



# LIFE Group Discussion Guide

March 29, 2026

Acts 25:13-26:32

## 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 heard a story that inspired you or made you think differently about something? What made it powerful?

Your story matters. You may not stand before kings like Paul, but God can use what Jesus has done in your life to impact friends, teammates, classmates, and family. Paul didn't argue — he shared how Jesus changed him.

Think about this as we begin: *If someone asked how Jesus has changed you, what would you say?*

## SCRIPTURE

Read **Acts 25:13–26:32** together (you may split into sections). Listen for Paul's story and how people respond.

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## **PASSAGE SUMMARY**

Paul stands before King Agrippa and Governor Festus to explain why he is in prison. Instead of just defending himself, Paul tells his story — how he once hated Christians, how he met Jesus on the road to Damascus, and how his life was completely changed. Paul explains that Jesus rose from the dead just as the Scriptures promised, and now he lives to tell others about Him. Some people think Paul is crazy, while others are deeply moved but not ready to fully follow Jesus. This passage shows how powerful a personal faith story can be and how everyone must choose how they will respond to Jesus.

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## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**Why do you think Paul chose to share his personal story instead of just defending himself?**

Because stories connect to hearts and show real change Jesus brings.

**What was Paul like before he met Jesus?**

He hated Christians and tried to stop the church.

**How did meeting Jesus completely change Paul's life?**

He went from hurting Christians to telling everyone about Jesus.

**Why is the resurrection of Jesus such an important part of Paul's message?**

It proves Jesus is alive and that God's promises are true.

**How did Festus and Agrippa respond differently to Paul's message?**

Festus thought Paul was crazy; Agrippa was moved but didn't fully commit.

**Why do you think it's possible to be close to faith but not fully follow Jesus?**

Fear, pride, distractions, or not wanting life to change.

**What encourages you about Paul's courage in sharing his faith?**

He wasn't ashamed and trusted God no matter who was listening.

**Who is one person God may want you to share your faith story with?**

Friends, family, classmates, or teammates.

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## **DIG DEEPER**

**Read Acts 9:1–19. What details help you better understand Paul's transformation?**

**Why do you think God loves using changed lives to point people to Jesus?**

How can your everyday actions show that Jesus has changed you?

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## APPLICATION

Write or think through your own faith story: before Jesus, how you met Him, and how He's changing you now.

Ask God for courage to live and speak for Him this week.

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## CLOSING THOUGHT

Paul's life proves that no one is too far from God's grace. Jesus can change any heart and use any story for His glory. The question isn't whether God can use you — it's whether you are willing to trust Him and follow Him.

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## LOOKING AHEAD

Next week we will celebrate Easter. Worship services will be at 7:30, 9:00 and 10:30 and LIFE groups will not meet. On April 12 we will resume our study of **Acts 27:1-44**, where Paul faces a dangerous storm and learns to trust God in the middle of fear and uncertainty.

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## PRAYER FOCUS

- Thank God for saving and changing lives.
- Ask for boldness to live for Jesus at school and with friends.
- **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.**

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## COMMENTARY

**Acts 25:13-26:32**

**25:13-15.** Herod Agrippa II (A.D. 27-100) was still a young man the day he visited Festus. Approximately thirty-three years of age, he had become king of Chalcis in A.D. 48 and had advanced to control over Abilene, Trachonitis, Acra, Tarichea, and Tiberias. His sister Bernice was one year younger and had come to live with her brother after the death of her husband, who was also her uncle. Throughout the Roman Empire people assumed an incestuous relationship, probably an accurate analysis of the strange situation. Herod did not rule over Judea but had been appointed by Claudius as "Curator of the Temple." He could insert or depose a high priest and also held responsibility for the temple's treasure and priestly vestments.

**25:16-22.** The former procurator had every opportunity to acquit the prisoner in the absence of valid charges but chose not to do so. Festus had barely begun to look into the case when Paul cut him off with his appeal to Caesar. From that point on Festus had no chance to consider what he would or would not do with Paul; the matter was out of his hands. In this casual conversation with Agrippa which existed only for informational purposes, Jesus became the center of the dispute, something lacking in earlier trial summaries.

Like the word Christian, we would expect the word emperor to appear frequently in the pages of the New Testament. After all, the entire account took place against the backdrop of Roman authority and Rome appears from the soldiers of the gospel to references to the city itself in the Book of Revelation. But the word emperor (sebastos) appears twice in this chapter, its only use in the entire New Testament. At this time Romans did not yet equate the emperor with Deity, but certainly acknowledged a high level of majesty. Festus, in his ignorance, had stumbled over the philosophy of the resurrection which argues, "There is more to life than life." Perhaps this message never affected him, but it was precisely the testimony Paul would take to Caesar's court.

**25:23.** We can hardly miss the parallel between Paul standing before Herod Agrippa II and Jesus before Herod Antipas, a scene which Luke alone records (Luke 23:6-12). In each case the prisoner was first arraigned before a Roman governor and then brought before the Jewish king. This is the longest of five defenses Luke records in Acts. Luke may have been a firsthand observer. A bona fide historian, he had already chronicled the life of Christ and may have used a first-century equivalent of a "press pass" to attend public festivities. The Romans knew all about pomp, and Agrippa had picked up a thing or two himself; so we see this high drama building though there is nothing legal at stake. These two could decide absolutely nothing about the fate of the prisoner; the whole council convened just for show and the convenience of Agrippa to hear Paul's side of the story. An interesting word for "pomp" is fantasia. Luke attempts here to paint a picture displaying the mood of the event. Finally, when all the robes were unfurled and the trumpets had sounded their last note, Paul was brought in.

**25:24-25.** In a fine piece of rhetorical exaggeration which could have been appreciated by both Romans and Greeks, Festus announced the whole Jewish community in Jerusalem and Caesarea wanted Paul dead. He had hardly been in office long enough to get many variant opinions on this subject, but as a Roman, he assumed that the leaders of any people (in this case the Sanhedrin) spoke for that people. Here Festus set himself up as Paul's deliverer, even though it had been necessary to stand against all the Jews in Judea. Politicians must always make an impression, always give the message that they have achieved something, preferably defending the constitution and national legal system. Again Festus declared Paul's innocence but didn't quite tell the truth in saying, I decided to send him to Rome; that decision did not belong to him.

**25:26-27.** Since Paul had broken no Roman law, what could this governor write when he sent the prisoner to Rome? We find no hint early in the chapter that he has looked to Agrippa for help on this matter, but here it comes in verse 26. To be sure, it would be unreasonable to send a prisoner to the emperor without specifying charges. It would

also be dereliction of duty, incompetence, and probably cause for removal from office. Festus' conundrum had lessened, since he no longer had to deal with the Jews; but he still had to figure out what papers Roman soldiers would take to the imperial city along with this nuisance of a prisoner.

**26:1-3** This is Paul's third apologetic or defensive speech in Acts; see 22:1; 24:10. Paul began his "captatio benevolentiae" by flattering Agrippa about how fortunate he was to be making his defense before an expert in Jewish customs and laws.

**26:4-5** My youth indicates that Paul had lived in Jerusalem since his teens. All this time his way of life had been known and seen by others, and he lived by the strictest party of Jewish religion, the Pharisees. In this way, Paul painted a portrait of his character for Agrippa.

**26:6-8** Paul distilled the entire controversy down to his hope of the promise made by God to raise the dead. More than a mere tactic to pit Pharisees and Sadducees against one another, this was an accurate assessment of the Jewish complaint against Christianity: that Jesus was raised from the dead and that faith in Him as risen Lord gives eternal life.

**26:14** Only in this account of his conversion did Paul say the voice from heaven spoke to him in the Hebrew language. "Hebrew" may literally have been Aramaic, the common tongue of the first-century Jew. It is hard for you to kick against the goads probably meant that Paul should not resist the divine force that was moving him in a new direction.

**26:16-18** These three verses are not included in the accounts of Paul's conversion in chapters 9 or 22, even though the mention of Paul's ministry to the Gentiles was a message given to Ananias in Damascus (9:15; 22:15). Many scholars believe the essence of Paul's mission to the Gentiles was revealed to him at the time of his conversion.

**26:19-21** I was not disobedient is a spectacular understatement in light of Paul's faithfulness to God's calling, even through remarkable hardships. Paul's faithfulness to "the heavenly vision" (v. 19) was the very reason the Jews seized him and wanted him dead.

**26:22-24** Paul emphasized that the message of Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection matched OT teachings. He probably had in mind such prophetic passages as Isa 52:13–53:12. Festus took Paul to be mad because of talk about resurrection and Messiah, Jewish beliefs that seemed foolish to the Gentile world.

**26:25-26** As evidence for his good judgment, Paul pointed out that the major events of Christianity had not taken place in a corner, out of sight and scrutiny. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection were all public and could not have escaped King Agrippa's notice.

**26:28** Scholars disagree over whether Agrippa's response was sarcastic anger, a jest, or a sign that Paul's logic was close to persuading him.

**26:29-32** Paul's rhetorical skills were at their best as he concluded his speech. His confidence in Christ was such that he wished that all who listen could become as him, except for the chains. Objective judgment could lead to only one conclusion: Paul was innocent. But Paul's life was held in the service of the Lord, not the judgments of men. The charges against Paul were found to be groundless before both Roman and Jewish authorities. Nevertheless, Paul's appeal to Rome put his case in a special category that must be discharged by Caesar himself.