

40 DAYS THROUGH THE BOOK OF ACTS

BIBLE READING PLAN

**WHATEVER
IT TAKES**

for the gospel



Cottonwood
CREEK CHURCH

WHATEVER IT TAKES FOR THE GOSPEL

40 Days Through the Book of Acts

THIS DEVOTIONAL BELONGS TO

Introduction: What Is a “Whatever It Takes” Mentality?

I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.

1 Corinthians 9:22b

Paul was radically saved on the road to Damascus. It was there that he came face to face with Jesus and his life changed forever. This credentialed Jew became a slave to Christ as he went from killing Christians to preaching life to sinners, and he spent the rest of his days sacrificing everything for the sake of the Gospel. He was thrown in prison, flogged on numerous occasions, exposed to death again and again, beaten with rods, pelted with stones, shipwrecked three times, moved around from one dangerous place to another, deprived of sleep, food, water, and shelter and given a thorn in the flesh (2 Cor 11:21-12:10). But he did whatever it took to see more people come to faith in Jesus Christ until he ultimately gave his life for the Gospel.

It's one thing to observe Paul's life and say, "What a great man of faith!" It is an entirely different matter to say, "How do you have this same kind of **Whatever It Takes** mentality?"

You exist to love God and honor Him with your life. In everything you do, you are called to worship Him and point others to the reality of the Truth: that everyone stands guilty in their sin and must call upon the name of Jesus to be saved.

Over the next 40 days, you will come face to face with the **Whatever It Takes** mentality of the early church through the book of Acts. Each day there will be three ways to engage:

- 1) Read the larger Acts reference on your own and at the end of 40 days you will read through the entire book;
- 2) Center your attention on the highlighted verse(s) from that day's reading;
- 3) Be challenged through the daily devotional that will prompt you to learn, evaluate and pray through that day's focus text.

May God give you wisdom to understand His Word, a passion to see the lost all around you and a boldness to do **Whatever It Takes for the Gospel!**

DAY 1

READ ACTS 1:1-26

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Acts 1:8

In the four Gospels, it is clear that Jesus came to earth in the flesh, lived a perfect life, died necessarily on the cross and rose again on the third day bringing salvation to everyone who believes. At the beginning of Acts, Jesus ascended to heaven, leaving His followers with this central mission: Go everywhere and show the world who I am! Though the task was daunting, He did not abandon His followers. Through the Holy Spirit, He gave them the power and the fuel to do all that He asked. As a believer, you have a great calling to live a life that points to Jesus. But God is faithful to walk alongside of you: comforting, empowering, helping and strengthening you as you make much of Him with your life.

How is God helping you carry out His mission?

Prayer: Lord, open my eyes to see where You are leading and empower me through Your Spirit to go in confidence.

NOTES:

DAY 2

READ ACTS 2:1-13

*Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"
Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."
Acts 2:12-13*

In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit came and believers began proclaiming the wonders of God in many different languages. Some of the crowds were amazed. But some of the crowds made fun of them. Why would they make fun? Often, the world doesn't know how to respond to the work of God. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:18 that, "The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." When the world is faced with something they don't know, they arrogantly dismiss and delegitimize it, rather than come face to face with something they do not understand. Salvation is a humbling process because it involves letting go of your ways and believing God works in ways that you don't fully understand.

How do you live out your salvation both confidently and humbly?

Pray: Lord, Your ways are higher than my ways and Your thoughts are greater than my thoughts. Even though I don't fully understand Your ways and thinking, strengthen my faith so that I may walk confidently in Your leading.

NOTES:

DAY 3

READ ACTS 2:14-41

“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

Acts 2:36

As you read through Peter’s sermon at Pentecost in Acts 2, you are able to see God’s work from the beginning to bring salvation to His people through Jesus, who is both Lord and the Messiah. You are called to worship Him as Lord, for He is Ruler and King over all things. You are called to worship Him as Messiah, for He is Savior of all. And you worship Him most when you live a life that points to these two realities: Jesus is both Lord and Messiah.

Does your life point to the Ruler and Savior of all?

Pray: Lord, move me to live a life that displays Jesus as King and Savior of everything.

NOTES:

DAY 4

READ ACTS 2:42-47

And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.
Acts 2:47b

Acts 2 records the beginning of the early church. Thousands believed in Jesus and what did they do? They devoted themselves to God's Word, fellowship, prayer, ministry, service and worship. As a result, the Lord continued to save people around them. You were not called to do the Christian life alone. In fact, when you join hands with other believers and pursue God's purposes together, God is worshipped, the Church is strengthened and more will come to know Jesus.

How can you join hands with other believers to do whatever it takes for the Gospel?

Pray: Lord, show me my place in Your Church so that You are worshipped and glorified in our work together.

NOTES:

DAY 5

READ ACTS 3:1-26

While the man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade. When Peter saw this, he said to them: "Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?"

Acts 3:11-12

Are you ever surprised by the way God works? After Peter healed a lame beggar, the crowds who witnessed this miracle were in shock. They couldn't believe their eyes. God is in the business of working in ways so that He alone receives the glory. He forgives the unforgiveable. He gives grace to the merciless. He heals the broken. He sets the captive free. You serve a God Who can do what seems impossible. Don't be shocked when He does just that.

Do you believe God can do miracles?

Pray: Lord, strengthen my faith and remind me how You are the One who does the impossible.

NOTES:

DAY 6

READ ACTS 4:1-22

But Peter and John replied, "Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

Acts 4:19-20

As they preached the good news, Peter and John were ridiculed, made fun of and threatened. Yet they couldn't help but talk about Jesus. No matter the pushback, you are called to point people to Jesus. It will be hard. It will rub up against culture. It will hurt sometimes. But Jesus is the truth the world needs and therefore, you cannot help but speak about how your life has been changed by Him.

Do you see your call to point people to Jesus as a responsibility or a burden?

Pray: Lord, put a burning passion in my heart to point people to You.

NOTES:

DAY 7

READ ACTS 4:23-37

Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.

Acts 4:29

In the face of opposition, the early church prayed that the Lord would give them boldness to live out their faith. Why? Because it is hard to live out a Christian faith in an increasingly secularized society. It's hard to obey God when everyone else is rebelling against Him, but you aren't called to do this alone. You have help. God has promised to boldly work through you so that as you go, He is the source of your strength. Pray for boldness to live out His call in your life.

How often do you ask the Lord to live out your faith boldly?

Pray: Lord, give me boldness to live out the truth of Your Word.

NOTES:

DAY 8

READ ACTS 5:1-11

Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.
Acts 5:11

The story of Ananias and Sapphira is a peculiar passage in light of the rest of the missional focus in the book of Acts, but it's important. In the passage, two people drop dead because of their lies and their love of money. It contrasts the disciples of Jesus who have given up everything for the Gospel and those who say "Lord, Lord" (Mt 7:22), but truthfully are still disciples of the world. The enemy wants to soften you to the destructive nature of sin. Take this passage as a warning: God is serious about faith and does not put up with deception in the church. You should live a faith that takes sin seriously and holds loosely to things of this world.

Are you holding so tightly to the things of this world that you are failing to live the life God has called you to live?

Pray: Lord, reveal to me those things in my life that are holding me back from full surrender to You.

NOTES:

DAY 9

READ ACTS 5:12–42

Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.”

Acts 5:38–39

As the disciples are under trial for preaching the name of Jesus, a Jewish leader steps up and proclaims this awesome truth: “Humanity’s plans fail, but God’s plans don’t.” You are a follower of the God Who will always carry out His perfect plan and nothing will stop Him from accomplishing it. In this truth, you gain both peace and hope. So don’t worry, God will make good on His promises.

How can you join in on God’s perfect plan?

Pray: Lord, let me realize that every plan apart from You will fail and show me how I can join Your perfect plans.

NOTES:

DAY 10

READ ACTS 6:1–15

But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke.
Acts 6:10

The Jewish leaders brought all kinds of false accusations against Stephen, but they couldn't stand against the never changing Truth. God's wisdom is always greater than the world's wisdom. As the world turns from God's ways, God is faithful to give you the right words to say at the right time as you stand firm in His Truth: God is the Creator and Sustainer of all things; humanity was created in His image and designed to have a relationship with Him; sin has broken that relationship and Jesus is the only one Who can bring restoration.

How often do you depend on the Lord's wisdom in your conversations?

Pray: Lord, give me wisdom so that I may walk and speak in it.

NOTES:

DAY 11

READ ACTS 7:1–53

You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit!
Acts 7:51

At the conclusion of Stephen's sermon, he didn't shy away from the harsh reality that people are stubborn and broken apart from God working in their lives. You need God to change you. Further, you can't change someone else apart from God working their lives. As you live out the Christian life, it's important to live in the reality that God is the One Who changes hearts, and you are called to faithfully represent His Word with clarity, boldness and conviction.

Do you believe God changes people's hearts?

Pray: Lord, go before me in my conversations and interactions today and use me as a faithful vessel by which people ultimately see their need for You.

NOTES:

DAY 12

READ ACTS 7:54–60

*While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”
Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.”*

When he had said this, he fell asleep.

Acts 7:59–60

Stephen suffered at the hands of the enemy for living out a bold and radical faith in Jesus. Yet, even as he is pelted by stones, he models the grace of Jesus. Even in death, Stephen communicates the beauty of God’s forgiveness. If you are a follower of Christ, then Jesus has done a miracle work of grace in your life. No matter how the world acts or responds to that work, you are called to exemplify a steady stream of God’s love to a world who desperately needs the same salvation you have received.

Does your life model the grace and forgiveness of Jesus?

Pray: Lord, overwhelm me with the grace and forgiveness that I have received so that I walk as a shining example of Your love.

NOTES:

DAY 13

READ ACTS 8:1–25

Peter answered: “May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin.

Acts 8:20–23

Simon the Sorcerer attempted to buy the powers of the apostles so that he might be able to do the miraculous signs that they did, but Peter rebuked him. God has not saved you so that you may have earthly profit and gain in this life. He has not saved you so that you would receive praise and glory. Rather, God has saved you so that you live a life that points to Him.

Do you live the Christian life with the right motivations?

Pray: Lord, forgive me for making my salvation about me. Teach me to run from my selfishness and embrace a life that worships You.

NOTES:

DAY 14

READ ACTS 8:26–40

Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked. “How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

Acts 8:30–31

Philip was eager. Philip was available. Philip ran in obedience. As a result, God used him to save the Ethiopian eunuch. God desires to use you in the same way. The problem is that often, your life is too busy to stop everything and have intentional Gospel interactions. But you have multiple opportunities for Jesus conversations every day. Be eager. Be available. Run in obedience to where God is leading.

Do you have enough margin in your life to be used by God?

Pray: Lord, open my eyes to the daily opportunities I have to show others who You are. Move me to be eager, available and obedient.

NOTES:

DAY 15

READ ACTS 9:1-22

But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.

Acts 9:15-16

God radically changed Saul (who will later become Paul). Where this man used to kill Christians, now he will suffer for the Name he used to persecute. Why? Because God works in ways to where only He receives the glory. The world doesn't expect a Christian killer to become a Christ proclaimer, but God displayed that His abilities far exceed the world's expectations. You serve a God who can transform a stone heart into a beating heart. Whether you need this as personal encouragement or as the Lord brings someone else to mind: Don't write someone off because of their past. Rather, pray that the Lord would change them in a way to where He alone receives the praise.

Do you believe God can save anyone?

Pray: Lord, forgive me for limiting Your ability to radically transform the life of a sinner. Teach me to live in Your grace and believe that You always have the power to save.

NOTES:

DAY 16

READ ACTS 9:23–43

In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor.

Acts 9:36

When you read Acts 9:36–43, you encounter an incredible miracle of life and resurrection. But at the very beginning of this story, the text makes clear that kind Tabitha was the kind of woman who was always doing good and helping the poor. It's important to remember that sharing the Gospel can be done in a variety of ways, shapes and forms. You are not simply called to speak about Jesus, you are called to live like Jesus. As 1 John 3:18 says, "Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."

Do your words about Jesus match your actions for Jesus?

Pray: Lord, let me not separate my words and actions, but instead be a light in every area of my life.

NOTES:

DAY 17

READ ACTS 10:1–48

Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.

Acts 10:34–35

God does not show favoritism. God does not pick and choose some nationalities, some socioeconomic classes or some types of people over other people. He instead chooses all who worship and obey Him. You need this same mentality. James 2:9 reads, "If you show favoritism, you sin..." Favoritism and partiality should have no place in your life for they are the antithesis of the heart of God.

Do you show favoritism or partiality toward particular types of people?

Pray: Lord, show me where I show partiality and kill that sin in me. Let me live in a way to where I interact with all people as ones who have been created in Your image and are in need of Your salvation.

NOTES:

DAY 18

READ ACTS 11:1-30

News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

Acts 11:22-24

In Acts 4:36, a man named Joseph is said to have been given another name by the apostles: Barnabas. Why? Because Barnabas means “son of encouragement.” In this passage, Barnabas is living up to his namesake. As Barnabas lived a joy-filled life, people saw the work of God in his life, and they were saved. You can live in this way as well. In a world full of discouragement, be a Barnabas.

How can you be a joy-filled encourager?

Pray: Lord, remind me of the joy I have in You and let that joy fuel a life of godly encouragement to others.

NOTES:

DAY 19

READ ACTS 12:1–25

So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

Acts 12:5

As Peter is again in prison, God's people don't embrace their helplessness by growing discouraged or frustrated. They show no indication of worry or fear. Rather, they pray earnestly. It's been said that "Prayer is the expression of our confidence in the sovereignty of God." When you pray, you are not only confessing that God holds all things in His hands, but that He can then act on what He holds. Humble yourself before God and trust in His plan. Rather than be filled with the anxieties of the world, confess your inabilities and ask the Lord to do what only He can do in and through you.

Is prayer your last resort or your first line of defense?

Pray: Lord, You are King over everything. I'm not. Lord, You hold everything in Your hands. I don't. I confess my inabilities and ask that You would work according to Your will.

NOTES:

DAY 20

READ ACTS 13:1–52

The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. But the Jewish leaders incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. So they shook the dust off their feet as a warning to them and went to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 13:49–52

Paul and Barnabas stopped at nothing to share the good news of Jesus. They took to heart Jesus's words in Matthew 5:11–12, "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." You shouldn't be surprised that the world will be opposed to God working through you. Regardless of the earthly consequences, you are called to a life of faithfulness and joy.

Does worldly opposition bring you sorrow or joy?

Pray: Lord, as I live out my faith, give me a joy that cannot be silenced and a commitment that cannot be stopped.

NOTES:

DAY 21

READ ACTS 14:1-28

They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said.

Acts 14:21-22

There is no question: God has called you to be faithful. Faithfulness means staying committed to His mission, purpose-driven in your efforts and trusting God will work in and through you. But notice also that the faithfulness of the early church was a collective effort. You need other believers to surround you and encourage you to be faithful. You need others to challenge you and remind you that you were created to make much of Jesus in a world that opposes Him.

How can you strengthen and encourage another believer to remain faithful?

Pray: Lord, surround me with people who will challenge me, encourage me and strengthen my faith so I may walk in faithfulness. And Lord, let me be this kind of person.

NOTES:

DAY 22

READ ACTS 15:1-41

It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God.

Acts 15:19

This story in Acts 15 presents a group within the church who got distracted from their mission. Rather than staying focused on pointing others to Jesus, they began telling others how they should act, behave and other things they must do to be saved. But as the church discussed the issue, James proclaimed that they need not make it hard for the nations to come to faith. You can't get distracted. God wants to use you to communicate the good news of salvation with simplicity and clarity. Don't live out a Gospel with strings attached. Live a Gospel that saves all who call upon the name of Jesus.

What are ways you get distracted from God's mission in your life?

Pray: Lord, let my life exemplify Your good news. Let me live in a way where people constantly see Your grace, forgiveness and power to save them as they are.

NOTES:

DAY 23

READ ACTS 16:1–15

One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.

Acts 16:14

During his missionary journey, Paul came across Lydia who was described as “a worshipper of God.” Literally translated, this woman was a God-fearer, a Gentile who sympathized with Judaism but wasn’t a full convert. Interestingly, as Paul is talking about Jesus, God opened her heart to receive the Gospel. When you share the Gospel, it’s not about having all the right answers, saying all the right words or having the right persuasion techniques. God must open the heart of a sinner to save them. Your call is to share the Gospel faithfully.

How can you share the Gospel faithfully?

Pray: Lord, go before me as I live out Your good news. Use me to faithfully present Your good news and open the hearts of the people around me to receive Your Word.

NOTES:

DAY 24

READ 16:16-40

The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"
Acts 16:29-30

The latter part of Acts 16 records yet another miraculous prison break in the book of Acts. Rather than set the prisoners free, this time it was to show God's mighty power and also for the apostles to display God's miraculous grace. The jailer knew that the prisoners' escape was his death sentence. But God used this to make His way known to the jailer and his family. God's love for His people is relentless and He will stop at nothing to save His own. And the craziest part? He wants to work through you to do that.

How can God use you to save His own?

Pray: Lord, move me so that I am in the best position to be used by You.

NOTES:

DAY 25

READ ACTS 17:1–15

Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women. But other Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. . .

Acts 17:4–5

Some are persuaded and drawn in by the Gospel message. Others reject the message and go as far as to fight against it. No matter the response, your role is to keep on living out the good news of Jesus. Jesus addresses this issue in Matthew 13 with the parable of the sower: there will be a variety of responses to the Gospel message, but you are called to continue to spread and scatter the name of Jesus wherever you go.

Do you continue to point people to Jesus regardless of their response?

Pray: Lord, I know You are the only One who can make a dead heart come alive. Give me strength to faithfully scatter Your Name wherever I go, regardless of the response.

NOTES:

DAY 26

READ ACTS 17:16–34

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there.

Acts 17:16-17

Paul was burdened by the lost people throughout Athens. He was burdened by their false ideas of religion. He was burdened by their leading others down the path of destruction. He was burdened that they would spend eternity without God. Therefore, he used their culture and their surroundings to share the good news of Jesus. You can never do whatever it takes for the Gospel if you fail to be burdened by lostness. You must see the world through the compassionate eyes of Jesus, as they are sheep in need of the Shepherd.

Are you burdened by the lostness of the world around you?

Pray: Lord, let me see the world through Your eyes. Give me a burden and a compassion for the lost all around me.

NOTES:

DAY 27

READ ACTS 18:1–17

One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: “Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.”

Acts 18:9-10

In the middle of the night, after preaching the name of Jesus and after being persecuted yet another time, God reminded Paul of both a specific truth and a timeless truth. A specific truth, that he would be safe in the city of Corinth. But also a timeless truth, that He was with him wherever he went. Paul wasn't safe in every city he went, but he did have God on his side no matter the circumstances. You have that same promise. God's way is not the safest way, but it is the best way. He promises to be with you wherever you go.

How does God's continual presence in your life change the way you live?

Pray: Lord, thank You for never leaving me. Let me walk in obedience and confidence as You walk alongside of me.

NOTES:

DAY 28

READ ACTS 18:18–28

For he vigorously refuted his Jewish opponents in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.

Acts 18:28

Acts 18 records the spiritual growth and the ministry of a man named Apollos. Eventually, Apollos matured as a Christian and became a force for the Gospel among the Jews. He refuted arguments and defended the Truth of the Scriptures, proving that Jesus was the Messiah. Salvation through Jesus is not a fairy tale or a conspiracy theory. It is truth. Jesus has not called you to blind faith, but a faith that is based on the truths of God. You are called to know and point people to this truth.

Do you live as though the Gospel is true?

Pray: Lord, I know Your Word and Your Way to be true. Strengthen me to know Your truth and defend Your truth.

NOTES:

DAY 29

READ ACTS 19:1–22

Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.

Acts 19:8–10

Paul was tenacious. Not only did he preach to the obstinate for three months, he kept teaching and preaching daily for two years so that more and more would come to know and love Jesus. You are called to grow and live in Jesus daily. The whole of your Christian life can't be exclusive to an hour a week. God has called you to a life in Him, and a life in Him is one that is wholly devoted to all of Jesus.

Do you see your call to be a disciple as a whole-life commitment?

Pray: Lord, teach me to have the tenaciousness of Paul so that I won't segment out my Christian life, but I would have a lifestyle that points people to You.

NOTES:

DAY 30

READ ACTS 19:23–41

And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that gods made by human hands are no gods at all. There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited; and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty.

Acts 19:26-27

Paul preached salvation in Jesus alone and people became mad. Why? Normally, those who were mad were the Jews. In this case, Gentiles were mad because God was saving people and as a result, they stopped buying and worshipping idols. In other words, God disrupted a business enterprise as He saved people in that city. You follow a God who disrupts the plans of the world. You should live in such a way that your loyalty lies in Jesus over anyone or anything else.

How does your loyalty to God impact your faith in His plans?

Pray: Lord, I believe Your plans are greater than the world's plans. As the world pushes their agenda, give me strength to remain loyal to You alone.

NOTES:

DAY 31

READ ACTS 20:1–12

Seated in a window was a young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up dead. Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. “Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “He’s alive!”

Acts 20:9–10

This is one of the most bizarre stories in the book of Acts, but it serves as a great reminder. Though Paul was preaching the Word of God, Eutychus slept. Just like the disciples in the garden prior to the crucifixion, he failed to be awake, alert and ready for God to work through him. Yet through the power of the Spirit, this man was resurrected. There’s no doubt: despite your failures and shortcomings, the Gospel will still rescue you. However, understand the enemy wants to keep you asleep to the Gospel opportunities around you.

Are you alert to God working around you?

Pray: Lord, give me strength and keep me awake to Your workings all around me.

NOTES:

DAY 32

READ ACTS 20:13–38

However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.

Acts 20:24

Paul’s ministry to the Ephesians was defined by both humility and tears as he continued to faithfully live out the Gospel in the midst of opposition. Yet even in pain, hardship and struggle, Paul considered his life worthless compared to the surpassing riches of knowing and preaching Jesus. Your life is nothing without Jesus. He has set a course for you to run: to make His Name known in and through you. Don’t run off course or you will find yourself chasing after the wind rather than Jesus.

Is Jesus worth more than life itself?

Pray: Lord, Your love is better than life itself. Teach me to live for You and not for myself, for I know that Your way is better than all others.

NOTES:

DAY 33

READ ACTS 21:1–40

Then Paul answered, “Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the Name of the Lord Jesus.” When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, “The Lord’s will be done.”

Acts 21:13-14

Many of Paul’s friends and other disciples urged him to not go to Jerusalem because they knew it would lead to intense persecution, but Paul had counted the cost of following Jesus and kept his course. In Luke 14, Jesus looks to the crowds and says, “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it?” He goes on to say, “In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be My disciples.” If you are a follower of Jesus, then you are called to count the cost of your discipleship. Though Jesus may cost you everything in this life, He is worth it.

How seriously have you counted the cost of following Jesus?

Pray: Lord, teach me to see everything in this life as nothing compared to the unfathomable greatness of living for You.

NOTES:

DAY 34

READ ACTS 22:1–30

Then Paul said: “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today. I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison...”

Acts 22:2b-4

Paul was always quick to remind people how he had been saved by a miraculous grace. This is often how he shared the Gospel. If you believe in Jesus, then you have a story of miraculous grace too. You have a story of how God, despite all the odds and circumstances, looked to you as you were dead in your sin and made you alive with Christ. The greatest tool you have to share the good news of Jesus is your testimony. Tell the world who Jesus is and how He has changed you.

What is your story of God’s grace?

Pray: Lord, I know I have been saved by Your grace. Give me boldness and strength to share how You gave me life.

NOTES:

DAY 35

READ ACTS 23:1–35

The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, “Take courage! As you have testified about Me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.”

Acts 23:11

Immediately following this verse, a plot to kill Paul was created by a large number of Jews. Despite this, their ambush was thwarted by a boy who had courage to go to a Roman guard, who the Lord used to deliver Paul with the help of 200 soldiers, 70 horseman and 200 spearmen. God made sure Paul was headed to Rome. The same can be true for you: when God calls you to something, nothing will stop His plan. Be faithful and be obedient for God is on your side.

Do you believe God will make good on His promises?

Pray: Lord, teach me Your way so that I may confidently and obediently follow Your truth.

NOTES:

DAY 36

READ ACTS 24:1–27

So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.
Acts 24:16

What was the world's view of Paul? He was a troublemaker, a rioter, a ringleader of a rebellion and a desecrator of the temple. However Paul explained his actions and then concluded that his conscience was clear before both God and man. When you live out God's Word and God's leading, the world will look at you differently and question your intentions. Don't worry, for God always sees your motivation. Make sure the "why" behind your actions is that God would be glorified and people would see Jesus.

Why do you do what you do?

Pray: Lord, check my heart and reveal any false motivation in me so that I may have a clear conscience before You and others.

NOTES:

DAY 37

READ ACTS 25:1–27

Then Paul made his defense: “I have done nothing wrong against the Jewish law or against the temple or against Caesar.”
Acts 25:8

As Paul lived out the good news of Jesus, he made sure that he was blameless before everyone. This is hard to do, but this is your call as you obey Jesus. 1 Peter 2:12 says, “Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us.” No matter where you are or what you are doing, live in a way that represents Jesus.

Does your life point others to Jesus?

Pray: Lord, teach me to walk in such a blameless way that You are honored in everything I do.

NOTES:

DAY 38

READ ACTS 26:1–32

Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?” Paul replied, “Short time or long—I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains.”

Acts 26:28–29

Paul’s heart for unbelievers is on display in these verses. He prays over and over again that everyone who hears the good news would repent and believe in Jesus. Here is the truth: some people will respond to Jesus and be saved immediately. Some people will be saved over a long period of time. Some will not be saved. That doesn’t change your responsibility. God is the only One Who saves. Therefore, pray for the lost people you encounter and keep pointing them in the direction of Jesus.

Do you pray for your lost friends, family, neighbors, coworkers, etc.?

Pray: Lord, I pray that _____ would be saved. Show me how I can be a light to them.

NOTES:

DAY 39

READ ACTS 27:1–44

So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me.

Acts 27:25

Faith is believing God is who He says He is and He will do what He says He will do. Who is God? Among so many attributes: He is Good, Holy, Kind, Love, King, Almighty, Powerful, Just, Perfect, Gracious and Merciful. What has He promised? He promises salvation to all who believe in Jesus. He promises direction and guidance. He promises peace, joy, love and hope. He promises His presence and His help. He promises to complete His mission and one day make all things new. Take courage and put your faith in God.

Does your faith in God help your obedience to God?

Pray: Lord, strengthen my faith in You so that I can live courageously in Your promises.

NOTES:

DAY 40

READ ACTS 28:1–31

“Therefore I want you to know that God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!” For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!

Acts 28:28–31

Paul would soon after give his life for the name of Jesus, but he went out boldly proclaiming and teaching about Jesus. As this devotional comes to a close, you should be encouraged by the acts of the early church. They did whatever it took to make much of the name of Jesus in their lives. You should also be challenged. You are a follower of Jesus and therefore you have the same calling. Believe in Jesus. Live like Jesus. Preach the name of Jesus. Tell others about Jesus. Love others like Jesus. Do whatever it takes to point people to Jesus.

Will you do whatever it takes for the Gospel?

Pray: Lord, thank You for the book of Acts. Thank you for the encouragement of the early church and the challenge they leave behind. Show me how I can do whatever it takes to make Your name known through me.

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