

The Resistance

Life Group Leaders should read through this material and choose a few questions to talk over in your group. Your group will not have time to cover all the material. The guide is for personal study and for choosing a few questions that you and your life group would like to discuss.

Read Aloud Acts 14:1-7

Before we break down this section of Scripture, describe what is happening in your own WORDS. (Being able to summarize Scripture is a great way to see if we are comprehending what we have just read.)

Acts 14:1-2

Paul and Barnabas had experienced challenges and resistance in the last city, although, that did not stop them from boldly proclaiming the Gospel in this city.

Once again, the Apostles saw the people respond effectively to the message of Christ, but there were those who “poisoned” the people's minds against Paul and Barnabas.

This type of barrier did not go away but continued to be an obstacle for the early Church. There were always men trying to stir up division and especially turn people away from the Apostles' leadership and message.

2 Timothy 2:16-17 shows us how dangerous dissension and heresies can be, and how quickly it can spread.



Question: How can you spot those who seek to poison people's minds instead of build them up? It is easy to be caught up in controversies and gossip, so how can we stand on guard so that our minds are not poisoned?

Acts 14:3-7

The resistance did not cause the Apostles to run. In fact, it seems to be one of the reasons they stayed. They saw the need to combat the lies of the unbelieving Jews with the truth of the Gospel. They did not just do this with their words, but they put their money where their mouth was and showed courage.

In 1 Corinthians 16:13-14, Paul calls the men of the church to be strong, to act like men, and to lead in love. Paul could call them to this action because he himself had demonstrated it. The early Church did not run from the forces of wickedness but oftentimes ran to the darkest places to bring them the hope of the Gospel.

Eventually the threats became severe to the point of death. As a result, Paul and Barnabas continued on their journey of preaching the Gospel. Even though they left Iconium, they did not forsake the mission; they continued preaching boldly the name of Jesus!



Question: When we stand firm on the Gospel, some will violently and harshly criticize us. However, when we are dedicated to the mission of Christ, we can stand firm. Would you say that you are currently intentionally living on mission? If we cannot live on mission when it is easy, we will not live on mission in the face of adversity.



Read Aloud Acts 14:8-20

Describe what is happening in your own words.

Acts 14:8-10

God often used a demonstration of His power to help gain momentum in the cities the Apostles went to. Sometimes this was through miracles, sometimes this was through the power of preaching, and other times it was through the power of salvation and changed lives. The engine behind these moves of God was first and foremost God's power. Secondly, it required faith.

The Scripture says Paul saw that the crippled man had faith to be healed. In Matthew 9:22, Luke 17:9, Matthew 8:13, along with other verses, Jesus makes it clear that the individual's healing was directly tied to their faith. We know that it is not God's will to "fix all problems and heal all sickness" on this side of heaven. He is coming back to establish paradise; that is not what this life is for. However, God does bring restoration through the power of His Gospel and grace working through faith in this life.



Question: Do you find yourself believing God can and wants to do the miraculous in your life? Seeing the worst of sinners saved, seeing a loved one healed, seeing a marriage restored, etc? Or do you find yourself believing that God only works through practical means? God does not owe us miracles, but He is calling us to trust that He is able to restore all things.

Acts 14:11-20

1

As the crowds saw the wonders done by the Apostles, they quickly began to worship them. This may sound funny to us, but it is not much different from our day. Many famous men of God or "rock star" preachers are put on a pedestal and worshiped by many Christians. We can easily be drawn to power, charisma, and gifting.

In this case, the pagan people even believed that the Apostles were gods. This is the last thing that the Apostles wanted! It is interesting to note that although Paul and Barnabas wanted Christ to be glorified for their work, they could not control the people's responses. They tried to preach the Gospel, but the people would not listen.

2

It is important to note that "what we are won with, is what we are won to." The people were won with "miraculous power," and that is what they became interested in, not in Christ Himself. As a result, when the unbelieving Jews came to stir up the crowd, they were easily deceived. Their faith was not in Jesus, they were simply in it for the experience and the power.

When we build a ministry around a person, spiritual gifts, or simply fun events, it is quickly torn down. The people who quickly came for the excitement will just as quickly leave in times of trouble and seek to find the new exciting thing.



Question: Do you find yourself attracted to ministries based upon a sense of excitement or upon the Gospel and mission of Christ? It is easy to begin idolizing what leaders can do rather than committing to the mission of God with the people of God.

3

After trying to turn the people's hearts back to God, Paul was ultimately stoned and left for dead. By God's grace, Paul's life was spared. I am sure not without pain, suffering, and fear. However, going through these trials is what strengthened Saul and Barnabas for the mission ahead. James 1:2-4

Read Aloud Acts 14:21-28

Describe what is happening in your own words.

Acts 14:21-23

1 Wow! After all that Paul and Barnabas experienced they did not shrink back, but pushed on. They continued to:

- A** Preach the Gospel: Paul was not on mission to create better people, social programs, or ministry programs. Rather Paul was on a mission to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the only power to save man's soul. Romans 1:16
- B** Make Disciples: The Apostles were not just seeking to make converts, but they were on a mission to develop disciples, or followers, students, examples, and teachers of Jesus Christ. A disciple is someone who is actively following Jesus, learning from Him, obeying Him, and is able to help others do the same.

Not only did Paul and Barnabas continue the mission, but they even went back to the cities that had persecuted them.

2 Why did they go back to these cities? To provide encouragement to the disciples. Their encouragement was not just in word, but it was in action.

Jesus warned us that being a disciple would cost us everything. In Luke 9:23-24, Jesus lays out the cost of being His disciple. Time and time again Jesus ran into individuals who were **interested** in following Him but would not **invest** their lives into following Him. Paul was reminding the disciples that following Christ was not going to be easy and that they were guaranteed trials. Paul had the authority to preach this as he himself was leading by example.

3 The Apostles' goal was not just to preach the Gospel and make disciples, but to establish local churches. The gatherings of believers needed leadership; they needed shepherds.

The early local churches were not led by one pastor, but rather they were led and fed by teams of elders. This is the pattern that we will see throughout Acts. Paul preached the Gospel, made disciples, and then established elders to form a local church.

4 The appointment of elders was not just a formality for a religious organization, but rather was a weighty spiritual matter for a living organism, the Body of Christ. The decision for appointing elders was ultimately made by God through:

- A** Prayer: The Apostles sought the Lord's wisdom on who would be a good shepherd/leader of the flock. These men had to possess both the spiritual gifts necessary and the character necessary to lead a church. Today we find a list of qualifications and directives in: 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-16
- B** Fasting: Not only did the Apostles seek God in prayer and wisdom, but they also humbled themselves in fasting. They were acknowledging their weakness and the need for God's intervention. This was a decision that had to be made from the Holy Spirit. Acts 20:28
- C** Commitment to the Lord: Finally, the Apostles recognized that these leaders were not being upheld by themselves, but ultimately by the Lord. The church was not their church, but was Christ's church. Hebrews 13:17-18



Question: What sticks out to you about the process the Apostles used to establish churches?

Acts 14:24-28

Paul and Barnabas finished the work they had started. They continued to preach the Word and returned to their “sending church” to give a report of the mission. This is one of the beauties of sending missionaries. The missionary is able to accomplish their calling and purpose in the Lord, and the church is able to rejoice as partners in the work that was accomplished.

Weekly Challenge

It is easy to give up when things get hard. We saw the Apostles remain steadfast under intense opposition in Acts 14. We see that they had a great faith and reliance on the Lord and also a clear mission that could help them stay the course. Can you remember a time when conflict came and you shrank back from being bold and steadfast in the Gospel? Perhaps fatigue and discouragement took over, and you found yourself not finishing the mission. Can you also remember a time when you were faced with adversity and you relied on the Lord and overcame? When you continued to press on towards the mission of the Gospel? Take some time this week and reflect on these two scenarios. What are some of the main differences you see in the time that you persevered compared to the time when you did not finish well?

Memory Verse

Acts 14:21-23 ESV

²¹ When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. ²³ And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.