



Acts Chapter 14

Theme of Acts: The Holy Spirit and the Birth of the Church

Personal Reflection

Complete this section in one sitting or little by little during the week. Begin with prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit into your time. Spending time in the Bible, studying the original intent, meaning and cultural context helps you to understand how it applies to you now.

Further Study

Complete on your own or with your small group.

Personal Reflection

Song for the week: Runnin' - Elevation Worship

Song links: <https://youtu.be/0-OsZLjz7oU?si=B2LwkCJKW2WKvaEn>

Read Acts 14 Click on any Bible verse in the study to read it or use your own Bible.

Iconium was in Asia Minor and was located in what is today Turkey. It was about 80 miles west of Antioch where they had been. Just as in Antioch, Paul and Barnabas went to the Jewish synagogue where both Jews and Gentiles who believed in God were. As the proselytes (practicing Jews who had been circumcised) and God-fearers (non practicing Jews who had not been circumcised) both would have known the Old Testament, just as the Jews did. All groups should have recognized Jesus as the Messiah, the one who fulfilled the prophecies.

Many believed but some who did not “poisoned the minds” of those listening. *Optional, read Acts 14:2*

What are some arguments you have heard from those who refuse to believe? What is “poisoning their minds”?

This did not dissuade Paul and Barnabas from their purpose of spreading the gospel. In John, “After the people saw the signs Jesus performed, they began to say, “Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.” The signs He performed confirmed His being the Messiah. Now it was the Holy Spirit at work in Paul and Barnabas performing the miracles to confirm Jesus as the Messiah. *Optional, read John 6:14*

What work of the Holy Spirit have you seen in your life - or the life of others - that confirms who God is?

There “is evidence that the population worshiped the Asia Minor mother goddess Cybele, Herakles (Hercules), Zeus Megistos ... as well as Apollo (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary).” Perhaps it was these Gentiles who worshiped the gods who sided with the Jews who were unbelieving, while others chose to believe what the apostles taught about Jesus.

Today these gods, as well as others, remain present in movies, shows and books. Some people continue to worship them. How would you compare these gods to the Triune God?

The Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe were nearby; Galatia was just to the north. In Lystra there was a man who had been lame since birth.

Isaiah prophesied that when God comes, the lame will leap like deer. The Jewish people knew this which is why when Jesus healed a lame man, the people praised God. In Jerusalem Peter later healed a lame man in the name of Jesus. Now in Rome Paul has done the same. The power of the Holy Spirit in Peter and Paul pointed to Jesus as God. *Optional, read Isaiah 35:4-6, Mark 2:1-12, Acts 3:1-10, Acts 14:8-10*

Just as in Jerusalem, the response to the man being healed in Lystra reflected their beliefs. The people thought the gods had come down in human form. There was a legend in Phrygia, just to the west of Lystra, that mirrored this. The legend was that Zeus and Hermes visited Phrygia disguised as ordinary people. They were turned away from 1,000 homes but were finally welcomed by a humble elderly couple. The gods turned that home into a temple and destroyed the homes of all who had rejected them.

“Religious culture was pluralistic, and spiritual choices were available so clear presentation of the gospel was crucial (The life with God Bible).”

How is our culture today the same as the culture of Lystra?

What is the difference between today’s spiritual choices and the gospel?

As he had done before, Paul spoke to his audience with language they would understand. His “rhetoric emphasized keeping one speech relevant to one’s audience (Cultural Background Study Bible).”

What are some examples of how you can keep your speech relevant to those you are sharing the gospel with?

Paul tore his clothes to express anguish. His desire was to point to Jesus and instead he was assigned the glory.

When have you felt frustrated knowing a person or people did not understand when you presented them with the truth of Jesus? Or that people looked to you as though it was you who were to be admired above Jesus in you? How were you able to redirect people to Jesus?

Jews came from other cities, determined to stop Paul and Barnabas. The people in the area shifted “loyalty quickly once Paul and Barnabas preached against the peoples’ gods ... The stoning exceeded their (Jewish) legal authority and would constitute mob action, perhaps designed by some of the Jewish critics because it was designated as a penalty for blasphemy (Cultural Background Study Bible).”

Luke is not given to exaggeration when he writes. He does not speculate, he makes a careful, detailed account. What he is not sure of, he does not include. He does not say Paul rose from the dead. He said Paul was stoned, the people thought he was dead, and after the disciples gathered around him, he simply got up and went back to the city, the next day leaving for Derby. When God has a mission for us, He will make sure we can complete it. *Optional, read Acts 14:19-20*

Luke's writing of only what he knows should give us the confidence to trust him in the other places when he tells us the amazing things that happened. It is remarkable that Paul was thought to be dead and the next day began the walk 62 miles on an unpaved road to Derbe.

Derbe was in the southern part of the Roman province of Galatia. It is the only place Paul and Barnabas visited on their first journey where they preached with peace.

In just two verses Paul and Barnabas were headed back to the cities where they had previously shared the gospel and had people wanting to stone them. Paul knew that "all who are converted need to be confirmed in the faith; all who are planted need to be rooted. A ministers' work is to establish saints as well as to awaken sinners (Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary)." He had a deep commitment to those who were converted to faith in Jesus; he showed courage in returning to the places people sought to stone him.

The Greek word used for "confirmed" is epistērizontes. It means to be strengthened. Paul and Barnabas were "strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith (Acts 14:22).

Read 1 Corinthians 3:6-8. Paul wrote about the seed, the watering and the growing. The strengthening comes in the watering. Both lead to God's work in each of us. Who in your life is confirming / strengthening your faith? In whose life are you the one confirming?

Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in each church. Elders were not a new idea. In the Old Testament elders were appointed to help with local decision making. God told Moses to tell the elders first about leaving Egypt. Later, Moses called the elders together to explain the Passover commands as God had given them to him. God asked Moses to include 70 elders in worshipping Him. In the wilderness God asked Moses to bring 70 elders to stand with him at the tent of meeting - the place where God met His people, so that He could put some of the Holy Spirit on them, lightening Moses's leadership load. *Optional read Exodus 3:15-20, Exodus 12:21-25, Exodus 24:1-2,*

Paul appointed elders in the churches he visited and later he had Titus appoint elders in Crete. *Optional, read Titus 1:5*

What are some reasons elders are appointed?

Putting it into practice:

Paul knew the Holy Spirit was at work in Him. His desire was to point the way to Jesus, not to himself.

God's work in you is different from God's answers to your prayers. Sometimes God is quiet when we speak with Him. Sometimes it is because He is saying "wait, wait for it, the answer is coming..." But He is always at work.

As a believer, the Holy Spirit is at work in you. What do you notice that He is currently doing in you?

How do you recognize when you are taking credit for what God is doing in and through you?

Take some time to invite the Holy Spirit to be active in your life and to thank God for what He is doing in you and through you. Ask Him to help you shine like Jesus to point others to Him.

Further Study

“Paul supposed the purpose of ministry was to equip the saints. We are commanded not only to make disciples but also to teach them to be everything that Jesus commanded. This is today the great omission from the great commission in many churches (The Life with God Bible).”

What are you doing to equip yourself in the knowledge of who God is and what the Bible says?

Who has God put in your life who you are teaching the knowledge of Jesus? How are you witnessing to them?

Read Ephesians 4:11-15. We are equipped by God and are to have unity of knowledge of Jesus.

Based on what you have been learning, what are some things that may have caused confusion for the early believers so that they were not in unity of faith and the knowledge of Jesus? What existing beliefs may have distracted them from the truth of Jesus?

Today believers still need to be rooted in their faith. How has your faith or knowledge increased as you study the Acts of the Apostles / the Acts of the Holy Spirit?

A disciple is a student or learner as well as a follower - “someone who adheres completely to the teachings of another, making them his rule of life and conduct. (gotquestions.com).”

The Pharisees were disciples of Moses, adhering to his writings. Jesus’s followers were called disciples before they were part of the Way or called Christians. They were making the teachings of Jesus the rule of their life. *Optional, read John 9:28, John 14:6, Acts 9:1-2*

Jesus said if you love Him, you will keep His commands and that we should teach others. *Optional, read Matthew 28:18-20, John 14:15, 1 John 5:2-3, John 14:21*

What does Jesus command? (Read Matthew 22:37-40)

Keeping Jesus’ commands requires God’s help. Read John 14:16-17. How does God help us keep His commands?

Derbe was in the southern part of Galatia which was split into a northern and southern region. Paul’s letter to the Galatians was written “to address the concern of whether or not they were also subject to the Mosaic law, like the Jews were. This book provides a bridge from the Old Testament to the New, and shows that while there are divisions in this life, all are one in Christ (biblestudytools.com).” Galatians was most likely written between 47-49 AD between his first and second missionary journeys and was one of the first New Testament books to be written.

“Galatians addresses the crucial question of how we can have a right standing before God (bibles.net).”
Read Galatians 2:16. How are we justified (made right) with God?

Follow Up - Is there anything from this week’s personal reflection time which you would like to discuss more with your small group?