SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES

REFLECTION JOURNAL · FIVE DAYS

Acts

Chapter 23

The Lord Stood at His Side

MEMORY VERSE · ACTS 23:11

“But on the night immediately following, the Lord stood at his side and said, “Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also.””

THIS JOURNAL BELONGS TO _____

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

This week in Acts 23

Paul had the worst day of his ministry — struck in the face, shouted down, dragged away by soldiers — and that night the Lord Jesus came and stood beside him. This week, whatever your cell, your house or your past looks like, He is not locked out. He comes to say "Take courage," and then He keeps His word in the ordinary details of your days.

How to use this journal

1. Each day, read the passage slowly — out loud if you can.
2. Answer the **Observe** question from the text before you write what it means.
3. Write honestly on the **Reflect** questions. No one grades this.
4. Do the **Respond** step today, not someday. Say the memory verse.
5. Bring this journal to the group. The last page is for the table.

The full Deep Dive, the O·I·A study and the slides for this chapter are on the Acts study page.

WHERE I AM AS I START THIS CHAPTER

What is going on in my life right now that I want to bring to God this week?

DAY 1 OF 5

A Good Conscience

READ · ACTS 23:1–5

OBSERVE — WHAT DOES IT SAY?

What does Paul say about how he has lived, what does the high priest order, and what does Paul say once he learns who gave the order (23:1–5)?

REFLECT

Paul said he had lived "with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day" (23:1), even though he had once persecuted Christians. What is still sitting on your conscience that you need to bring to Jesus and, where you can, make right?

REFLECT

Paul answered sharply when he was struck (23:3), then backed up when he learned he had spoken against the high priest (23:5). When have you said something true in the wrong way, and what did it cost?

RESPOND — TODAY

Take one step today toward a clean conscience: confess one specific thing to God, and if it involves a person, write down what it would take to make it right.

☐ READ IT ☐ PRAYED IT ☐ SAID THE MEMORY VERSE (ACTS 23:11)

DAY 2 OF 5

The Hope of the Resurrection

READ · ACTS 23:6–10

OBSERVE — WHAT DOES IT SAY?

What two groups were in the Council, what did each believe about the resurrection, angels and spirits, and what happened when Paul spoke (23:6–10)?

REFLECT

Paul said he was on trial "for the hope and resurrection of the dead" (23:6). How would your week look different if you really believed that Jesus is alive and that you will rise too?

REFLECT

The Council fought so hard that the commander feared Paul "would be torn to pieces" (23:10). Where have you seen religious arguments get loud while the real question — Jesus raised from the dead — gets lost?

RESPOND — TODAY

Tell one person today, in a sentence or two, why the resurrection of Jesus gives you hope for your own future.

☐ READ IT ☐ PRAYED IT ☐ SAID THE MEMORY VERSE (ACTS 23:11)

DAY 3 OF 5

Take Courage

READ · ACTS 23:11

OBSERVE — WHAT DOES IT SAY?

When did the Lord come to Paul, where did He stand, and what two things did He say about Jerusalem and Rome (23:11)?

REFLECT

The Lord came "on the night immediately following" the worst day (23:11). What is your hardest hour right now, and what would it mean to believe Jesus is standing beside you in it?

REFLECT

Jesus told Paul his witness in Jerusalem counted and that more work was ahead in Rome (23:11). What has God already done through you that you have written off, and what might He still have for you to do?

RESPOND — TODAY

Write Acts 23:11 on a card, put your own name where Paul's would be, and read it out loud tonight before you sleep.

☐ READ IT ☐ PRAYED IT ☐ SAID THE MEMORY VERSE (ACTS 23:11)

DAY 4 OF 5

Forty Men and a Nephew

READ · ACTS 23:12–22

OBSERVE — WHAT DOES IT SAY?

What did the forty men swear, how did Paul's nephew find out, and what did each person do with the information (23:12–22)?

REFLECT

More than forty men bound themselves under an oath to kill Paul (23:12–13), but one young man's report undid the whole plot (23:16). Where do you feel outnumbered right now, and how does this story speak to that?

REFLECT

Paul's nephew told the right people quietly and carefully (23:16–22). Is there something you know — about someone in danger, or something wrong being planned — that you need to tell the right person?

RESPOND — TODAY

Pray by name for one person who is in danger right now, and if you know something that could help them, tell someone who can act on it today.

☐ READ IT ☐ PRAYED IT ☐ SAID THE MEMORY VERSE (ACTS 23:11)

DAY 5 OF 5

Carried Toward the Promise

READ · ACTS 23:23–35

OBSERVE — WHAT DOES IT SAY?

How many soldiers went with Paul, where did they travel, and what did the commander's letter say about the charges against Paul (23:23–30)?

REFLECT

God used 470 Roman soldiers, a letter and a long road to keep His promise to Paul (23:23–33), with no angels or miracles. Where might God be working in your life through ordinary people and events you have been overlooking?

REFLECT

The commander's letter made himself look a little better than he was (23:27). When are you tempted to polish your own story, and what would it look like to tell it straight?

RESPOND — TODAY

Look back over the last month and write down three ordinary things — a person, a delay, a door — that God may have used to keep you on His path. Thank Him for each one.

☐ READ IT ☐ PRAYED IT ☐ SAID THE MEMORY VERSE (ACTS 23:11)

WHEN THE GROUP MEETS

Questions for the table

FOR THE GROUP · 1

Paul faced the Council with a good conscience (23:1) and Felix with the same claim (24:16). What practical habits help a man keep short accounts with God and with other people?

FOR THE GROUP · 2

The Lord's word "Take courage" (23:11) came before Paul knew about the forty men (23:12–13). How does it change the way we face trouble to know that Jesus sees it coming before we do?

FOR THE GROUP · 3

God protected Paul through a nephew, a centurion and a commander (23:16–24). Who has God used in your life as an ordinary instrument of protection, and how can we be that for one another?

MY PRAYER

Lord Jesus, You stood beside Paul on his worst night, so tonight I ask You to stand beside me and…

CUT OUT · CARRY IT · ACTS 23:11

“But on the night immediately following, the Lord stood at his side and said, “Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also.””