

The Village Church – Rancho Santa Fe
Week #24 – Adult Bible Study – 2025 & 2026

Discovering the Bible

March 24 & 25, 2026

Review – The Mission

1. The news about Jesus began to spread as Jesus' followers shared it, sometimes traveling for the express purpose of sharing, other times sharing as they went about the regular business of their lives.
2. The stories of several people are key during this first expansion stage, among them Peter, Philip, and especially, Paul – the onetime enemy of Jesus now become Jesus' most influential proponent
3. Initially the news spread among the Jews, but soon, Gentile converts came into the fold. The decision to allow Gentiles to follow Jesus was a monumental one that forever changed the course of Christianity

The Journeys

4. General Thoughts

- a. News of Jesus and subsequent Christian faith was made possible as Jesus' first followers traveled about the Roman Empire
- b. When a few people in a new locale would come to faith, a church was formed
- c. New churches had to learn about Jesus and about new life in Jesus that would be nurtured by the church
- d. A new system of belief and way of life is not easy to spread, and those who spoke of Jesus often met with resistance, resentment, and sometimes outright persecution
- e. Obstacles notwithstanding, those who believed in Jesus would not be dissuaded: if anything, they became more convinced of the imperative to share Christ with others

5. Acts 13:1-3, 42-52; 14:21-28 – Paul's First Journeys

- a. Note that Paul was generally not alone in his work and travels; others were with him
- b. Always, the travels of Paul were spurred by prayer and consultation with others
- c. The "natural audience" for the gospel of Jesus were the Jews, and so that is where the first Christian missionaries targeted their work
- d. Many Jews did, indeed, come to faith in Christ
- e. But, many resisted the message, and so the missionaries often turned next to Gentiles, where they often found more receptive audiences

6. Acts 15:36 – 16:10 – Paul's Second Journey

- a. Paul often visited an area more than once, and on subsequent visits he would strengthen the churches that were still so young in their faith and practice
- b. Mission work was not without its setbacks and problems: Paul and Barnabas parted company for a while
- c. While in Lystra, Paul encountered a young believer – whose mother was a believer – who showed promise for missionary work: Timothy
- d. Note that Paul had Timothy circumcised in order to make him more acceptable to Jewish audiences
- e. Throughout the work, direction from the Holy Spirit was sought and followed
- f. While in Troas, Paul has a vision of work that needs doing in Macedonia. Paul's work in Macedonia took the gospel into Europe.

7. Acts 16:11-40 – Paul in Philippi

- a. In Philippi, Lydia is converted to Christ – the first European Christian!
- b. Lydia and her entire household are baptized
- c. While in Philippi, Paul heals a slave girl who is demon-possessed. The girl's owners used her divination gifts to make money, and so they have Paul and Silas thrown into prison.
- d. Note: the message about Jesus does not always make people happy!
- e. Paul and Silas are freed by a miraculous earthquake, and in the process, the jailer converts, along with his household
- f. Paul uses his Roman citizenship to his advantage here, and he and Silas leave Philippi unharmed – but the church is now established there

8. Acts 17:16-34 – Paul in Athens

- a. Athens was one of the most important cities in the world, and a center of philosophical and theological discourse and debate
- b. At the Areopagus, Paul engages in such discourse, and preaches a message about Christ
- c. Here we have a great example of early Christian missionary preaching, which started with acknowledgement of areas of common belief and then moved more specifically into the story of Jesus
- d. As in most places, some believed, some did not, but still, the church was established

9. Acts 20:1-38 – Paul’s Third Journey

- a. Note that Paul’s travels are often interrupted and changed by the “climate” of the regions where he was: if there was significant disruption from those who disbelieved, he might go elsewhere
- b. While preaching in Troas, a young man in the congregation falls asleep, falls out of a window, and is thought to be dead. But he is not. Here is the first report of someone falling asleep in church! And the young man becomes forever famous: Eutychus.
- c. On this journey, Paul meets with elders from Ephesus, and tells them he doubts that he will pass their way again. By this time, Paul is getting older, and he has his sights set on traveling one day to Rome.
- d. Paul’s farewell speech to the elders is a touching and telling example of the dedication and love shared by those who were the first followers of Jesus in a new place.

10. Acts 21:17, 27-36 – Paul in Jerusalem

- a. Paul has been eager to get to Jerusalem, especially to meet the “mother church” there
- b. While in Jerusalem, Paul meets significant opposition from some of the Jews there
- c. Paul is arrested because of the disturbance
- d. Paul tells his story, speaking of his conversion, and of the message of Jesus, and of the spread of the gospel
- e. The story continues, of Paul’s many trials and appearances before the authorities
- f. Eventually, it is decided that Paul will be sent—as a prisoner—to Rome

11. Acts 28:16-31 – Paul in Rome

- a. Paul’s journey to Rome is anything but safe and calm, but eventually he does arrive there
- b. Paul is essentially under “house arrest” in Rome
- c. Paul preaches of Jesus to the Jews in Rome, some of whom believe, others do not
- d. For two years, Paul teaches and preaches, and then, his story (as told in Acts) comes to an end
- e. Note: the story of Jesus has moved from the remote, provincial capital city of Jerusalem, to the very heart of the greatest empire on earth

Questions for Your Life Today

- A. What was it that convinced those who heard Paul’s preaching to become followers of Jesus?
- B. How is the story of Jesus told today?
- C. What kind of “journey” can one take today in order to share about Jesus?
- D. How would you tell the story of Jesus in your own words?
- E. What is the best “method” to use in spreading the gospel?

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