



09/22/2019  
Acts 21:37-40; 22:1-29

## BIG IDEA

Our testimony will always carry some form of tension.

## LOOKING BACK

*As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.*

*Invite members to share any questions or points that came up in their family discussions regarding last week's study. Invite them to share ways God continued to speak to them as they sought to apply those truths throughout the week.*

- What word would you use to describe your attempts at sharing the gospel? Explain.
- When thinking about sharing your testimony, do you tend to expect positive, negative, or indifferent reactions? Why?

## LOOKING IN

*Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.*

| *Ask a volunteer to read Acts 21:37-40.*

Paul had been arrested as one who had incited a riot. Those rioters would likely have killed Paul had he not been arrested and carried away from the crowd. It was this same crowd that Paul asked the tribune to speak to in Acts 21:37-40.

- Why do you think Paul wanted to speak to the crowd of people who had just tried to kill him?
- What was Paul risking by asking to speak to the crowd?
- What do you risk by sharing your testimony with others?

| *Ask a volunteer to read Acts 22:1-21.*

- In what way(s) can you relate to every unbeliever?
- Becoming a Christian is really an exchange—an exchange of your story for the story of God. How has the story of your life changed since coming to faith in Christ?
- What are the learning points for you from Paul's testimony that you can apply in sharing your own testimony with others?

Paul's witness teaches us important lessons about sharing our Christian testimonies. A testimony should establish a connection with the hearers. Paul stressed how much he had in common with the Jewish crowd. He spoke to them in their own language. He emphasized his Jewish upbringing, his exceptional training in the Jewish law, and his zeal for the Jewish faith. Paul built a bridge of communication between his Jewish listeners and himself. Another way to build a bridge is by testifying to common experiences, such as the inability to cope with sinful habits, breakdowns in personal relationships, feelings of meaninglessness in one's life, and others. People often respond to such testimonies by saying, That's exactly my problem; maybe I need to pay attention to what this person has to say.

- What do you understand "sharing your testimony" to include? Why is it important that we understand that our testimony is ongoing, not simply beginning with the moment we turn to Christ in faith and ending the moment we get baptized?
- What feelings or circumstances sometimes keep you from thinking you ought to share your testimony?

The Lord appointed Paul to be "a witness for Him to everyone" of what he had seen and heard. In other words, God appointed Paul to testify to the gospel. Paul was not worthy to be chosen for this task. In fact, he is the last person who is worthy to be chosen for this task as he had devoted his life to violently persecuting Christians. Paul was chosen for this task not because of anything good in himself, but because of the grace of God in his life.

| *Ask a volunteer to read Acts 22:22-30.*

- What is one of the hardest things you have had to experience because of your faith?
- Paul was a professional evangelist, sharing his testimony under the power and leading of the Holy Spirit, and no one got saved. Does this mean Paul shouldn't have shared his testimony? What does it tell you about sharing the gospel?

With the word Gentiles, the speech ended. The thought that Jews and Gentiles could stand on equal footing before God was completely intolerable. The audience once again became a mob as anarchy and prejudice filled the air. Only the fact that Paul was a Roman citizen saved his life. Paul lived to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles. Some people live for themselves. Greed has become a popular motivator in our day. Others live for family. Some live and even die for the church. Like Paul, some modern Christians live for Christ, as we are called by Him to do.

## LOOKING FORWARD

*Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.*

- Do you ever feel unworthy to be used by God to advance His kingdom? How might considering Paul's testimony help you overcome such insecurities?
- How does knowing that sharing your testimony will always carry with it some form of tension encourage or challenge you?

## FAMILIES

*Use the following questions and truths to disciple your children throughout the week.*

Consider sharing personal testimonies as a family. Include the pre-Christ, conversion, and post-Christ elements, and encourage family members to share an experience or circumstance that God has used recently to show them what it means to follow Jesus.

**PRAY**

Thank God for the spiritual transformation He has brought about in the lives of your group members. Pray that God would continue to transform us into the image of Christ. Ask God to help us faithfully testify of His grace to the various audiences He has placed in our lives.

**COMMENTARY****| Acts 21:37-40**

21:37-38 Paul asked permission to speak. His use of Greek surprised the Roman commander (“Claudius Lysias,” 23:26). Lysias mistook Paul for an Egyptian rebel. The Jewish historian Josephus said this rebel, a messianic pretender, had gathered a number of people at the Mount of Olives to attack Jerusalem in A.D. 54. The group was routed by the Romans, but the leader escaped. Lysias initially suspected that Paul marked the return of this man.

21:39 That Paul was a citizen of Tarsus, a city of importance in the Greco-Roman world, accounted for his knowledge of Greek.

21:40 Though the text says Hebrew, Paul probably spoke Aramaic to the crowd in order to communicate clearly with them. Aramaic became the new Hebrew, so to speak, among the Jewish people after the exile. In Paul’s day Hebrew was used only by the religious elite.

**| Acts 22:1-21**

Acts 22:1-21 reports Paul’s address to the Jewish mob in the temple courtyard in Jerusalem, the same mob who moments before had sought to kill him. This is the first time he shared his testimony while he was under arrest. With the permission of the Roman commanding office, Paul addressed the crowd of Jews from whom he had been rescued. The people listened when Paul began to speak to them in their own native Aramaic. He shared his testimony with them.

22:1-5 Paul began by speaking of his life before he became a Christian. First, he noted his strong Jewish heritage. He was born into a Jewish family in Tarsus. Gamaliel was the leading teacher of the Jewish law (Torah) of his day. Torah studies consisted of learning by memory the written Old Testament law and the extensive oral interpretations of the law passed down from the great Torah teachers.

Paul emphasized his persecution of followers of this Way, Christians, and emphasized the intensity of his persecution. He had stopped at nothing, pursuing them even to their death. Paul emphasized his role as persecutor because it pointed to his Jewishness. The crowd had accused Paul of flagrantly violating Jewish law (Acts 21:28). Far from that, Paul showed that no one had been more zealous for the law than he. Paul rejected God through both religion and rebellion. You think you are good, Paul was better. You think you are too bad, Paul was worse.

22:6-9 These verses depict Paul’s encounter with the Lord Jesus. Paul was journeying to Damascus to seek out the Christians among the Jews there (22:5). Just outside town he was stopped in his tracks. Although it was around noon, a light suddenly surrounded his party. Paul fell to the ground in awe at the heavenly vision. A voice from heaven addressed him by his Hebrew name, Saul. Jesus revealed Himself as the victim of Paul’s persecution. To persecute Christ’s church was to persecute Christ Himself. Paul wasn’t looking for Jesus, but Jesus came looking for Paul. In the same way, Jesus came looking for you.

22:10-16 The second part of the Paul’s testimony sets forth Jesus’ instructions to Paul. Paul responded by surrendering to God. This time Paul knew that the Lord was the Christ whom he had persecuted. Jesus told Paul to go into Damascus and await instructions. Paul had been blinded by the light and had to be led into the city.

22:17-21 The final section of Paul’s conversion account presents what happened after his encounter with Christ. Paul noted how Ananias came to him as he lay blind and waiting for the Lord’s directions.

Paul emphasized that the Christian Ananias was also a devout observer of the law, a Jew who was respected by all the Jews of Damascus. Paul wanted the Jewish crowd to realize that both he and his fellow Jewish Christians were still faithful to the law.

Continuing his testimony, Paul described how Christ had changed his life. He returned to Jerusalem and prayed at the temple. There he had a vision. The Lord warned Paul that he must leave Jerusalem immediately. Acts 9:29 shows that the advice was well-advised; some of the Greek-speaking Jews of Jerusalem tried to kill him. The Lord knew they would not accept Paul's testimony about Christ.

Paul wanted to stay in Jerusalem. He thought that he would have an effective witness there. The Jews would have been aware of his reputation as persecutor of Christians. They would remember how he had participated in Stephen's martyrdom (22:19-20). They would know, therefore, that he was not a renegade Jew, a law-breaker, but the most zealous of them all. He thought he could be a powerful witness to the transforming power of Christ. The Lord had other plans for Paul. He would be Christ's witness to the Gentiles.