



## BRIDGING THE GAP

### Open it

1. Have you ever done something just because it was what someone else wanted to do? What was it? Why did they want to do it so badly?

### Daily devotions

Day 1

TODAY'S THEME: EXPLORE IT

Read Acts 21:15-26

2. How would you summarize this passage?
3. What do you think was the main point of this part of Luke's story?
4. Why do you think Paul participated in a Nazarite vow and offered a sacrifice?
5. Is there anything about these verses that didn't make sense?



### Day 3

#### TODAY'S THEME: MINISTRY REPORT

Read Acts 21:18-20a

Paul has brought back news from his missionary journey and the fruitfulness of his ministry to the Gentiles. Even just from the snippets that we have heard from his journeys throughout the book of Acts, we can only imagine how much he would have to share! I'm sure we would have loved to just sit and listen to all the work that God was doing as He was calling more and more people to saving faith in Jesus Christ!

As a result of Paul's report, James and the elders of the church worshipped and glorified God! As we serve in different ministries whether it be something here at home like the nursery or kid's ministry classes or maybe it's in far away lands on a missions trip, God gets all the glory for the work that takes place. God is doing great things all around the world and He should be glorified for it. We hear great testimonies from God's work here at home in our own church and in our own communities and every now and then we get to hear about what God is doing through our missionary partners all around the world. To God be the glory, great things He has done!

8. **How can the ministry reports from church and missionary leaders encourage the church to worship God? How can they serve as a catalyst for ministry growth?**

**When has God used someone else's story to move you to serve God in greater ways?**

9. **How do we balance the praise we receive when we are part of fruitful ministry work and God getting the glory for it all?**

**I HAVE A QUESTION!** ✍ Write it down so you can ask your leader or your parents!

**PRAYER GUIDE** ➤ Here is something you could pray for today:

- That God would keep you humble as you serve Him and that you will not rob Him of any of the glory due to Him.
- Praise God for the ways you see Him working through your own ministry and the ministry of others at the church!

## Day 4

### TODAY'S THEME: CAN OLD CUSTOMS WORK UNDER A NEW COVENANT?

#### Read Acts 21:10–14

These were Jewish Christians who remained devoted to the ceremonial aspects of the law. While not viewing it as a means of salvation, they still observed its required feasts, Sabbath regulations, ritual vows (v. 23), and dietary restrictions. Why were they still clinging to the customs and rituals of the Old Covenant? First, because those customs and rituals had been established by God. Coming to faith in Jesus Christ enhanced these Jewish believers' love for God and desire to obey Him and thus may have motivated a greater zeal for the old ceremonies. Second, the apostles and other leaders in the Jerusalem church did not oppose the continuation of these practices. Nowhere in the New Testament are Jewish believers condemned for observing them.

In fact, Paul commands tolerance for such “weaker brothers” (Rom. 14:1ff.; 1 Cor. 8–10) until they grow to understand their freedom and can use it with clear consciences. The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), while forbidding the imposition of Old Covenant rituals on Gentiles, did not prohibit Jewish believers from continuing to observe them.<sup>1</sup>

**10. Even though the Old Testament rituals could not bring about salvation, they were not condemned from practice in the early church. What value do you think these old rituals could still bring to the early Christians?**

**11. Are there any church traditions or rituals that we do today that don't bring salvation but still have spiritual value to them?**

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**I HAVE A QUESTION!** ✍ Write it down so you can ask your leader or your parents!

**PRAYER GUIDE** ➤ Here is something you could pray for today:

- Thank God for a new covenant of faith in Jesus Christ and all the freedom it gives you!

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<sup>1</sup> MacArthur, John. *Acts 13-28 MacArthur New Testament Commentary (MacArthur New Testament Commentary Series)* (Kindle Locations 4673-4686). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

## Day 5

### TODAY'S THEME: THE NAZARITE VOW

#### Read Acts 21:23-24

James and the elders of the church have put together a plan for Paul to show all the Jewish believers who think he opposes them and the Old Testament teachings that Paul is not their enemy. The plan is that Paul will take part in a Nazarite vow with four other guys who were taking one. Being an Old Testament tradition (see Numbers 6:1-21 for explanation), Paul would demonstrate that he does not condemn Old Testament practices as long as they are not relied upon for salvation.

So what is the Nazarite vow? It was a vow where people would consecrate (or dedicate) themselves to God for a period of time. There were many rules they must follow and things they needed to stay away from during the time of their vow such as dead bodies, wine or anything grown on the vine, and they had to shave their heads. One of the most famous Nazarite vows we know of is Samson.

Now when we think of a vow, we think of it as something that was taken to get something from God. As if we were to say, I'll vow to do this if you'll do something for me. But in reality, these vows were more done in gratitude for something that God has already done for them!

**13. What value do vows have in our spiritual walk with the Lord? Have you ever made a vow? What was your reason for making a vow to God? What was your vow?**

**14. Since vows were made out of gratitude, not requesting, what would be some things that you might be thankful for that God has been doing in your life lately that could spur you on to take a vow?**

**I HAVE A QUESTION!** ✍ Write it down so you can ask your leader or your parents!

**PRAYER GUIDE** ➤ Here is something you could pray for today:

- Praise and thank God for all the blessings He has given you.
- Consider making some kind of vow to the Lord out of gratitude for what He has already done for you.

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Note: This study guide was written by Pastors Tim Badal, Mario Arindaeng, and Jeremy Anderson, Village Bible Church. [www.villagebible.church](http://www.villagebible.church)