

BGCC Community Group Guide



Acts: Without Hindrance

July 5th, 2026

Acts 25-26

Section 1 – The Gospel Is Always on Trial...and So Are We

Acts 26:24-29

"Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?" —
King Agrippa

Summary

Throughout the book of Acts, it seems as though Christianity is constantly on trial. Peter, John, Stephen, and now Paul repeatedly stand before councils, governors, kings, and crowds to defend the gospel. Yet if we look more closely, something unexpected happens every time.

The people questioning the gospel end up being questioned by it.

Governor Festus begins convinced that Paul has lost his mind. King Agrippa listens with curiosity but quickly becomes uncomfortable when Paul makes the message personal. Neither man simply evaluates Paul's testimony—they are themselves confronted by the claims of Christ.

This pattern reaches back to Jesus' own ministry. Whenever people questioned Him, He exposed something deeper. The Pharisees' pride, Pilate's fear, Herod's selfishness, the thief's repentance, and the centurion's faith all surfaced when they encountered Jesus. As Hebrews 4:12 reminds us, *"The word of God is alive and active...it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."*

As C. S. Lewis wrote, *"Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance."*

The gospel never leaves us where it found us. It always presses us toward a decision.
Acceptance or denial

Group Question

Why do you think people often try to evaluate Jesus without allowing Jesus to evaluate them?

Personal Relevance

It is surprisingly easy to study Christianity without allowing it to change us. We can discuss theology, attend church, read books, and even lead Bible studies while quietly avoiding the deeper questions God wants to ask our own hearts. It is also surprising how much of our Bible reading can be done on autopilot.

The goal of Scripture is not simply information but transformation. Every time we open God's Word, we should expect Him to reveal something about Himself—and something about us.

Flow Question

When you read Scripture, do you primarily look for information or transformation?

Reflection Question

Has there been a time when God's Word exposed something in your heart that you hadn't recognized before? Was it difficult to surrender? Did you?

Section 2 – Every Heart Responds to Jesus

Acts 26:19-23

"I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven."

Summary

Paul could have spent his trial proving his innocence. Instead, he chose to tell the story of how Jesus changed his life. That decision reveals something profound. Paul believed that his greatest need wasn't to win his case—it was to help people meet Christ.

As Paul shared his testimony, each listener revealed what was already happening inside their heart.

Festus dismissed the gospel as foolishness.

Agrippa resisted because belief would require surrender.

Felix (from the previous chapter) delayed because conviction made him uncomfortable.

Others throughout Acts believed immediately, while still others grew angry.

The responses differed, but no one remained neutral. Jesus explained this reality to Nicodemus when He said, *"Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light"* (John 3:19). Light always reveals what darkness hides.

*"I am not what I ought to be...but by the grace of God I am not what I once was." -
John Newton*

The gospel exposes us, but only so it can heal us.

Group Question

Looking at the different responses in Acts, why do you think two people can hear the exact same gospel message yet respond so differently?

Personal Relevance

Most people assume rejection of Christ happens because of a lack of evidence. More often, Scripture suggests it happens because surrender feels costly. We love our current life more.

Following Jesus means allowing Him to challenge our priorities, our pride, our habits, and our self-sufficiency. That can feel uncomfortable. Yet conviction is not condemnation. God exposes our hearts because He loves us enough to transform them.

Flow Question

Why do you think conviction often feels uncomfortable even though it is an act of God's grace?

Reflection Question

Is there an area where you've sensed God calling you to change but have found yourself resisting?

Section 3 – The Question Is No Longer About Paul

Acts 26:28-29

"Whether short or long—I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains."

Summary

One of the most beautiful moments in this passage comes near the end of Paul's defense. Standing before powerful government officials with his own freedom hanging in the balance, Paul stops defending himself altogether.

Instead, he begins inviting them to follow Jesus. That tells us something about Paul's heart. Winning an argument mattered far less than winning people. He wasn't interested in merely being declared innocent. He wanted Festus, Agrippa, Bernice, the soldiers, and everyone listening to experience the same grace that had transformed him.

This reflects the heart of Christ Himself. Jesus did not come simply to prove He was right. He came to seek and save those who were lost (Luke 19:10).

As Charles Spurgeon once said,

"Every Christian is either a missionary or an impostor."

Paul saw every courtroom, every prison, every conversation, and every hardship as another opportunity to point people toward Jesus. The same calling belongs to every believer today.

Group Question

What stands out to you about Paul's concern for the spiritual condition of the people who were judging him?

Personal Relevance

Most of us naturally think about difficult people as obstacles.

Paul viewed them as opportunities. The coworker who challenges your beliefs. The skeptical family member. The friend who keeps asking hard questions. The neighbor who disagrees with

your convictions. Rather than seeing them as enemies to defeat, Paul reminds us to see them as people Christ loves.

Sometimes the most powerful witness isn't having every answer. Sometimes it's simply telling your story with humility, patience, and genuine love.

Flow Question

How would your relationships change if you viewed difficult people as opportunities for God to work rather than interruptions to avoid?

Reflection Question

Who is one person God may be inviting you to pray for or intentionally share your story with this week?

Conclusion

Acts 25 and 26 leave us with one unavoidable truth:

The gospel always demands a response.

That was true for Festus, Agrippa, Felix, the religious leaders, the thief on the cross, the Roman Centurion, and us. The question isn't whether we have heard about Jesus. The question is what we will do with Him.

Jesus still asks the same question He asked His disciples:

"Who do you say I am?" (Matthew 16:15)

That question cannot be answered by our parents' faith, our church attendance, our knowledge of the Bible, or our religious background. It is deeply personal. As Tim Keller once wrote,

"Jesus doesn't simply ask us to believe ideas about Him; He calls us to trust Him with our lives."

As you leave today, prayerfully consider these questions:

- What response has Jesus been drawing out of my heart lately?
- Is there any area where I am resisting what God is showing me?
- Who in my life needs to hear not only what I believe, but what Jesus has personally done for me?

Every time we encounter Christ through His Word, our hearts are being examined by His grace. Rather than hiding from that work, may we welcome it—allowing Him to expose what needs healing, strengthen what is weak, and draw us into deeper trust. Because in the end, the most important question is not, **"What do I think about Jesus?"** It is, **"What will I do with Him?"**