

True and Reasonable
Acts 23:12-26:32
Small Group Guide

Opening question:

- How would you define “reasonable”? Who is the most reasonable person you know?

INTRODUCTION (TAKE TURNS READING): Today we will focus on Chapter 26 where Paul presents the gospel in order to defend himself against the charge of corrupting the Jewish faith. Off and on since September of 2014, we’ve been looking at the book of Acts, which follows the beginnings of the Christian movement. Luke, the writer of Acts, begins with how Peter and other Jerusalem converts brought the gospel to the area in and around the nation of Israel. Then, he tells of how Paul is commissioned to bring the gospel to the greater Euro Asia area. Paul did this via three missionary journeys and then, prompted by God, had returned to Jerusalem.

We left off last week when some Jews in Jerusalem stirred up a mob, which beat Paul. Paul was rescued from them by Roman soldiers and brought to the Jewish religious elite. Paul made his defense and explained the gospel, but they became divided and hostile. Paul was rescued from them also and put in jail, but then Jesus appeared to him to confirm that Paul would be his witness in Rome.

Our passage (23:12 and following), begins on the next day when some Jews plot to kill Paul. Discovering this, Roman soldiers transport Paul from Jerusalem to Caesarea. Over the next two years, Paul is able to make his defense and thus share the gospel with two governors (Felix and Festus) and a king (Agrippa)! His defense before King Agrippa is where we come in.

Now that you have a grasp of the background, TAKE TURNS READING Acts 26. Keep in mind Question #1 below.

1. As you are listening to Acts 26, how would you summarize the gospel of Christ?
 - a. What are significant and timeless elements of the gospel that are crucial for any culture or generation to know?
 - b. How did Paul specifically customize his presentation of the gospel for King Agrippa? How does this equip us to customize our gospel presentation today?
 - c. What obstacle did Paul face when presenting the gospel to King Agrippa? How did he deal with it?
 - d. What can we learn about how we might deal with obstacles to the gospel?
2. Paul keeps focusing more on the gospel than on defending himself.
 - a. Are there times when you focus more on defending yourself than explaining the gospel (or sharing it)?
 - b. What can we learn from Paul in this regard?

3. In last Sunday's sermon, Andy said, "If Jesus really rose from the dead that changes EVERYTHING, starting with our whole purpose in this life, and what it all means. It changes how we see ourselves and treat others."
 - a. What areas of your life do you think align well with the gospel, where your perspective or actions have changed?
 - b. Where in your life are there areas that are resistant to change, where you're not acting as if you really believe in a sovereign, loving God?
 - c. What do you think holds you back from fully believing and incorporating these changes?
4. Andy outlined four possible responses to the gospel. They are described below (a-d).
 - Think of the person whom you most want to know Christ. Which of these do you see in that person's life? How might we get past these obstacles?
 - Does one of these responses characterize your own response to Jesus at present?
 - a. Feel that you are not good enough to be allowed in.
 - b. "When I find it convenient, I'll send for you."
 - c. Procrastinate: Push the decision for Christ or our relationship with Christ down the road.
 - d. We let our good standing and reputation limit our ability to accept Christ (like King Agrippa).
5. What if God sent out a Holy Spirit prompting (sort of like a spiritual email blast) that said Jesus was coming in 3 minutes. Take some time to yourself, write out, and practice what you would say to the person you love most about the gospel of Christ if you only had 3 minutes before his Second Coming.
 - a. Let's share our 3 minute stories/gospel presentations with each other.
6. **Share and Pray:** Among our other prayer requests, let's pray for specific people that we want to know the Lord and pray for how we can be better involved in God's unstoppable mission to share the gospel in Long Island and the world.