



LIFE Group Discussion Guide

March 1, 2026

Acts 22:30-23:11

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- What are some highs or lows you experienced this past week?
- What Scripture has been shaping you recently?
- Where have you seen God moving in your life this week?
- What did you hear in today's sermon OR read in today's passage that you would like to discuss?
- What did you learn about yourself in today's sermon/passage?
- What did you learn about God in today's sermon/passage?
- What convicted you as you listened to today's sermon OR read in today's passage?

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

Have you ever had to stand up for what you believe—even when it felt awkward, scary, or unpopular? That's exactly where Paul finds himself in this passage. He's surrounded by powerful leaders, facing accusations, and unsure what will happen next. Yet, instead of panicking, Paul stays confident in who he is and what God has called him to do.

This story reminds us that following Jesus doesn't always lead to comfort. Sometimes it puts us in tough situations where we have to choose courage over fear. But even when things feel uncertain, God is still in control.

Ask yourself:

- **Where do I feel pressure to hide my faith?**
- **How can I stand strong like Paul this week?**

SCRIPTURE

Acts 22:30–23:11

Have different students read sections aloud.

PASSAGE SUMMARY

- Paul is brought before the Jewish council to explain the accusations against him.
- The council becomes divided between Pharisees and Sadducees.
- Paul boldly shares his faith and causes debate.
- Things get so intense that soldiers step in to protect him.
- That night, Jesus appears to Paul and encourages him.

Emphasize that Paul is under pressure but stays faithful.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- **What stood out to you in this story?**
Jesus encouraging Paul, the argument between groups, Paul's boldness.
- **How would you describe the atmosphere in the room?**
Tense, angry, chaotic, emotional.
- **What risks did Paul take by speaking up?**
He could be attacked, arrested, or punished.
- **Why do you think Paul stayed bold even when things got heated?**
He trusted God, knew his purpose, believed in Jesus.
- **What does Jesus say to Paul in verse 11, and why is it important?**
Jesus tells him to be courageous and confirms his mission.
- **What does this show us about God's presence during hard times?**
God doesn't leave us, He encourages us, He has a plan.
- **Where do teens feel pressure to hide their faith today?**
School, sports teams, friend groups, social media.
- **What fears keep people from standing up for Jesus?**
Being judged, losing friends, embarrassment.
- **What might God be calling you to be brave about right now?**
Inviting a friend to church, making better choices, speaking kindly.

APPLICATION

- How could your faith impact your school or friend group?
- How can this group support each other when faith gets hard?

CLOSING THOUGHT

Paul didn't know what the future held—but he trusted the One who did. Even in danger, God showed up and reminded him he wasn't alone. When we stand up for Jesus, He stands with us. You may not face a courtroom like Paul, but you do face moments every day to choose courage over comfort. Trust God—He's right there with you.

LOOKING AHEAD

Encourage your group to look ahead as we continue the series on Acts next week.

March 8, 2026 — Acts 23:12–35

Next week, we'll see a plot to kill Paul and how God protects him in unexpected ways.

Think about:

- How does God work behind the scenes?
- What does this teach us about trusting Him when we can't see the outcome?
- Where do you need to trust God more?

PRAYER FOCUS

- **Courage to follow Jesus boldly** even when it's uncomfortable.
- **Strength for students** facing pressure at school or online.
- **Transformation in our community**—homes, schools, and friendships.
- **Wisdom to make godly choices** in a confusing culture.
- **Boldness to share our faith** with friends and family.
- **For Our Worship Services** – Pray specifically for the **invitation portion** of our services:
 - that **hearts would be open**,
 - the **Holy Spirit would move**,
 - and people would **respond obediently** to God's leading.

COMMENTARY

Acts 22:30-23:11

23:1. We already know Paul has been brought to the Sanhedrin by Claudius Lysias. We are as surprised as they when, rather than waiting for some invitation, Paul immediately begins speaking. He used the common formal address for assembled Jews and affirmed his commitment to godly duty as a Jew (Rom. 15:19b; Phil. 3:6b; 2 Tim. 1:4–7). As innocent as this line may seem, we must understand it in light of what the Sanhedrin knew full well about this man from Tarsus: an outspoken Christian, totally convinced of the messiahship of Jesus.

23:2. Ananias, son of Nedebaeus, was appointed priest in A.D. 48 and held that office for approximately ten years. Famous for bribery and plunder of temple offerings, he was assassinated by Jewish guerrillas in A.D. 66. His order to strike Paul on the mouth was illegal since, before the Sanhedrin as before our own western courts of law, the prisoner was innocent until proven guilty.

23:3. Paul's response astonishes us as much as Ananias' order. We look for Paul to act like Jesus: "When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats" (1 Pet. 2:23). Instead, Paul spoke the truth prophetically (though probably not consciously on this occasion), for God did smite Ananias. The phrase whitewashed wall accused Ananias of hypocrisy (Matt. 23:27).

23:4-5. We can infer from Luke's remark about those who were standing near Paul that the high priest sat some distance away. Seventy-one people in addition to Paul would have occupied the room if all the Council showed up for this hastily-called meeting. Upon being challenged regarding his words, Paul retreats to his opening line and calls the Council, Brothers, once again. He explains his behavior by saying, I did not realize that he was the high priest. The question of why Paul did not know Ananias was high priest is much debated.

23:6-8. Time to change tactics. Exchanging ill behavior with the high priest would achieve nothing in the Sanhedrin. Paul knew the group's makeup, since he had once been part of it. The controlling Sadducees (including Ananias) were constantly besieged by the Pharisees, particularly on the issue of the resurrection. If Paul could create a doctrinal civil war, he might divert attention away from himself to an ongoing internal debate. For the third time Paul addresses the group as brothers. This time he states his sterling religious credentials: I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. Then he cuts to the bottom line—the resurrection. Some argue that Paul could no longer have called himself a Pharisee because he spent his life spreading the gospel to Gentiles.

23:9-10. A minority group of the Sanhedrin argued vigorously for Paul's release. In the latter part of verse 9 we find out why Luke raised the point of angels and spirits in verse 8. Either he has not given us a full account of the discussion up to this point, or these Pharisees have already heard the story of Paul's Damascus Road experience. In the

spirit of Gamaliel (Acts 5:39), they warn of the possibility that a spirit or an angel has spoken to him. Obviously, that enraged the Sadducees even more, and the meeting became complete bedlam. In the typical pattern of the Sanhedrin, they could not contain their arguments in words alone and apparently pulled at Paul from two sides until Lysias intervened and had him taken back to the barracks.

23:11. Not that night, but the night following the next day Paul experienced the fourth of five visions he received in Acts (16:9; 18:9–10; 22:17–21; 27:23–24). This message emphasized God's control over all these events and offered courage. Mainly, Jesus informed Paul that these trial appearances have not been defenses for his life, but rather witness of the truth. Furthermore, this witness would continue all the way to Rome.