

TABLE TALK

FAMILY DISCUSSION GUIDE for October 30-November 5, 2022

“ACTS IN 30” Chapter 23: Paul Created Opportunities Out of Problems

CHAPTER OVERVIEW: No matter how desperate the situation he found himself in, the Apostle Paul always found a way to **create opportunities out of problems**. In Acts 23, we see that the prophetic warnings Paul received in Acts 21 have now come to pass. After being arrested, Paul must stand trial before a Jewish religious council – the Sanhedrin – which is made up of both Pharisee’s and Sadducee’s. This trial could have ended with his death, but Paul knew that the Pharisee’s believed in the Resurrection while the Sadducee’s did not. In making his defense, Paul focuses on the Resurrection and splits the council into “*violent dissension*” (v. 10). This divide and conquer strategy works! Jesus appears to Paul and tells him of his next assignment in Rome (v. 11). As Paul’s nephew discovers a plot from the Jews to assassinate him, Paul appeals to his Roman citizenship and they protect him as he travels to his next trial (v. 24).

DAY 1 Paul Demonstrates Christlikeness

READ: Acts 23:1-5

REFLECT: As Paul begins his defense, the corrupt High Priest (Ananias) sends a guard to punch Paul in his mouth. Paul denounces Ananias as a “*white-washed wall*” before discovering that he is Israel’s High Priest. Paul then apologizes (vs. 5).

JOURNAL or DISCUSS:

Context Question: Paul quotes Exodus 22:28 when apologizing for his comments. Why do you think that verse applies to Paul’s situation?

Application Question: Jesus taught that - as His followers - when we are mocked or insulted by others that we should then “*turn the other cheek*” (Matt. 5:38-39). What does that really look like practically and why is this so hard for us to do sometimes?

DAY 2 Paul’s Declaration for the Resurrection Causes Division

READ: Acts 23: 6-10

REFLECT: In this passage, Paul reminds the council that he himself and his own father are Pharisee’s (v. 6). However, knowing that the other half of the council - the Sadducee’s - did NOT believe in the Resurrection, Paul declares it was for that reason he is on trial.

JOURNAL or DISCUSS:

Context Question: Read Luke 20:1-8. How did Jesus use a similar “divide and conquer” strategy in that passage? What was the outcome?

Application Question: What do you personally believe about the Resurrection? Do you believe Jesus was resurrected from the dead? If so why? Also do you believe you will be resurrected when Christ returns? Why or why not? (see I Thess. 4:15-16)

DAY 3 The Romans Help Paul Escape an Assassination Plot

READ: Acts 23: 12-35

REFLECT: Paul’s nephew hears of the assassination plot and warns him (v. 16). Then Paul appeals to his Roman guards that since he is a Roman citizen, he must be protected so that he can receive a trial before being executed. The Romans agree and Paul’s life is spared.

JOURNAL or DISCUSS:

Context Question: Compare some of the many “prison miracles” from Acts 5, Acts 12, Acts 16, and Acts 23. What are some similarities that stand out to you? What does that say about God’s willingness to deliver His people from desperate situations?

Application Question: It is a complete miracle that God convinces the Roman guards to save Paul’s life – yet this fulfills the prophetic promise Jesus told Paul would happen earlier in Acts 23:11. Has the Lord given you a prophetic promise about something that you can believe for until you see it happen? If so, have you written it down or shared it before?

DAY 4 God Delivers His People From Generation to Generation

READ: Psalm 124

REFLECT: From Genesis to Revelation, God has a consistent pattern of delivering His people when they cry out to Him. In this Psalm, David recounts the many ways God delivers His people from evil armies, chaos (“*floods*”), or hunters (“*snare of the fowler*”). Throughout it all, it is vitally important that God’s people know that WITHOUT THE LORD’S HELP – they would not have made it (vs. 1,2 and 8).

JOURNAL or DISCUSS:

Context Question: After reading Psalm 124, how do you think this relates to Paul’s problems (or “opportunities”) in Acts 23?

Application Question: What are some areas of life where YOU feel “trapped” in? Is it a “dead-end job”; a failing marriage; wayward kids; a debilitating illness, or a financial hardship? If so, how can this Psalm and Paul’s story in Acts 23 – provide you with a sense of hope today? (NOTE: If none of this applies to your situation, then who is someone else that you know that IS going through a tough situation right now? How can you reach out and encourage them this week?).