These notes focus on Acts 21–22 and 26, the parts of the assignment having to do with Paul’s call and testimony.

**Verses 10–14:** Who is Agabus? What does it mean to say that he is “a certain prophet”? Another translation would be “some prophet,” without the negative connotations that phrase often has in English. Is this a prophecy from God? If so, what is the status of the person who delivers it?

Why would his friends’ weeping break Paul’s heart?

Why does Paul’s testimony of his readiness to die calm his friends’ weeping and pleading?

**Verses 17–26:** Is “thousands of Jews” in verse 20 an exaggeration?

The Pharisees were “zealous of the law” (verse 20). They believed that the Levitical law—the purity rules for priests offering sacrifice in the temple—should be followed by not only the priests but everyone. And they believed that they were the best interpreters of that law. How do they understand what it means to be a convert to Christianity, and what do they think Paul is doing?

Is Paul guilty of what the rumors say he is doing? Paul could take one of at least three possible positions: he could agree with the Pharisees both about the need for everyone
to live the Levitical laws of purity and about their interpretations of those laws, he could reject the need to follow the law of Moses, or he could agree that converts should follow the law of Moses but disagree with its Pharisaic interpretation and the need for everyone to live the Levitical laws. What position do you think he held? Why do you think that? See Romans 3:13 for Paul’s attitude toward the law of Moses.

Do the elders ask Paul to make a public, hypocritical show (verses 22–26)? If not, why not? Why does it matter what the “many thousands of Jews” (verse 20) think of Paul and his mission?

For the requirements of the Nazirite vow, see Numbers 6:1–21. How heavy a requirement has been laid on Paul? Why would the elders have asked Paul to take such a vow with the four brothers who were taking it? What does his attitude seem to be?

**Verses 27–40:** The Nazirite vow was usually for thirty days. Has Luke made a mistake in verse 27?

Are the people who are raising their concerns the same people whom the elders in Jerusalem were concerned about?

What are their charges against Paul (verses 28–29)? What do you think the mob would have given as its reason for killing Paul?

The translation *castle* (verse 37) is odd. The Greek term simple means “military camp,” “military headquarters,” or “barracks.”
What does verse 38 suggest about why the Roman guards have taken Paul prisoner?

Why is it important to the story that Paul speaks Hebrew (verse 40; see also Acts 22:2)?

**Acts 22**

Compare this account of Paul’s conversion (verses 3–15) with the account in Acts 9:1–22. How do they differ? For example, in Acts 22:9 Paul says that his companions saw the light but didn’t hear the voice that spoke to him, though Acts 9:7 says that they heard the voice. Both of these were written by the same person, Luke, so what do you make of that discrepancy? What about other differences?

**Verse 3:** The Greek word translated exactness could also be translated sharpness. It means “strict.” Paul emphasizes his strict interpretation of the law and says nothing about now rejecting that interpretation. But compare Philippians 3:5–11, where he gives another account of his life and, speaking of his zealouosity for the law, says: “But whatever things were profitable to me, these things I have regarded as forfeit to me because of Christ” (Philippians 3:7). How do you explain this difference?

**Verse 4:** Why does Paul refer to Christianity as a way, a path or road? Why doesn’t he call it a teaching, a belief, or a faith instead?

**Verse 12:** In this context why is it important that Paul was sent to a man who was devout with regard to the Mosaic
law and well regarded by the other Jews of Damascus? Why might it have been important to Paul himself?

**Verse 17:** Why is it significant that upon Paul’s return to Jerusalem, probably three years after his conversion, he is praying in the courts of the temple?

The Lord seems not to have appeared to Paul in his first vision. He reports a blinding light, but not a vision of the Savior. Why does the Lord wait until now to appear to him?

**Verse 22:** What has Paul said that makes his audience so angry?

**Verse 24:** What does the Roman commander want to learn that he thinks he may find out if he flogs Paul?

**Verse 30:** Why does the commander call the Jewish council to explain their complaint against Paul?

**Acts 26**

Paul’s legal process eventually brings him before Agrippa, king of Judea, grandson of Herod the Great, and himself a Jew. What do we learn in this chapter that we don’t know from chapters 9 and 22?

**Verse 3:** How is Agrippa “expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews”?

**Verses 6–8:** According to Paul, he is being accused of hoping for what was promised to Israel. Can you explain specifically what Paul is saying? What event was Israel promised that Paul has hope in?
Verse 11: In contemporary English foreign is a better translation than strange.

Verse 14: A prick is a goad, a sharp-pointed stick used for herding cattle. When has Paul kicked against the goads? Has he been resisting influences that would have had him follow the way of the gospel? Was he obeying the law when that happened or fighting against it?

Perhaps, instead, the goad influencing Paul was the blinding light and Christ’s voice speaking to him. If so, what sense to you make of the proverb that the Lord quotes? What point is he making with it?

What are the goads in our lives, and when do we kick against them?

Verses 15–18: Paul gives a great deal more detail of what he heard in his vision than he has given before. Why do you think he does that before Agrippa?

In verse 16 the Lord says that Paul is to be “a minister and a witness,” or in another translation “a servant and witness.” The Greek word translated minister means “one who helps or assists another.” The helper is usually subordinate to the person that he or she helps. The word is used, for example, of priests’ helpers. With what does Paul assist the Lord? Is it in the Lord’s function as the Great High Priest? Is it by preaching the gospel? Something else?

Verse 17: The Lord promises to deliver Paul from the people he is sent to. But we know, and Luke knew as he was writing his history, that Paul would be taken prisoner in
Jerusalem and sent to Rome where he would eventually be executed. What, then, is the Lord promising?

Verse 19: How is Paul’s life and training as a Pharisee reflected in his obedience to this vision?

Verse 20: Is it significant that Paul first taught “throughout all the coasts of Judea” and only afterward taught the Gentiles?

Verses 22–23: Where did Moses say that Christ should come, suffer, and be the first to be resurrected? Paul speaks as if these are things that any dispassionate observer would recognize: Jesus of Nazareth has been resurrected in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. If Agrippa knows Judaism well, as he presumably does, how can Paul make this claim?

Verse 27: In the context of Luke’s account, what is the force of Paul’s question?

Verse 28: What are we to make of Agrippa’s answer? Some translators take Agrippa to be asking a question rather than making a statement: “Do you think you will make me a Christian in a short time?” How do you imagine the tone of Agrippa’s response? Is he being ironic or serious?

Verse 32: What is the irony of Paul’s situation? What would probably have happened had he not taken advantage of his right to appeal to Rome?