

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.

"NE PLUS ULTRA VS. PLUS ULTRA" | ACTS 26 | PASTOR BRIAN

WARM-UP QUESTION:

What was your favorite commercial during the Super Bowl?

"Being Respectful and Finding Common Ground" - (Acts 26: 1-8)

Paul takes time to show respect and establish common ground and common interest with King Agrippa. What things people do that help them do that today? What are things people do that hurt their ability to do that?

"Being Real and Transparent while Telling His Story" - (Acts 26: 9-18)

Paul is honest and simply says what he saw, heard, and said in his story about how he met Jesus. Who is someone you know who has simply shared their life story similarly? How did that impact you?

"Explain the Gospel Clearly and the Need for A Decision" - (Acts 26: 19-32)

Paul shares with the King person to person, sinner to sinner, about the gospel of Jesus' death and resurrection and how it offers forgiveness, mercy and grace to all. How would you simply explain the gospel to someone else?

REFLECTION QUESTION:

This chapter shows Paul on trial before a king and a governor, and instead of arguing for justice, he is presenting the good news about Jesus' salvation that Paul personally experienced. In other words, the gospel message was more important than Paul's personal agenda. How well have you been able to put Jesus' message of salvation ahead of your own agenda lately? What would you need to do to allow that to happen more?

Ne Plus Ultra vs. Plus Ultra

I. Slide1 Announce:

A. Slide2-6 Larry: DC. GC. Men. Min Opp. ~~Sun Prayer.~~ Church App.

II. Slide7a Intro: Ne Plus Ultra vs. Plus Ultra

A. Ne Plus Ultra - Before the discovery of America the **Spaniards** prided themselves on the supposed fact that their country was the last point of solid land on the earth westward. Beyond them, they thought, there was **nothing but a vast expanse of water**, a shoreless ocean, a mystery never to be solved.

1. Slide7b Consequently the **early coins** of that country, in order to give prominence to this idea, were indented with a picture of **the pillars of Hercules**, the 2 great sentries on each side of the straits of Gibraltar. Encircling these pillars on their coins was the inscription, **Ne Plus Ultra, No More Beyond.**
2. They imagined that they constituted the **limits** of creation; that beyond them there was **nothing**. In their own estimation, they constituted the **Ne Plus Ultra** of God's favored people.
3. Slide7c Thus they constituted **another proud monument of man's folly and ignorance**, from which it is well to take warning. After 1492, when he sailed the ocean blue, the **new coins** read **Plus Ultra - More Beyond.**
 - a) Is there life after death? Is there more beyond?

B. Slide8 Paul clearly Communicates his Faith to King Agrippa by: *Being Respectful. Establishing Common Ground. Finding Common Interest. Being Real & Transparent. Telling His Unique Story. Explaining the Gospel Perspicuously/ Clearly. And, Emphasizing the Need for a Decision.* (not pushy)

III. Slide9a BEING RESPECTFUL (1,2) Read 1-11 Paul b4 Christ

A. (1) Agrippa starts with *Paul, tell your story.*

- B. **Slide9b Paul stretched out his hand** - The gesture here was a form of dignified **oratory**, designed to show the earnestness of the speaker.
1. The orator stretched forth the right hand, with **the 2 lowest fingers shut in on the palm of the hand and the other fingers extended**.
- C. (2) **Paul's finest hour**. He gets to tell of Christ's purpose & power to King Agrippa.
1. **Slide9c** Note also he is both **apologetic** (defense) & **evangelistic** (gospel).
 2. 1 Pet.3:15 ***always being prepared to make a defense (apologia) to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.*** Be respectful.

IV. **Slide10 ESTABLISHING COMMON GROUND (3)**

- A. He starts to ***build a bridge*** that Agrippa can cross securely. [not flattery]

V. **Slide11a FINDING COMMON INTEREST (4-8)**

- A. **Why does Paul make such a big deal about himself as a *persecutor* of the church?**
1. To establish his credibility w/Agrippa, who like his sister Drusilla, comes from a long line of **haters, Christian-haters**.
 - a) Remember, **Herod Agrippa I**, killed **James**. **Herodias & Herod Antipas** had **John the Baptist** killed. **Herod Aristobulus** was strangled by his father **Herod the Great** who ordered all the **butchering of the Bethlehem baby boys**.
 2. **Slide11b** Paul's saying, ***I used to be just like that!***
- B. **Agrippa, I don't believe in anything crazy**. No conspiracy theories. No tin-foil hat. What I believe is **factual**, passed down **by God** to our fathers & the 12 tribes. (6,7)
- C. **Slide11c (8) Why is it thought **incredible** by any of you that God **raises** the dead?**
1. Isn't it more **incredible** to believe ***Ne Plus Ultra/No More Beyond***, **this life or the grave**. Or in reincarnation. ***For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! ... If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men***

the most pitiable. 1Cor.15 [Jesus' death&res is the fulfillment of what Jews hoped for]

VI.Slide12 BEING REAL & TRANSPARENT (9-11)

- A. I know what it's like to **not** believe this. *I hated Jesus & His followers.*
- B. I'm sure Agrippa was expecting some wild-eyed, scripture-spoutin fool, but now is faced with a man that isn't much different from himself.
 1. This man is **real & transparent, &** surprisingly **believable.**
- C. With this established, Paul moves to the day his life turned **a strange new course.**

VII.Slide13a TELLING HIS UNIQUE STORY (12-18) *Read 12-18 conversion experience*

- A. (12) **In this connection**/one day - meaning, I wasn't on some spiritual quest, or gnawed by doubts, about what I was doing. I was engaged in pursuing my vendetta against Christians, when Jesus stopped me in my tracks.
- B. **Slide13b** (13-15) Real simply he says 3 *down-to-earth phrases: I saw; I heard; I said.*
- C. (14) **kick against the goads** - prod an animal, guide an animal.
 1. **Why are you resisting my discipline? Why are you kicking against my guidance?(my truth) Why resist me any longer? Why not submit to me as Lord?**

VIII.Slide14a EXPLAINING THE GOSPEL PERSPICUOUSLY/CLEARLY (18-23) *Read 18-23 life after salvation*

- A. (18) **Wow!** What a concise, believable, & coherent statement of Christianity.
 1. It's not **syrupey**; he does not **dangle** Agrippa over the flames of burning hell; nor does he **alter** the gospel to make it palatable.
 2. He addresses the king **person to person, sinner to sinner**, with the **simple facts** of Christ's *mercy, generosity, & love.*
 3. **Slide14b What is sin anyways?** Missing the mark. Refusal to render to God worship due Him. Living against His laws. Being *unjust*. Crossing forbidden lines. Not only doing what you shouldn't **but not** doing what you should (omission/ co). Owing a debt you can't pay. Having wickedness of

heart, enmity of spirit, or shameless deeds.

IX. Slide15a EMPHASIZING THE NEED FOR A DECISION (24-29) Read 24-32

A. But, **knowing the facts** isn't enough. Agrippa must **respond in faith**, so Paul describes what that faith looked like in his own life.

1. He says I didn't ignore the **light & the voice**; I **obeyed!**
2. King Agrippa, you need to **trust Christ & live for Him**.
3. He didn't shake his boney finger of judgment at Agrippa, despite the king's rumored incestuous relationship w/his sister Bernice.

a) **Slide15b** Instead he **unwrapped God** for him, by **unveiling Jesus**. [The suffering Christ nailed to the cross, the shining Savior risen from the dead]

B. Agrippa sat quite, but Festus had enough.. *You're crazy*.

1. He remained **composed & confident**, *I'm not mad...I speak sober truth*.

C. (28) **In a short time** would you **persuade** me to be a Christian? [*irony* Paul's was short]

D. **Commentators vary widely on what Agrippa was saying here**. Said it in jest, bitter sarcasm, irony, anger, **or** an expression of sincere conviction?

1. With Paul's response in **vs.29** I think Agrippa's heart was touched because Paul pleads with him to **trust Christ**.
2. See Paul is all about Agrippa's **salvation**, **not** his **favor**.

E. **Slide16a SIDEBAR (30-32) to consult with each other**

F. Like **Felix** he also walks off the pages of history **w/o** a commitment to follow Christ

G. **Slide16b** NKJV reads, *You almost persuade me to become a Christian*.

1. **Almost**. Another **dropped baton** in the 4x100 meter relay.
2. **Almost**. Agrippa was like the man **almost pardoned**, **but** was **hanged**.
3. **Almost**. Agrippa was **almost saved** **but** now is **damned**, **IF** he never responded to such a fine message.

- a) Agrippa walks away from being crowned one of *The Real Kings Kids* & settles for his **fake title** of king. His **false security** of temporary power on earth. His all around **fake life!** And now his **new nickname** *Almost Agrippa*.
- b) Slide 16c Agrippa was **almost** when he could have been **altogether**.

H. So in the end **the prisoner** was the **free man** & **the king** was the **slave**.

I. **END:**

J. There is *Plus Ultra* (more beyond) a collegiate education.

K. There is *Plus Ultra* (more beyond) a powerful position *King Agrippa held*.

L. There is *Plus Ultra* (more beyond) the belief that *death ends all*.

M. There is *Plus Ultra* (more beyond) Christ's Death, *the Resurrection*.

N. There is *Plus Ultra* (more beyond) this life, *find the abundant life*.

O. **Communion:** Bread. Cup.

P. **Lessons:**

1. Speak to unbelievers **respectfully**. Express what it was like **not** to believe [share your sticking point? phys or hard to believe?] Aim to exalt **Jesus** and not you. Show *the need for* and *the benefits of* the gospel. Stick to the **resurrection** and call to **repentance** (if you don't know what to say head to the Resurrection - **He's Alive!**) Rely on help that comes from **God**. Make **specific application** boldly. Be prepared to face **rejection and ridicule** (*yur out of yur mind*). **Pray** for those you're evangelizing

Q. Keywords: Plus Ultra, Agrippa, Felix, Paul, apologetic, evangelistic, bridge, story, sin, decision, almost.