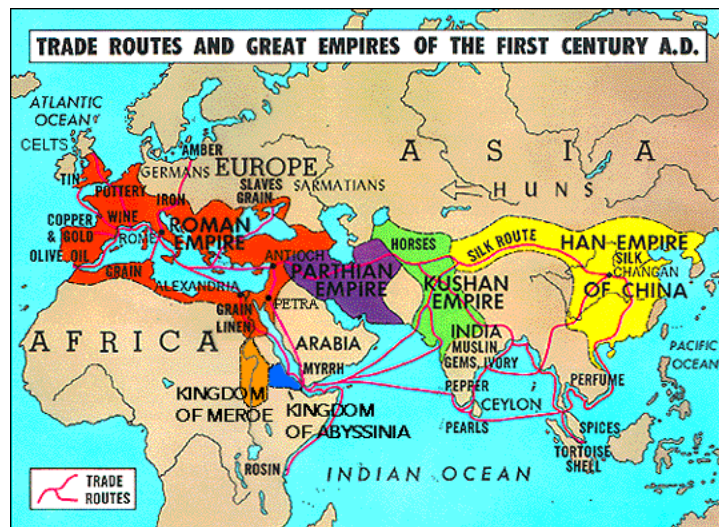
Opening question:

- Other than the Christian faith, what is the most significant event/ideal/mission in which you've ever been involved? What made it so significant or important?

Optional Reading for Background: Today we're concluding our study of Acts. In case you haven't been around during this series, Luke, the author of Acts, is showing us how the promise that Jesus made his very first followers right before he left the earth comes true. That promise can be found in Acts 1:8. He told them that they would be empowered by the Holy Spirit, and then they would be his witnesses — that they would tell people about his life, death, and resurrection, and the new life that he offers. This witness would start in Jerusalem, but eventually extend to peoples of every ethnicity in the farthest corners of the world.

When he first made that prediction, it seemed like a pipe dream. What are the chances that people will believe in a guy who supposedly rose from the dead? But against all odds, we've watched this mission of God move forward in strategic places throughout the Roman Empire. Paul, the man who has primarily been taking this message to new places in the second half of Acts, has been longing to get to Rome, the capital of the Empire. It was the crossroads of the world—the most influential city of all.

1. From the attached maps, you can see the scope of the Roman world in the first century A.D. — Southern Europe, Northern Africa, Southwest Asia and Western Middle East. Like the U.S. today, the first century Romans were the greatest power at that time, and the city of Rome was their capital. Similarly, New York City is the most significant city in the U.S. If a wave of Christian revival happened there, how might it affect our world today?



Now that you have a grasp of the background, TAKE TURNS READING ACTS 28:11-31

2. Despite the beatings, imprisonment, court cases, and shipwrecks, we see in vv. 30-31 that Paul was finally able to speak freely about Christ in Rome (and for two whole years). Thus, Pastor Josh's first point of his sermon was that **"You are invited to see your Plan B as God's Plan A....** When your life is aligned with God's mission, your greatest disappointments will often become your greatest opportunities."

 - a. Reflecting back, do you have any disappointments in your life's mission (your Christian service and/or your secular vocation/avocation) that could possibly be part of God's Plan A for your life? Have you seen or can you imagine a larger purpose God has by allowing these disappointments?
 - b. Note that God's promise that Paul would preach in Rome did not include the detail that Paul would arrive as a prisoner. How might it be in our best interest for God not to give us all the information that we might want about our purpose and role in life?
 - c. Is there any disappointment with your life's mission that you're having a hard time releasing to God? How can we help you or pray for you?
 - d. From Philippians 2, listen to what Paul says, as he speaks about his two year imprisonment in Rome, then answer the following: What would help us have an eternal perspective more like Paul's?

12 Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. **13** As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. **14** And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

3. Look at v. 31 again: "He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!" So here's the invitation that Luke leaves us (and Josh's 2nd point of his sermon): **You are invited to join your life to the unstoppable mission of God.**
 - a. Can you see yourself in the ongoing story of proclaiming the arrival of God's kingdom in Jesus Christ? If not, what is prohibiting you? If so, please describe.
 - b. Part of being able to share the good news of Jesus is to experience this good news yourself. Is Jesus good news to you? If not, what do you think is getting in the way?
 - c. Another part of being able to share the story of Jesus' death so that we might live is being aware of your gifts and your role in the kingdom. What gifts, strengths, and even personality do you think God has given you in order to serve the kingdom?¹
 - d. If you said "Yes," and stood up during the response time Sunday, what do you sense that some next steps might be in your journey of obedience to God?
4. **Share and Pray:** Among our prayer requests, as we close our study of Acts, let's pray that God will clarify how we are to serve in his kingdom, how we are to share the good news of Christ to others, and/or how we might see disappointments and suffering as part of God's Plan A for our lives.

¹ If you a little fuzzy here, you might consider taking the "Thriving in Ministry" class the next time it is offered.

