

DISCUSSION GUIDE

# PAUL

## APOSTLE OF CHRIST

The poster features a close-up of Paul on the left and Jesus on the right, both with intense expressions. In the background, a silhouette of a man stands on a hill overlooking a city at sunset.

THEIR FAITH  
CHALLENGED  
AN EMPIRE.



# PAUL, APOSTLE OF CHRIST

## CREW OVERVIEW

Andrew Hyatt (Director; Writer: screenplay)

T.J. Berden (Producer)

David Zelon (Producer)

## CAST OVERVIEW

Jim Caviezel (Luke)

James Faulkner (Paul)

Olivier Martinez (Mauritius)

Joanne Whalley (Priscilla)

John Lynch (Aquila)

Yorgos Karamihos (Saul of Tarsus)

Cassius (Alessandro Sperduti)

Antonia Campbell-Hughes (Irenica)

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## USING THIS DISCUSSION GUIDE

Intended for use after viewing the film, this study guide provides catalysts for biblically based discussion of various themes found in *Risen*. The guide features three themes from the movie and is structured in such a way that groups can choose to discuss the entire guide at once or can focus on one or two themes at a time. The guide is also an excellent resource for individual or personal study and reflection.

## THEME ONE: LOVE

Guiding Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NIV): "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."

## SCRIPTURES REFERENCED

- John 13:35 (NLT): "Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."
- Luke 6:27-31 (NIV): "But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you."
- 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 (NIV): "For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The

weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds."

- 1 John 4:9-12 (NLT): "God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us."
- Romans 5:8 (NLT): "But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners."
- 1 John 3:16-18 (NIV): "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."





- 1 John 4:7-9 (NIV): “Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.”
- Romans 8:35-37 (NIV): “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”
- Psalm 136:26 (NIV): “Give thanks to the God of heaven. His love endures forever.”
- 1 Corinthians 8:3 (NIV): “But whoever loves God is known by God.”
- 1 Peter 4:8 (NLT): “Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins.”
- 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NIV): “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”

## SCENES TO REVIEW

*“Peace Begins With You” [00:40:31 – 00:43:42]*

*“Love Is The Only Way” [00:43:42 – 00:46:54]*

*“Saved” [01:27:10 – 01:31:59]*

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

As you start this theme discussion, reflect on the nature of Christian love, as it’s defined by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13, our Guiding Scripture: “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres” (NIV).

In PAUL, APOSTLE OF CHRIST, Paul is awaiting his execution in the Mamertine Prison. And yet he encourages his brothers and sisters in the faith to love their enemies. This man who had been repeatedly beaten, whipped, stoned, and falsely accused continued to extend love and forgiveness to his persecutors. In the same way, we are called to love as Christ loved us.

## SCENE TO REVIEW

*“Peace Begins With You” [00:40:31 – 00:43:42]*

- In this scene, what do you learn about the cultural and historical context for life as a first-century Christian? How does this scene illustrate the daily struggles of living in Nero’s Rome?
- How does this scene characterize Cassius? Why does Cassius feel justified in his views—and how would you describe his sentiment? How do the other members of the community respond to Cassius?
- Describe Luke’s rebuke to Cassius’ impassioned speech. What does Luke mean when he says, “Peace begins with you”?

*Read John 13:35; Luke 6:27-31; 2 Corinthians 10:3-4; 1 John 4:9-12 (see Scriptures Referenced).*

- What do John 13:35 and Luke 6:27-31 tell us about the Christian response toward our enemies or persecutors? How did Christ himself live out this kind of love?
- Consider the high calling of 2 Corinthians 10:3-4. What does it mean that we do not wage war as the world does?
- Notice how 1 John 4:9-12 says, “since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other.” Christian love is the response to experiencing Christ’s love. How can we demonstrate Christ-like love to both neighbors and enemies?

Though the Christians in this scene are heartbroken and grieving the death of a loved one, Luke reminds them that love is the only way to respond to evil. Where Nero incites violence, they are to show peace. While the Romans persecute them, they are called to pray for their persecutors and show love. As the Christians struggle to comprehend and live out such love, they’re reminded to follow Christ’s example—that evil can only be overcome with good.





## SCENE TO REVIEW

*"Love Is The Only Way" [00:43:42 – 00:46:54]*

- Looking through the scene, what reasons does Luke list when declaring that "this world doesn't know a thing about love"? Name as many as you can. What parallels do you see between this depiction of ancient Rome and our world today?
- At their darkest moment, Paul reminds Luke that, "Love is the only way." What does that mean for you? When you face adversity, challenge, or hardship, how do you respond?
- How does this scene characterize the relationship between Paul and Luke? Notice how Paul both rebukes and encourages Luke. How does this illustrate Christian discipleship?
- In this scene, Paul describes love by quoting 1 Corinthians 13, our Guiding Scripture. According to Paul, what does love do? What does love not do? How does Paul live out Christ-like love in the film?
- Believing that "Love is the only way" is easier in word than in deed. How would you respond in the following situations:
  - When a loved one's life is taken because of someone's carelessness
  - When you're bullied at school
  - When you're discriminated against at work
  - When a loved one says hurtful things
  - When senseless violence strikes in a community
- Read Romans 5:8; Romans 8:35-37; 1 John 3:16-18; 1 John 4:7-9 (see Scriptures Referenced).
- Notice in this scene how Paul says to Luke, "So you would give up on the world when Christ did not give up on us?" Relate this to the portrayal of Christ that we see in 1 John 3:16-18 and Romans 5:8.
- Consider 1 John 3:16-18 and 1 John 4:7-9. What do these passages have to say about God's relationship with his people? How can you show love not with words or

speech, but with actions and truth?

Romans 8:35-37 says that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ—no trial, no hardship, no persecution. When tragedy strikes the Christian community, members of "The Way" are divided and disagree about whether to show love or strike in retaliation. Luke turns to Paul for guidance—and Paul reminds him that the Christian calling is to show love. John 13:35 says, "Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples" (NLT). It is this profound love that the Christians are called to show not only to their fellow believers, but to all people.

## SCENE TO REVIEW

*"Saved" [01:27:10 – 01:31:59]*

- Throughout the film, Mauritius struggles to understand how Paul is deemed a threat by the mighty Roman empire. How is Mauritius characterized in *Saved*? How does his relationship with Paul and Luke develop over the course of the film?
- In this scene, Mauritius says, "And what if after all this, I still do not believe in your Christ?" But what examples or hints from this scene illustrate that Mauritius' skepticism may be weakening?
- Paul describes what it's like to encounter the unconditional love of God: "You will understand that you are completely known by God, and that you are completely loved." Have you had a moment of experiencing the fullness of God's unconditional love and mercy?
- Paul uses sailing as a metaphor for the Christian life. What does he mean by saying that Christians live for "that endless expanse of sea"?
- Read Psalm 136:26; 1 Corinthians 8:3; 1 Peter 4:8 (see Scriptures Referenced).
- Consider the relationship between knowledge and love, as shown in 1 Corinthians 8:3. Why is it important that we are completely known by God?
- Throughout the film, Paul is haunted by visions of his past







misdeeds. But God knows him completely—knows every sin he committed, every life he took—and yet loves him unconditionally. In your own words, explain the Christian view of unconditional love as shown in these verses. How do these verses challenge the worldly understanding of love?

In Greek, there are several different words for love. *Philia* is brotherly love, marked by loyalty and friendship. *Storge* means familial affection, like between a parent and child. *Agape* means unconditional love, such as the love God has for all people. This kind of love is selfless and sacrificial and is not dependent on circumstance. In the film, we see brotherly love between Paul and Luke, the familial love shared by the Christian community in Rome, and the unconditional love God shows his people. And as the Christians struggle to comprehend what it means that “Love is the only way,” they unite in their shared convictions and belief in Christ’s all-redeeming love.

## THEME TWO: FORGIVENESS

Guiding Scripture: Ephesians 4:31-32 (NIV): “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

## SCRIPTURES REFERENCED

- Romans 3:23 (NIV): “...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...”
- Micah 7:18-19 (NLT): “Where is another God like you, who pardons the guilt of the remnant, overlooking the sins of his special people? You will not stay angry with your people forever, because you delight in showing unfailing love. Once again you will have compassion on us. You will trample our sins under your feet and throw them into

the depths of the ocean!”

- Psalm 103:12 (NLT): “He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west.”
- 1 Timothy 1:15 (NIV): “Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.”
- Acts 9:15 (NIV): “But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel.”
- Acts 26:17-18 (NIV): “...I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”
- Matthew 6:12 (NIV): “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”
- Luke 23:34 (NIV): “Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.’ And the soldiers gambled for his clothes by throwing dice.”
- Luke 6:37 (NIV): “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.”
- Romans 12:19-20 (NLT): “Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, ‘I will take revenge; I will pay them back,’ says the Lord. Instead, ‘If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink.’”
- Ephesians 4:31-32 (NIV): “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”
- Ephesians 1:7 (NIV): “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace.”
- Acts 13:38-39 (NIV): “Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is



proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses.”

## SCENES TO REVIEW

*Blasphemy [00:29:22 – 00:32:51]*

*Receive Thy Sight [00:49:04 – 00:52:41]*

*Let Us Pray [01:19:09 – 01:21:24]*

*Luke Sent Me [01:24:12 – 01:27:10]*

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Throughout the Bible, God has quite a scandalous cast of characters. Noah was a drunkard. David was an adulterer. Saul was a persecutor. Yet, through these people, God demonstrated his radical love and forgiveness, showing us that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

One of the most unique and engaging aspects of PAUL, APOSTLE OF CHRIST is that we get to see Paul in his last days of ministry, but we also experience his life as Saul of Tarsus—including his journey to Damascus, which is interrupted by a blinding light and voice from heaven. As he tells Mauritius, “Sins of a past life. By God’s grace washed away.” Though Paul lives with regret, he’s confident in God’s love, mercy, and redemption. He holds fast to the truth that where sin abounds, grace abounds more.

## SCENE TO REVIEW

*Blasphemy [00:29:22 – 00:32:51]*

*Receive Thy Sight [00:49:04 – 00:52:41]*

- Contrast Saul of Tarsus with Paul the Apostle. How does Saul’s view of righteousness differ from Paul’s personal belief in Jesus as Lord and Savior?
- Consider the character of Stephen, the first martyr. How is he characterized in this scene? How does he extend forgiveness to his persecutors?
- In Receive Thy Sight, what do you notice about the character of Ananias? How does he treat Saul? How does his behavior demonstrate forgiveness?

- How do the filmmaking decisions (flashback, lighting, cinematography, landscape, soundtrack etc.) enhance the poignancy of Paul’s conversion and baptism scene?
- Read Micah 7:18-19; Psalm 103:12; 1 Timothy 1:15; Acts 9:15; Acts 26:9-23 (see Scriptures Referenced).
- How do Micah 7:18-19 and Psalm 103:12 describe God’s forgiving nature? What does it mean that God has “removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west”?
- Read 1 Timothy 1:15, Acts 9:15, and Acts 26:9-23. What do you learn about Paul’s conversion and testimony? Considering Paul’s past, why do you think it’s so significant that God called Paul to be his “chosen instrument”? What made Paul the ideal messenger to bring the truth of God’s grace?
- Have you had a “Road to Damascus” moment, in which you had a turning point in your life? What happened in that experience?

Paul struggles to forgive himself for his past—and he’s haunted by the faces of those he killed. But at the end of the film, he stands in the road of his visions. He sees Stephen, the martyr. He sees the faces of everyone he persecuted. They smile and welcome him, rejoicing that their former persecutor has now joined them. They extend unwarranted forgiveness and mercy—just as Christ gave freely to us.

## SCENE TO REVIEW

*Let Us Pray [01:19:09 – 01:21:24]*

- In this scene, Luke references Jesus’ words on the cross: “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.” How does this line offer insight into the way God views us and our sin?
- How do you respond when life brings suffering or discouragement? If you were Luke, how would you have comforted the other Christians?
- Consider how the character of Luke has developed throughout the film. In this scene, he says, “In my heart, I felt that there should be some kind of retribution against the Romans for the crimes that they have committed. But there can be only one way.” What causes him to change in the film? How does he come to understand God’s love and forgiveness more fully?
- Read Matthew 6:12; Luke 23:34 (see Scriptures Referenced).
- Notice how in the Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:12), we ask for forgiveness before acknowledging our need to forgive others. Why is this order important?
- Where else do we see moments of forgiveness in the film? Consider the characters who extend forgiveness and mercy to each other, who openly receive forgiveness from God, or who learn to forgive themselves.

Soon after Cassius breaks into the prison, Luke is condemned to Nero’s circus and sent to prison. There, he meets other Christians who will die in the games. But instead of rousing anger and vengeance, Luke humbly confesses his desire for retribution, and reminds the other believers that love is the only way. To live like Christ is to





say, "Father, forgive them." Take some time to reflect on the following questions as they pertain to you: How does your faith influence your daily life? Do you find it difficult to extend grace or forgiveness to those around you? If you're struggling to fully forgive others—or yourself—how might you start to take steps of reconciliation and Christlike forgiveness?

## SCENE TO REVIEW

*Luke Sent Me [01:24:12 – 01:27:10]*

Given the context and reality of daily persecution, reflect on the gravity of this scene. Luke has sent a Roman military official to the Christian community, asking Priscilla and Aquila to help the Romans.

- The Christians, though at first fearful and wary, respond with forgiveness and love. What does this scene suggest about the counter-culture values within the Christian community?
- Notice who speaks up in response to Mauritius' plea. Octavia—the woman who arrived at the community splattered with the blood of her baby. How does her response characterize the theme of forgiveness in the film?
- Have you ever had to extend forgiveness toward someone who hurt you?
- If so, what happened and how did this experience challenge or encourage you?
- If not, how did this scene between the Christians and Mauritius inspire you to handle difficult situations in the future?
- Have you ever had to seek forgiveness for hurting someone else?
- If so, how did you reconcile with this person?
- Read Luke 6:37, Romans 12:19-20, and Ephesians 4:31-32, our Guiding Scripture. What do these verses say about how Christians should act? What are Christians

called to do? What are Christians called not to do?

- Read Ephesians 1:7 and Acts 13:38-39. How do these verses relate to the theme discussion on "forgiveness"? Why is forgiveness so essential to the Gospel truth? What does it mean that Christ's sacrifice is our "justification"?

As you finish this theme discussion on the power of forgiveness, revisit our Guiding Scripture. Reflect on how forgiveness is given freely through grace—no one deserves it. Not Saul of Tarsus. Not Mauritius. Not Priscilla and Aquila. All have sinned. And yet through God's lavish love and mercy, we are welcomed into relationship with him. We are forgiven. And from the riches of this forgiveness, we are called to act likewise. Spend some time examining what else the Scriptures have to say about the power of forgiveness and the theological significance of unmerited grace. Consider the difference between the worldly response to evil—retaliation, revenge, anger—and the Christian response we see in the lives of Paul, Luke, and the Roman Christians. To see a prayer asking for forgiveness, you can read Psalm 51, a psalm of David.

## THEME THREE: DISCERNMENT

Guiding Scripture: Hosea 14:9 (NIV): "Who is wise? Let them realize these things. Who is discerning? Let them understand. The ways of the Lord are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them."

## SCRIPTURES REFERENCED

- Proverbs 12:15 (NLT): "Fools think their own way is right, but the wise listen to others."
- Proverbs 19:20-21 (NIV): "Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise. Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails."





- 2 Timothy 3:16 (NIV): “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”
- Colossians 1:9 (NIV): “For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives.”
- Psalm 119:105 (NIV): “Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.”
- Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV): “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”
- James 1:5 (NLT): “If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.”
- Romans 12:2 (NIV): “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”
- Philippians 1:9-10 (NIV): “And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ...”
- 1 Peter 3:15 (NIV): “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...”
- 2 Corinthians 10:5 (NIV): “We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”
- Colossians 3:16 (NLT): “Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts.”
- Isaiah 9:6 (NIV): “...And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of

Peace.”

- Colossians 2:2-23 (NIV): “My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”
- Hosea 14:9 (NIV): “Who is wise? Let them realize these things. Who is discerning? Let them understand. The ways of the Lord are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them.”

## SCENES TO REVIEW

*He Does Struggle* [00:14:49 – 00:17:21]

*Some Good in Staying* [00:24:38 – 00:29:22]

*Powers* [01:01:56 – 01:05:58]

*There Is Another Way* [01:13:38 – 01:16:57]

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What does it mean to have discernment? If someone has strong discernment, it means they have the ability to judge well—to observe a situation and perceive what’s true or wise. For Christians, discernment also includes spiritual guidance and wisdom. Christians often pray for discernment when faced with difficult decisions. But even skeptics use discernment, especially if they’re trying to seek the truth.

In PAUL, APOSTLE OF CHRIST, Priscilla and Aquila as leaders of the Roman church are plagued by their worries for the community. Is it best to evacuate the church, even if it means abandoning their homes, forsaking Rome? Or is it best to stay and remain bravely in the face of persecution? We see this marriage wrestle with discernment; but we also see Mauritius dealing with the tumult of skepticism and doubt. Throughout the film, he struggles to discern what is true about Paul the Apostle and this Christ he follows.

## SCENE TO REVIEW

*He Does Struggle* [00:14:49 – 00:17:21]

At the request of Priscilla and Aquila, Luke has sought Paul’s counsel on whether or not the Christians should flee Rome. After returning from the Mamertine Prison, he shares Paul’s response.

- When Aquila asks for instructions, Luke says that Paul is “urging you to discern for yourselves where Christ is calling you.” Why does Paul give this answer? What does it say about the nature of discernment and discipleship?
- Priscilla and Aquila disagree on how to lead the Christian community in Rome. How do we see them seeking wisdom and discernment in this scene? What steps do they take to search for counsel?
- Though Paul doesn’t provide specific instructions, he does “offer an example of his own life.” Reflecting on the film and what we learn of Paul in the Scriptures, what qualities of Christian living do you see in Paul’s life? How





might you use his example to discern how live like Christ?

- Walk through the varied emotions in this scene as a peaceful morning is interrupted by trauma. How does Octavia's entrance, covered in the blood of her baby, escalate the tension and need for wisdom? What's at stake for the Christians with this pending decision?
- Whether you're a Christian or not, have you ever had an experience of needing to seek wise counsel and advice for a difficult, life-altering decision? Describe that experience. How did you come to a decision? What was the outcome?
- Read Proverbs 12:15; Proverbs 19:20-21; 2 Timothy 3:16; Colossians 1:9 (see Scriptures Referenced).
- Consider the two passages from Proverbs. What does Scripture say is the difference between foolishness and wisdom? How does this subvert the worldly understanding of wisdom?
- Describe the message of Colossians 1:9. Where does it say that "knowledge of his will" comes from? Consider this in light of 2 Timothy 3:16. How can we seek wisdom?

The Christians in Rome have been hoping and praying for instructions from Paul. But when Luke returns from the prison, he shares that Paul can only offer an example of his own life. The Christians are left to discern the next step for themselves. Hosea 14:9 says, "Who is wise? Let them realize these things. Who is discerning? Let them understand. The ways of the Lord are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them" (NIV). As the Christians pursue righteousness and wisdom, they seek counsel from leaders, advice from each other, and wisdom in prayer and through the Word of God.

## SCENE TO REVIEW

*Some Good in Staying* [00:24:38 – 00:29:22]

- What reasons does Priscilla give for wanting to stay in Rome? What reasons does Aquila give for wanting to leave? Name as many as you can.
- Priscilla says, "We are the only light left in this city." What does she mean by this? What does it look like for you to be a light in your city?
- How would you describe the relationship between Priscilla and Aquila? What aspects of this scene reveals the nature of their marriage and ministry? Explain how we see mutual respect in their relationship, even as they disagree.
- Read Psalm 119:105; Philippians 4:6-7; James 1:5 (see Scriptures Referenced).
- Psalm 119 says, "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path." What does this look like in your life?
- What do you think you would have done in Priscilla and Aquila's situation? Would you have stayed in Rome or fled? Why?

Priscilla and Aquila, along with the entire community of Christians, are faced with an impossible decision. Do they stay in Rome or escape to Ephesus? As one of the Christians remarks, "We were Romans before we were Christian. This

is our home." Though the community doesn't immediately agree on the proper response, they all seek discernment and wisdom. They request advice from Paul. They seek wisdom in prayer. And they openly discuss their worries and hopes and fears together with the community, ultimately recognizing that true wisdom comes from Christ alone. But in this difficult situation, there was no clear answer, no universal direction from God. As Priscilla says, "This is something each man and woman must take upon their own thoughts and prayers."

## SCENE TO REVIEW

*Powers* [01:01:56 – 01:05:58]

*There Is Another Way* [01:13:38 – 01:16:57]

- What is your initial reaction to the scene Powers? What do you think about Paul's defense of the Gospel and by what authority he preaches?
- How does Mauritius define "power"? Compare and contrast how Mauritius and Paul discuss power.
- How do we see the theme of discernment in these scenes? How does Mauritius' line of questioning illustrate the difference between pagan Roman values and Christian values? What is it about Paul's testimony that Mauritius cannot understand?
- What is at stake for Mauritius if he accepts what Paul and Luke say to be true? How does that reality motivate him in this scene?
- In *There Is Another Way*, Mauritius is trying to discern what's true when he says, "You keep saying truth, truth, but it is only a truth according to you. If it were the only truth, everyone would believe it." If you were standing in this scene with Mauritius, how would you respond to this?
- What tactics do Paul and Luke employ when defending the Gospel? How does their approach and answers inspire you to defend your faith?





- Read Romans 12:2; Philippians 1:9-10; 1 Peter 3:15; 2 Corinthians 10:5; Colossians 3:16 (see Scriptures Referenced).
- What does it mean to be “transformed by the renewing of your mind”? How does this relate to discernment? How does Philippians 1:9-10 relate discernment to love?
- What do 1 Peter 3:15, 2 Corinthians 10:5, and Colossians 3:16 say about sharing the faith with wisdom?

One of the names for Christ is “Wonderful Counselor” (Isaiah 9:6). In ancient times, this name evoked the wise kings like Solomon, who guided his people with discernment. Our Lord is a wise counselor. He listens when we pray for guidance. He leads us as we seek truth. As Paul writes in Colossians 2:2-3, “My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (NIV). Conclude this theme discussion by reflecting on what it means that Christ is our Wonderful Counselor. What have you learned about discernment from PAUL, APOSTLE OF CHRIST and the example of the early Christians? What are some ways that you can seek wisdom or counsel when faced with challenging decisions?

## FINAL THOUGHTS

How does this film bring to life the daily dangers of living as a Christian in Nero’s Rome?

Reflect on the character of Mauritius. How do you think he grows and develops throughout the story? Do you think he ever comes to accept belief in Christ?

Which character do you identify with the most and why?

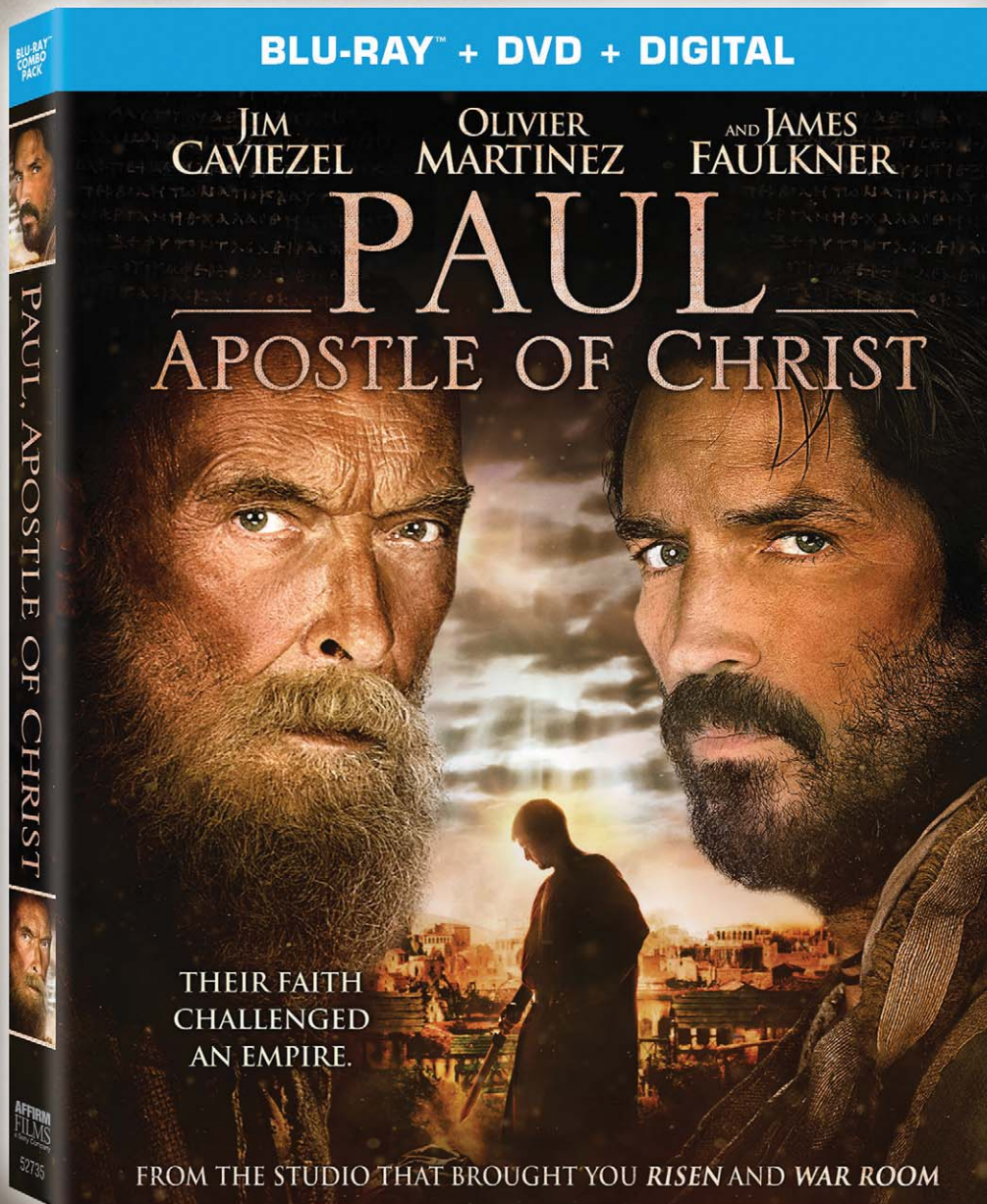
Which character do you identify with the least and why?

Why do you think the Christian faith continued to spread despite such raging persecution?

What additional themes do you notice in the film?







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