

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.

"GO BIG OR GO HOME" | ACTS 25 | PASTOR BRIAN

WARM-UP QUESTION:

What's your favorite story or experience with jury duty?

"Paul Meets Festus" - (Acts 25: 1-12)

In verse 6 we see Paul is brought to trial again before many of the same people. What are ways it is difficult to fight the same struggles repeatedly? What are ways to handle fighting the same struggle repeatedly?

In verse 10-11 we see Paul works within the legal system despite his unjust treatment. How can people today work within the government system while still holding onto their faith?

"Paul Meets Agrippa" - (Acts 25: 13-27)

In verse 23 it shows Paul's trial has become an excuse for Agrippa and others to gain attention and be entertained. Has your misfortune ever been someone else's entertainment? How do you react to the drama of someone else's problems?

REFLECTION QUESTION:

Pastor Brian points out Jesus warned that his followers would stand trial before powerful leaders and officials which involves all kinds of issues: special rules and laws, long delays, explaining and arguing over and over again, and many others. Jesus said not to worry for the Holy Spirit would be there. Have you trusted God to be with you in your struggles lately? What would need to change in your life to allow the Holy Spirit to lead you more?

Go Big or Go Home

I. Slide1 Announce:

- A. Slide2-9 AP: Missions Prayer. BCC. MOMS. Ladies. DC. Poverty. CG. *Video*.
- B. Slide10 Tues Night Men's Group - Come explore the story of a God who loves us, longs to be known by us, and ultimately invites us into His story. *Register* right on the CM app. Starts Feb.9. Every Tues 7pm. *Meet every other Tues in sanctuary & in small groups.*
- C. Slide11 JM10 - next Sunday at both our 9 & 11am services. Our theme, *Let Justice Roll*. Our guest speaker this year will be **Dr. Sandra Morgan**. She has learned much as *Co-Chair of the Public-Private Partnership Advisory Council in Washington DC*, being at the table with these leaders. *We are excited to hear all she has learned and what role we can play in the fight against injustice.*
- D. Join me *Weds night 7pm* as we journey through **James** (2nd ½ of ch.2).
- E. Pray:

II. Slide12 Intro: Go Big or Go Home

- A. Slide13 Dr.Seuss wrote his last book (1990) from a speech he gave at a graduation. *Oh, the Places You'll Go!* The book concerns the journey of life and its challenges. (Front Flap reads: For out-starting upstarts of all ages).
 1. Wherever you fly, you'll be best of the best.
Wherever you go, you will top all the rest.
Except when you don't. Because, sometimes, you won't.
I'm sorry to say so - but sadly it's true,
That **bang-ups & hang-ups** can happen to you.
- B. The bible teaches that real life is filled with *bang-ups & hang-ups*.
- C. Slide14 We are not only reading history as *cold scholars*. We were reading it as *committed soldiers* who are carrying out *the spirit & the mission* of God, as we still live in *the book of Acts*.

D. We ended ch.24 with **Felix** (gov) **out** & **Festus** (new gov) **in**.

E. How **patiently** Paul waited for God to fulfill His promise to *take him to Rome*. (24:27, 2 more yrs). **Like Joseph** in the Egyptian prison, **Paul** was *tested and tried* as he waited for the Word to be fulfilled. *Slide15 Read Ps.105:16-19 *screen*.

III. Slide16 **PAUL MEETS FESTUS (1-12)** [*Pic*: Caesarea, Gov residence]

A. (1) **Fresh in office** Festus' *1st business trip* was to **Jerusalem** to see how the Jewish leaders were doing, as tensions were high.

1. Know this, **Felix** was a bad governor. Get this, Nero thought **Felix** was a violent man. **Festus** on the other hand was **more moderate & fair-minded**, though as we'll see *very flawed*.

2. So **Festus** asks the Jewish leaders *can't we all just get along?* They say, *sure, just send a lil guy name Paul for a trial in Jerusalem*.

B. (8) **nor against Caesar** - Paul says, *I'm not against the government/Caesar*. We Christians aren't supposed to be against our government that we are under.

1. Jeremiah commanded the Jews shipped off to Babylon to pray for the shalom/peace of Babylon (Jer.29:7). **And yet** Christians today on social media can't pray for their own president & government leaders **unless they're of their own party?** That's insane. And unbiblical.

C. (9) So Paul was asked, *want an all expense paid trip to Jerusalem?* He said, *Uhh no thanks, I'd rather go to the dentist*. Paul knew that for him there was no such thing as **fair play** in dealing with the Jews in the Jerusalem's *Kangaroo court*.

D. Slide17 (10-12) **Paul's Go Big or Go Home Speech**.

E. **1st**, Remember something, this is exactly what Jesus was talking about that would happen **to** them & **through** them. I quote Jesus in Mt.10:18-20, *You will stand trial before **governors and kings** because you are my followers. But this will be your opportunity to tell the rulers and other unbelievers about **me**. 19 When you are arrested, don't worry about how to respond or what to say. God will give you the **right words at the right time**. 20 For it is not you who will be speaking - it will be **the Spirit of your Father speaking through you**.*

1. **God with us - God in us - God for us & God granting us wisdom.**
 2. **Note:** Before **Felix**, Paul emphasized the continuity of *The Way* w/ *Judaism*. **Now** before **Festus**, Paul stressed his loyalty to Caesar. (8 x's)
- F. **Slide18a** (10-12) **Paul's Go Big or Go Home moment. 3 things:**
1. Why would I go to *Jerusalem*, when Caesars the highest court in the region?
 2. I haven't done anything wrong. I am OK with having my charges adjudicated, *though weak and untrue*. And if in the end you decree I have to die, I'm ok with dying. [a Christian's **fear** is not **death**, but **sin!**]
 3. The aha moment in the chapter. (Pause) if you're a 1st century Jew in the audience, listening/watching on. You're thinking, *how is Paul going to get to Rome, the biggest stage in the world, as he says God told him he would, Impossible! How are you going to get that platform in your impossible situation? Then baam*, the clever loop-hole, *oh that's right he's a Roman Citizen*, something all Jewish listeners didn't have a right to. **I appeal to Caesar. An irrevocable appeal.** Paul goes all in. **Go Big or Go Home.**
 - a) I'm going to win **or** die trying. **Whatever mood Caesar is in for the few minutes he looks at me, so be it.**
- G. **Slide18b** **I appeal to Caesars judgment seat.**
1. Only if a man was *a murderer, a pirate, or a bandit* caught in the act was the appeal **invalid**.
 2. Through all of this, whether *Felix or Festus or Agrippa or Bernice or Drusilla*, they are executing *their due process*. **While GOD** is executing His *providential plan*.
- H. **Slide18c** Like Paul, **we don't know the whole story do we?** We live in this chapter of our lives. And it may be an awful chapter. **But can you trust God** in that chapter? He's writing a story, and we **don't** know the end ...
- I. **Slide18d** We all have asked, **why didn't God stop this bad thing in my life?** *No easy answer*
1. **A man had a horse, and it ran away.**

- a) (Neighbor) **Bad** luck isn't it? (man) *What do I know about these things?*
2. A few days later the horse came back, with 20 more wild horses.
- a) (Neighbor) Wow, **not** bad luck, **but good** luck isn't it?
(man) *What do I know about these things?*
3. A few days later the man's young son was taming one of those horses & fell & broke his leg.
- a) (Neighbor) **Bad** luck isn't it? (man) *What do I know about these things?*
4. A few days later a bunch of thugs showed up in their town to take recruits to join their gang, *all able young men*. Then they noticed the broken leg & didn't take his son.
- a) (Neighbor) Wow, **good** luck isn't it? (man) *What do I know about these things?*
- J. Slide18e Wait until you stand before God *face-to-face*, **then you** can ask Him, *why this happened to you in your life*. Pursue trusting God, **not blaming** God.

IV. Slide19a **PAUL MEETS AGRIPPA (13-27)**

- A.(13) Agrippa (the 2nd) was the son of the Agrippa 1st *who killed James, & was eaten by worms*, and Bernice was the older sister of Drusilla, Felix's wife. Worse yet, she was also Agrippa's **sister**, **thus many rumors about an incestuous relationship**.
1. Festus thinks ... **maybe this Agrippa of Jewish descent** could help solve **this quandary?** [Festus = Roman gov; Agrippa = Jewish petty king]
- B.(19) Festus at least knew that **the resurrection** was central to the Christian belief.
- C.(23) **pomp** (Gk. *phantasia*/fantastic/fantasy) – pageantry. **Slide19b** [Picture **The Hunger Games**. Big hair, colors, drama, funny clothes, people ewe'ing & ahh'ing]
1. Agrippa & Bernice most likely had on their purple robes of royalty, & the gold circlet of the crown on their brows.¹
2. Most likely **Festus** donned his scarlet robe, which a governor wore on state occasions.
3. **Then**, there was the little *Jewish tent-maker*, w/his hands in chains.

¹ William Barclay pg.191,2

D. Slide20a (25) So far we know ... (*below*: Acts 23:29 - 25:25 - 26:31)

1. Captain Lysias admitted that he had no case against Paul.
2. Porcius Festus here admitted that Paul had done nothing worthy of death
3. Agrippa will agree with this verdict in Acts 26:31.

E. It was **not true** that Festus *had nothing definite to write* to Cesar about Paul (26).
And that he *could not specify the charges* against him (27).

1. The Jewish charges were both **definite** and **specific**.
2. What Festus lack was not **charges**, **but** evidence to substantiate them.
3. He should've had the **courage** to *declare Paul innocent and to release him*

F. The bible is full of characters that were dealt with **unjustly**... So what do you do in those impossible situations?

1. Slide20b Submit to it with the mind that **God is sovereign**.
2. Wasn't **Daniel** treated unfairly, **then** thrown to the lions?
3. Wasn't **Joseph** (as we mentioned) betrayed, hated, slandered, sold into slavery by his own jealous brothers, accused of a crime he didn't commit, imprisoned, & forgotten by a fellow prisoner?
 - a) **Yet**, instead of becoming *bitter toward man & God*, he kept **a heavenly vision**.
But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.
4. Wasn't **the Son of God** treated unfairly Himself?
5. Slide20c When **you** are dealt with *unfairly* this week, how will **you** handle yourself? Will you submit to it with the mind that ... **God is sovereign?**

G. **End Prayer**: Lord, when we are *falsely accused, when we are innocent, unfairly criticized, or misjudged*, help us to respond with **love not hate; forgiveness not bitterness; hope not despair**. Help us to look to **You** - *our life, our salvation, or God*. God help us to *cooperate with you* and to rely on **Your strength**, **and** to do this ... **for your glory**.

H. Keywords: Paul, Festus, Bernice, Caesar, sovereign.