

# STUDY NOTES

## *The Acts of the Apostles*

A MESSAGE SERIES AT NEW CITY CHURCH (Summer 2016)

[WWW.NEWCITYPHX.COM/SERMONS](http://WWW.NEWCITYPHX.COM/SERMONS) - CHRIS TOWNLEY

The following content is based on the message “Paul’s Story and the Armor of God” spoken on 07/17/16 by Chris Townley at New City Church in Phoenix, AZ. The following is not meant to be a full synopsis of the message but rather a brief look at the main ideas. To use this Study Guide effectively you must listen to the message found at <http://newcityphx.com/sermons/>.

Leaders using these Study Notes for group study and reflection should read the Biblical text thoroughly before beginning, using this resource as assistance and not relying solely on this material for insight. We encourage all leaders to pray and ask the Spirit for revelation as they lead their respective communities.

## PRAYER

**Pray and ask God to lead the discussion as everyone gets to share.**

## THE SCRIPTURE: ACTS 22:1-23

## PAUL’S LIFE-SUMMARIZING DEFENSE

Paul is in chains to be punished. He is addressing a group of Jewish people deeply committed to the Law of Moses. He starts his defense by sharing his story with the crowd of people.

- *What makes someone’s story so powerful?*
- *How often do you feel like your story matters?*
- *What parts of your story do you think no one else would connect with?*

## THE CROWD RESPONDS

The crowd was engaged in Paul’s story until he told them that God’s message included the outsider.

- *How does the crowd respond to what Paul says?*
- *Why do you think it was so difficult for the crowd to hear that God’s message was for the outsider?*

**We are off the tracks of Jesus when we cannot imagine a “they” that might actually be an “us”.**

- *What kind of similarities do you see in our world today?*
- *In some ways, we all imagine a “them”. How do **you** imagine a “them” rather than an “us”?*

## PAUL PUTS ON JESUS

Remember, Paul used to incite violence, now he doesn’t lift a finger. He actually lets himself get beat up and jailed. This should not just be glossed over. We can’t let this become tame or mundane.

### **What made Paul unique is that he put on Jesus**

This doesn’t mean that he wrapped Jesus’ skin around him. That’s weird. However, he does write about putting something on in Ephesians. **Read Ephesians 6:10-18.** The armor of God is the armor God wears. The armor here is for protection against attack, not for going on the offensive against Satan.

- *We’ve talked a lot about Paul’s life being different after Jesus. How do **you** see Paul’s life being different after putting on Jesus?*
- *How does it feel to know that you can put on the same armor that God wears?*

## JESUS’S ARMOR IS DIFFERENT

When we put on the armor of God we are “putting on” Jesus!

**To put on Jesus is to put on humble, genuine love because without love, you’re just a mercenary in really nice armor.**

What if we, like Paul, and of course Jesus before him, were outfitted in belts of truth, and body armor of righteousness, and shoes of peace (please more shoes with the Gospel of peace!), and shields of faith, and helmets of salvation, and swords of the Spirit... not swords that wound and destroy, but **SWORDS THAT HEAL?**

- *How is Jesus’s armor a paradigm shift to what we normally think armor to be?*
- *Have you seen people use this armor to hurt others? If so, how?*
- *Why do you think that Jesus’ armor is different?*
- *Which piece of Jesus’s armor do you need most help with?*
- *How can we wear Jesus’s armor together as a group?*
- *What do you think things would look like if we put on Jesus’s armor?*
- *Pray for God to strengthen us to wear his armor with love—as Jesus would wear it.*