

## Proverbs 12, Acts 4-9, Song of Solomon 1-6 (#127)

**Proverbs 12**— *What do the following proverbs say about: (1) speech and the power of words- verses 18, 22, and 25, (2) care of animals- verse 10, and (3) the fool and the wise- verses 15-16.*

**Acts 4**— The church in Jerusalem now has grown to 5000 disciples, and there is great amazement among all of the people after the healing of the lame man. The priestly family and the Sadducees are very distraught that the Apostles are preaching the resurrection of Christ and accusing them of His murder. Peter and John are taken into custody and brought before the Sanhedrin the next day to give an accounting. Peter and John say that the power and name by which they have done this sign is “Jesus Christ” and that He is the only way of salvation. Knowing they cannot deny the miracle, the Jewish leaders ordered them to stop preaching in the name of Jesus and released them. After their release, Peter and John returned to the church body and reported what had taken place. They did not ask the Lord for protection but for boldness to speak the message, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. The whole church was unified in one heart and mind and generously shared their possessions so that there was not a needy person among them. Joseph, known as Barnabas, was singled out as one who showed great generosity. *Verse 12 says that Jesus is the only way of salvation and the only way to God. How would you answer someone who says that all religions lead to God but just express different ways to get at Him? Extra question: Did the early church practice communism (vv. 32-37). Why or why not?*

**Acts 5**— External pressures on the church spur on its growth, but in verses 1 to 11 we come to the first internal test that was caused by the deceit and hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira who verified that the money they gave to the church for the sale of their property was the full price of the land when it was not true. Their immediate deaths brought great fear to the whole church and those outside did not dare join them (vv. 1-13). As believers were added to the church many signs and wonders were done by Peter who healed the sick and those tormented by evil spirits. Filled with jealousy, the high priest and the Sadducees arrested the apostles and put them in jail. The angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail for the apostles during the night, and they went to the temple at daybreak and began to teach. Completely baffled as to what happened to these men, the leaders found the apostles in the temple preaching and brought them in to confront them. Peter unflinchingly declares that they will obey God and not men, that God has exalted Jesus to His right hand as ruler and Savior, and will grant repentance and forgiveness of sins to those who believe in Him. Through the intervention of Gamaliel, the Sanhedrin decided to flog the apostles and let them go. The apostles left the presence of the Sanhedrin rejoicing they had been counted worthy of suffering and continued proclaiming the gospel (vv. 14-42). *Why was the punishment on Ananias and Sapphira so swift and seemingly too harsh?*

**Acts 6**— As the church grew in number a problem arose in that the Greek-speaking widows were not receiving the daily food distribution that the Hebrew-speaking widows were receiving. Since the Apostles were occupied in the food distribution, they decided to call seven Greek-speaking men to take over for them so that they could then fully dedicate themselves to the preaching of the Word and prayer. The church was flourishing and growing, and even a large group of priests became believers (vv. 1-7). One of those called to serve the church was Stephen who was full of grace and power and did great wonders and signs. The leaders of a synagogue composed of former Jewish slaves disputed with Stephen but were unable to stand up against his wisdom. They lied about Stephen and dragged him off to the Sanhedrin where they set up false witnesses. Stephen's face was like the face of an angel (vv. 8-15). *Explain the problem the church had in verses 1 to 7, and what they did to solve the problem. What are principles from this passage that can be applied to our churches today?*

**Acts 7**— Stephen begins by reciting the history of Israel from the calling and covenant of Abraham (vv. 1-8), to the deliverance of Jacob's entire family by Joseph (vv. 9-16), to the life, calling, and leadership of Moses (vv. 17-37), and to the rebellion of Israel from their days in the wilderness to their deportation to Babylon (vv. 38-43). Stephen spoke of the importance of the temple but said that it is of greater importance that our glorious God should not be limited to the temple as the present Jews had done to Him (vv. 44-50). Stephen boldly confronted the Sanhedrin saying "You stubborn people! You are heathen at heart and deaf to the truth. Must you forever resist the Holy Spirit (v. 51 NLT)?" Upon hearing his words that they had killed the Messiah, they became enraged, dragged him out of the city, and stoned him to death (vv. 51-60). *How was Stephen an example to us in the way he responded to the people that stoned him to death? How should we respond to others that may persecute us or say evil things against us falsely?*

**Acts 8**— Chapter 8 is the good news/bad news chapter. The good news is that the gospel was finally taken to Judea and Samaria in accordance with Christ's command in 1:8. The bad news is that it took the persecution by Saul and others to scatter the church so that they would obey His command to be His witnesses outside of Jerusalem. Philip (not the apostle) goes down to Samaria, proclaims the gospel of Christ, performs signs and miracles, and a multitude believes. One of the converts is Simon who had practiced sorcery. Upon hearing that Samaria had welcomed the gospel message, Peter and John came and prayed that the Samaritans might receive the Holy Spirit. Simon was severely rebuked when he offered money to be able to replicate what Peter and John had done (vv. 1-25). An angel of the Lord sent Philip down to the road toward Gaza so that he could proclaim the

message of the gospel to an important official of Candace, the queen of Ethiopia. Upon joining him in the chariot, Philip explained the good news about Jesus beginning with Isaiah 53. When he believed the gospel, he asked Philip what would hinder him from being baptized. After he baptized the Ethiopian, Philip was taken away by the Spirit of the Lord and taken to Azotus where he continued to evangelize, and the Ethiopian eunuch returned to his country rejoicing.

*Jesus gave the command in Acts 1:8 (Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 16:15) to go into all of the world and preach the gospel, but it wasn't until the persecution came that they began to scatter and preach the gospel. Is there anyone in your life right now that the Holy Spirit has been prompting you to share the gospel with? Who is that person? Ask the Lord for strength to share the gospel with that person. Be accountable to another Next Level man about this.*

**Acts 9**— This chapter is a turning point in the life of the church when our Lord Jesus Christ personally selects the one that He desires to be his vessel to take the gospel to the Gentiles and thus, appears to Saul of Tarsus on the Road to Damascus. Instead of dragging off the believers to jail in Jerusalem, Saul receives his sight, is baptized, and then goes into the temple and proclaims Jesus as Messiah and Savior. Both in Damascus and Jerusalem he barely escapes death because of his preaching and is finally sent off to Tarsus by the Apostles (vv. 1-31). As the Apostle Peter travels from place to place, he comes to Lydda where God uses him to heal Aeneas who was paralyzed and bedridden for eight years. This miracle causes the people of this area to turn to the Lord. When a lady full of good works by the name of Tabitha (or Dorcas) dies in Joppa, the disciples hear that Peter is near and send for him. Upon entering her room Peter kneels down, prays, and says “Tabitha, get up.” Throughout Joppa many of those who heard of her resurrection believed in the Lord (vv. 32-43). *Before Saul's conversion he was the number one enemy of the church and the one that the church thought that it would be impossible for him to become a Christ follower. The angel said to Mary, “For nothing will be impossible with God (Luke 1:37 ESV).” Write down the name of a person among your family, friends, neighbors, or co-workers that you would love to see saved but that it seems highly unlikely or nearly impossible for that person to become Christian. Share their name with the group and covenant to pray for that person regularly and see what God will do.*

**Song of Songs or Song of Solomon**— This book is traditionally ascribed to King Solomon (although which of his many wives he is addressing is not made clear). The purpose of this book is to tell of the love between a bridegroom and his bride, to affirm the sanctity of marriage, a celebration of love and sex, and to picture God's love for His people. The most explicit statements on the physical relationship between a man and his wife in the Bible can be found in this book. This book has often been criticized down through the centuries because of its sensuous language. The purity and sacredness of love represented here, however, are greatly needed in our day in which distorted attitudes about love and marriage are commonplace. God created sex and intimacy, and they are holy and good when enjoyed within the bonds of marriage. A husband and wife honors God when they love and enjoy each other. If you remember one thing from this book, remember that love between husband and wife is mysterious, passionate, awe-inspiring, and should be revered.

**Song of Solomon 1**—

**Single men** – Tell someone in your life how important they are to you and what their friendship means to you.

**Married men** – Devote today to speaking words of love to your wife. You can also leave her notes for her to find.

Examples would be “One of my favorite memories of us together would be...” or “I appreciate you and the things you do for me. I really love it when...”

### **Song of Solomon 2—**

**Single men** – How are you devoting yourself to the service of God and His people?

**Married men** – Today devote yourself to showing love to your wife through acts of service.

### **Song of Solomon 3—**

**Single men** – If God has marriage for you in the future, what are the qualities you are looking for in a wife?

**Married men** – Today express your love to your wife by giving her heart-felt gifts. They do not need to be expensive or big, just from the heart.

### **Song of Solomon 4—**

**Single men** – What qualities do you have that would make you a good husband?

**Married men** – Spend quality one-on-one time with your wife today and have a meaningful conversation with her about something other than daily tasks, chores, or kids. Rediscover her dreams and passions.

### **Song of Solomon 5—**

**Single men** – What changes do you need to make to be a godly and loving husband?

**Married men** – Find time throughout the day to touch your wife in a loving way. Hold her hand for no reason. Hug her whenever you see her. Give her a back rub. Etc.

### **Song of Solomon 6—**

**Single men** – If you would like to be married, what steps are you taking right now to find a godly woman?

**Married men** – Have a date-night with your spouse. Have a romantic dinner. Take a picnic walk or find some other activity that the two of you can do together.

*Sources for summary and questions: 1. Serendipity Bible for Groups, c. 1988 Littleton, CO. 2. MacArthur Study Bible ESV, 1997 Thomas Nelson, Inc. 3. Life Application Bible HCSB c. 1988 Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. 4. The Complete Bible Companion c.2014 Barbour Publishing, Inc. Uhrichsville, OH. 5. ESV Study Bible c. 2008 Crossway Bibles, Wheaton, IL. 6. The World Bible Handbook, Lawrence Richards, Word Inc. Waco, TX. 7. The Quest Study Bible NIV, c. 1994 Zondervan Publishing & Christianity Today, Grand Rapids, MI & Wheaton, IL. 8. The Transformation Study Bible, c. 2009, David C. Cook. 9. Key Ideas Bible Handbook, Ron Rhodes, c. 2016, Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, OR. 10. 500 Questions & Answers from the Bible, c. 2006, Barbour Publishing, Uhrichsville, OH. 11. Homan Bible Handbook, c.1992, Homan Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN. 12. Moody Bible Commentary, c. 2014, Moody Publishers, Chicago, IL. 13. Life Essentials Study Bible, c. 2011, Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN. 14. The Message, c. 2002, Eugene Peterson, NavPress Publishing Group, Colorado Springs, CO. 15. NIV Study Bible, c. 2011, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI. 16. Understanding the Bible, c.2000, Holman Publishers, Nashville, TN.*

## Proverbs 13, Acts 10-15, Song of Solomon 7-8, Ezekiel 1-5 (#128)

**Proverbs 13**— *How should children be disciplined? See verses 1, 24. See also 19:18, 22:6, 15, 23:13-14, 29:15. After reading these verses, corporal punishment is clearly implied. Today's society in the western world clearly condemns spankings of any kind. How do Christian parents navigate between what these verses teach and what our society condemns? Speak to all sides of this issue of discipline.*

**Acts 10**— This chapter gives a second turning point in the church when the Lord extends full salvation and acceptance to the Gentiles who believe in Jesus. God simultaneously prepares Cornelius, a God-fearing centurion, and Peter for a meeting in Caesarea where Peter will powerfully proclaim the message of the gospel to him, his family, and close friends. An angel appeared in a vision to Cornelius to send for Peter in Joppa. The next day near the time the messengers that Cornelius had sent arrived at Simon's house by the sea, Peter had a vision three times of a great canvas sheet coming down from heaven with all kinds of unclean animals on it. He was commanded to kill and eat but protested that he had never eaten anything unclean. A voice said, "What God has made clean, you must not call unclean (v. 15 HCSB)." When the messengers arrived to ask Peter to go to the house of Cornelius, the Lord told him to go with them and have no doubts. When Peter and other brothers arrived at the house of Cornelius, he preached and explained the gospel of Christ to all that were in the house. Upon hearing that "everyone who believes in Him will receive forgiveness of sins," the Holy Spirit came in power, they spoke in other languages, and they declared the greatness of God. After they had received the Holy Spirit, Peter commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus. *What was the difference in the way the Gentile believers (vv. 43-48), the believers on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38), and the believers in Samaria (8:12-17) received the Holy Spirit and baptism? What might account for the differences?*

**Acts 11**— Upon hearing that the Gentiles became disciples, those Christians in Judea who were Judaizers protested that to truly become a disciple a man first must be circumcised. After rehearsing the story of Cornelius and those of his house, and how they received the Holy Spirit when they believed, the people rejoiced that God had even granted "the Gentiles the privilege of repenting of their sins and receiving eternal life (v. 18 NLT)." When the Gentiles in Antioch began to turn to Christ in large numbers, the Apostles sent Barnabas to encourage and teach them. He went to Tarsus to search for Paul in order to bring him back to Antioch to assist him teaching and making disciples. During this time the prophet Agabus predicted a famine, and so the church in Antioch sent money to the elders in Jerusalem to help them with their need. *How was this church in Antioch important in the early history of Christianity?*

**Acts 12**— Another wave of persecution came over the church, and King Herod killed James, John’s brother, with the sword. When he saw that the Jewish leaders were pleased, he arrested Peter and held him in prison until after the feast of the Unleavened Bread was finished so that he could bring him to trial and execute him. The night before coming to trial, the church earnestly prayed for Peter’s safety. An angel of the Lord came and rescued him from prison. When Peter arrived at the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, the people that were praying were completely shocked by Peter’s rescue. He explained how the Lord had saved him from sure execution. After King Herod interrogated the guards and ordered their execution, he went down to Caesarea. While giving an oration to the people of Tyre and Sidon, King Herod was struck down by God and eaten with worms because of his pride in accepting the adulation of the people. *How are we like the people that gathered for prayer at Mary’s house? Do we always believe God answers prayer? What answer to prayer have you seen in the last few months?*

**Acts 13**— As the church at Antioch prayed and fasted, the Holy Spirit directed the believers to send off Barnabas and Saul to win souls, make disciples, and plant churches. On their first stop, they came to the island of Cyprus which was the home of Barnabas. Cyprus had a large Jewish population. The Roman governor of the island became a believer when through Paul’s words, the Lord struck Bar-Jesus (Elymas), the sorcerer, with blindness (vv. 1-12). Leaving the city of Paphos on the island of Cyprus, Paul and Barnabas arrived at Perga in the province of Pamphylia where John Mark left them and went back to Jerusalem. Going on to Antioch in Pisidia, Paul was invited to speak a message of encouragement in the synagogue on the Sabbath. He then gave a gospel message which included the history of Israel and God’s promises to them, the life of Jesus Christ including His death, burial, and resurrection, and the offer of forgiveness of sins to all who believe on Him. Nearly the whole town came to listen to him the next Sabbath, and the Jews became jealous of the large crowd and incited leading men and prominent women against Paul and Barnabas. They were expelled from Antioch and went on to Iconium, but the new believers were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit. *After reading the Apostle Paul’s message in the synagogue (vv. 16-41), what things stand out in your mind about its structure and content?*

**Acts 14**— The next stop for Paul and Barnabas is Iconium where they first go to the synagogue and proclaim Christ. Although a great number of Jews and Greeks believed, part of the town tried to stone them so they fled to Lystra (vv. 1-7). In Lystra a man lame from birth was healed by Paul. This healing caused the crowd to think they were gods that came down from heaven. Then the priest from the temple of Zeus tried to offer sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas. They were barely able to stop the people from offering sacrifices to them. Then Jews that came from Antioch and Iconium, won the crowds over, and incited them to stone Paul. They dragged Paul out of the city thinking he was dead, but he got up and went back into the town (vv. 8-20). Going to Derbe next, they made many disciples, and then returned through all the cities encouraging the believers, appointing elders, and telling them “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God (v. 22b NIV).” *When the missionary journey was completed, who did Paul and Barnabas report to about their first missionary journey? Why was this important, and how is this an example to our churches today?*

**Acts 15**— Now we come to a decisive council in Jerusalem where an important decision had to be made as to whether the Gentiles would be forced to be circumcised and live under the Law of Moses in order to be saved as the Pharisaic wing of the church in Jerusalem demanded. First, Peter made it clear that through his mouth the first Gentiles were saved, and upon believing the gospel message they received the Holy Spirit. Next Barnabas and Paul described all the signs and wonders God has done through them among the Gentiles. Finally, James brings scripture to bear upon God's purpose of enfolding Gentiles into His eternal plan. He then passed on four guidelines to the Gentile churches which would bring unity between Jews and Gentiles in the local assemblies. A letter then was written by those in the council to all the Gentile churches in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. Upon hearing the letter, the church was very encouraged and strengthened. Paul wanted to return with Barnabas to the churches they planted but had a sharp disagreement happened because Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them although he had deserted them on the first journey. As a result of the contention, Barnabas took John Mark to Cyprus, and Paul departed with Silas to revisit and strengthen the churches in Syria and Cilicia. *Give the steps from start to finish that these leaders and Apostles used to resolve their conflict about whether or not Gentiles have to keep the Law of Moses to be saved.*

#### **Song of Solomon 7—**

**Single men** – Would you like to be married some day, or do you believe that the single life is what God has in store for you?

**Married men** – Today's assignment is a difficult challenge. Ask your wife how you can be a better husband to her, and then listen quietly to her response without defending yourself or interrupting.

#### **Song of Solomon 8—**

**Single men** – What advantages and freedoms do you have as a single man that you would not have if you were married? See I Corinthians 7:32-33. What type of person should every Christian marry? I Corinthians 7:39, II Corinthians 6:14-16.

**Married men** – Discuss with your wife this past week. Find out what meant the most to her, what touched her heart and really made her feel loved? Congratulations, you have discovered her love language. Now, find new ways to tell her that you love her by using her favorite language.

**Ezekiel**— For the historical background of Ezekiel read 2 Kings 22-25 and Jeremiah 28-29. The book of Ezekiel contains a variety of prophetic visions and oracles which Ezekiel presented to the exiles in Babylon over a twenty-two-year period (593-571 B.C.). Except for the oracle and lament over Egypt (29:17-30:26), the oracles appear in chronological order. Chapters 1-24 contain oracles from the five-year period preceding the siege of Jerusalem (588 B.C.). These are primarily announcements of God's certain judgment against the city of Jerusalem and its temple. Chapters 25 to 32 are a series of oracles against surrounding nations with Babylon being the notable exception. Chapters 33-48 cover a sixteen-year period after the fall of Jerusalem and focus on hope for the future. Pay attention to how the structure reveals Ezekiel's theology of God's holy wrath. God is sovereign over all the nations and is a God of great mercy. If you read Ezekiel carefully, you will be able to see its imagery echoed in the writings of Paul and in John's Revelation. This book was written in approximately 571 BC in Babylon.

**Ezekiel 1**— At the age of thirty, when he should have started serving in the temple (Numbers 4:3), Ezekiel was instead called to serve as God’s prophet in Babylon. He saw a vision of God and received the Word of God in order to give it to his people. He describes what he saw, four creatures with wings, four wheels within wheels, a throne, and the Almighty. He immediately falls facedown as the Lord was speaking to him.

**Ezekiel 2**— After falling on his face in humble worship, he then is lifted to his feet, is filled with the Spirit, and listened to the Word of God. He was fed on the Word of God which gave him what he needed to speak God’s Word (See Jeremiah. 15:16, Revelation 10:9, and Matthew 4:4). *How did God describe the people of Israel to whom Ezekiel would preach? See 2:4. What was Ezekiel not to do? See 2:6.*

**Ezekiel 3**— God sent Ezekiel to his own people to proclaim the Word of God. God warned Ezekiel that his own people would not listen to him but was to go anyway. After the vision, he went to Tel-abib and sat there for seven days overwhelmed. Then God gives Ezekiel a command that should give each of us pause. When God tells Ezekiel to speak and he doesn’t obey, then the blood of the wicked that perish will be on his hands. *God has called each of us to speak His Word to a rebellious world around us. What are the reasons we give to ourselves for holding back and not speaking?*

**Ezekiel 4**— God gave Ezekiel “performance art” to display to Jerusalem what would happen to it and the people. First, he “played war” to demonstrate the siege of the city (vv.1-3). The iron plate represented the barrier between God and His people (Lamentations 3:43-44) showing that God would no longer tolerate their idolatry. By God’s decree, Babylon would capture the city and nothing could stop that from happening. Then, he lay bound for part of each day, 390 days on the left side and then 40 days on the right. During that time, Ezekiel had to ration his food and water as the people of Jerusalem would do. Compare verse 14 with Acts 10:14. *Why did Ezekiel complain about the way he was told to bake his bread? What alternative did God allow him to use?*

**Ezekiel 5**— God commanded that Ezekiel shave his head and beard, a very real sacrifice for a Jew. The hair was used to represent the people of Jerusalem who would be punished in three different ways, death by famine, death by the sword, and exile among the nations (Deuteronomy 28:47-57). Here you will see that God would spare a remnant yet again. *What caused the Lord to be so angry with His people (vv. 6-7 and 11)?*

*Sources for summary and questions: 1. Serendipity Bible for Groups, c. 1988 Littleton, CO. 2. MacArthur Study Bible ESV, 1997 Thomas Nelson, Inc. 3. Life Application Bible HCSB c. 1988 Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. 4. The Complete Bible Companion c.2014 Barbour Publishing, Inc. Uhrichsville, OH. 5. ESV Study Bible c. 2008 Crossway Bibles, Wheaton, IL. 6. The World Bible Handbook, Lawrence Richards, Word Inc. Waco, TX. 7. The Quest Study Bible NIV, c. 1994 Zondervan Publishing & Christianity Today, Grand Rapids, MI & Wheaton, IL. 8. The Transformation Study Bible, c. 2009, David C. Cook. 9. Key Ideas Bible Handbook, Ron Rhodes, c. 2016, Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, OR. 10. 500 Questions & Answers from the Bible, c. 2006, Barbour Publishing, Uhrichsville, OH. 11. Homan Bible Handbook, c.1992, Homan Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN. 12. Moody Bible Commentary, c. 2014, Moody Publishers, Chicago, IL. 13. Life Essentials Study Bible, c. 2011, Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN. 14. The Message, c. 2002, Eugene Peterson, NavPress Publishing Group, Colorado Springs, CO. 15. NIV Study Bible, c. 2011, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI. 16. Understanding the Bible, c.2000, Holman Publishers, Nashville, TN.*



## Proverbs 14, Acts 16-21, Ezekiel 6-11 (#129)

**Proverbs 14**— Explain the meaning of the following verses: 1, 12, 31, and 34.

**Acts 16**— Paul and Silas returned to the churches in Asia Minor that were planted and gave them the report of the Jerusalem council, and the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily. They tried to take the gospel to other parts of Asia Minor, but the Holy Spirit wouldn't allow them to go. Timothy and Luke had joined them along the way. When they came to Troas, Paul had a vision of a man pleading with him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us (v. 9b HCSB)!" After arriving in the city of Philippi in Macedonia, they went on the Sabbath day to the riverbank outside the city and found some women gathered for prayer. One of the women in the group was Lydia who was a merchant of expensive purple cloth. The Lord opened Lydia's heart to believe, she was baptized, and then she invited Paul's team to stay at her home. When Paul cast demons out of a slave girl who was constantly bothering them, her owners seized Paul and Silas and dragged them off to the authorities. After a mob stripped off their clothes and beat them, Paul and Silas were thrown into prison. At midnight as Paul and Silas were singing, God sent a violent earthquake which loosened everyone's chains. Since no one escaped, the jailer asked "Sirs, what must I do to be saved (v. 30 ESV)." After believing in the Lord Jesus, the jailer and his family were baptized. Since Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, the city magistrates apologetically escorted them out of the city. *Where do we see the work of the Holy Spirit in this chapter? What work does the Holy Spirit do in your life?*

**Acts 17**— Paul's team traveled from Philippi to Thessalonica where he reasoned with them from the Scriptures in the Jewish synagogue for three Sabbaths. Although many Jews and God-fearing Greeks were persuaded to believe in Christ, other Jews became jealous, formed a mob, and forced Paul and Silas to leave town (vv. 1-9). As was their custom, Paul and Silas went to the synagogue in Berea and taught the scriptures. The Jews of this city were more open-minded and fair and eagerly examined the Scriptures to see if Paul was speaking the truth. A large number believed in Berea, but Jewish agitators from Thessalonica came and forced Paul to leave Macedonia (vv. 10-15). Silas and Timothy stayed in Macedonia to instruct the believers, but Paul went on to Athens to await them. He taught in the synagogue but also reasoned with Epicurean and Stoic philosophers who took him to the Areopagus to share his strange ideas with them. Having been taught in Greek philosophy, he adapted his message of the gospel in a way the Greeks could understand by talking about the altar to an unknown God and even quoting Greek philosophers. After finishing his message on the theme of Christ and the resurrection, some ridiculed him, some wanted to hear more another day, and others believed (vv. 16-34). *Paul used the altar to the unknown God and Greek philosophy as points of contact between the people and the gospel. What are some of the ways we can contextualize (adapt and relate the gospel to a culture) the gospel today in order to reach people for Christ? See 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.*

**Acts 18**— After leaving Athens, Paul arrived in Corinth and found a believing couple from Rome by the names of Aquila and Priscilla who were tentmakers as he was. When Silas and Timothy joined them, Paul was occupied with the message of the gospel in the synagogue. Although many believed in Christ, he was strongly opposed by the Jews and thus dedicated his time to reaching the Gentiles. God promised to protect Paul in Corinth, and so he boldly proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah for a year and a half. When Paul was dragged into court, the judge by the name of Gallio would not accept the Jews arguments and had them escorted out of the court. Leaving Corinth, Paul went to Ephesus where he stayed for a short period of time and reasoned with the Jews in the synagogue. Leaving Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus, Paul sailed back to Caesarea and Antioch where he greeted the churches. He then returned through Galatia and Phrygia strengthening the churches. When Priscilla and Aquila heard Apollos speak boldly in the synagogue, he only declared what John the Baptist said about Jesus. “They took him home and explained the way of God to him more accurately (v. 26b HCSB).” Crossing over to Corinth from Ephesus, Apollos greatly helped the believers and refuted the non-believing Jews in public. *This chapter introduces us to a dynamic couple by the name of Priscilla and Aquila. What information can we glean about them from this chapter as well as other parts of Paul’s writings? See verses 1-3, 25-26, Romans 16:3-5, I Corinthians 16:19, and II Timothy 4:19.*

**Acts 19**— Upon returning to Ephesus, Paul found some disciples of John the Baptist who he taught clearly the gospel of Christ and had them baptized in the name of Jesus. After their baptism Paul laid his hands on the twelve men, and they spoke in other languages (tongues) and prophesied (vv. 1-7). For two years Paul spoke boldly the message of the gospel so that all the inhabitants of the province of Asia heard the Word of the Lord. The Lord performed extraordinary miracles through Paul, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. Believers who had previously been involved in the occult brought their incantation books and burned them in a public bonfire (vv. 8-20). Because of the large number of converts in Ephesus and surrounding cities, the silversmiths who made silver shrines of the goddess Artemis were losing a vast amount of money. Demetrius assembled all the craftsmen who became enraged by the loss of business, and so they dragged Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul’s travelling companions, into the amphitheater. Confusion reigned for two hours as the people shouted “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians.” The city clerk calmed the crowd down, urged the silversmiths to bring charges in a court of law if they have any, and then dismissed the assembly (21-41). *As you have read and thought about the last seven chapters (13-19) that record Paul’s missionary journey, what seemed to be his strategy in church planting and evangelism?*

**Acts 20**— Paul departed from Ephesus to go to Macedonia and Greece. He spent three months in Corinth, returned to the cities of Macedonia, and then stopped seven days in Troas. He assembled the church together on the first day of the week and preached until dawn. A young man by the name of Eutychus, who was sitting on a window sill, sank into a deep sleep and fell from the third story and died. Through Paul, the Lord brought him back

to life (vv. 1-12). Arriving at Miletus Paul sent for the elders of the church of Ephesus. First, Paul reviewed his ministry with them which was preaching everything they needed from the Word including repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus. Even though he knew that going to Jerusalem would mean prison and suffering, his concern was not his life but that he will finish the course and ministry of testifying to the gospel of God's grace (vv. 12-24). Now the writer Luke begins to show the deep love and concern that Paul had for the churches and challenges the elders to be on guard for the flock that the Lord has called them to shepherd. He warned them to constantly be on the lookout because savage wolves will come in to tear the sheep apart with false doctrines in order to lure away disciples to themselves. He then described his behavior which he wanted them to imitate such as providing for their own needs and not being greedy. After his farewell heartrending message, they knelt down and prayed together with a great deal of weeping and grieving when he told them that he would never see them again (vv. 17-38). *In this chapter Paul is completely transparent. After reading verses 17 to 38, describe what Paul reveals about his motives, character, and person.*

**Acts 21**— Paul and his team left Miletus and sailed to Phoenicia, spending time with the disciples in Tyre and Caesarea. At every place the Holy Spirit indicated that Paul would be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles. Even the prophet Agabus said that Paul would be bound in chains, but this did not deter Paul on what he knew the Lord wanted him to do (vv. 1-14). Coming to Jerusalem, Paul met with James and all the elders as he declared what God had done among the Gentiles. Since it was rumored that Paul encouraged the Jews to abandon the Law of Moses, they advised him to fulfill a Nazirite vow with four other men, thus showing that he was not rejecting the law (vv. 15-25). On the last day of the annual feast of Pentecost (presumably), the Jews from Asia saw Paul and leveled false charges against him, stirred up the crowd, and dragged him out of the temple complex. As the mob tried to kill him, the Roman commander and the soldiers rescued Paul. After identifying himself to the tribune, Paul asked and was given permission to speak to the crowd (vv. 26-40). *In Acts 16:3 Paul had Timothy circumcised, and in this chapter Paul fulfilled an Old Testament custom of a Nazirite vow which included seven days of purification and then making animal sacrifices. Was Paul right in doing these rites, or was he compromising and denying the doctrine of salvation by grace. See also I Corinthians 9:22.*

**Ezekiel 6**— The time for signs and examples is over. Now Ezekiel delivers sermons. The first sermon is a judgment against idolatry. The mountains and valleys where idolatrous acts were performed would be destroyed along with the idolatrous people. God, however, would show grace and mercy and leave a remnant. The remnant would finally remember God and turn back to Him, but all the other people will die from pestilence, sword, and famine. Ezekiel uses rather harsh and graphic language to describe idolatry. *Why did God tell Ezekiel to prophesy against the mountains (v. 2)? See also Deuteronomy 12:2-3.*

**Ezekiel 7**— The end has come. Four times God says “I will repay” (verses 3-4, 8-9; see also Gal 6:6-8). Everything that Judah had put their trust in (other than God) would not be able to help them, not money (v. 19), idols (v. 20-22), or their leaders (23-27). It was indeed the end (v. 2, 3, 6). *Re-read verses 10-11. What does God mean by the rod blossoming, pride budding, and violence growing up, and what does it say about God’s character?*

**Ezekiel 8**— Ezekiel has another vision; this time dealing with the defilement of the temple. What Ezekiel was shown in his vision about the idolatry in the temple was indicative of what was happening within the nation. The nation was given over to idol worship in every area. In the temple, there was an image at the door as a person first came in. There were idolatrous images in the inner chamber. People worshipped idols openly in the very temple while others hid their idolatry “in the dark” (v. 12); but in the eyes of God, all were guilty. These sins caused God to remove His glory from the temple (v. 6) and brought violence to the land (v. 17). *Who was Tammuz (v. 14)?*

**Ezekiel 9**— The glory of God had left the Holy of Holies and was departing from the temple because of the people’s great sins (1 Sam. 4:19-22; Jer. 7:1-15; Exod. 33:12-16). God’s judgment begins. He sent out a messenger to mark those who should be spared and sent out the executioners to slaughter everyone else inside the city without pity or mercy. Ezekiel cried out for God to show His people mercy, but the Lord’s wrath was upon those who have sinned. *What is the reason that some get the special mark on their foreheads and thus are not slaughtered? Where else in the Bible do we see something similar? See Revelation 7:3.*

**Ezekiel 10**— After seeing all of the sins of Judah and Israel laid bare, Ezekiel looks up and receives a fresh vision of the throne of God (Jer. 17:12). God is preparing to leave His house behind to the idols since He is unable to be in the presence of such great sins. God is unwilling to share His glory with idols (Isa. 42:8). God directs the man in linen to bring coals from the fire of the altar so that He can bring judgment on Jerusalem (compare to Isa. 6:6-7). Ezekiel then describes the cherubim and the wheels of God that were still turning and working out His purposes in the world. *Why was it necessary that the glory of the Lord leave the temple (vv. 18-19)?*

**Ezekiel 11**— Ezekiel prophesies against the leaders of the city. The leaders believed that they were the choice meat and would be spared the sword. God, however, was telling them that they were the scraps, and that He would kill them with the sword “at the border” (v. 9). As Ezekiel is prophesying one of the leaders dies. God then

says that He will renew His people who have been scattered. He will replace their hearts of stone with new hearts of flesh. Then the glory of the Lord departed Jerusalem and went to a mountain to the east (see Matt. 23:38-24:3). *Will the glory of the Lord ever return to the temple? See Ezekiel 43:1-4, Zechariah 14:4-5. When will this happen?*

*Sources for summary and questions: 1. Serendipity Bible for Groups, c. 1988 Littleton, CO. 2. MacArthur Study Bible ESV, 1997 Thomas Nelson, Inc. 3. Life Application Bible HCSB c. 1988 Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. 4. The Complete Bible Companion c.2014 Barbour Publishing, Inc. Uhrichsville, OH. 5. ESV Study Bible c. 2008 Crossway Bibles, Wheaton, IL. 6. The World Bible Handbook, Lawrence Richards, Word Inc. Waco, TX. 7. The Quest Study Bible NIV, c. 1994 Zondervan Publishing & Christianity Today, Grand Rapids, MI & Wheaton, IL. 8. The Transformation Study Bible, c. 2009, David C. Cook. 9. Key Ideas Bible Handbook, Ron Rhodes, c. 2016, Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, OR. 10. 500 Questions & Answers from the Bible, c. 2006, Barbour Publishing, Uhrichsville, OH. 11. Homan Bible Handbook, c.1992, Homan Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN. 12. Moody Bible Commentary, c. 2014, Moody Publishers, Chicago, IL. 13. Life Essentials Study Bible, c. 2011, Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN. 14. The Message, c. 2002, Eugene Peterson, NavPress Publishing Group, Colorado Springs, CO. 15. NIV Study Bible, c. 2011, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI. 16. Understanding the Bible, c.2000, Holman Publishers, Nashville, TN.*

## Proverbs 15, Acts 22-27, Ezekiel 12-18 (#130)

**Proverbs 15**— Read the verses listed and then write down the verse in Proverbs 15 that seems to be similar or opposite in meaning. 1. Hebrews 4:13 \_\_\_ 2. 1 Kings 12:13-16 \_\_\_ 3. Isaiah 1:11, 15 \_\_\_ 4. 1 Kings 1:11-12 \_\_\_ 5. James 4:10 \_\_\_ Choose from these verses in Proverbs 15— 1, 3, 8, 13, 16, 20, 22, 32, or 33.

**Acts 22**— Paul then addressed the audience of the Jews in Aramaic which was the common Hebrew language. He describes his background, education, and zeal before he met Jesus on the road to Damascus. He then tells the story of his conversion and calling, but when he mentions his ministry to the Gentiles, the crowd once again erupts in yelling and tossing dust in the air. The commander then ordered that Paul be brought in to be flogged to find out why the people were shouting and out of control. When the commander was told that he was a Roman citizen, those who were going to flog him withdrew at once. *How were Paul's Roman citizenship, his speaking Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic, his birth in Tarsus, and his education under the rabbi Gamaliel assets to his ministry to both Jews and Gentiles? How has your background as to place of birth and childhood, parents, gifts, talents, and personality prepared you for Christian service in your life?*

**Acts 23**— The commander wanted to find out exactly why Paul was being accused by the Jews, and so he convened a meeting with the Sanhedrin and Paul. Realizing that the Sanhedrin was divided between the Sadducees and Pharisees, Paul said, "I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead (v. 6b NIV)." Because of their belief in the resurrection, the Pharisees began to defend Paul, and the dispute became so violent that the commander had to rescue Paul and bring him back to the barracks (vv. 1-10). The Lord gave Paul a promise that night that he would also testify in Rome. There was a conspiracy of 40 men who vowed to kill Paul, but Paul's nephew found out and told Paul. When the commander was told of the plot, he prepared 200 soldiers, 70 mounted troops, and 200 spearmen to take Paul to Caesarea at nine o'clock that night. The commander, Lysias, sent a letter to Felix the governor giving in detail the reason he sent Paul to Caesarea. Felix promised a hearing when Paul's accusers were able to come to present their case (vv. 11-34). *What was the difference in beliefs between the Sadducees and the Pharisees? How did Jesus show that the teaching of the resurrection was found in the five books of Moses (Pentateuch)? See Matthew 22:31-32 and Exodus 3:6.*

**Acts 24**— Five days later Ananias, the high priest, came down with some elders and a lawyer named Tertullus to accuse Paul. They charged Paul with being an agitator among the Jews throughout the Roman Empire, a ringleader of the Nazarene cult, and a desecrater of the temple (vv. 1-9). Paul skillfully defended himself declaring that he had come to Jerusalem to bring charitable gifts and to worship without attracting a crowd or causing an uproar. He said that the Jews from the province of Asia should bring their charges against him if they have any. He asserted that the people of the Way (Christians) believe in all that is taught in the Old Testament including the resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous (vv. 10-21). Felix called Paul to listen to him talk concerning the subject of Christ Jesus, but also hoped that Paul would offer him a bribe. He left Paul in prison for two years as a

favor to the Jewish leaders (vv. 22-27). *What response should we have as Christians when we are falsely accused and persecuted?*

**Acts 25**— Felix is replaced as governor by Festus who immediately confers with the Jews in Jerusalem. The chief priests and the Jewish leaders wanted him to act right away on Paul's case and bring him to Jerusalem to be judged, but their real intent was to have him killed on the way. Not willing to bring Paul to Jerusalem, Festus held court in Caesarea where the same accusations they had given to Felix were presented by the Jews, and the same defense was given by Paul. When Paul sensed that his options were either to go to Rome or be killed on the road to Jerusalem, he said to Festus, "I appeal to Caesar!" Festus said, "You have appealed to Caesar; to Caesar you will go!" When King Agrippa and Bernice paid a courtesy call on Festus, he made them aware of a prisoner left by Felix who had appealed to Caesar. Since Agrippa knew the Jewish culture well, Festus wanted him to clarify the charges that needed to be brought to the Emperor in Rome. The next day King Agrippa and Bernice entered the auditorium with great fanfare to hear Paul. Many prominent people of the city were also in attendance to see King Agrippa and hear Paul. *The Apostle Paul received protection from the Roman authorities during this period in his life. Can we trust God to work out His will through civil authorities? # 7 p. 1603. Explain. See Romans 13:1-5. Do we really appreciate and pray for our government officials, police officers, and first responders as they serve us? I Timothy 2:1*

**Acts 26**— Paul gave his defense and testimony before King Agrippa, beginning with his background as belonging to the strictest group of the Jews as a Pharisee, and showing his great zeal for Judaism by his persecution of those who belonged to Jesus the Nazarene. He shared his conversion experience of how he encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus. Paul clearly declared to Agrippa and to those who were listening the gospel story and the reality of the resurrection. He said that the reason he was seized in the temple complex by the Jews with the intention to kill him was that he told the Jews that God has offered this gift of salvation also to the Gentiles. Both Festus and Agrippa reacted to Paul's testimony since Paul encouraged them to believe in Christ. King Agrippa asked Paul if he believed that he would be persuaded to become a Christian so quickly. After the encounter with Paul, both Agrippa and Festus agreed that he had not done anything that deserved imprisonment. *Write down from this chapter the verses that describe the message of the gospel. As Paul gave his testimony in this chapter, what group of people did he emphasize, the Jews or the Gentiles? Why?*

**Acts 27**— Luke describes the trip from Caesarea to Rome in graphic details giving us knowledge of what travel on the Mediterranean Sea was like at that time. When they reached Fair Havens on the island of Crete, they found

the harbor unsuitable to winter in and decided to sail on to Phoenix even though it was late fall and very dangerous to sail. Paul warned that the voyage would have damage and heavy loss if they tried to sail on to Phoenix before winter, but the captain and owner of the ship paid no attention to his words. As Paul predicted, bad weather ensued and a violent storm was raging that carried them on without seeing the sun or stars. They did all they could to lighten and to gird the ship but it was to no avail. The storm continued violently for two weeks with their hope of being saved growing dim. Paul stood up among them and encouraged them to take heart since the angel of the Lord promised him that he would stand before Caesar in Rome and all those on the ship would be safe. Paul prevented sailors from escaping and the soldiers from killing the prisoners. Coming to an island and sighting a beach, they planned to run the ship ashore, but they struck a sandbar. Eventually, all of the 276 that were on the ship arrived safely to the island of Malta. *Luke describes in vivid detail the unbelievable treacherous storm the people in the ship experienced where they even despaired of life. Describe a terrible "storm" that you have suffered in your life. What caused this storm? What did you learn from this storm? How has this storm changed you?*

**Ezekiel 12**— God's people had become spiritually blind and deaf. They refused to see the signs or hear God's Word. Because of this, God had Ezekiel preach two more action illustration sermons to warn them about the impending judgment of God. In the morning, he packed for exile showing that the people would pack to go into captivity. In the evening, he dug through his wall, covered his face, and walked out to show what would happen to King Zedekiah when he tried to escape. The false prophets of the time were saying that Ezekiel's and Jeremiah's prophecies would not come true, but God said that they would come true and quickly. *Is your life a living illustration sermon that catches the attention of people who are blind and deaf to God's truth? The answer is to be personal.*

**Ezekiel 13**— Ezekiel is now called to prophesy against the false prophets. They whitewashed the people's sins, but God wanted to wash them white (Isa. 1:18). Ezekiel then prophesied against the women who were leading the people astray with divination, false prophecy, and magic charms. *Why were the false prophets so dangerous? How do we know if a prophet is a true or false prophet? See Deuteronomy 18:21-22. What percentage of the time must a prophet be right in his prophecies to be a true prophet of God?*

**Ezekiel 14**— In chapter 8, God showed Ezekiel the idols in the temple. Now God is showing Ezekiel the idols in the very hearts of the leaders of Jerusalem. He calls the people to repent and turn from their idolatrous ways. God uses Noah (Heb. 11:7), Daniel (Dan. 2), and Job (Job 42:7-10) as examples of men who saved others from



destruction because of their personal righteousness. But God now says that even these men and their righteousness would not be able to save anyone in Israel; they would only be able to save themselves.

**Ezekiel 15**— God talks about how wood from a good vine is only useful for two things: bearing fruit or burning. If a vine isn't bearing fruit, its only use is for the fire. Israel was not bearing fruit. She was only good for one thing. Because of this, God would set His face against her and she would be consumed by the fire. Entertaining sin in the heart will lead to practicing sin in your life. *"Idols in their hearts are the commitments and affections that people allow to stand between them and God (14:3)." #7 p. 1202. What idols of the heart do Christians have? What is an idol that you have struggled with?*

**Ezekiel 16**— God uses very rough language to describe Israel. Yahweh chose her as a baby and raised her to be His bride. She deserted Him and went off with anyone and everyone. She broke her marriage covenant and was both an adulterous wife and a harlot who paid others to sin with her. God judged Sodom and Israel (Samaria, the northern kingdom), but that did not cause Judah to repent. She offered herself to false gods and allied herself with other nations. As such, she would be stoned and cut apart with the sword. We probably find this language offensive – but it is nowhere near as offensive as the behavior of the people of Jerusalem in betraying the Lord their God. *Genesis 19 describes the gross sexual immorality and perversion of Sodom. What other sins of Sodom does Ezekiel 16 describe? See verses 48-50.*

**Ezekiel 17**— God has Ezekiel use an allegory to describe Israel and her situation. The first great eagle is Nebuchadnezzar. He came to Jerusalem (called Lebanon in the story) and took King Jehoiachin (the top branch of the cedar) to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar left King Zedekiah (some seed) which grew into a low vine. Zedekiah made a covenant with Nebuchadnezzar to be loyal to Babylon, but he broke that covenant thinking that Egypt (the second great eagle) would protect him. God declared that this would not work and that Zedekiah would die in Babylon. *Compare this chapter with Isaiah 11:1-9. What did the cedar represent, and what does the twig (shoot/sprig) that grows represent?*

**Ezekiel 18**— The Jews were quoting a proverb (Jer. 31:29-30) which accuses God of being unjust in punishing the children for their parent's sin. God explains that a person's sin or righteousness are credited to that person only. God is a just God. He does not punish a child for their parent's sin. He also does not spare a child because of the

parent's righteousness. Each person is judged on their own merit. God does not want anyone to perish because of sin. He wants all to repent and turn from their sin. If they repent, they will not be punished. *Verse 31 calls for us to receive a new heart and a new spirit. What is the only way that this can happen?*

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