Small Group Study Guide
Series: **UNSEEN**
Sermon 23: WHEN DARKNESS GETS RELIGIOUS
Not Militant, but Mighty Through God!
November 22, 2026 | CrossPointe Church
Tracy "PT" Pounders, Pastor

◆ INTRODUCTION

Saul held the coats while Stephen died for speaking about Jesus. Years later, Paul stood before a crowd who wanted to kill him and Paul asked for a chance to speak. What happened between those two moments? Jesus showed him mercy. That mercy gives us an answer when deception clouds the gospel, shame tells us to stay quiet, or anger makes us forget who's listening.

◆ KEY SCRIPTURES

- **Acts 21:17–30, 37–40 —** A rumor about Paul sparks a beating. Paul asks permission to address the crowd.
- **Acts 22:6–10, 19–22 —** Paul recalls meeting Jesus, approving Stephen's death, and being sent to the Gentiles.
- **Ephesians 6:11–12, 18–20 —** Paul names our spiritual enemy and asks for prayer to speak boldly.
- **Revelation 12:3–5, 7–11, 17 —** The dragon accuses believers. They overcome by the Lamb's blood and their testimony.
- **2 Corinthians 11:4, 14 —** A different gospel can sound convincing. Even Satan can disguise himself as an angel of light.
- **1 Corinthians 15:3–8, 17 —** Christ died for our sins, was buried, rose again, and appeared to witnesses. Our forgiveness rests on His resurrection.
- **Colossians 2:13–15 —** At the cross, God canceled the debt the accuser holds against us.
- **2 Corinthians 10:3–5 —** God gives us power to challenge arguments and bring our thoughts into obedience to Christ.
- **2 Timothy 1:7 —** God gives His people power, love, and self-control when fear presses in.
- **2 Timothy 2:24–26 —** The Lord's servant corrects opponents gently, trusting God to grant repentance.

◆ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Some men saw Paul with Trophimus in Jerusalem and assumed Paul had taken him into the temple. How might the crowd have responded if someone had asked, ***"Did anyone actually see Paul take him inside?"*** When a clip shows up on social media with a caption accusing someone of wrongdoing, what should you ask before you pass it along? *(Acts 21:27–30)*
2. A friendly Muslim says, ***"We honor Jesus, too."*** What could a Christian ask to understand what the Muslim means? How could a Christian explain why the cross and the empty tomb matter to them personally? *(1 Corinthians 15:3–8, 17)*
3. If a speaker you love and admire says, ***"The Holy Spirit told me,"*** is it appropriate to ask, ***"Can you show me where the Bible teaches that?"*** Why or why not? How would you decide the best time and place to ask, and what attitude should you bring to that conversation? *(2 Corinthians 11:4, 14)*

4. Someone says, ***"If my family heard me talk about Jesus, they'd bring up my past."*** What does Paul's willingness to mention Stephen teaches us about transparency and accountability of both guilt and forgiveness? Do you consider yourself honest, transparent and accountable? In what way? *(Acts 22:19–20 and Colossians 2:13–15)*

5. PT describes repeating a true story about someone who hurt him. When does sharing what happened serve the listener, and when does it become a way to make the other person pay? *(2 Corinthians 10:3–5)*

6. Picture a heated city council meeting about approving a mosque in your community for construction. A Christian has three minutes at the microphone and gets interrupted repeatedly and called an Islamophobe. What could the speaker say next that would let even the person interrupting hear something of Jesus? *(2 Timothy 1:7 and 2:24–26)*

7. As Stephen was being stoned, he asked the Lord to forgive the people attacking him. When you watch a Christian debate someone online, what do you listen for in the way that Christian speaks to the other person? How does Stephen's prayer shape your answer? *(Acts 7:59–60 and Revelation 12:10–11)*

8. A teenager hears the adults at supper talk about politics every night but has never heard how they came to faith in Christ. Why do you think that happens? If that teenager were at your table tonight, what would you tell them about how you came to trust Jesus? What detail from your story might invite them to consider Jesus in their life? *(Acts 22:6–10)*

◆ PT's BEST QUOTES

- *"How do you stand firmly for Jesus when fear is pushing you toward silence and anger is pushing you toward a fight?"*
- *"I'll defend this Gospel because I need this Gospel."*
- *"The men holding the stones could decide whether he lived through the day. They couldn't decide to whom he belonged."*
- *"Self-control lets him finish his sentence when I'm itching to interrupt."*
- *"When you are on your knees, fully surrendered to God, you are standing your ground against the devil."*

◆ ACTION PROMPTS

- **PUT IT IN YOUR OWN WORDS.** Read 1 Corinthians 15:3–8 with someone at home. In two or three sentences, tell them what Jesus did and why you trust Him. Give them room to ask a question.
- **PRAY BEFORE YOU SPEAK.** Name one person you hope to talk with this week. Ask a friend to pray for your courage and your conduct. When the opportunity comes, hear the person out, share your hope in Jesus, and invite them to sit with you Sunday at CrossPointe.

◆ CLOSING PRAYER

Father, give us discernment when a lie sounds religious. Keep us diligent in Your Word so we guard the faith You've entrusted to us. When shame brings up our past, remind us what Jesus paid for at the cross.

Ground the next generation in the New Testament faith. Let them hear what Jesus has done in our own lives. Holy Spirit, give us courage to invite someone to CrossPointe this Sunday and love enough to save them a seat. In Jesus' name, amen.

PLEASE!!! TAKE A GROUP PICTURE AND TAG PT AND TABATHA ON SOCIAL MEDIA