



LIFE Group Discussion Guide

March 22, 2026

Acts 25:1-12

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?

OPENING

Have you ever had to stand up for yourself or make a tough decision? What happened?

Following God doesn't always mean everything becomes easy. Sometimes it means making hard choices that take courage and trust. Paul didn't give up, panic, or stay silent — he trusted God and made a wise decision that protected him and kept God's plan moving forward.

Think about this as we start: *Have you ever had to do the right thing even when it felt uncomfortable or scary?*

SCRIPTURE

Read **Acts 25:1–12** together. Listen for the different motives people have and how Paul responds with wisdom.

PASSAGE SUMMARY

Paul is still in prison when a new governor named Festus takes charge. The Jewish leaders again try to have Paul punished and secretly plan to harm him. Festus wants to please the people, so he suggests moving Paul's trial back to Jerusalem. Knowing this would be dangerous and unfair, Paul wisely uses his rights as a Roman citizen and appeals to Caesar. Through this decision, God continues moving Paul closer to Rome—just as Jesus promised. This passage shows how God guides His people while they make brave and wise choices.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Why were the leaders still so angry at Paul and trying to hurt him?

They didn't accept the message about Jesus and felt threatened by Paul, letting anger and pride control them.

What do you notice about Festus and his desire to make everyone happy?

He cared more about pleasing people than doing what was right.

Why was Paul's appeal to Caesar a smart and brave decision?

It protected his life, gave him a fair trial, and helped move God's plan forward.

How do you see God still in control even though people had bad intentions?

God used the situation to guide Paul safely toward Rome, just as He promised.

What does this story teach us about trusting God while making wise choices?

We pray and trust God, but we also take responsible steps when we can.

When is it hard for you to stand up for what is right?

When it might cost friendships, popularity, or comfort.

What encourages you most about how God protects Paul?

God never loses control, even when people try to do wrong.

What is one decision coming up where you can ask God for wisdom and courage?

Personal answers may include school, friendships, honesty, or faith choices.

DIG DEEPER

Why do you think God wants us to use wisdom and not just rely on feelings?

How can trusting God give us courage to make tough choices?

What Bible promises help you feel confident in hard situations?

APPLICATION

What is one wise choice God may be leading you to make this week?

How can prayer help you trust God when decisions feel hard?

CLOSING THOUGHT

Paul trusted God and acted wisely at the same time. This reminds us that faith is not about doing nothing—it's about trusting God enough to take the right steps forward. When we follow God with courage and wisdom, He faithfully leads us where He wants us to go.

LOOKING AHEAD

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

Next week we will study **Acts 25:13–26:32**, where Paul shares his story with King Agrippa and continues boldly pointing people to Jesus.

PRAYER FOCUS

- Thank God for guiding us through difficult choices.
- Ask for wisdom and courage to do what's right.
- **Pray specifically for the invitation portion of our worship services—that hearts would be open, the Spirit would move powerfully, and people would respond in obedient faith.**

COMMENTARY

Acts 25:1-12

25:1-2. Porcius Festus wasted no time in attempting to cement relationships with the Jews. Roman procurators always had to establish a working relationship with the high priest in the Sanhedrin, or governing Judea would be a nightmare. Festus faced an even greater burden—succeeding the very unpopular Felix whose behavior toward the Jews had antagonized the local countryside for years. Virtually unknown before his time in Judea, Festus' tenure was so short that Luke's account in Acts represents the most we know of this "foot soldier for Rome." He seems the perfect politician, quite willing to consult local authorities while trying not to offend anyone, an appropriate posture since his predecessor had just been summarily fired by Nero. Why does Luke use "chief priests" in the plural? It may reflect the ongoing influence of Ananias, even though Ishmael, the son of Phabi, now sat in the head chair. Imagine all the local and regional matters the Sanhedrin would have had on its hands during the transition of a Roman

procurator. High on that list loomed their constant nemesis—Paul—who, for two years, had languished in the prison of Herod's palace at Caesarea.

25:3-5. Will the Jews never tire of these execution plots? Whether they hoped to use Festus' inexperience against him (and against Paul), we cannot know. They were not the least bit bashful in asking for a favor from a Roman official whom they had just met; a favor linked to a murder conspiracy with which they had now become quite comfortable. In chapter 23 they had merely agreed to a murder plot presented by the Asian zealots; here they themselves apparently designed the strategy. Festus apparently had no desire to rescue Paul; he just wanted things done decently and in order. The prisoner was already in Caesarea; he had barely had time to acquaint himself with the two major cities of his jurisdiction; he was hardly in a position to make promises to a group of religious authorities—but a man's life could be at stake.

25:6-9. Paul had no reason to be on trial here at all. Felix's incompetence in failing to declare an acquittal when he had no evidence to retain the prisoner now caused another trial for the apostle. Luke paints an angry picture of Jewish officials circling Paul and hurling charges, yet none of the charges could be sustained by either proof or witnesses. We assume the charges have not changed: offending the law (21:28); defiling the temple (21:28; 24:6); and planning treason against Rome (24:5). Paul denied them all (v. 8) and for the first time argued that he had not offended Caesar in any way.

Still Festus wanted to get this thing out of his hair. Doing the Jews a favor would be a good way to start his stint in Caesarea. The key words in verse 9 are before me which clearly suggest political compromise. If the Sanhedrin had its choice, it would have tried Paul and brought a charge of capital punishment for his desecration of law and temple. Nevertheless, getting him out of Caesarea gave them an opportunity to carry out the conspiracy mentioned earlier in the chapter. Festus thought he could mediate the situation by choosing Jerusalem as venue but presiding over the trial himself. He obviously never considered the Jews capable of a murderous ambush.

25:10-11. Things were getting shaky. One could not trust a politician in the first century, especially when the issue of favoritism kept surfacing during his early days in office. Paul had finally come to the bottom line and wanted to silence this talk about going back to Jerusalem once and for all. Let's not miss the contrast here with Jesus' trial at which he stood silent in the face of all charges. Paul was not only verbal, he became downright defiant in telling Festus that he knew very well that these trumped-up charges were nonsense.

Was Paul wrong because he didn't behave like Jesus? Jesus was headed for the cross, and he knew it; any discussions with Pilate or anyone else would have been futile in the Father's plan. Paul, though not afraid of dying, certainly did not have that in his plans at this point. If he would have to face a death sentence, it would have to come from a Roman court, not a frenzied Sanhedrin in their holy city. Apparently in Paul's view all other appeals had been exhausted, so he declared the Roman fifth amendment (see

“Deeper Discoveries”) and appealed to the emperor, an appeal reflected several more times before Acts ends (25:11-12, 21, 25-26; 26:32; 28:19).

25:12. All indications at this point suggested that Nero could have been a model emperor. Besides, Paul wasn't going to Nero as much as he was going to Caesar—the law, not the emperor, was the major focus here. Let's not credit Festus with any great wisdom. Once Paul had delivered his “caesaren appello” (appeal to Caesar), a provincial governor had no choice. Paul had effectively designed an end-run around Festus' authority, whether in Jerusalem or Caesarea, and whatever further delays might come in his path, he was underway for Rome.