

Spiritual Growth Resources: From Discipleship to Apostleship

# Acts of the Church

Early Church Faith for Today



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## **The Empowered Church**

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## Brief overview of Acts 11:19-16:34

A brief introduction to Acts 11:19-16:34

This section covers a large portion of the book. This overview won't be so brief.

We go back to the persecuted saints who have fled Jerusalem. Luke covers the story of the ones who have fled to **the coastal lands - Phoenicia, Antioch**, and the island of **Cyprus**. Persecution served to spread the gospel to different lands. It wouldn't be any different in this instance. The fleeing ones don't just find a new place to live and resume life as usual. Instead, they look for fellow countrymen with whom to share the gospel.

Being a large cosmopolitan city of about 300,000 people, **Antioch** had an estimated 22,000-65,000 Jews. So who would share the message with the "Hellenists" (Greeks, Gentiles, Non-Jews)? Some disciples from **Cyprus and Cyrene** focused their efforts on the gentiles. As a result of their work, many "turned to the Lord."

Word got back to Jerusalem of the work there, so they sent **Barnabas** to Antioch. Barnabas, known as the encourager native of Cyprus, too, encouraged the believers to



remain faithful. Seeing the great work and potential for Antioch, Barnabas recruited Saul to be his partner in ministry. Their work in Antioch lasted for **one year**. It was in Antioch where for the first time, the disciples were called **Christians**. Quickly this newly founded church is involved in the work of relief aiding the disciples back in Judea.

Acts 12 takes us back to Peter. This Herod is Herod the Great's grandson. He was liked by the Jews and did things to please them. Among the things that pleased the Jews, killing the apostle James was one of them. So Herod, wanting to capitalize on the moment decided to arrest Peter too. Peter's great breakout of prison is the centerpiece of this story. The church is praying for Peter's release when he shows up at the house.

We are introduced to another partner in ministry - John Mark. He's the author of the Gospel of Mark. Peter was most likely his main source for the writing of the book.

In Acts 13:9, Saul is discreetly called Paul and remains that way. Barnabas and Saul are officially sent as a team to preach the gospel. Their journeys take them to many places with many interesting experiences.

**The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15)** deliberates about some serious issues that the church has to deal with. The church has a formal meeting to decide if Christians need to follow Jewish customs and beliefs in order to be fully accepted into full fellowship.

Paul and Barnabas go in different directions and Silas becomes Paul's new partner.

On one of those stops, Paul meets a young man named Timothy who became a young pastor later on.

There's much to go over this week, so let's dive right in.

**K N O W | G R O W | G O**



# Ministry Partners

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## K N O W

**Read Acts 11:19-16:40**

**1. How did the preaching of the gospel on the day of Pentecost help the gospel spreading in Antioch?**

- A. People from Crete were in Jerusalem when they heard the apostles preach in their language.
- B. The Jews that lived outside of Israel were used to a non-Jewish culture and were comfortable speaking with non-Jews.
- C. It empowered people to learn and share the message back home without having an apostle oversee whether they were preaching correctly or not.
- D. The men from Cyprus and Crete were the first ones to preach to non-Jews in Antioch.
- E. Other.

**2. Why would the scattered Jews only preach to the Jews in Antioch? Acts 11:19**

- A. They felt a sense of obligation to let their countrymen.
- B. They spoke the same language.
- C. They probably felt that it was more important to share with Jews.
- D. They would be more accessible: same culture, religious background.
- E. They would leave that to someone else to do.
- F. Other.

**3. Why would Barnabas recruit Saul to join him in Antioch? Acts 11:25-26**

- A. He knew that Saul was set aside for the preaching of the gospel.
- B. Barnabas knew Saul was the right fit.
- C. Saul would be able to reach many people that Barnabas would have a more challenging time reaching.
- D. As much as Barnabas was encourager, he needed a partner for his own encouragement.

E. Other.

**4. How did Herod's action against Christians affect the church? Acts 12:1-24.**

- A. James, the first apostle to be martyred.
- B. Peter was arrested.
- C. The church saw their prayers for Peter's release answered right away.
- D. It didn't stop the church from gathering and possibly face punishment.
- E. Other.

**5. How did the "setting aside," commissioning or ordination of Barnabas and Saul occur? Acts 13:1-3 compare with Acts 14:23.**

- A. They were in a worship setting.
- B. Many church leaders were present.
- C. They were fasting, which may indicate they were "waiting on the Lord" to lead them to a decision in light of the next missionary venture.
- D. The Holy Spirit leads the proceedings.
- E. Other.

**6. Where did Saul's missionary journey take him? Acts 13:4-6 Lookup these places in a Biblical map.**

- A. Seleucia
- B. Cyprus
- C. Salamis
- D. Island of Paphos
- E. Other.

**7. Why did Elymus, called Bar-Jesus, a Jewish false prophet, try to keep Sergius Paulus from hearing the gospel? Acts 13:6-12**

- A. He was a false prophet, and Sergius wanted to listen to the gospel, which contradicted what Elymus believed.
- B. The devil was influencing him.
- C. He intended to keep the proconsul from experiencing the life God wanted for him.
- D. Elymus would have to either convert to Christianity or lose his friendship with the proconsul, affecting his status in the community.
- E. Other.

**8. What does Paul's gospel presentation teach us? Acts 13:13-41**

- A. Knowing the Bible story gives credibility and context for the story of Jesus.
- B. He told them a story they were familiar with.
- C. He repeats the story of Jesus that he had heard and which God revealed to him.
- D. Quoted specific verses of Scripture.
- E. Be ready to share the gospel story when invited to do so because the invitation may not come again.
- F. Other.

**9. Why does the issue of "how someone is saved" stir up so much controversy? Acts 15:1-35.**

- A. People are sincerely concerned about people's salvation
- B. Once engrained for generations, a belief is hard to change people's thinking.
- C. Having the correct teaching is so enmeshed in one's identity that a different view challenges the foundation of one's faith.
- D. The church "establishment" is afraid of new people coming in with new ideas that would change their way of having church, change their way of preaching the gospel, and some can't accept that.
- E. It's a growth opportunity for those who need to see that God is not static and boxed into a mold made in the image of man.
- F. Other.

**10. How could two men who have worked together in ministry allow a disagreement to separate them? Acts 15:36-41.**

- A. Barnabas' cousin, Mark, was the point of contention.
- B. Some people draw the line when it comes to deciding between family and colleagues.
- C. Paul was upset that Mark had left them earlier in the journey and needed someone dependable.
- D. It was for the good of covering more territory and allowing newer disciples to be part of the traveling mission.
- E. Other.

**11. Why did Paul think it an excellent idea to circumcise Timothy, even though he doesn't believe that circumcision matters for salvation? Acts 16:1-5**

- A. The circumcision was not for salvation reasons but to avoid obstacles in preaching to the Jews.



- B. Paul believed so strongly in preaching the gospel that he would require this if Timothy wanted to join Paul.
- C. Timothy is committed to the cause.
- D. Paul and Timothy loved the people enough that they put personal rights and privileges aside.
- E. Other.

**12. What did Paul experience after the vision of the "man from Macedonia"? Acts 16:9**

- A. Paul ended up in Philippi, which is a major city of Macedonia.
- B. He was able to preach the gospel to a woman named Lydia and proceeded to baptize her.
- C. Paul encounters another person with the spirit of "divination."
- D. Paul and Silas were beaten up and put in prison.
- E. Other.

**13. What was Paul and Silas' attitude while in jail? Acts 16:25-40**

- A. They prayed and sang hymns throughout the night.
- B. They didn't complain about the situation.
- C. They had a genuine care for the jailor.
- D. They were ready to talk to the jailor and his family about salvation in Jesus.
- E. He took advantage of his Roman citizenship, but not for the reason of going free.
- F. Other.

# G R O W

**How far does your Christianity go** when you are away from home? Going to Antioch opened the door for new experiences. The Jews who ended up there fleeing persecution didn't arrive just to lay low. They brought their missionary zeal with them. They didn't leave their Christianity at the door of their former house.

Taking your faith and missionary zeal wherever you go is vital to your spiritual growth. The experiences the Lord wants to give us when we are away from home, on a trip, on vacation are unique experiences that we would miss out on if we had an attitude of taking a break from our faith when we are away from home. Being the same people we are in our local community as we would be in an unknown community demonstrates that we are not just Christians and followers of Jesus in the comfort of our territory, but even in the unknown places.

Maybe something that would help us feel more at home is **not to pretend we are someone else**. The Jews didn't hide the fact that they were followers of Jesus. I'm sure they were careful of how they shared or not shared. They were only speaking to Jews, probably out of mistrust of the non-Jewish population of Antioch. Instead of living in fear hiding in their homes, they sought opportunities to talk to fellow countrymen about Jesus. And they were successful in doing so.

**Saul** still had much spiritual growth (like we all do). Being a relatively new convert, Saul had spent a couple of years "in the desert" and hadn't begun a public ministry. Barnabas had to get him out of his hometown and take him to Antioch. This strategic move by Barnabas paid enormous dividends for Paul and the expansion of God's kingdom.

**We read and study the Bible for Spiritual Growth.** Peter, Stephan, and Paul recall the stories they grew up hearing and reading. These stories now make more sense to them that they read them in the context of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. The more they tell the story, the more their faith is confirmed. We don't always understand what we read, but we read the stories repeatedly, and one day these things will begin to make more sense. Keep reading, slowly review, write your thoughts, pray, ask questions. Repeat these stories to the children for their faith journey.

So far in Acts, we read about Peter getting up to preach in Acts 2. When Stephan preached the gospel to the religious leaders in Acts 8, they retold the story of Israel and how God had to lead them throughout the years. Saul continues this practice here when the time

circumstance called for it. Saul didn't cram the night before to be able to tell the story. Saul had grown up hearing these stories. Recalling them at the appointed time was possible because Saul had stored these in his mind and heart. Growing up hearing and reading the stories contribute to our spiritual growth. That's why reading these stories to your kids is vital. They will store these in their hearts and minds for years to come.

### **Apply**

1. How do stay connected and faithful even when you are far from home (vacation, trip, visiting a new place)?
2. Is there a someone who is still "at home," like Saul in Tarsus, that needs to be invited to get out and fulfill the purpose God gave them?
3. How has this Spiritual Growth Resource helped you in your spiritual growth?
4. Are you familiar enough with the "old stories" of the Bible to give a quick summary?



## G O

The evangelism strategy we read about in Acts *could* be a model we follow in personal evangelism, small group, and church-wide evangelistic strategy.

**On the personal and ministry team level**, wherever we go, we have a testimony to give. We seek out people who have not heard the gospel. In this section of Scripture, the “scattered” people fleeing persecution seemed to intentionally plan to bring up the topic and go directly to those with whom they want to share. You have a ministry partner with whom you talk about your experiences. You go together to visit and study. You think about who else could help you like Barnabas went and got Paul, and later on, they added John Mark. The church will eventually hear about it and give support.

**The group level.** Your family circle, your friendship circles, your small group, your Sabbath School class can be that next level of support. There you bring the names of those with whom you are working and pray for those individuals.

Peter’s “group” was praying for him while he was in jail. Imagine when you are in trouble when you find yourself in a difficult situation, you know that you have a group of friends praying for you and even set aside a time and place to do so. That’s encouraging! Who could resist such love demonstrated?

The group could plan for social activities such as lunches, hikes, sporting events, concerts, etc. These non-religious events can allow for people to get to know each other at a different level. Community service projects are also a great way to invite new people to participate.

***Split the small group into groups of 2-3 who will be ministry partners.***

**Ministry Partners** set aside time to pray together, meet to study/read the Bible, check-in with each other about what’s going on in their lives, in the families, work, school, etc. Ministry partners bounce ideas off each other about how to reach more people.

**On the ecclesiastical (church) level**, the church will give the individual or the groups the support and resources needed to continue sharing the gospel. The church can give you further training and resources. Like Barnabas and Saul were sent to Antioch after hearing about the “great number turning to the Lord,” the church can send elders and others to support, augment and complement the work to help it continue to grow.

The way I've explained these different levels of evangelism can come across as the only way to move forward. It indeed isn't a linear process. The steps don't always work as described. But, we cannot wait for the group or the church to do something in order for us to do something. Everyday disciples are aware of everyday situations and opportunities. We can't bring our group wherever we go, and certainly not the church body. The "rubber meets the road" at the individual level, quickly including your ministry partner.

### **Apply**

1. Pray that God will give you spiritual and evangelistic awareness (spiritual antennas) to engage everyday people in conversations that can lead to a spiritual conversation.
2. Do you have a "ministry partner" with whom to share your ministry with?
3. How can you invite a new person to your small group or church activity?
4. Would you like to be part of a class to learn how to share your faith? (Contact Pastor Pedro at [ptrinidad@carmsda.org](mailto:ptrinidad@carmsda.org))

## **Scripture Memorization for this Week**

**... 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. – Acts 14:22**



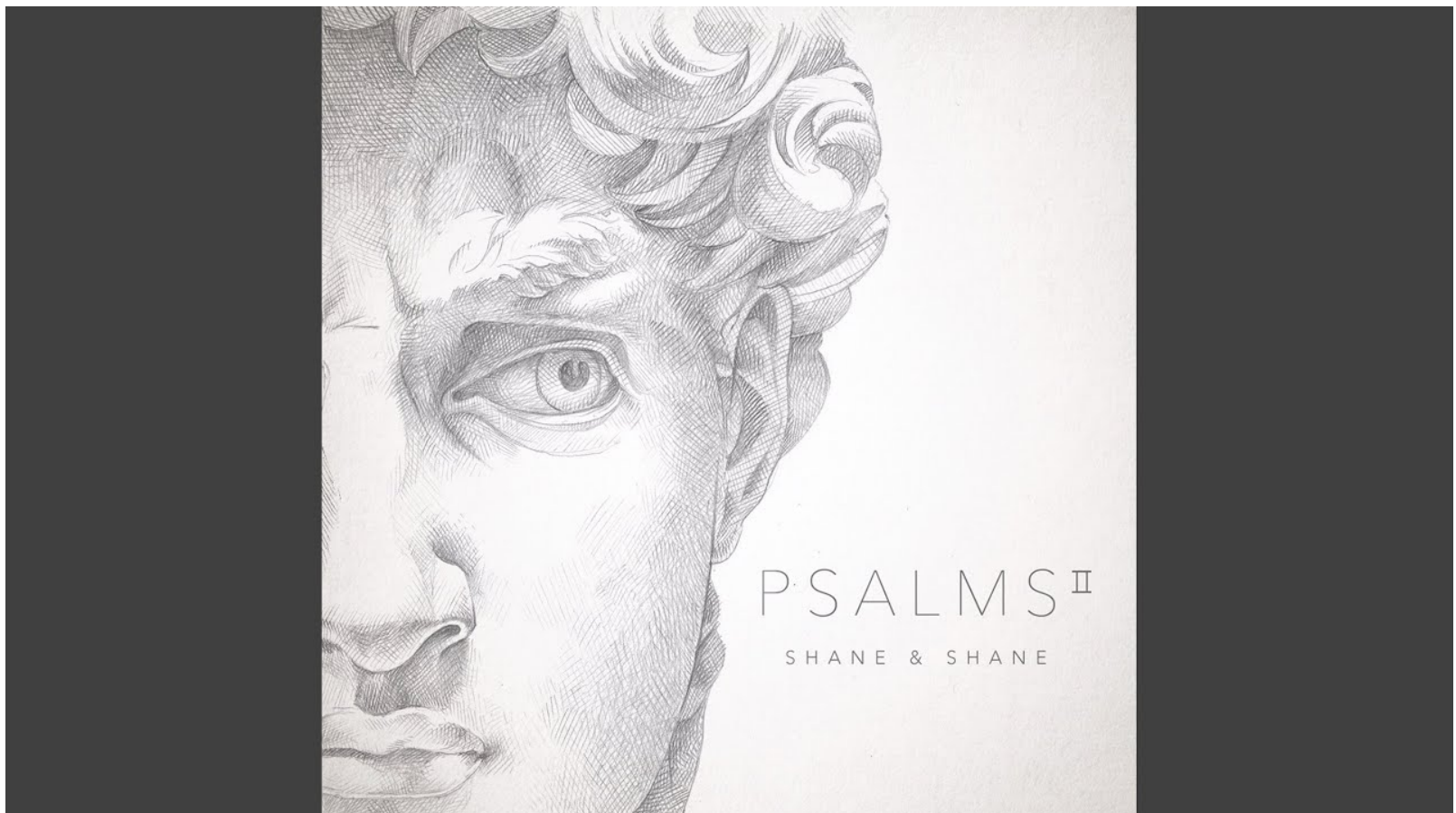


# Praise & Worship in Song



## CHRIST BE MAGNIFIED I AM THEY

Take Over by Shane and Shane





Abide by Shane and Shane

