**Sermon Based Community Group Leader Guide**

**Acts 14**

**\* Read Acts 14. Open in Prayer.**

**\* Sermon Overview**

In this passage, Pastor Aaron will focus on counting the cost to know and follow Jesus, to follow the Lord in obedience and an others-focused passion. He will walk through the persecution and proclamation of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 14.

**\* Prompt Questions**

1. Was there anything that stood out to you in the pastor’s sermon? Are there any clarifying questions that you may have regarding the sermon?

2. How have you been seeking to apply the sermon in your own life this week? Or, what is one way that you can apply the sermon to your life this week?

3. What was the take away from the sermon for you? If you had to sum up the main idea of the sermon in one sentence, what would it be? What main themes do you see in the text and did you hear in the sermon?

4. How have you seen God at work this week in your life and in the lives of those around you? How has God been working in you this week through His Word, through prayer, through the body of Christ, and through service/evangelism? What were the highlights and lowlights of your week? How can we be praying for you specifically?

**\* Observation/Interpretation Questions[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Note: Please do not feel compelled to get through every one of these questions. I have given them in hopes that they will drive us back to the text so that we may diligently search the Scriptures as the Bereans did (Acts 17:10-15). These questions will give us a grasp of what the text says/means so that we can apply the text to our lives. I would encourage you to spend the majority of your time on application questions so that we can become “doers of the Word and not hearers only” (James 1:22).

**1. What is the context of Acts 14?**

*Luke wrote Luke and Acts (written around A.D. 62) to Theophilus in order to give him an accurate account of the life, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus and to tell how Jesus continues to work through Spirit-empowered witnesses to carry the gospel to the end of the earth without hindrance and with boldness. Acts 1:8 serves as the theme verse of the book and as the outline for the book, for chapters 1-7 focus on Jerusalem, chapters 8-12 focus on Judea and Samaria, and chapters 13-28 focus on the end of the earth. The risen Lord sends His Spirit to empower followers of the Way to be witnesses who proclaim the kingdom of God to the end of the earth.*

*After Paul and Barnabas were driven out of Pisidian Antioch, they came to Iconium where they proclaimed the word of God, leading to a great many Jews and Greeks believing the gospel. However, once again, the unbelieving Jews stirred up trouble, yet Paul and Barnabas spoke boldly for the Lord in Iconium for a long time, with the Lord bearing witness to the word of his grace in signs and wonders in that city. Discovering that the leaders of the city planned to stone them, Paul and Barnabas fled to Lystra and Derbe where they continued to preach the gospel. The Lord testified to the power of the gospel by making a lame man walk, which led the people of Lystra to worship Paul and Barnabas, thinking they were Zeus and Hermes in the flesh. Paul responded to this by declaring the gospel to the people, beginning with the truth of God as Creator and Provider. However, before he could finish, the mob of people moved from worship to anger/murder through the inciting of unbelieving Jews from Pisidian Antioch and Iconium. Paul survived the stoning, and he and Barnabas continued in the gospel ministry, revisiting all the cities of the first missionary journey to strengthen, encourage, and prepare the churches. Upon returning to Antioch of Syria, Paul and Barnabas reported of all that God had done on their journey.*

*Derek Thomas writes, “They had made a round trip of approximately a thousand miles, through the native areas of both Barnabas (Cyprus) and Paul (the region near Tarsus). In doing so Barnabas and Paul were setting the agenda for the church in every age, including our own, to go into all the world with the good news of the gospel of free grace in Jesus Christ.”*



*Note: This map of Paul’s first missionary journey (Acts 13-14) comes from the ESV Study Bible.*

**2. What is going on in Acts 14:1-7?**

*In Iconium, Paul and Barnabas once again began by preaching in the Jewish synagogue, where they saw many Jews and Greeks believe the gospel. However, the unbelieving Jews sowed seeds of discord by poisoning the minds of believing Jews and Greeks against Paul and Barnabas. Due to the effort of the unbelieving Jews to harm the people of God, Paul and Barnabas stayed for a long time to speak boldly for the Lord, “who bore witness to the word of his grace” by granting signs and wonders. Yet, the city remained divided, and the unbelieving Jews and Greeks joined forces to stone Paul and Barnabas. Before these people could act on their plan, Paul and Barnabas fled to Lysta and Derbe where they continued to preach the gospel.*

*As you read this text, dwell on these questions: How did the Lord bear witness to the word of his grace this week in and through your life? Do you have a burden for those who are being led astray by false doctrine so that you risk much to spend time with them so that they may be rooted and built up in the faith? What does it look like for you and I to speak boldly for the Lord? How can we be prepared to suffer for the Lord?*

*Remember that in Acts signs and wonders help confirm the gospel message (see Acts 2:23, 43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 8:6, 13).*

*Tony Merida writes, “In this act of relocating, we should notice the combination of prudence and perseverance. The missionaries were brave but not stupid! In fleeing danger, they lived to preach another day. Sometimes the best way to make the gospel known may mean remaining; at other times it may mean relocating. For such matters one must seek the Father, who promises to give his children wisdom when they ask him (see James 1:5).”*

*Tony Merida asks, “Have you ever known that you would be opposed for speaking faithfully for Christ in a certain situation and yet did so anyway?”*

**3. What is going on in Acts 14:8-20?**

*Acts 14:8-20 can be broken down into four parts: (1) Paul healed a lame man who had faith in the Lord (vv. 8-10). (2) In response to the miracle, the people of Lystra moved to worship Paul and Barnabas, believing that these two men were gods (Zeus and Hermes) who had come to visit them (vv. 11-13). (3) Paul reminds the people of Lystra that he and Barnabas are mere men, and he begins the gospel conversation with a call to repentance—a turn from false gods/idols to the one true living God (see 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10)—and an exposition of God as Creator and Provider. However, it appears that before Paul could finish the gospel presentation the mob of Lystrans cut him off (vv. 14-18). (4) Unbelieving Jews travel great distances (from Pisidian Antioch and Iconium) to hinder the gospel proclamation and to stone Paul. It appeared that Paul was dead, but when the disciples gathered around him, Paul rose up and went back into Lystra and then into Derbe to proclaim the gospel.*

*As you read this text, dwell on these questions: What is your testimony? How have you seen the Lord redeem and restore someone to himself recently? If so, share that with the community group and praise the Lord for His redeeming work! Like the Lystrans, have we been guilty of elevating men of God on too high of pedestal? How should we present the gospel to various kinds of people? Do we expect and are we prepared to suffer for the gospel?*

*Two additional notes: (1) Contrast the response of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 14:14-15 with Herod in Acts 12:21-23. (2) Tearing of clothes is a sign of sorrow, dismay, or rage (see Genesis 37:29, 34; Numbers 14:6; Joshua 7:6; Isaiah 37:1; Mark 14:63).*

*Note that the themes of the speech in Acts 14 will be developed in the Mars Hill sermon in Acts 17:16-34. Note the differences between Paul’s sermon in Acts 13 to his sermon in Acts 14. In Acts 13, he highlights to Jews and Gentile God-fearers how the promises of God had been fulfilled; in Acts 14, he begins with God as Creator and provider in preaching to pagan Gentiles.*

*Like Jesus in Luke 6:6-11 and Peter in Acts 3:1-10; 9:32-35, Paul heals a lame man in Acts 14:8-10. For miracles like this speaking of the inbreaking of the kingdom of God, see Isaiah 35:5-6; 61:1-2; Luke 4:16-30.*

*NIV Zondervan Study Bible: “According to a local legend, these same gods, Zeus and Hermes, once descended to this region disguised as humans seeking lodging. Though they asked a thousand homes, none took them in. Finally, at a humble cottage of straw and reeds, an elderly couple, Philemon and Baucis, freely welcomed them with a banquet. In appreciation, the gods transformed the cottage into a temple and appointed Philemon and Baucis priest and priestess. They then sent a flood to destroy the homes of the inhospitable people who had turned them away.”*

*Tony Merida writes, “We have no right or need to edit the gospel, but we do need to understand our audiences. We must begin by establishing appoint of contact with people, and then we must lead them to the gospel conflict. Often points of contact can be made by simply observing what all humans see and experience and then working from there (i.e., a hunger for love and community, a search for freedom, a need to be rid of guilt and shame, a quest for meaning, a longing for significance, a thirst for satisfaction and joy, an attraction to beauty in creation, a love for creativity and innovation).”*

*John Stott says, “Wherever we begin we shall end with Jesus Christ, who is himself the good news, and who alone can fulfill all human aspirations.”*

*Derek Thomas writes, “The answer is that the closer you live to the King, the more likely you are to draw the enemy’s fire.”*

**4. What is going on in Acts 14:21-28?**

*Acts 14:21-28 details the completion of the mission, the action of the mission, and the report on the mission. First, Paula and Barnabas completed the first missionary journey by revisiting the cities rather than taking the easier route to Antioch of Syria by heading east from Derbe.*

*Second, on the first missionary journey, Acts 14:22-23 describe the emphases of Paul and Barnabas on their return journey through the cities: (1) to strengthen the souls of the disciples; (2) to encourage the disciples to continue in the faith; (3) to instruct the disciples that suffering is the call of a disciple; (4) to appoint elders in every church; (5) to entrust the disciples and churches into the hands of the Lord in whom they believed.*

*Third, Paul and Barnabas gave a report of the mission work to the church at Antioch. In their report, they declared all that God had done through the gospel and how God opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.*

*As you read this passage, dwell on these questions: Would you be willing to go share the gospel and encourage the saints in places where you knew you could suffer? As you look in Acts 14:22-23, how might the instructions of Paul and Barnabas shape us and call us to obedience today? If you have someone in your community group who has gone on a mission trip, have you given them an opportunity to report on what God did on that trip?*

*Note that Acts 14:26 recalls Acts 13:2. For more passages on suffering, see Matthew 16:24-25; Mark 13:13; Acts 11:23; 13:43; Romans 8:17; 2 Corinthians 11; 2 Timothy 3:10-12; 1 Peter 4:12-13.*

*For plurality of elders/pastors in every church, see Acts 11:30; 15:2, 4, 6, 22-23; 16:4; 20:17-18; 21:18; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 5:17; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Pet 5:1-5; James 5:14. Note that the terms elder, pastor, overseer, bishop are used synonymously (see Ephesians 4:11; Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5, 7; 1 Peter 5:1-2).*

*ESV Study Bible: “The decision to take this longer route shows the importance Paul attached to maintaining contact with his churches and establishing local elders. It also shows tremendous courage that he would return to the cities from which he had been driven by such violent opposition.”*

*Instead of returning to Antioch of Syria by land, which would have been a much easier journey, after completing their business in Derbe, John Polhill writes, “They (Paul and Barnabas) chose, however, to retrace their footsteps and revisit all the congregations that had been established in the course of the mission. In so doing they gave an important lesson on the necessity of follow up and nurture for any evangelistic effort. Paul would again visit these same congregations on his next mission (see Acts 15:41; 16:1-6).”*

*Tony Merida writes, “Paul’s church planting paradigm rested on three foundations: (1) apostolic instruction; (2) pastoral oversight; (3) a confident trust in God.”*

*Derek Thomas reminds us of this lesson: “to place the needs of the people of God above our own comforts and conveniences.”*

**\* Application Questions**

Note: Please do not feel compelled to use every question, for you will have time for 3 to 5 questions. I’ve tried to offer enough for you to pick the ones you think will best fit your group, as you know what your ladies or men are going through at this time and may need to hear. Also, please note that these questions might be adjusted to reflect what the pastor calls us to do in application of the sermon.

1. Over the past week, what were you most passionate about? What are the people/things in your life that you are most passionate about and speak boldly about? In Acts 14:3, we see that Paul and Barnabas “spoke boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.” (Note: this speaking boldly is in the context of protecting the sheep of God and the truth of God from wolves/false teaching) Did we intentionally speak boldly for the Lord this week? If so, how did you see the Lord bear witness to the word of his grace this week? Given the context of this speaking boldly for the Lord, how ought it instruct us to be patient and steadfast in defending the truth from wolves/false teachers and investing/discipling new believers (note that the text says they remained a long time)?

2. Does fear of opposition/conflict/confrontation keep you from speaking boldly for the Lord? If so, why? What is it about the gospel that compels Paul and Barnabas to continue to preach the gospel in the face of suffering/opposition? Do we grasp the depth of our sin, the power of God’s grace, and the beauty of the gospel? How can we this week remind ourselves of the gospel so that it compels us to share the gospel as unhindered witnesses this week? Read and reflect on 2 Corinthians 5:11-21.

3. Like the lame man, do your circumstances reveal a heart that hopes in God or a heart that hates God? Do your circumstances lead you to run to or run from God?

4. Like the people of Lystra, do we have a tendency to worship the creature rather than to worship God?

5. Like Paul, we must begin with people where they are in their understanding. Paul began the gospel presentation in Lystra with the truth that God is Creator and Provider. Think through how you would share the gospel with different kinds of people (for example, unbeliever with no background of Scripture, unbeliever with some background of Scripture, etc.).

6. How have you seen God at work this week? How has God given witness of himself this week—through His Word, prayer, the body of Christ, circumstances of life, creation?

7. How can we strengthen souls of disciples, encourage one another to continue in the faith, and prepare for suffering? This question is a reflection/application of Acts 14:22.

8. How does verse 23 shape our understanding of church structure (appointing of elders/pastors in every church) and inform us who is the head of the church (committed the churches to the Lord in whom they believed)? When we are prone to criticize/complain, how might it help to remember who is the head of the Church (Christ) and what He has to say about the church in the Word?

9. Like Paul and Barnabas, let us declare how God has worked (see verse 27). How is God working in and through you by His Word, prayer, the body of Christ, circumstances of life? How did God open up doors for gospel conversations this week?

10. Did you notice how quickly the people of Lystra moved from worship to anger/murder? Is our faith that fickle? How do we cultivate a strong faith together with strong roots in the Word?

11. Pastor Aaron is challenging us to obedience and an others-focused mentality in 2018. Where does this passage call us to obedience? How does this passage call us to be others-focused?

12. What was it that compelled Paul and Barnabas to persevere in the faith and in gospel ministry? How do we cultivate perseverance in our own lives?

13. Here are some good questions to reflect on and act on this week (these were passed along to me by Pastor Aaron and Dr. David Jones):

A. What do you take as the main theme from this sermon?

B. What have you learned today about Jesus’ character that has affected you daily?

C. Do you have any clarifying questions concerning the sermon?

D. What did the Holy Spirit convict you of because of His Word today?

E. Will you ask forgiveness and what will you change?

F. Will you be willing this week to pass on to someone else what you’re learning about Jesus? How will you be intentional this week to do so?

14. In his book, Asking the Right Questions, Matthew Harmon gives the following instructions/questions for understanding and applying the Bible:

A. Understanding the Bible

1. What do we learn about God?

a. Look for God’s character (who he is, what he is like).

b. Look for God’s conduct (what he is doing).

c. Look for God’s concerns (what things, events, people, he is concerned about).

2. What do we learn about people?

a. Look for aspects of what it means to be created in God’s image.

b. Look for the fallen condition.

c. Look for how God’s people should live.

3. What do we learn about relating to God?

a. Look for things to praise and thank God for.

b. Look for sin to confess and repent.

c. Look for promises and truths to believe.

4. What do we learn about relating to others?

a. Look for how we should interact with and treat others.

b. Look for ways to pursue reconciliation with others.

c. Look for specific ways to love, serve, and care for others.

B. Applying the Bible

1. What does God want me to think/understand?

2. What does God want me to believe?

3. What does God want me to desire?

4. What does God want me to do?

**\* Sermon Take Away:** Count the cost to know and follow Jesus.

**\* Bible Reading Plan**

1. Monday—Revelation 15; 2 Chronicles 29

2. Tuesday—Revelation 16; 2 Chronicles 30

3. Wednesday—Revelation 17; 2 Chronicles 31

4. Thursday—Revelation 18; 2 Chronicles 32

5. Friday—Revelation 19; 2 Chronicles 33

6. Saturday—Revelation 20; 2 Chronicles 34

7. Sunday—Revelation 21; 2 Chronicles 35

**\* Unhindered: A Study of Acts (Part 2)**

1. January 21st—Acts 15:1-35

2. January 28th—Acts 15:36-16:5

3. February 4th—Acts 16:6-40

4. February 11th—Acts 17:1-15

5. February 18th—Acts 17:16-34

6. February 25th—Acts 18:1-23

7. March 4th—Acts 18:24-28

8. March 11th—Acts 19:1-41

9. March 18th—Acts 20:1-16

10. March 25th—Acts 20:17-30

--. April 1st (Easter Sunday)

11. April 8th—Acts 21:1-26

12. April 15th—Acts 21:27-22:29

13. April 22nd—Acts 22:30-23:35

14. April 29th—Acts 24:1-27

15. May 6th—Acts 25:1-12

16.May 13th—Acts 25:13-26:32

17. May 20th (Mother’s Day)—Acts 27:1-44

18. May 27th—Acts 28:1-31

1. For this discussion guide, I used the following resources: Darrell Bock, *Acts;* I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*; F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*; John B. Polhill, *Acts*; Derek Thomas, *Acts*; R. Kent Hughes, *Acts*; R. C. Sproul, *Acts*; John Stott, *The Spirit, the Church, and the World: The Message of* Acts; Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesu in* Acts; ESV *Study Bible*; *NIV Zondervan Study Bible.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-1)