



The last half of the book of Acts reveals the amazing story of how the Jesus' community became a global movement, and it reveals keys to how it has remained so. There is so much to apply as we explore how we can "proclaim the kingdom of God with all boldness and without hindrance."

These questions are designed to extend the impact of the weekend message. Use them to go deeper in your personal study time, with your family and/or with a group.

1 OBEYING GOD'S "NO"... **Read Acts 16:6-7.** Paul was eager to go through the "open door" to continue with the mission God gave him. As he pursued God's big "yes" he heard God's surprising "No". How do you think Paul might have felt after twice being prevented from carrying out his intentions? How would you have been tempted to respond?

2 Obeying God's "no" meant having an open agenda. Rather than start moping, Paul resolved to keep moving. **Read Acts 16:8-10.** Have you ever been frustrated by the Holy Spirit's leading because it seemed to contradict your plans? What was God trying to teach you or show you in that moment?

3 Paul knew obedience meant having an open agenda, and it led to an open **door.** **Read Acts 16:11-15.** What does Paul and his companions' quick response to the Macedonian man's request indicate about their basic ministry purpose? How does that compare to how we sometimes respond today?

4 Paul was expecting to find the man in his vision but instead he found a woman with an open **heart.** What qualities and characteristics do you notice about Lydia in verse 14? What does that verse reveal about our role in sharing the gospel with others?

IMPORTANT NOTE: Rick reminded us that "God opened her heart, Paul opened his mouth, Lydia got baptized, and then she opened her home. Thus was planted the first church in Europe, and one of the

most special churches in all of Paul's ministry. And it happened because Paul would not allow "no" to hinder his pursuit of the purposes of God. Realize that closed doors are not a rebuke. When God rejects our plans it does not mean He has rejected us." Keep this in mind as you wrap up this study by remembering not to let "no" hinder you...

5 DON'T LET "NO"... **Hinder your trust in His purposes.** When "no" arrives it always brings a test of faith with it. Rick said "we can often look back on paths we would not choose and see a course we would not change". Share an experience like that from your life and talk about what you learned in the process.

6 DON'T LET "NO"... **Hinder your vision for His purposes.** We must understand that God's vision includes us, but it is never about us. God does not exist to make much of us; we exist to make much of God (see **Colossians 1:16**). Why is that often difficult for us to understand? Share an example of a time you attempted to pray God into your agenda instead of asking to be led into His.

7 DON'T LET "NO"... **Hinder your pursuit of His purposes.** It is not wrong to try a good thing that God might stop. What is wrong is to stop pursuing the next good thing. Paul knew the what (make disciples); he just needed to know the where. Where might God be leading you in your pursuit of His purpose of making disciples?



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1 Think back over the last week. Which day was the worst? What made it a bad day? How did you deal with feeling chained by those circumstances?

2 Read Acts 16:16-24. Share 1-2 things that stand out to you from this event. Have you ever been in a situation like Paul and Silas—when you did the right thing but people responded badly to it? What was that experience like for you and how did you respond to it?

3 WE HAVE... response-ability. **Read Acts 16:25.** Instead of cursing men, Paul and Silas are blessing God. Rick reminded us that "worship does not need the right place; it needs the right perspective." In any circumstance we have the capacity to choose our response. What does the response of Paul and Silas to their circumstances show about them? When you face the trying situations, how do you generally respond? How can Paul and Silas' example change your perspective?

4 UNHINDERED PRAISE... is a pre-decision. Paul and Silas are praising God without ever knowing if they would leave that prison. Their praise was not rooted in their circumstances but in God's character. **Read Philippians 4:4.** Share an example of a time you chose to praise God even before you knew how your circumstances would turn out. What allowed you to have that type of response?

5 UNHINDERED PRAISE... is a refocus. Response-ability means we can fix what we fixate on. We must change our perspective because perspective changes everything. Why do we tend to focus on "what is wrong" instead of "what is right" and where does that lead us? **Read Philippians 4:8.** Share an example from your own life of how unhindered praise hinders the capacity of struggles to discourage us. What does worship help us remember?

6 UNHINDERED PRAISE... is a witness. Offerings to God are a blessing to others. **Read Acts 16:26-34.** Why did the jailer's mood change after Paul's statement in verse 28? What do you think caused the jailer to want to be saved?

7 Like Paul and Silas, some of you are in tough places right now. But you have response-ability. You can choose to offer God praise in those places you would not choose. **Prison cannot hinder praise, but praise can hinder **bondage.** **Read Ephesians 5:18-19.**** How has corporate praise time been a blessing to you personally? How have you seen it be a blessing to others?

Spend some time in prayer and praise as you end your time together (take a moment to read and reflect on some of these praises from the book of Psalms: **Psalm 3:1-4; 8:1-9; 9:1-2; 13:1-5; 18:1-2; 25:1-5; 27:1; 34:1-2; 95:1-5; and 100:1-3.**



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1 Rick began by noting that "*Paul would say there is no place you cannot talk about Jesus, but you do not talk about him the same way in every place.*" How have you experienced that to be true in your context? Share an example of how you've had a conversation that led to Jesus by using the Bible and an example of how you did it by not using the Bible.

2 KNOW SCRIPTURE! The scriptures are always the place to start when you are talking to someone who believes the Bible is the Word of God. **Read Acts 17:1-15.** What evidence in verses 1-4 shows that Paul had a clear strategy for sharing the good news about Jesus? What stands out to you regarding the different responses the people had to his message?

3 Rick reminded us that "*It is impossible to overemphasize the importance of knowing the scriptures, nor is it impossible to start too soon.*" **Read 2 Timothy 3:15.** What is one practice you do regularly to help you know the scriptures better? What is a next step you need to take in this area?

Read Acts 17:16-34 before discussing the following questions.

4 NO SCRIPTURE? We all have "Where did it come from?" questions. Very few people exist who do not wonder how they came to exist. What spiritual longing do you think that reveals? What's significant about how Paul began his message (**17:22-25**)?

5 NO SCRIPTURE? We all have "Do I matter?" questions. Paul says that God places us intentionally in our specific time and location to prompt us to want to find Him. Then instead of quoting scripture to affirm this he quotes some of their own pagan poets (**17:28**). What do you think about Paul using the culture around him to share the heart of the message of the Bible? What can we learn from Paul's example here?

6 NO SCRIPTURE? We all have "Will it ever be right?" questions. No one argues that the way the world is is the way it ought to be. All people have a universal longing for justice. With that in mind, what is significant about how Paul ends his message (**17:29-31**)? Rick concluded this point by saying, "*There are many ways to build a bridge, but the bridge must lead to Jesus.*" Why is that so crucial and how did Paul emphasize this?

7 God is leaving footprints everywhere. **GOD IS... creator, father, judge, but most of all, God is Jesus!** Describe the importance of each of those descriptions of God for your life.

Conclusion: The good news is ***nothing will hinder God from pursuing us!*** As you reflect on this message take a moment to let everyone reflect on this question: How is God pursuing you right now? Don't let anything hinder you from finding Him.



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1 Start with this get to know you question: What was your first job? (Bonus points if anyone has worked with leather, as Paul likely did.)

2 Read Acts 18:1-5. We see here that **God uses every part of our life.** There is no compartmentalizing work or school or hanging out from God's mission. Do you struggle to feel "on mission" every where you go? What settings is it harder for you to speak up about your faith?

3 Read Acts 18:6-8. In Acts 18, transformation takes place in a living room, not a lecture hall. Are there ways you've seen God work in homes to reach people for Christ? How could God use your hospitality to reach out and care for others?

4 Read Acts 18:7-9. When we are on mission, God answers every fear in our hearts. God knew that Paul needed courage and comfort. What of God's words to Paul do you find most comforting? What do you find hardest to understand or believe?

5 God sends the same way He saves: with His presence. Read 1st Corinthians 1:30 and 2nd Corinthians 13:14. How do these verses remind us of God's presence in both saving and sending? Why does God want to remind us that He's with us in every moment?

6 Finish by praying together that God would bring courage and comfort to all of your group through the Holy Spirit. Ask God to give you boldness to share your faith and to love without reservation or fear. Pray that Jesus would remind you daily that His Spirit is present and active.



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1 Read Acts 19:1-5; Acts 1:8. We must “KNOW POWER!” Rick says, “Living without power hinders our witness.” Paul immediately sensed that the followers of Jesus at Ephesus were living without power. They had not received the Holy Spirit at baptism because they had not been baptized in the name of Jesus. But, when we surrender to Jesus and receive the Holy Spirit at baptism, we have the Lord’s unhindered power to witness. Nothing can stop us! Worldly powers can no longer hinder our witness. Share an example in your life where you received a divine empowering.

2 KNOW THAT HIS POWER IS OVER ALL DISEASE. Read Acts 19:11-12; Acts 5:15-16; Acts 10:38. Rick stated that almost 40% of the narrative in the four gospels are devoted to the healing ministry of Jesus. As Luke 5:17 says, “The power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick.” This authority for supernatural healing is still present today! Experience tells us that it is not always His will to heal, but it is His will that we always ask for healing! Just by asking, we are witnessing to our belief in His power! Name an area of your life where you would like to experience more of the power of God.

3 KNOW THAT HIS POWER IS OVER THE DEMONIC. Read Acts 19:13-20. There is a difference in using the name of Jesus, and surrendering to Jesus. The latter is an expression of faith in the name of Jesus. A powerful witness follows, as Rick said,

“They were publicly repudiating “the powers that be” and confessing the power that “was and is and is to come.” They did not sell their magic books, they destroyed them. **Read Acts 26:17-18.** Name a few things you would consider as demonic today. How does the power of God manifest itself in you to help you overcome the schemes of the Devil?

4 KNOW THAT HIS POWER IS EVEN OVER DEATH. Read Acts 20:7-12. We still continue to meet “on the first day of the week.” Of course, Sunday is the day Jesus arose from the dead, proclaiming His power even over death. **Read Hebrews 2:14.** Death has no authority over those who are under Jesus. Paul raised young Eutychus. It is the same power given to us today. **Read Ephesians 1:19-20.** Speak about some ways that Jesus is empowering you to witness about your victory over death.

5 HOW WE KNOW HIS POWER? CHRIST HAS OVERCOME THE POWER OF SIN! Sin was a master that no one had the power to defeat. So, heaven sent a champion that could. In reality, there is nothing in this world to hinder you! You have God’s power to overcome! Pray together that nothing will hinder your witness about what God has done and is doing in your life.



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1 "MY RACE... is all about God's grace!" Read **Acts 20:22-24**. Paul spent the first part of his life running a different race, but he changed his course after meeting Jesus. How did Paul describe his life and mission in verse 24? Share an example of someone you know who models this mind-set too.

2 UNHINDERED GRACE... produces holiness. A common misunderstanding about the message of grace is that sin doesn't matter. Rick, however, reminded us that "Grace isn't about getting away with sin; it's about doing away with sin. Grace redeems and grace reforms." **Read Titus 2:11-12.** How has God's grace empowered you to live a self-controlled, upright and godly life, instead of focusing on your own interests and appetites?

3 Rick also mentioned that "Grace makes the pursuit of holiness a joy, not a duty." How have you experienced that to be true in your life? Discuss the differences between law and grace.

4 UNHINDERED GRACE... proclaims truth. Another misconception about grace is that it makes room for all beliefs. Why is that a dangerous misconception? Follow up discussion: Jesus was full of grace and truth, and his church must be as well. **Read Acts 20:28-31.** What were the warnings Paul gave to the leaders at Ephesus? Which do you think is most important for our church? Why?

5 UNHINDERED GRACE... prompts generosity.

When grace goes deep the root of selfishness is cut off and the branch of greed dries up. **Read Acts 20:33-35.** How have you experienced the truth of "it is more blessed to give than to receive" in relationship to the spreading of the good news of Jesus?

6 Our generosity is not just motivated by grace; it manifests grace. **Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-4, 7-9.** How should God's ultimate gift to us compel us to give? What can you do to keep this truth in your thoughts this week?

7 No one runs a perfect race, but everyone can finish. **God's grace is stronger than my race!** **Read Acts 20:32.** Rick closed by reminding us that "We are a community of flawed but focused people, saved and sustained by the grace of God." He then added, "So stay committed to grace, because grace is committed to you!" Share an example of how you have experienced this to be true. How has this encouraged you to finish the race?



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1 Rick began this message by sharing an example in Acts 21 of how the prophetic ministry was active in the early church. Do you believe God still gives people prophetic words to share with others today? If so, how can we do that in a healthy way that does not try to control others or manage the outcomes?

Note: before you move to the rest of the questions, remind everyone of the context of Acts 21 and Paul's example (you may want to read **Acts 21:4-39** together).

2 PAUL NEVER... gave in because he gave up. Some godly people give Paul some advice but he chooses not to follow it. How did Paul know that he was on the right path when other followers tried to convince him otherwise? How do you discern the will of God when you are in similar circumstances?

3 PAUL SURRENDERED... the expectation that following Jesus would be easy or safe. When Paul offered Jesus a life of obedience, he did not expect a life of convenience in return. And neither should we. What are some ways we often make following Jesus "easy or safe" (personally and as a church)?

4 Read Luke 9:23-24. How would you explain the way to "save your life" to someone else? Why do you think Jesus specifically commanded His disciples to "take up their cross **daily** and follow me"?

5 PAUL SURRENDERED... his freedom for the sake of the gospel. When Paul was being slandered, the church leaders suggested that he do something to tangibly express his allegiance to the Jewish people (see **Acts 21:17-26**). He knew the gospel gave him the right to refuse their suggestion but Paul was always willing to surrender freedom for the sake of the mission. **Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-21.** Rick reminded us that "*A truly liberated Christian is never in bondage to their freedom. They will sacrifice preference for deference for the sake of the gospel.*" Share some examples of how you've seen others sacrifice their "preference" for the sake of the gospel. How might you need to do the same?

6 PAUL SURRENDERED... his sufferings to the purposes of God. Paul was willing to suffer so that the mission of God would not have to. Share some examples of someone who surrendered their sufferings for the purposes of God. How does this encourage your faith journey?

7 Surrender brings victory! Rick closed by noting that "*We may not always know what is best, but we can trust that God will do what is best for any totally surrendered life.*" As you reflect on Paul's example, what is one area in your life where you still need to totally surrender?



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1 What is a story from your life that you love sharing with others?

2 Read Acts 22:1-5. God gave you a story for you to give away. How does Paul's past help make him relatable to this audience? How does sharing where we come from give our testimony credibility?

3 Read Acts 22:6-11. We tell our stories **to share who Jesus is.** Share how you encountered Jesus. When in your life did you come to know and believe who He is?

4 Read Acts 22:12-15. God most often brings other people into our life to lead us to faith. For Paul, that person was Ananias. Who was an Ananias in your life? How did God use them in your story?

5 Read Acts 22:16. We tell our stories **to show what only Jesus can do.** Paul is standing before a crowd, and inside his own story in he slips in huge truths about Jesus. What claims did Paul make about Jesus using his story?

6 How does your own story show that Jesus forgives sins, changes lives, and has the power to save? Who has God put in your life that hasn't heard your story?



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1 In Acts chapters 23 and 24 we find Paul on trial due to some false accusations. Things were so bad that his accusers plotted to have him killed (23:12-15). Have you ever had your reputation or character unfairly attacked? How did it make you feel? How did you respond?

2 The Jews keep trying to make the case against Paul that he is a threat to the civic stability of the Roman empire. But Paul dodged the side issues and went straight to the heart of the matter. **THE REAL ISSUE IS... "Is Jesus' resurrection for real?" Read Acts 23:6-10.** Why does Paul change the focus of the situation at hand to his hope in the resurrection? Why did this create such division between the Pharisees and Sadducees?

3 Rick noted that "*Christianity without a resurrection is not missing the last chapter; it no longer has a story at all.*" **Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-5; 12-19.** Why is faith in a Jesus who did not rise from the dead useless or insufficient? What are some of the things that would be different about both history and your own life if Jesus had not risen from the dead?

4 JESUS' RESURRECTION MEANS... that God is on the throne. What example did Rick share of how God's sovereignty was at work in this story (hint: it involved Paul's nephew)? What encouragement

does that give you regarding God (see **Proverbs 21:30**)? How should an empty tomb make us full of confidence in the sovereignty of God?

5 JESUS' RESURRECTION MEANS... that fear is on the run. Read Acts 23:11. How would this alleviate any fear Paul might have had? Follow up discussion: Rick then mentions that "fear changes teams" (**Read Acts 24:24-25**). Why did Felix become afraid?

6 JESUS' RESURRECTION MEANS... that judgment is on the way. What are some reasons Paul might have thought talking about judgment was an important part of talking about "*believing in Christ Jesus*"? Jesus talked about judgment too. **Read John 5:28-30.** Why should the thought of judgment fill followers of Jesus with hope instead of dread?

7 Paul reminds us in **Romans 8:18-24** that one day God will put everything death has touched back together. Because of that we can **cope with hope!** With that in mind, what ways does the truth about the death and resurrection of Jesus determine how you live out your faith in the meantime? Share one practical thing you can do this week.



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1 In Acts 24-26 Paul had the opportunity to make his defense while on trial before three key leaders (Felix, Festus, and Agrippa). Each time he looked for an evangelistic opportunity. What was the driving force behind Paul not letting anything hinder his invitation?

2 Read Acts 26:1-29 to set the context of this lesson. What is one thing that resonates with you from this scene?

3 THE PLEA: Paul's plea is "Be like me!" Paul concluded by saying, "*I pray that all who are listening to me today may become what I am*" (**Acts 26:29**). In another place he wrote, "*You should imitate me, just as I imitate Christ*" (**1 Corinthians 11:1**). What sorts of things did Paul do as a follower of Jesus that we ought to imitate?

4 Rick noted that Paul had one theme (*Jesus is risen and he is Lord!*) and one aim (*to invite everyone to follow Jesus as he did*). Nothing hindered him from focusing on his mission. What are some of the things that often hinder us, individually and as a church, from inviting everyone to become what we are—followers of the Lord Jesus?

5 THE ASK: Examine the Jesus Story. We need to take seriously the story the Bible is telling. Paul invited Agrippa to do exactly that. **Read Acts 26:19-23.** How would you summarize the one big story the

Bible is telling? Share the name of one person in your life that you need to invite to closely examine the Jesus story.

6 THE ASK: Experience the power to change.

Paul validates the legitimacy of Jesus' resurrection by offering up his own transformed life as evidence. His story reminds us that the only thing that can transform from the *inside/out* is an encounter with the living Christ. Why do all *outside/in* approaches to life change ultimately end in frustration? Share an example from your own life where you've seen the gospel turn "ought to" and "want to" into "able to" (see **Philippians 2:13**)?

7 THE ASK: Expect the incredible. Rick closed with three strong challenges: "*I challenge you as a seeker to be open to encountering a God who still shows up and surprises those who thought he was gone. I challenge you as a believer to live a life that makes no sense unless Jesus is risen from the dead. And I challenge us as a church to relentlessly pursue mission goals that cannot be reached unless God does the incredible.*" Which one of those encourages and/or convicts you the most? How has the **Courage Campaign** taught you to trust God for the incredible?



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1 Acts 27 tells the story of Paul being shipwrecked in the midst of a great storm (and this wasn't the only time Paul had been shipwrecked—see **2 Corinthians 11:25**). What kind of courage does it take to go through an experience like that and willingly put yourself in a place where it could happen again? What are some of the storms that appeared to create a hopeless situation in your life?

2 WE NEED COURAGE... to grow through what we go through. God had promised that Paul would get to Rome, and now Paul realizes he will do so as a prisoner. If God wanted Paul in Rome, why didn't He make it easy for him to get there? How does this relate to your life experience?

3 Read Acts 27:20-26. On what basis did Paul encourage the men to keep up their courage? What kinds of things must Paul have believed to be true about God in order to respond like this?

4 IT TAKES COURAGE...to trust that God is present in your present circumstances. Paul spent two years stuck in prison, and it had been over a week being tossed at sea since his last word from God. So it took great courage to thank God in the middle of the storm. **Read Acts 27:33-36.** How did Paul's words and his example serve to encourage the others? How have you been encouraged by other people's trust in God's promises while it felt like God was absent in the midst of the storm?

5 IT TAKES COURAGE...to find your identity in what God says instead of what others say. Read Acts 28:1-6. People are quick to assign reasons why you're going through what you're going through. It is easier to give a label than give a hand. But Paul did not live in fear of the latest opinion poll. Why do we often struggle with "the pull of approval addiction"? Share an example of how it takes courage to let God define who you will be.

6 IT TAKES COURAGE...to be who you should be when you are not where you want to be. Rick said, "We've all been stuck on Malta. Malta is that place you did not plan on going to, that experience you wanted to keep from going through. You may not be responsible for where you are, but you are responsible for what you do there." **Read Acts 28:7-10.** Share an example of a time you saw a divine detour lead to a ministry opportunity. What did you learn from that experience?

7 What you go through is not just about you. Rick closed by reminding us that "The storms, the shipwrecks, the Maltes become pulpits for those with unhindered courage. God will never take you where He cannot use you." With that in mind, reflect on this question "What's the boat you don't want to get on, the storm you don't want to go through, the Malta you don't want to go to?" Close in prayer by asking God for the courage to say "yes" to His itinerary.



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1 What is the most relieved you've been to arrive at your destination after a long trip (especially during the holiday season)?

2 Read Acts 28:14-15. Throughout his journey, Paul experienced this truth first-hand: **God encourages us through others.** Who has God used to encourage you recently? Who is God calling you to encourage in this season?

3 Read Acts 28:16-23. In every situation, **God enables us to witness.** Paul is under house arrest with no ability to go to others, so God provided a full room of listening ears. Share a time when God opened a door for evangelism that you thought was closed. How has He enabled you to witness?

4 Read Acts 28:24-28. Despite pushback or persecution, **God emboldens us for mission.** What are ways God builds our confidence in Him so that we are courageous in reaching the lost?

5 Read Acts 28:30-31. In the face of many obstacles, God keeps making a way. **Nothing can stop what God sets in motion.** Why do you think Acts ends this way? If someone asked you to talk about the Kingdom of God, what would you say? How does the book of Acts as a whole point us to God's ultimate victory?