

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you talk about God's word and Pastor Brian's message with friends and family. You of course can use your own questions, but we'd like to give you this tool to encourage Biblical fellowship and discipleship in your circle of relationships. We hope you are well and discovering new ways to relate to God and His Word.

"OH, LORD, PLEASE DON'T LET ME BE MISUNDERSTOOD" | ACTS 21: 17-38 | PASTOR BRIAN

WARM-UP QUESTION:

What is the most awkward misunderstanding that you've ever heard of?

***"Misinterpretation"* - (Acts 21: 17-26)**

Paul's ministry to the gentiles was misinterpreted as a lack of respect for Jews. What are wise ways to handle being misunderstood? Unwise ways?

***"Mistreatment"* - (Acts 21: 27-32)**

Some people gave into their suspicions, exaggerated and overreacted what Paul was doing and had him arrested. What are some causes of suspicions, exaggerations, and overreactions? What are some other effects?

***"Mistaken "* - (Acts 21: 33-40)**

Paul has been mistaken for an assassin and been beaten, yet calmly asks to speak to the crowd. How much of a struggle do you have with misunderstandings? What has helped you have peace during those times?

REFLECTION QUESTION:

Throughout this arrest and false accusations, we see Paul seeking to show respect to his enemies, first by observing Jewish customs and second by wanting to talk to them. Misunderstandings are even more common in our high tech and media rich society. What about your character have recent misunderstandings revealed about your character? How can you let God give you love for your enemies during these times?

Oh Lord, please don't let me be misunderstood

I. Slide1 **Announce:**

- A. *Slide2-7 Lar & AL: Giving Tree. C@R. New Service Times. Xmas Eve Times. Wed Night. Survey.*
- B. *Slide8,9 New Web Site & Ch App: Download CM App. Built in Bible App/also can listen to it. Listen to any messages you've missed: audio/video/speed me up/take notes/share it/download it. Events. As for Giving, if signed up on old web site no problem will continue. And the new web/App can give on also.*

C. **Prayer:**

II. Slide10 **Intro:** *Oh Lord, please don't let me be misunderstood*

- A. Here we have the conclusion of Paul's 3rd missionary journey.
 - 1. All told, this journey, *which began in Antioch and ends in Jerusalem, covered 2,700 miles*, over the course of approximately **3 years**.
- B. As Paul arrives in Jerusalem, he is *greeted warmly* by the Christ-followers there. *However*, as predicted, there are also plenty of people who are *not happy to see him*.
- C. **Misunderstanding!** - *The Animals*, as part of the *British Invasion* in 1964, made popular the song, *I'm just a soul whose intentions are good, Oh Lord, please don't let me be misunderstood.*
- D. Can you think of any **bible characters** that were misunderstood?
 - 1. There was **Noah** and the ark-builder from the people pretty much labeled crazy. There was **David** the giant-killer took him king Saul deemed overly ambitious. There was impulsive **Moses** to whom the Hebrew said, *are you intending to kill me, as you kill the Egyptian?* And the visionary **Joseph** to whom his brothers said, *here comes the dreamer.*
 - 2. We will ALL deal with being **misunderstood**...even when you're just a soul whose intentions are good.

3. In 2014 I had a *Christian ministry* call me a Communist because I quoted Lenin in my notes I post online. I wrote to them & asked if they actually read my quote. They said, *it didn't matter, I shouldn't have quoted him.*
 - a) My quote: Lenin the implementer of Communism in the Soviet Union, while meeting with a small group of people in London in the early 1900's set down these **4 Totals:** [1] Total acceptance of the cause [2] Total dedication to the cause [3] Total discipline in the cause [4] Total action for the cause.
 - (1) *I said, What was terrible for the cause of communism, is beautiful to the cause of Christianity. Everything devoted to loving God.*
 - (2) *"It does not take much of a man to be a believer, but it takes all there is of him."*
4. Our **reaction** to misunderstanding says much more about our character than whatever action triggered it. *Let's learn from Paul how to handle this...* READ 17-26

III. Slide11a MISINTERPRETATION (17-26)

- A. A rumor about Paul has been spreading among the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.
 1. The rumor included Paul told the Jews up north *to forsake Moses, not to circumcise, and not to follow Jewish customs.* (21)
 2. Of course this accusation was unfounded.
 - a) He had told **the Gentiles** that they did not have to become **Jews** to be saved (which the Jerusalem council had backed).
 - b) **However**, he had never stopped **the Jews** from continuing their religious traditions after salvation.
 3. **So**, vs.21 **they had been told** - but who told them? What was the evidence? Where are the witnesses? The accusations were based solely on hearsay and gossip.

- B. So how did Paul show his great **character** in this? By simply *listening* as the leaders formulated a plan to challenge the churches misconceptions. He simply *asked a question* in vs.22 what then is to be done?
1. They respond, **do what we tell you.**
 2. They recommended that **Paul** participate in this custom, **then** he could demonstrate his **respect** for the Jewish believers **and**, by his **actions**, ***silence the rumors.***
 3. Slide11b 1 Cor.9:19,20 ***For though I am free from all (men), I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. 20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law.*** [win 5 x's in 19-22]
- C. As Paul is dousing the flames of **false accusations** among the Christian Jews, a group of **non-Christian Jews** began lighting more fires while his back was turned.¹ **READ 27-32**
- #### IV. Slide12a **MISTREATMENT (27-32)**
- A.(27) Laid hands on him. These **Asian Jews** have been seeing their own following dwindle **and** on the other hand watched as **thousands** were now **believing in Christ.**
1. Filled with resentment they looked for the opportunity to get rid of Paul. **Now** with Paul on their turf, **&** surrounded by **the most zealous Jews** in the world, **their chance had come!**
- B. Slide12b **1st Tactic, exaggerate the truth.** (28a) ***This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law and this place.*** **And** the Temple Jews swallow these lies **hook, line, & sinker.**
1. **Why is it we always want to believe the worse about others, especially friends?** Can our 1st response be...when we **hear a rumor, well let's wait and see if it's even true.** What happened to innocent till proven guilty?

¹ Charles Swindoll, Acts 21.

C. **2nd Tactic, be suspicious.** (28b,29) *Moreover, he even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place. 29 For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple.* [wait, what? they supposed that...they assumed]

1. Had they actually seen him do it? No. They merely suspected that he had. They were basing a charge on *circumstantial evidence*.

D. **3rd Tactic, overreact.** (30-32) *exaggeration often leads to suspicion, and then suspicion leads to an overreaction which in this case was almost murder.*

1. Now, like a frenzy pack of coyotes that just got ahold of a rabbit, they begin tearing into Paul.

V. Slide13a MISTAKEN (33-40)

A. How ironic, God using a gentile commander to rescue his Jewish apostle.

B. **Slide13b The Inquiry** (34-36) *who he was and what he had done.*

1. These raging people must have reminded Paul of those who had chanted *Crucify Him! Crucify Him!* at Jesus.

C. **His Identity** (37-39) he thought he knew who he was. *Are you not the Egyptian, then, who recently stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?* [I thought you were the Egyptian assassin! No, I'm straight out of Compton/Cilicia.]

1. Assassins were men “*armed w/short daggers under their cloaks, who mingled w/the crowd, struck down their opponents, then pretended to call for help.*” From Josephus, Wars of the Jews, II, 13, 5.

2. Josephus goes on to give a little more back story. The Egyptian mentioned was a Jew who proclaimed himself as a prophet. He gathered a large following intending to lead them to the Mount of Olives promising that at his command the walls of Jerusalem would collapse. His force was attacked by Felix but the Egyptian himself escaped.²

² Fritz Rienecker, A Linguistic Key to the Gk NT. pg.323.

D. Despite the ridiculous allegations, Paul reacts calmly. He says *permit me to speak to the people.*

1. Paul's trust in Christ soothes **any fears or frustrations**, **and** he's able to face his enemies with **open arms** and **an open heart**.

E. Next week will look at *Paul's words to the people*, **but** let's reflect on what we've learned so far.

F. **Slide14a 3 things about Misunderstanding:**

1. **The reality** of it is inescapable - even when we have ***the best intentions***, our **words** and **actions** can & often will be **misunderstood**, ***it's inevitable***.

2. **The reason** for it is often unpredictable - the **source** of the misunderstanding is something ***we can never fully anticipate***.

3. **Our reaction** to it can be questionable - when it comes, our **reaction** to it will illuminate the **truth** about **our character**.

a) We might be tempted to don our ***martyr's sackcloth & ashes*** and sulk and have a pity party.

b) We might be tempted to put on our ***battle fatigues*** & prepare for war.

(1) But the right response is ***to face our accusers with a loving heart***, an option that is **only possible** if we **cast ourselves into the nail-scarred hands of Christ**, who knows above all others ***what it is like to be misunderstood***.

(2) **Slide14b** Paul never lost his **head** because his **heart** was fixed on God.

G. **When you're misunderstood:** Don't retaliate. Seek to clear up the misunderstanding.

Don't allow your emotions to blur your judgment. Listen and agree to a plan to correct the peoples thinking. Don't be vindictive, but loving. Help people to resolve their anger and trust Christ. Don't run from your accusers, but face them directly.

And whatever the outcome, ***have a settled confidence in God***.

H. **Keywords:** Paul, Acts 21, misunderstood, misunderstanding, misinterpretation, mistreatment, mistaken, Jerusalem,