

The Acts of the Spirit
ORCHESTRATING OPPOSITION

ACTS 21:17-26

“THE PURIFICATION”

NOVEMBER 24, 2024

SUMMARY

Pastor Joey admonished us with this truth: When it comes to leadership, we all think we can do better when it's our turn to lead, but when it's our turn to follow, follow. This does not mean we blindly follow or leave our leaders unchallenged. Joey carefully made caveats for the abusive and heretical, which we should challenge. However, our baseline biblical responsibility is for each person to be a good leader and follower at the right time. Especially for us as Western American Christians- this is hard.

However difficult it was for Paul, he modeled this in his return trip to Jerusalem. After years on the front lines of ministry, sharing the gospel of reconciliation with Jews and Greeks, Paul had seen the gospel's freeing power and implications for Jewish cultural law play out in real time. The old concerns about Jewish purification, through hard-won theological debate, had lost the day.

However, Jerusalem was not quite there yet. In this hallowed city, these implications were hard to swallow. The people were suspicious of Paul and his libertine practices. The leaders, however much they disagreed with the people, felt the pressure to appease their suspicions by requiring Paul to obey the ritual purifications. As we will see in future months, this did not achieve peace; it worsened the situation.

However, despite knowing it was the wrong call, Paul obeyed his leaders and submitted to their request. Why? Because he knew that it was not his place to lead; it was his time to follow.

Today, Westerners have to grapple with why it is so difficult to know when to lead and when to follow. Let's dig into this text together and seek the Spirit to help us follow Paul as he follows Christ.

DISCUSSION

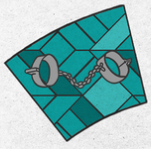
Joey's big Idea was, “When it is your turn to lead, lead. When it's your turn to follow, follow.”

- o What do you think he meant by that, and do you agree with it? Why or why not?



This document can be used for either personal or group reflection.

Group facilitator: Please feel empowered to use only the questions that are helpful for the context of your group.



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Extract the Truth

Read the text: Acts 21:17-26

- What jumps out to you from the text?
- Based on what we have learned in the Acts series so far, what had Paul Experienced on the frontlines of ministry that made the concerns of the Jerusalem Church leaders outdated and unbiblical?

The leaders had two choices:

- Avoid Conflict: Ask Paul to accommodate their unbiblical but relationally challenging needs.
- Embrace Conflict: Challenge/correct the unbiblical beliefs of their congregations.
 - They chose the first. What were the Jerusalem leaders experiencing from their home congregation that caused them to be so image-conscious/afraid of perceptions?
 - If Paul knew it was unbiblical and wrong, why did he follow it?

Experience Transformation

- What can we learn from the Jerusalem leader's image-conscious decision-making, and are there any modern parallels for our church today?
- How was Paul's Jewish-Biblical worldview of authority different than our Western view of authority?
- How has our Western worldview impacted our view of what it means to lead and follow?
- What can we learn from Paul's willingness to follow in this situation that we could apply to our lives/church?
- What do you personally want to put into practice as a result of reading this text?

**PREPARE FOR
NEXT WEEK:**

Read Isaiah 55

