



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 speak up for yourself or make a tough choice to avoid a bad situation? What helped you decide?

Following God doesn't mean being passive — it often requires wisdom, courage, and trusting Him while making hard decisions. Paul doesn't panic, lash out, or resign himself to fate. Instead, he calmly uses the opportunity God provides to protect his life and advance the mission.

God's guidance frequently comes through everyday decisions, conversations, and moments where we must step forward in faith.

As we begin, reflect: ***When have you had to trust God while making a difficult or uncomfortable decision?***

SCRIPTURE READING

Read **Acts 25:1–12** aloud together. Listen for both the human motives at work and how God's plan continues moving forward.

PASSAGE SUMMARY

Paul remains imprisoned as a new governor, Festus, takes office. Jewish leaders renew their accusations and secretly plan to have Paul killed along the way. Festus, wanting to please the people, suggests moving the trial back to Jerusalem. Recognizing the danger and the injustice of the situation, Paul wisely appeals to Caesar — exercising his legal rights while trusting God's greater plan. This moment moves Paul closer to Rome, just as Jesus promised. The passage highlights God's sovereignty working through human systems, the importance of discernment, and the balance between faith and wise action.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Why were the Jewish leaders so determined to see Paul condemned (vv. 2–3)?

They still rejected the gospel and viewed Paul as a threat to their authority and traditions, allowing hatred and pride to drive their actions.

What do you notice about Festus's leadership and his desire to please the people (vv. 9)?

Festus is concerned with political favor more than justice, showing how compromise can creep in when approval becomes the goal.

Why was Paul's appeal to Caesar both wise and necessary at this moment?

It protected his life, ensured a fair hearing, and aligned with God's promise that Paul would testify in Rome.

How do you see God working through imperfect leaders and legal systems in this passage?

Even though motives are flawed, God uses the process to move Paul safely toward His purpose.

What does this story teach us about combining trust in God with responsible action?

Faith does not mean inaction; it means trusting God while wisely using the opportunities and resources He provides.

When are you tempted to stay silent instead of standing up for what is right?

Often when conflict feels uncomfortable or when speaking up may cost relationships or approval.

What encourages you about God’s control over Paul’s future despite human schemes?

No plan against Paul succeeds because God’s promises cannot be stopped.

Where might God be calling you to make a wise, faith-filled decision right now?

Answers will vary — areas like family, work, obedience, or ministry opportunities.

DIG DEEPER

Read Proverbs 16:9. How does this verse connect to Paul’s journey toward Rome?

Paul makes wise decisions, yet God ultimately directs each step toward His purpose.

Compare Paul’s appeal here with Esther’s bold action in Esther 4–5. What similarities do you see in faith and courage?

Both trust God while stepping forward wisely in dangerous situations.

Why is discernment so important when facing pressure to compromise?

Without discernment, we may choose comfort or approval over obedience and truth.

APPLICATION

What is one situation where you need both prayer and wise action this week?

How can you trust God’s sovereignty while taking responsibility for your choices?

CLOSING THOUGHT

God’s guidance is not always dramatic — often it comes through wisdom, courage, and obedience in ordinary moments. Paul’s appeal to Caesar shows that trusting God includes making faithful decisions, even when the future feels uncertain. When we walk wisely and prayerfully, God faithfully directs our steps toward His purposes.

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 testifies before King Agrippa and continues boldly sharing his faith.

PRAYER FOCUS

- Thank God for His sovereign control over every circumstance.
- Ask for wisdom and courage to make faithful decisions.
- **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.