



Study Group: Leader Guide
Acts 21 – September 10-16, 2018

CHECK-IN

An opportunity to show authentic community as we **share the struggles** and **celebrate the victories** we've experienced in the last week.

STUDY

Main Topics: Hospitality, Christian Freedom, Persecution

- This chapter is near the end of Paul's third missionary journey. What were some of the key events that took place earlier in this time? How would those events give him encouragement now?

Read v. 1-16

- What do we learn here about the strength of Christian community and hospitality?
- Paul gives a powerful response to the believers pleading with him not to go to Jerusalem. What other passages of Scripture does this remind you of?
 - Acts 20:24, Philippians 3:7-11, Philippians 1:20-21

Read v. 17-26

- Why was it extremely important to James and the church of Jerusalem that Paul participate in these purification rites (the Nazarite vow)?
 - Refer to leader note on the back.

Read v. 27-40

- Why has Paul never lifted a finger against his enemies when he was persecuted?
- What does it tell us about Paul when he turned and spoke to the mob?

APPLY

- Can you share examples of how Christians you didn't know personally provided support and help for you? Have you ever provided such hospitality to others? (Mark 10:29-30)
- Have you ever had to persevere when others pleaded with you to not follow through with something God commanded you to do?
- Why are we called to be extra cautious when exerting our Christian freedom? What damage can it bring if we aren't careful with it? (1 Corinthians 8:7-13)
- Is there anything in your life right now that you aren't willing to give up for Christ? (job, family, reputation, financial security, your life)
- How can we remind each other that Christ is the only thing worth living for?

CLOSE

Which attributes of God did you see in this week's passage? How should it change the way that you pray, think, speak or act this week?

Intro to the Content:

Tim Keller - Leader Guide B (p. 31 & 32)

James speaks of four men who have taken a Nazirite vow (cf. Numbers 6:1ff; Acts 18:18ff.) In this rite, a person would refrain from drinking wine or cutting his hair for a period of time, after which the hair was cut and burned along with other sacrifices. It was similar to what people seek to accomplish through a fast — it is a way of offering one's heart and will to God in a particularly strong way. The Nazirite vow was part of the Mosaic law. James asks Paul to join them and pay the temple fees that accompanied the offerings. This would show everyone that he was still a "practicing Jew" who observed the Mosaic legislation. The second part of James' plan is to be sure that the Gentiles accompanying Paul were very careful to stick with the plan provided by the Jerusalem Council. There were four cultural practices (see our discussion of Acts 15) which were not wrong in themselves for Gentiles to do, but which they were asked to avoid out of sensitivity to Jewish believers.

Paul's response was to do exactly what James asked (v.26). Now we know that Paul himself was willing to abandon Jewish custom, even for himself, when it meant reaching out more effectively to Gentiles (I Cor.9:20), or then to adopt it fully (as here) when it meant helping Jews and Gentiles to live and work together in solidarity (as when he had the half-Gentile Timothy circumcised in Acts 16:2). What does this show us? To Paul, cultural practices are matters from which he had been completely liberated — so liberated that he was not offended or disdainful of them, nor enslaved to them. Sometimes people think they have been "liberated" from cultural practices, but their bitterness and contempt for them mean that now they could not engage in them, even if it would help a relationship. That was not the case for Paul. *"A truly emancipated spirit such as Paul's is not in bondage to its own emancipation"*. (Bruce, p.432). Paul was not compromising here at all, but acting in accord with his own principles as stated in I Cor. 9). The gospel frees us from cultural customs so we are not able to use or not use them for the purposes of fellowship and mission.

Reminders to Leaders:

- This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Study Group.
- Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word.
- There may be questions you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth.
- Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to **facilitate this experience, not to complete** the discussion guide.

What are Groups?

Groups at Boca Community fall into 1 of 3 categories: Study, Serve or Outreach. Each group consists of 8-16 people who encourage, challenge and care for one another as they walk through life together.

A full list of Groups can be found at bocacommunity.org/groups