



THERE'S PEOPLE IN THE CITY

Keep Speaking. God Has People Here.

STUDY GUIDE

Acts 18:9-11 · Psalm 23:4 · Isaiah 54:17

VERTICAL TAMPA

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide walks through the message centered on Acts 18:9-11, where God tells Paul not to be afraid, to keep speaking, and to remain in Corinth because He has many people in the city. The sermon traces God's pursuit of people from Genesis to Revelation and connects Paul's assignment to courage, presence, protection, purpose, and love for people.

BIG IDEA

The whole story has always been about people.

Fear may be real, opposition may form, and an assignment may become uncomfortable. But fear does not get to determine obedience. God's presence gives courage, His Word sets boundaries around opposition, and His concern for people gives the assignment its purpose.

REFLECT BEFORE YOU BEGIN

1. Where has fear tempted you to become silent, stop moving, or abandon an assignment?
2. Who are the people God may be asking you to see differently in your city, workplace, school, or neighborhood?
3. What would faithful obedience look like if you trusted that God is already present where He sent you?

POINT 1 · GOD KEEPS MOVING TOWARD PEOPLE

ACTS 18:9-11

The Lord tells Paul: “Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you... because I have many people in this city.” Paul remains in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching the Word of God.

The sermon traces this pattern across Scripture: after Adam hides, God comes looking. Abraham is called so that families of the earth can be blessed. God hears Israel's cry and comes down to deliver. Jonah sees Nineveh's wickedness, but God sees people. Jesus comes to seek and save the lost, and Revelation ends with a multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and tongue.

Genesis begins with God looking for a man. Revelation ends with God surrounded by a multitude.

God did not give heaven's greatest treasure because humanity was behaving correctly. Romans 5:8 says Christ died for us while we were still sinners. His love does not begin after transformation; His love initiates transformation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does the Bible's repeated movement toward people reveal about God's heart?
2. Where are you tempted to see only someone's present condition instead of the person God loves?
3. How should God's pursuit of people reshape the way the church sees its city?

POINT 2 · FEAR DOES NOT GET TO DETERMINE OBEDIENCE

Fear may begin as a feeling, but it becomes dangerous when it becomes a position: “I am staying here because of what I see,” “I am not moving because of what might happen,” or “I am not obeying because my reality looks greater than what God said.”

ACTS 18:9

“Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent.” God connects fear directly to movement and obedience.

Fear tries to keep you loyal to your current reality.

Paul could feel fear and still obey. He could see opposition and still move. Courage is not pretending there is no opposition; it is what happens when awareness of God becomes greater than awareness of opposition. Rejection, trauma, and overthinking what could go wrong could have silenced Paul, but God's instruction was clear: keep speaking.

THE WORD MUST BE SPOKEN

The sermon connects Paul's command to speak with the creative and life-giving power of God's Word: God speaks light into darkness; people believe through the Word they hear; the Word is seed that lives and abides.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When has fear become more than a feeling and started shaping your decisions?
2. What has God told you to keep doing even though you feel resistance?
3. How can you increase your awareness of God when opposition feels louder than His instruction?

POINT 3 · FOR I AM WITH YOU

ACTS 18:9-10

God does not first tell Paul what He will remove. He tells Paul who is with him: “For I am with you.”

This pattern appears throughout Scripture. Isaiah 41 connects “fear not” to “I am with you.” Psalm 23 does not deny the valley, darkness, or danger; David's confidence is that the Shepherd is with him. His rod protects, His staff guides, rescues, and keeps the sheep close.

The presence of God is the answer to fear.

Presence does not always prevent the valley; presence preserves you through it. Isaiah 43 says “when” you pass through waters and fire, not “if.” The consistent promise is not that God's people will never enter difficult places. The promise is that they will never enter them alone.

You can be surrounded by danger without being abandoned to danger.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you usually define God's protection as keeping you out of difficulty or keeping you through it?
2. What changes when your confidence is rooted in the Shepherd rather than your surroundings?
3. Where do you need to remember today: “I am not entering this alone”?

POINT 4 · THE WEAPON CAN FORM WITHOUT PROSPERING

ACTS 18:10-12

God promises Paul that no one will attack and harm him, yet opposition still forms and Paul is brought before the judgment seat. The attack existed, but it could not override what God had already spoken.

ISAIAH 54:17

“No weapon formed against you shall prosper.” The promise is not that no weapon will form, but that the weapon formed will not accomplish what it was designed to do.

The sermon also points to Job: the enemy had activity, but not unrestricted authority. God established boundaries. Biblical protection does not mean there will never be a battle. Psalm 34 says the righteous have many afflictions, but the Lord delivers.

The attack came after the promise.

Before opposition rises in Acts 18:12, God has already spoken in verses 9-10. What rises against Paul does not surprise the God who spoke before it rose. Paul can judge the weapon by the Word God already spoke, rather than judging his future by the weapon that formed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What opposition have you mistaken as proof that God lost control?
2. How does it change your perspective to remember that an attack can form without being allowed to prevail?
3. What Word or instruction from God do you need to remember before evaluating what is happening around you?

POINT 5 · PURPOSE AND PROTECTION

ACTS 18:11

Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and six months, teaching the Word of God among them.

God's specific promise of protection in Corinth is connected to Paul's assignment there. Paul is not preserved merely for comfort; he is preserved for purpose. The sermon is careful not to turn this into a promise that believers are immune from suffering. Rather, in Corinth God assures Paul that opposition will not cancel what He sent Paul there to do.

If God still has purpose for you in a place, opposition cannot cancel what God has determined to accomplish through you.

This reframes difficult places. A job, neighborhood, industry, school, or city may be about more than what you are getting out of it. There may be people attached to your presence there.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Where might you be evaluating an assignment only by comfort, convenience, or what you receive from it?
2. Who may be connected to your presence in the place God currently has you?
3. How can purpose help you endure inconvenience without confusing endurance with immunity from suffering?

POINT 6 · I HAVE MANY PEOPLE IN THIS CITY

ACTS 18:9-11

God does not tell Paul to stay because Corinth has potential or because it is a strategic market. He says, "I have many people in this city."

Corinth was pagan, idolatrous, and immoral, yet God saw people who would respond to the Gospel Paul was sent to preach. Paul saw sinners; God saw sons and daughters who had not come home yet. Paul saw darkness; God saw people waiting on light. Paul saw what they were; God saw what grace could make them.

You may be looking at somebody's current chapter while God is looking at their whole story.

Their condition did not cancel God's concern. People were worth Paul's time, the opposition, and staying longer than he may have planned. The city becomes personal on Monday morning: the coworker, employee, family member, neighbor, server, person at the gym, or person you have already decided is too far gone.

If they matter to God, they have to matter to us.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who have you quietly written off because of their present behavior or beliefs?
2. What would it look like to see that person through the possibility of grace?
3. How can you see, love, serve, pray for, and speak to people without trying to manufacture the outcome?

CLOSE · FIVE THINGS TO DO WHEN GOD GIVES YOU AN ASSIGNMENT

1. KEEP YOUR VISION CLEAR

Do not allow what you see around you to make you forget what God showed you.

2. KEEP YOUR HEART PURE

Do not let rejection, offense, ambition, or frustration corrupt the reason you accepted the assignment.

3. DO NOT BE INTIMIDATED BY THE “WHAT IFS”

Do not permit imagined outcomes to become greater than God's instruction.

4. SPEAK THE WORD - NOTHING MORE AND NOTHING LESS

You are responsible for faithfully delivering the Word, not manufacturing the outcome.

5. LOVE GOD'S PEOPLE

Paul's assignment was never merely about building a ministry. It was about reaching people who already mattered to God.

There are people in the city.

The church cannot say it loves God while becoming indifferent toward the people He gave His Son to save. You do not have to preach a sermon to everyone. You can see people, love people, serve people, pray for people, speak when God opens the door, and refuse to write people off before God is finished with them.

THIS WEEK

1. Which of the five assignment practices needs the most attention in your life right now?
2. Name one person you will intentionally see, love, serve, or pray for this week.
3. Finish this prayer: “God, help me not to become so focused on where I am going that I stop seeing...”