

ACTS

GROUP GUIDE: WEEK 7

CONVERSATION STARTER

What's the best place you've ever traveled to, and what did you love about it?

NOT OUR WILL, BUT YOURS BE DONE

Over the past few weeks, we've read stories about how Paul continues to get himself into trouble as he travels through Asia Minor, Greece, and the surrounding regions. He's made enemies among some of the more zealous Jewish believers who think Paul is teaching other Jewish believers to disregard the Torah. Now, Paul turns his sights toward Jerusalem, and it's clear from Luke's writings that he anticipates trouble when he arrives. And he's not the only one! Twice before he arrives, his colleagues attempt to persuade him away from going. And twice Paul reaffirms his resolve, saying, "I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." (Acts 21:13).

Finally, when they realize they won't be able to change his mind, the believers give in, saying, "The Lord's will be done." These are famous words, words that tap into the heartbeat of the Biblical story, from the original Garden when humans first decided to disregard God's will in favor of their own, to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus uttered the same words as he resigned himself to the cross, "Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."

The Gospel is a call to surrender our will. The gift of Jesus was forgiveness where we fail to do so. Each and every day, we are invited to join Jesus in surrendering the ways we define for ourselves what is right and wrong, where we should go, and to accept God's will and wisdom, living in partnership with the Spirit in such a way that we are guided by God's will over our lives. Spend a few moments discussing this idea with your group: what does it look like to pray this same prayer over your life, over your community, and over the church? *Not our will, but yours be done, Lord.*

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What stuck out to you about the reading from this week? Was there a verse or idea that was particularly meaningful or challenging for you?
2. If Luke were to write a story about you, what is one story you hope he would include? What's one story you hope he would leave out? Why do you feel that way?
3. As more and more people follow Jesus, it changes the culture in Ephesus. Are Christians today called to be culture changers or culture adaptors? In other words, when should we seek to change the socioeconomic makeup of our communities, and when should we adapt to culture so we can be missionaries within culture?
4. When Paul returns to Jerusalem, he catches up with the brothers and tells them of all that's happened in his ministry. We're told that when the brothers "heard it, they glorified God." (Acts 21:20) What does it mean to glorify God? What are you hearing or listening to that prompts you to glorify God?
5. Paul summarizes his whole mission as being about the love of God and the love of others, just as Jesus taught. What does it look like practically for us to love God this week? What does it look like to love others? Which do you have a harder time with?

WEEKLY PRACTICE

The Psalms are not just pretty poetic words, they also make for great prayers! Paul's dedication to journey onward to Jerusalem even in the face of danger reminds me of the famous words from Psalm 23, "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me." This week, [Read Psalm 23](#), not just as words on a page but as a prayer you can participate in. Here are a few tips:

Read Psalm 23 through once from start to finish. Now, read it a second time and consider how the words speak to you. What stands out? What are you feeling? What situations or circumstances in your present reality are drawn to the front of your mind? What themes do you notice? Now read it again a third time. Don't just read the words this time—pray them back to God! Don't be afraid to change the language and add thoughts of your own. Summarize each verse as if you were talking directly with God.