

# Life Group Discussion Guide

Against All Odds: How the Name of Jesus Spreads  
Week 7: The Search for Salvation • Acts 13:13–25

Every human society is built on a set of values. While the Roman Empire of biblical times propagandized *la pax romana* (Roman peace) as the hope of humanity, Americans today build their lives on the promises of *freedom, justice, and happiness*.

*“These words are symbols that contain our deepest aspirations and hopes. And yet, because only the Gospel of Jesus is the bullseye—that is, He is the only water that won’t leave you thirsty—each of these values will let us down. They have the appearance of a final answer. They seem to get us so close, but we never arrive. The oasis always turns into a mirage.”*

- What are some of the empty promises our society chases?
- Think back to an aspiration or desire you held at some point. What happened when you reached it?

In this week’s passage, we see Paul laboring to help his fellow Jews grasp that one of their most potent and cherished symbols (King David) brought them so close—so close to freedom, so close to salvation—and yet, they would never arrive unless they embraced Jesus of Nazareth. Why? Because **the only oasis that never turns into a mirage is Jesus.**

Instead of beginning with Jesus, though, Paul takes his listeners *all the way back* to Genesis. In fact, he recaps hundreds of years of Israelite history before ever mentioning Jesus’ Name. This begs the question, *what is he getting at?*

Pastor Jon offered an explanation:

*“It’s not just because he’s speaking to Jews that Paul goes through this rehearsal of Jewish history. Jesus’ connection to David—and through David to all of Israel’s history—is central to the Gospel proclamation. While many people today prefer to deemphasize the Jewishness of Christianity, Paul’s exhortation—like those of Peter (Acts 2) and Stephen (Acts 7)—demonstrates a fundamental reality of our faith: **the road to Jesus goes through Israel.**”*

Some pastors say the Old Testament is not helpful in evangelism—it’s too primitive, too bloody, too harsh. Others say the God of the Old Testament was angry, and we want a happier, friendlier God. Still others prefer to focus on the problems and needs people have today, claiming no one in 21st century America is thinking of things like animal sacrifices and food laws. For these reasons and others, the Old Testament pages of many American’s Bibles remain unopened and unread.

- Have you been tempted to avoid, minimize, or dismiss the Old Testament? For what reasons?

- In this week's message, Pastor Jon stated, *"Some people never mature in their Christian faith because who they understand Jesus to be is not the Jesus of the Bible."* What role does the Old Testament play in knowing *"the Jesus of the Bible"*?
- In what ways can we find connections to Jesus as we read the Old Testament?

We've been saying that every culture, every person, has symbols of deliverance (think back to *la pax romana*). Why do we need deliverance? Because we all find ourselves in a process of death. We're in a race against the forces of death on our bodies, professions, relationships, cultures, and the list goes on. As a result, we're always seeking deliverance. Always seeking salvation.

This is why the main message of Scripture is this: God saves.

*"People don't need help knowing that they need salvation. They need help understanding that the only oasis that doesn't turn into a mirage is Jesus. They need help grasping that all sources of salvation leave them empty if their Savior is not Jesus."*

- Who/what do people look for salvation in apart from Jesus?
- Who/what have you been tempted to seek salvation in?
- From personal experience, what is the result of pursuing a "savior" other than Jesus Christ?

Everyone seeks salvation, but they seek it in the wrong places—which reveals a fundamental truth:

**The salvation everyone seeks must start with repentance.**

*"Repentance means that we have sought salvation in the wrong places, and our encounter with God demands that we turn around. It's a change at the heart level that spills into all our thought and behavior because we've encountered God."*

- Why is repentance the gateway to salvation?

In his discussion of repentance, Pastor Jon pointed out that many hold a childish view of it. The word itself sounds to us like a put-down, a scolding, a chastisement.

*"To us, repentance means that I need to feel bad for things I do that are wrong. While there's something to that, on a more fundamental level, repentance means that we have experienced something so glorious that giving up some of the lesser things in our lifestyle is worth it."*

- What changes when our understanding of repentance shifts in the way Pastor Jon described?
- What is God leading you to repent of today? (Think back to our discussion of the false saviors we've pursued apart from Jesus.)
- Take time now to repent of the empty promises and pseudo-saviors you've sought after, enthroning Christ in His rightful place as King of your life.
- How can you support one another in truly "turning away" from the things you've repented of and "turning toward" Christ?