lesson seven: acts 9

In Acts 7 and 8, Luke gave us a teaser of someone who is absolutely terrifying and the source of serious persecution in the Jesus community. He introduced us to a young man named Saul. He hated Jesus and His disciples. He vehemently opposed anyone who wanted to proclaim the name of Jesus. But why? Why is this guy so adamant about hunting down Jesus's disciples and wanting to imprison or kill them?

This is actually a crucially important question that deserves to be looked at. We learn in other Scripture that Saul was a Pharisee—a brilliant and passionate one. He loved the Scriptures and he loved the Jewish faith. In fact, it is very likely he sincerely loved Yahweh, but he was spiritually blind to the fact that he was actually opposing Yahweh when he opposed Jesus.

Think about it from his perspective. What had he JUST heard Stephen say right before they killed him? Stephen reminded all of them of the humiliating truth that the Jewish people had betrayed Yahweh when they worshipped other gods and as a result Yahweh allowed them to be conquered and taken into Babylon. After hundreds of years (and still many great struggles) the Jewish people had returned "home" to the Promised Land, rebuilt the Temple, and were able to somewhat worship Yahweh again.

Saul wanted to prevent his people from repeating this betrayal of Yahweh through worshipping this new "god"—Jesus of Nazareth. The name, story, and worship of Jesus had been spreading like wildfire, and Saul was willing to do *anything* to stop that fire from spreading.

This week continue to consider the themes of witnesses of Jesus and His Kingdom, the name of Jesus, awe and obedience. Also be on the lookout for some old characters to reenter the story. This is one of the most significant and well known stories in all of Scripture. Don't miss its power and significance for our lives even today.

day one :: comprehension

- Pray for focus and eyes to see what the Holy Spirit wants you to see today.
- Read or listen to Acts 9. (Look for repeated words and themes!)
- Answer the following questions to grasp a basic understanding of what the text is saying.

1. At the beginning of chapter 9, what was Saul's attitude toward the disciples and what did he do? (vs. 1-2)

2. Describe what happened to Saul while he was on the road to arrest Jesus followers. (vs. 3-9)

3. Who did the Lord send to help Saul and how did he respond to his assignment? (vs. 10-19)

4. Where did Saul go to proclaim the Gospel? (v. 20)

5. What was the response of the Jews who heard Saul proclaiming Jesus to be the Messiah and what affect did that have on Saul? (vs. 20-22)

6. What did the Jewish leaders plot to do to Saul and how did he escape? (vs. 23-25)

7. What happened when Saul tried to join the disciples in Jerusalem? Who stepped in to advocate for Saul? (vs. 26-30)

8. How does verse 31 describe the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria at this time?

9. In verses 32-43 we read about two miracles performed by Peter. Briefly summarize what happened in each situation.

1.

2.

day two: interpretation

- Pray, thanking God for who He is and for His faithfulness. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal clear meaning and the glory of Jesus to you as you study.
- Read or listen to Acts 9. (Look for repeated words and themes!)
- Answer the following questions to begin to discover what this passage means.

1. In Acts 9 we continue reading about Saul and find out about his encounter with Jesus resulting in a complete transformation of not only his heart, but also his life's mission. Read the following passages and write down any extra information you find out about Saul (who later goes by the name Paul).

Acts 22:3

Philippians 3:3-7

Galatians 1:11-24

2. When the Lord instructed a man named Ananias to help Saul, he questioned the Lord's instructions. How did God respond to his question? Did he scold Ananias for doubt or disobedience? Did He decide to use someone else? Why do you think God responded this way?

3. In verse 14 God generously provides Ananias with insight to His plan for Saul. What is that plan? Did it include a promise that Ananias would remain safe if he obeyed? Why is this plan for Saul so unique? (Read Ephesians 3:1-6 to help with your answer.)

4. What is the pattern you notice when it comes to Saul as he preached the Gospel with boldness in both Damascus and Jerusalem?

5. How is Tabitha (also named Dorcas) described in verses 36 & 39? Describe how her community responded to what happened to her.

6. What was the result of both of the miracles performed by Peter in Acts 9? (vs. 35 & 42)



day three: application

- Pray, ask the Holy Spirit how He is calling you to respond to this week's passage and how it should impact your life today.
- \circ Read or listen to Acts 9, and answer the following questions. (Look for repeated words and themes!)

1. This week we read about how Saul's life was set on a certain path, but when he encountered the risen Jesus, he was radically transformed and his life placed on a completely new trajectory. If you have encountered Jesus and have received Him as your Lord and King, has your life been set on a different trajectory than before? Why or why not? If you are on this Kingdom Path, how does this new trajectory pursue what is different from what the world values?

2. We saw Ananias receive instruction and then ask the Lord a question before obeying. The Lord graciously answered him. This reveals a sincere and humble heart—one that did not understand what he was being asked to do, but God knew Ananias's willingness to obey regardless of the effect it had on his own life.

Have you ever felt the Lord telling you to do something you didn't understand or were afraid to do? How did you respond? If you brought your questions, were they humble and sincere or were you prideful and stubborn? Are you willing to obey Jesus regardless of the outcome? Who is the One who is able to help you and comfort you in your obedience?

3. Acts 9:31 tells us that the church had peace and was being built up—that it multiplied and grew because the church walked in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit. What does it mean to walk in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit? Use the following passages to help you: Psalm 103:11-19, John 14:25-31.

Are you (as a follower of Jesus and part of the Church) experiencing peace and being built up? Why or why not? How are you walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, particularly in community? If you are not experiencing this, spend some time praying to the Holy Spirit for His guidance and wisdom in this.



bonus days: read, listen, write, or draw

- Pray, thanking God for His generous invitation to join Him in His eternal mission of sharing the Gospel of the Kingdom. Pray for wisdom for yourself and for your HSM brothers and sisters.
- Read or listen to Acts 9. (Look for repeated words and themes!) and answer the following questions.
- Is there anything in this passage you don't understand or have trouble believing? It's ok!
 Write out your questions and your doubts. Pray about them. After wrestling with it a while, take your questions to your parents, one of the HSM leaders, or an adult whom you trust.
- In the space below, write out a poem, song, or prayer of response to this week's passage.
- If you enjoy drawing, illustrate one or two of the following concepts in the space below:
 - A great light from the sky
 - o Saul being lowered over a wall in a basket
 - o Peter helping Dorcas up



• Dig Deeper:

Read Acts 7:58-8:3, then read Acts 22:3 and Acts 5:33-39. Compare and contrast how Saul is described (before his transformation) to his first teacher. What do you think about these observations? Do you have a wise teacher with whom you've disagreed, and even blatantly did the opposite of what they believed was best? Describe the situation and the outcome.

 Keeping in mind that Luke wrote both the Gospel of Luke AND Acts, read Luke 1:5-23. Compare Ananias's questions in Acts 9:10-19 to when Zachariah questioned the angel in Luke. Why do you think one received a serious consequence for his questions while the other was given more information to help encourage him?



Be Thou My Vision by Shane and Shane Awake My Soul by Hillsong

Songs:

student connection teaching notes: acts 9

lesson eight: acts 10-11:18

So far the story of Acts has played out like an epic movie, and will only continue to develop more. The newly formed church of Jesus followers has experienced some incredible and aweinspiring miracles and victories; however it has also lived through some unbelievable hardships. These hardships have come from both within the group and from without. But no matter how difficult things get, the name of Jesus is proclaimed even louder and more people believe in Him. But up to this point, other than some Samaritans and the Ethiopian Official in chapter 8, the vast majority of people in the church are Jewish—and many are simply fine with that.

All that is about to change. As you read and process the passage this week, try to take off your "21st century, young-American lenses" and look at this through the lenses of the Jesus followers at the time—particularly the Jewish followers. What Peter and the leaders in Jerusalem encounter is SHOCKING to them. It seems to go against so much of what their lives were based upon; however it is clear this shift in understanding of tradition, doesn't actually contradict the ultimate plan Yahweh has had since the beginning as presented in Scripture.

This week, not only will we read about this seriously uncomfortable tension that Peter has to navigate, but we will also see that some pretty weird stuff happens to him. One of the most helpful tips for reading the Bible given to this generation is from Hebrew Bible scholar Dr. Michael Heiser. He adamantly loves to give his students and readers this advice:

if it's weird, it's important.

As you continue to work through Acts (and as you read the Bible in the future) remember this. If something is weird, pause, ask "why," and wrestle with it. Slowing down to examine Scripture—especially the really weird parts—are sometimes the most rewarding and satisfying.

So this week, let the weirdness of what's happening sink in. Let Peter's experience and utter shock, shock you a bit. And maybe, you will get to experience the beautiful awe that comes from getting a glimpse of our God who is bigger, more complex, more compassionate, and wise than we could ever imagine.

day one .: comprehension

- Pray, thanking God that He has always had a plan to bring humanity back to Him. Ask Him to teach and reveal Truths about His Kingdom to you.
- Read or listen to Acts 10 11:18. [Look for repeated words and themes!]
- Answer the following questions to grasp a basic understanding of what the text is saying.

1. Using today's whole passage, write down everything you find out about Cornelius. (i.e. Who, What, When, Where, his reputation among the Jews, etc.)

2. Where was Peter staying? Summarize what Peter experienced while on the rooftop. (vs. 9-20)

3. What did Cornelius do when Peter entered? How did Peter respond? (vs. 25-26)

4. Write out Acts 10:34-35 in the space below.

5. What did Peter call himself (and other believers) in verse 39?

6. What happened to everyone while Peter was still sharing the Gospel with them? (v. 44)

7. How did the Jews who came with Peter respond? (v. 45)

8. Who did Peter meet with when he went back to Jerusalem? What were they most concerned about? (Acts 11:1-3)

9. After he tells them the story of how everything took place, what conclusion did Peter come to and how did the others respond? (11:17-18)



day two: interpretation

- Pray, thanking God for His Word. Ask the Holy Spirit will give you wisdom as you spend time in His Word today.
- Read or listen to Acts 10 11:18. (Look for repeated words and themes!)
- Answer the following questions to begin to discover what this passage means.

1. This week's Scripture describes how a Gentile family receives the Holy Spirit. Read Ephesians 2:11-19. Based on the way Paul describes the relationship between Jews and Gentiles, briefly summarize how they felt about each other in general.

2. Why do you think Luke gives us so much detail about Cornelius—especially his job? Is it unusual for someone in his role to be a "God-fearer"? Why or why not?

3. What was significant about the animals in the sheet? How many times did Peter and God have the same conversation about the animals in the vision? Based on the whole chapter, do you think God was simply telling Peter he should change his diet? Support your answer.

4. Read back through Peter's explanation of the Gospel in Acts 10:34-43. What do you notice that is different from the way he preached the Gospel to the Jews in previous chapters? What stayed the same?

5. God told Peter to go to Cornelius and his household heard the Gospel. They believed and the Holy Spirit fell on every one of them, giving them the same gifts He had given the other believers. Who is clearly in charge of everything that is happening? Support your answer with example from this passage.

6. The leaders of the church in Jerusalem (who were Jews who followed Jesus) were originally only concerned with one thing. What does that reveal about their mindset and hearts initially? What changed after they heard Peter's testimony about what happened? What does this willingness to change their thinking demonstrate about them?

7. What does this passage reveal about God's character? Support your answer.



day three: application

- Pray, asking God to show you how this week's passage should impact your life today. Pray for your brothers and sisters at HSM to trust the Holy Spirit to teach and guide them.
- Read or listen to Acts 10 11:18, and answer the following questions. (Look for repeated words and themes!)

1. Both Cornelius and Peter had radical encounters with God while they were praying—Acts 10:2 even says Cornelius prayed continually. Do you believe God wants to interact with you when you pray? Why or why not? If you are able to, describe a time when you prayed and the Holy Spirit responded to you clearly. Or explain what role prayer plays in your own life—be honest in your explanation.

2. Have you ever encountered someone that loved Jesus but didn't necessarily fit your concept of a follower of Jesus? Or maybe you met someone who was interested in knowing more about Jesus, but their appearance or their culture was different than yours so you just made assumptions about them? How willing are you to sharing Jesus with them? Why?

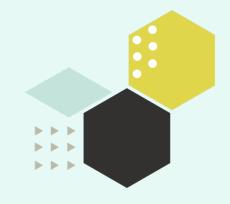
3. Multiple times in this passage Luke tells us that Peter and the other Jews were surprised, perplexed, amazed, and left silent by what the Holy Spirit was doing. Take a look at the pattern in Acts 10:18, at Peter's testimony, the other leaders "fell silent," then "glorified God," and finally changed their course to align more with God's plan (*as it was also confirmed by Scripture*). It's interesting to note that these feelings of awe were always accompanied by an attitude of humble obedience. When was the last time you were in awe of God and what He is doing around you? If you haven't experienced awe or amazement over God in a long time why do you think this might be?

4. God's plan throughout Scripture has ALWAYS included bringing people from every tribe, nation, and language back into relationship with Him and to take part in His Kingdom. How does your life actively demonstrate that you are partnering with God in His plan? If your life isn't demonstrating that you desire to see God's Kingdom full of a beautifully diverse community, explain why not and what is hindering you from joining Him.



bonus days: read, listen, write, or draw

- Pray, thanking God for His generous invitation to join Him in His eternal mission of sharing the Gospel of the Kingdom. Pray for wisdom for yourself and for your HSM brothers and sisters.
- Read or listen to Acts 10 11:18. (Look for repeated words and themes!) and answer the following questions.
- Is there anything in this passage you don't understand or have trouble believing? It's ok!
 Write out your questions and your doubts. Pray about them. After wrestling with it a while, take your questions to your parents, one of the HSM leaders, or an adult whom you trust.
- In the space below, write out a poem, song, or prayer of response to this week's passage.
- If you enjoy drawing, illustrate one or two of the following concepts in the space below:
 - An angel visiting a Roman soldier (tip: angels do not have wings!)
 - All kinds of animals in a big blanket
 - Peter baptizing Cornelius



- o Dig Deeper:
 - \circ What does this reveal to you about God, His character, His plan, or His Kingdom?
 - Cornelius isn't the first Gentile we've read about in Acts. Remember the Ethiopian Eunuch/Court Official? What's the difference? Why was Peter so hesitant about Cornelius?
 - Did the Holy Spirit wait on Peter to finish talking before He was poured out on this Gentile family? What do you think this reveals about the Holy Spirit? How might this impact you when you share the Gospel with someone?

• Read Jonah 1:1-6, 3, and 4:1-2. Compare and Contrast Jonah's experience with Peter's experience in Acts 10.



Songs: On the Banks by Chris Renzema Praise Him Forever by Jervis Campbell

student connection teaching notes: acts 10 – 11:18

lesson nine: acts 11:19-12:25

"Rollercoaster" might be a good description for the passage this week. Some really amazing things were happening. But Luke doesn't only tell us the good stuff. He has to tell us the hard stuff too. We learn about the death of one of Jesus's best friends, the arrest of one of the key leaders of the Church, and then a really disgusting (and weird!) story about the death of King Herod. (Remember—if it's weird, it's important!)

As the name of Jesus spreads further out into the world and people believe in His name, we read about a particular Jesus community and the dawning of a new era. It is in chapter 11 where we learn about a new name for this community of Jesus followers. It is from here they will from now on become known as "Christians."

Because we are so familiar with the name "Christian" we often gloss over it, or maybe even have a negative reaction to it. But let's look at what it actually means and the weight that title carries with it. When you break it down it means "Little Christs" but even that might not pack the punch it's intended to wield. Remember "Christ" is not Jesus's last name. It is the Greek translation for His Hebrew title: Messiah or Anointed One. So put that title all together. Believers in Jesus would from now on be called "Little Anointed Ones."

But there's more. In the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) only certain people were anointed and they were anointed to show they were set apart for a sacred purpose—to lead, proclaim, and protect people for the glory of Yahweh. These anointed ones were priests, prophets, and kings. None of the Old Testament "messiahs" were good enough to fulfill their ultimate purpose and calling. So Jesus came. And He did. He was the only one deserving of that title in its fullest sense. HE was and is THE Anointed One to announce the Kingdom and rescue those who would be its citizens.

Because these early Jesus followers reflected Jesus in so many ways (bore His Image), they were named after Him. So let's combine that with what we discussed in Week Five about the meaning of "The Church"—"those who are called out of the world and to God." Take a look at what do we have:

Christians belong to the Church and now identify as:

Those who are called out of the world and to God in order to be anointed to announce the Kingdom and invite others to become citizens under The Messiah-King Jesus.

As you study this week, pay attention to the way the characters are described, what their actions reflect about them, and what happened to the Church as the good news about the Kingdom of God spread out all over the world.

day one .: comprehension

- Pray, asking the Holy Spirit to give you clarity and focus as you read His Word today.
- Read or listen to Acts 11:19 12:25. (Look for repeated words and themes!)
- \circ Answer the following questions to grasp a basic understanding of what the text is saying.

1. After Stephen was killed, many believers scattered. For the most part, those who were scattered only shared the Gospel with Jews, but there were a handful of believers from Cyprus and Cyrene that were willing to share with non-Jews known as Hellenists or Greek Gentiles. (These people are different from "Hellenistic-Jews" described in Acts 6.) What does verse 21 tell us about what happened in Antioch as a result of their boldness in sharing?

2. Who did the church in Jerusalem send to encourage believers in Antioch? (v. 22) How did he encourage them? How is he described? (vs. 23-24)

3. What were the disciples first called in Antioch? (v. 26)

4. Who was the next disciple to be martyred? What happened to him? (Acts 12:1-2)

5. What happened to Peter? What time of year did this take place? (12:3-5)

6. Read and summarize Acts 12:6-17.

7. Summarize what happened to King Herod from verses 18-23.



day two: interpretation

- Pray for genuine understanding and faith in God's goodness, regardless of our circumstances. Pray for your brothers and sisters in HSM to trust His goodness as well.
- Read or listen to Acts 11:19 12:25. [Look for repeated words and themes!]
- Answer the following questions to begin to discover what this passage means.

1. Using the following verses, write down everything you find out about Barnabas, his character, what his life was like, who he ministered to, etc.: Acts 4:36-37, Acts 9:26-27, Acts 11:22-26, Acts 13:2, Acts 13:45-47

2. Look at Acts 11:27-30. What was prophesied and what was the response of the new church in Antioch? Why is this so significant? (Hint: Acts 11:20-21)

3. In previous chapters we've read how God rescued the apostles from different situations. We also read about Stephen's murder by the Jewish leaders. In chapter 12 we learned of another disciple who is martyred—or killed for his faith. But it's not just any disciple, it is the Apostle James. This is the James of the "three musketeers"—Peter, James, and John who were Jesus's closest friends.

What does this say about God? He performed miracles through all of these men and even rescued Peter multiple times from death and prison. Did James to something wrong to deserve death? Does this event support the idea that some believe God will always bless you with good things ("health and wealth") if you just have faith in Him?

4. Read Acts 12:1-3 and 20-24. Keeping in mind what you've read about King Herod, that he is a puppet ruler set in place by Rome, and that this event is set during a major famine, what sort of predicament do the people of Tyre and Sidon find themselves and how do they try to solve their problems?

5. How did Herod receive their flattery? What did an angel do in response to Herod's arrogance? How did God feel about Herod's display? Read Isaiah 42:8 and Galatians 6:7 to support your answer.



day three: application

- Pray, asking the Holy Spirit to help you discern how this week's passage should impact your life.
- Read or listen to Acts 11:19 12:25, and answer the following questions. (Look for repeated words and themes!)

1. The believers in Antioch were both Jewish and Non-Jewish. Because of the radical transformation in their lives through the power of the Holy Spirit, they earned a new name for their faith—Christians. One of the characteristics which marked them was their generosity (we read about this in Acts 2-4)—generosity not only in financial terms, but also in food, clothing, shelter, time, skills, kindness, and especially generosity in sharing the Gospel of Jesus.

We still call ourselves by the name "Christians." If you identify yourself as a Christian (or "Little Christ/Messiah") is your life marked by a similar generosity? Why or why not? Please be honest in the evaluation of your own heart. If you struggle with generosity in any of the areas listed above, pray and ask the Holy Spirit to instill this in you then prepare yourself to participate as He leads.

2. The story of Peter's rescue is one of the most famous miracles in Scripture. Peter thought he was in a dream until he was completely outside the prison. Then when Peter arrived at the place where his friends were, they didn't believe it was him until they saw him—even calling a young girl crazy for saying he was at the gate. Despite all the miracles they had witnessed, experienced firsthand, and even performed, at some level all of them still struggled to believe the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. Do you struggle to believe in the supernatural side of God's Kingdom and that He was and still is capable of all these miraculous things? Why or why not?



3. The people of Tyre and Sidon believed they had to flatter and win the favor of Herod in order to survive. Do you ever see others around you others who may seem to be in a position of power over you as a means to getting what you want or need? (These people might have more power in regards to popularity, grades, athleticism, wealth, leadership, etc.) Ultimately, are they able to satisfy the true hunger and thirst of your heart?

4. OR maybe you are the one with power over others. Do you ever find yourself accepting the praise of others and believing that you are the "king" of your life or your accomplishments? Do you leverage your privilege over others in a way that you are manipulating them to make yourself feel more powerful? Explain. If you find yourself on this path, how will God respond to the way you treat others and see yourself?



bonus days: read, listen, write, or draw

- Pray, thanking God for His generous invitation to join Him in His eternal mission of sharing the Gospel of the Kingdom. Pray for wisdom for yourself and for your HSM brothers and sisters.
- Read or listen to Acts 11:19 12:25. (Look for repeated words and themes!) and answer the following questions.
- Is there anything in this passage you don't understand or have trouble believing? It's ok!
 Write out your questions and your doubts. Pray about them. After wrestling with it a while, take your questions to your parents, one of the HSM leaders, or an adult whom you trust.
- In the space below, write out a poem, song, or prayer of response to this week's passage.
- \circ If you enjoy drawing, illustrate one or two of the following concepts in the space below:
 - o A Gift Box labeled "from: Antioch, to: Jerusalem"
 - o Prison door opened, chains unlocked
 - Word of God increasing/multiplied



- Dig Deeper:
 - Read Ezekiel 28 and note any similarities or anything you find interesting as it relates to what happened to King Herod in Acts 12.
 - What does this reveal to you about God, His character, His plan, or His Kingdom?



It is Well by Shane & Shane Even Unto Death by Audrey Assad

Songs:

student connection teaching notes: acts 11:19 – 12:25

lesson ten: acts 13 & 14

This week covers a lot of material. In fact, if this were a TV series, this week we'd be binging 8-9 episodes, but not only does this week cover so much, it also presents a major shift in some of the main characters in Acts. Beginning this week Peter begins to play a much more "behind the scenes" role while Saul not only steps in to the spotlight, but he also begins to use his Roman name—Paul.

Even though this name change is significant, believe it or not it is different from the times we've seen God Himself changing people's names—often signifying a new life, identity, or purpose. Paul chose to go by his Roman name for very strategic purposes that would benefit him in his journey to share the Gospel of Jesus to the Gentiles of the Roman world.

While the next two chapters might seem like a cruise itinerary, try not to get lost in the sweeping narrative and remember that each city Saul (Paul) and Barnabas come to was full of real people with real lives. Every one of them were lost and separated from God.

But no matter where they went, there was one sure thing—that the Gospel would be proclaimed clearly. Now those individuals would hear the Good News of the Kingdom of God in the name of Jesus. Some of them would respond with great joy to the name of Jesus of Nazareth and some would not. Some would find eternal life and some would try to kill Paul.

Even today, no matter how eloquently (or even how badly) the True Gospel of Jesus is proclaimed we still see the same reactions. Some will be overjoyed to hear the news of Grace and some will despise it. That is ultimately up to the Holy Spirit. Our job is to be obedient, over and over, no matter what reactions we get.

As you read chapters 13 and 14, pay attention to how Paul and Barnabas share the Gospel and how they respond to the outcome. Allow the Holy Spirit to be your teacher and remind you that He is sovereign over the hearts of humans. Our role is to simply respond as He invites us to participate in the Gospel adventure with Him.

day one .: comprehension

- Pray, asking God to give you focus as you read today's passage.
- Read or listen to Acts 13 & 14. (Look for repeated words and themes!)
- Answer the following questions to grasp a basic understanding of what the text is saying.

1. List the leaders of the church in Antioch and briefly explain what happened in Acts 13:1-3.

2. Who does this passage specifically say is the one who sent Barnabas and Saul out? (vs. 2, 4)

3. What new piece of information do we have about Saul in verse 9?

4. Fill out the chart on the next page, comparing what happened in each of the cities visited by Barnabas and Paul. In each column summarize what happened there, paying special attention to where B & P went, who responded well, who didn't, any outcomes mentioned, etc.

Cyprus/ Salamis	Antioch-Pisidia [a different Antioch]	Iconium	Lystra
Acts 13:4-12	Acts 13:13-52	Acts 14:1-7	Acts 14:8-23

5. After ministering to each of these cities, where did Barnabas and Paul end their journey and what happened there?



day two: interpretation

- Pray, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal more about Jesus, His Kingdom, and His character.
- Read or listen to Acts 13 & 14. (Look for repeated words and themes!)
- Answer the following questions to begin to discover what this passage means.

1. In Acts 13:2 and 4, it is emphasized that the Holy Spirit is responsible for sending Barnabas and Saul/Paul out to other cities and regions. Were their experiences always easy or met with open arms? Give examples and references for your answers. What do these examples reveal to us about how the World responds to the Gospel? What does this tell you about how the Holy Spirit often works out His plans in our own lives?

2. Look at Paul's sermon in the Pisidian Synagogue (13:16-41). What was Paul's approach for sharing the Gospel? Why did he choose this specific approach to sharing it? How is it similar to what we've seen before? (Hint: Peter's sermons in earlier chapters)

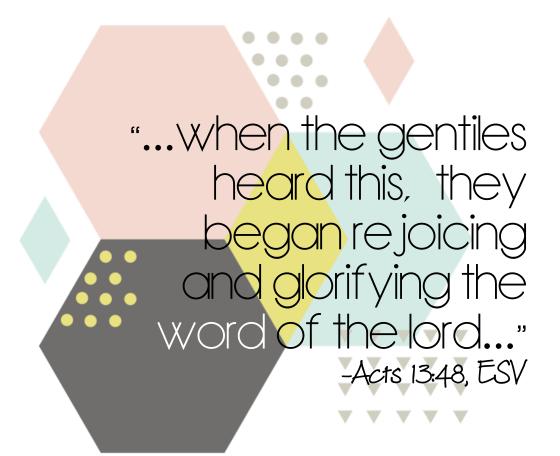
3. When the Gospel was preached there were a variety of responses in each of the cities and regions. How does Jesus's parable of "The Sower" (Matthew 13:1-9 & 18-23) provide insight into what Barnabas and Paul were experiencing?

4. Paul and Barnabas were persecuted by people (especially Jewish leaders) in every town they went to. What insights do the following passages give you in understanding how they persevered through the physical pain and rejection they encountered?

o Matthew 10:16-20

o Romans 8:35-39

o 2 Timothy 3:10-16



day three: application

- Pray, asking the Holy Spirit to increase your faith when He calls you to something which will glorify Jesus and His Kingdom—especially when it's difficult.
- $\circ~$ Read or listen to Acts 13 & 14, and answer the following questions. (Look for repeated words and themes!)

1. We have consistently seen the personal activity and direction of the Holy Spirit throughout the book of Acts so far—guiding disciples both generally and specifically. What are some specific ways you have experienced similar guidance from the Holy Spirit? What ways has He invited you to participate in building God's Kingdom where He has you? Did you respond to those invitations? If so, describe it. If not, what kept you from accepting that invitation to participate in His work?

2. Have you ever experienced rejection or persecution for sharing the Gospel? Describe that experience below. How did you respond? How were you able to recover?

3. With the understanding that the Holy Spirit called, guided, and comforted Paul and Barnabas on their journeys, what does this reveal about His character? As an image bearer of Jesus and a Temple of the Holy Spirit, does your life reflect this similar character? Why or why not?

bonus days: read, listen, write, or draw

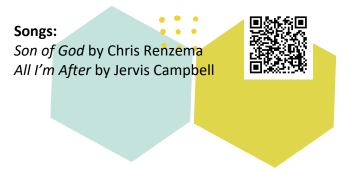
- Pray, thanking God for His generous invitation to join Him in His eternal mission of sharing the Gospel of the Kingdom. Pray for wisdom for yourself and for your HSM brothers and sisters.
- Read or listen to Acts 13 & 14. (Look for repeated words and themes!) and answer the following questions.
- Is there anything in this passage you don't understand or have trouble believing? It's ok!
 Write out your questions and your doubts. Pray about them. After wrestling with it a while, take your questions to your parents, one of the HSM leaders, or an adult whom you trust.
- \circ In the space below, write out a poem, song, or prayer of response to this week's passage.
- \circ If you enjoy drawing, illustrate one or two of the following concepts in the space below:
 - o A crooked path being made straight
 - o A ship sailing
 - o Dust coming off of Paul's feet



- o Dig Deeper:
 - How was the experience that Paul and Barnabas had with the magician Bar-Jesus (a.k.a. Elymas) similar to the magician Philip and Peter encountered in Acts 8? How was it different?

 When Paul and Barnabas were in Lystra, they performed a miracle. What was the crowd's response? How did Paul and Barnabas respond to the people? Compare and contrast that with what we studied last week about King Herod in Acts 12:1-3 and 20-23.

• What does this week's passage reveal to you about God, His character, His plan, or His Kingdom?



student connection teaching notes: acts 13 & 14

lesson eleven: acts 15

We've officially passed the halfway point in the book of Acts. Chapter 15 brings us to Jerusalem to witness what we now call "The Jerusalem Council." Here we are introduced to a leader we might not have expected—Jesus' brother James. He is the same man who rejected, made fun of, and essentially disowned Jesus while he was alive. But now he is the leader of the Church in Jerusalem and has some pretty crucial wisdom to give. (If you want to know more about James be sure to check out the Bonus days in this week's homework.)

It is at this point one of the most radical and significant decisions was made about the way Christians outwardly demonstrate their faith and how that does or does not affect their salvation. We see the apostles and leaders genuinely relying on both the Hebrew Scriptures and the guidance of the Holy Spirit to lead them in the correct direction.

Take a moment and look back at the timelines provided (either the short one at the beginning of this workbook or the longer one at the end). Find where it gives the context of the Jerusalem Council, and look at what Paul does in the years that follow the meeting. This is the setting for many of the letters Paul writes (i.e. Ephesians, Galatians, etc.), and he specifically addresses much of the tension that continues from the decisions made at this meeting.

As you finish this week, you'll also come face to face with a reality that all of us will experience in our lives, but we often don't think about in the context of our Biblical heroes—especially in the New Testament. Two very significant leaders have a conflict and part ways. Take your time with this. Look at what it does say and what it doesn't say. Let the Holy Spirit teach you as you wrestle with this reality.

day one .: comprehension

- $\circ~$ Pray, thanking God for this semester to study Acts together. Ask for clarity today as you read.
- Read or listen to Acts 15. (Look for repeated words and themes!)
- Answer the following questions to grasp a basic understanding of what the text is saying.
- 1. What were the men from Judea teaching the other believers? (v. 1)
- 2. How did Paul and Barnabas respond to this teaching? (v. 2)
- 3. How did they propose to solve this debate? (v. 2)

4. Summarize Peter's response to the council. What was the council's immediate response? (vs. 7-12)

5. After Paul and Barnabas gave testimonies about how God was working among the Gentiles, who stood up and spoke to the council? What did he say? (vs. 13-21)

6. Summarize the letter the council wrote for the Gentile believers in newer churches. (vs. 22-29)

7. What were the basic "requirements" the council felt the Holy Spirit had led them to follow as disciples of Jesus? (vs. 27-29) How did the believers respond to this letter? (v. 31)

8. What did Paul and Barnabas want to do next? Summarize what happened in verses 36-41.



day two: interpretation

- Pray, thanking God for His Word. Ask the Holy Spirit will give you wisdom as you discern what this passage reveals about Jesus and His Kingdom.
- Read or listen to Acts 15. (Look for repeated words and themes!)
- Answer the following questions to begin to discover what this passage means.

1. Why did some of the Jewish-believers think that Gentiles needed to be circumcised in order to be saved? (v.5) Is this true? Look up the following verses and write down any additional insight they provide. Genesis 17:1-14, Ezekiel 36:25-27, Romans 4:9-11, Galatians 3:23-29

2. When Peter spoke to the council he reminded them of how the Holy Spirit came upon the Gentile family he went to see years earlier—pointing them back to God's character. Spend some time reading verses 7-11 and write out any attributes or characteristics of God that you can find. (i.e. Sovereignty)

3. After Peter, Paul, and Barnabas share their testimonies of seeing God work among the Gentiles, another man stands up and seems to have the final say in the matter. This man is named James and history records him as the head of the Jerusalem church. He is James, the half-brother of Jesus of Nazareth, the first born (biological) son of Joseph and Mary.

In his conclusion, he listened not only to the testimony of others, but he was able to understand that Scripture has always pointed them toward the salvation of the Gentiles and so he used a passage from the Prophet Amos to support his final decision. Explain his conclusion and why he believed it to be true. While he did not believe the actions brought salvation, what actions did he ask the Gentiles to follow and why are these particular things important enough to emphasize to the new believers?



4. So far we have seen the powerhouse team of Paul and Barnabas, but at the end of chapter 15 something happens between them. Some scholars have assumed this meant the end of their relationship, but others, including Dr. Tom Constable do not believe this is the case. While they did strongly disagree, we do read in several of Paul's letters that he still thought highly of Barnabas AND John Mark—Paul even called John Mark "very useful to me in ministry" in 2 Timothy. (Note that their disagreement was NOT over anything out of line with Scripture.)

a. Think about how involved the Holy Spirit has been involved in the believers lives in Acts so far. Do you think this surprised Him (Holy Spirit)? Was He worried that now His plans for the Church would fail because Paul and Barnabas disagreed on the execution of His plan? Explain your answer.

b. How is the Holy Spirit able to use human disagreements for His purposes? How do the following verses help with your answer? Romans 8:26-28, Ephesians 1:11-12



day three: application

- Pray, asking God to show you how this week's passage should impact your life today. Pray for your brothers and sisters at HSM as they study and discern what the Holy Spirit is teaching them.
- Read or listen to Acts 15, and answer the following questions. (Look for repeated words and themes!)

1. While there are verses like Ephesians 2:10 that tell us we are created for good works, we tend to turn that upside down. Those "good works" are meant for building *His* Kingdom—not to make *us* kings. Look again at some of the verses from yesterday: Ezekiel 36:25-27, Romans 4:9-11, Galatians 3:23-29. These are meant to remind you of how God feels about works when they are used for ourselves rather than His Kingdom.

a. Do you ever find yourself trying to "earn" your salvation? Maybe in your head you know the truth—that no amount of "good works" can ever earn God's approval, but your heart and your actions prove the opposite.

b. What are some of the ways you typically gravitate toward earning God's favor? How are those working out for you? Do you feel satisfied? Secure?

2. When the Christians in Antioch received the letter from the Jerusalem Council, they received it's instructions and "rejoicing because of its encouragement." When you read Scripture or hear someone give Godly instruction do you find yourself rejoicing? Why or why not? If not, what is the root of that push-back? Could this root possibly reveal that you are still living under the lie that obedience is more for salvation rather than an outward celebration of God's kingdom culture? Be honest and thorough in your answer.

3. Describe a time when you disagreed with another believer (regarding something NOT opposing truth of Scripture).

a. How did you handle it? Did you remain friends? Why or why not?

b. If you are both believers, actively serving King Jesus, is it in line with Kingdom culture to write them off as "toxic" and completely cut yourself off from each other? Defend your answer using Scripture.

c. How is the Holy Spirit prompting you to respond right now?



bonus days: read, listen, write, or draw

- Pray, thanking God for His generous invitation to join Him in His eternal mission of sharing the Gospel of the Kingdom. Pray for wisdom for yourself and for your HSM brothers and sisters.
- Read or listen to Acts 15. (Look for repeated words and themes!) and answer the following questions.
- Is there anything in this passage you don't understand or have trouble believing? It's ok!
 Write out your questions and your doubts. Pray about them. After wrestling with it a while, take your questions to your parents, one of the HSM leaders, or an adult whom you trust.
- In the space below, write out a poem, song, or prayer of response to this week's passage.
- If you enjoy drawing, illustrate one or two of the following concepts in the space below:
 - An Ox Yoke on someone's shoulders labeled "law"
 - A Stone with "Law" carved into it, and a letter with "Grace" written on it
 - o A boat sailing away



- Dig Deeper:
 - What group did some of the believers/followers of Jesus belong to? Do you find this interesting at all? Why?
 - Look at James in Acts 15:13-22. Keeping in mind that this is Jesus's "little brother", read the following verses and summarize, as best you can, James's own faith journey. Matthew 12:46-50, Matthew 13:55, John 7:1-5, 1 Corinthians 15:7, Acts 1:14, James 1:1
 - What do the following verses tell us about sin and good works? Isaiah 64:6 and Romans 6:23

o Although the Council did not want to burden the new Gentile believers with following certain aspects of the Jewish law, they did instruct them to follow certain directives. Why do you think the Council settled upon those listed in verse 29? Read Psalm 119:173-175 and Romans 8:1-8. How can we reconcile these passages with freedom from the law the Jewish culture was imposing?



The Joy of Jesus by Rich Mullins

student connection teaching notes: acts 15

Timeline of Acts and Other Significant Events

Main Resources for Timeline: ESV Study Bible, Acts Exegetical Commentary by Darrell L. Bock (Most dates are approximate. Others are set and based on extra-Biblical, historical sources.)

Reference	Event	Year (AD)	Other events
Luke 23-24, Acts 1-2	Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension, Holy Spirit Descends;	30 (or 33)	Tiberius Caesar is Reigning
	Peter and John preach the Gospel,	31	
	perform miracles, and are arrested multiple times; Church is established	32	
Acts 4-7	Stephen is martyred, Church is scattered	33	
Acts 8	Philip goes to Samaria, etc.	34	
Acts 9	Paul encounters Jesus and is converted	35	
	Paul meets with the Apostles	36	Pilate's Rule as Procurator in Judea ends
		37	Major earthquake in Antioch, Emperor Caligula helps rebuild Antioch
Acts 10-11	Peter goes to Cornelius, the Holy Spirit fills Gentiles	38	
		39	Herod Antipas is exiled
		40	
		41	Claudius reigns as Emperor of Rome, Herod Agrippa I becomes "king" and rules Palestine
Acts 11	Church at Antioch established (time approximate)	42	
Acts 12	Herod Agrippa I executes James, brother of John; Peter arrested and rescued	43	
	Paul's second visit to Jerusalem and brings money to support the Church during a famine	44	Death of Herod Agrippa I
		45	
Acts 13-14	Paul goes on his "first missionary journey" including Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, etc.	46	<i>James, Jesus's brother, writes</i> <i>the Letter (Book) of James</i> (date is approximate)
A013 10-14		47	
	Paul writes Galatians	48	
Acts 15-18	Jerusalem Council takes place; Paul leaves for "second missionary journey";	49	Claudius expels all Jews from Rome

	Daul and Silas are put in prison and their		
Paul and Silas are put in prison and their jailer is converted; Paul meets refugee Jewish couple Priscilla and Aquila Paul writes 1 Thessalonians Paul writes 2 Thessalonians . Paul is		50	
	tried before Gallio, Proconsul of Achaia	51	
Acts 18-21	Paul goes on "third missionary journey"	52	Felix becomes Procurator of Judea
	to Macedonia, Greece, and Ephesus, plants the church, and stays for almost 3 years	53	Gospel of Mark is written
	Priscilla and Aquila are able to return home to Rome	54	<i>Gospel of Matthew written</i> , Nero is Emperor of Rome
		55	
		56	
Acts 21-24	Paul goes to Jerusalem to meet with James, Jesus's brother, is arrested, tried and is transferred to prison for 2 years in Caesarea under Felix, <i>he writes</i> <i>1 Corinthians</i>	57	
	Paul writes 2 Corinthians & Romans	58	
	Luke wrote the Gospel of Luke	59	
	Paul is arrested and tried under Festus and Agrippa, begins journey to Rome	60	Festus becomes Procurator of Judea
Acts 25-28	while under Roman guard, he is shipwrecked on Malta, imprisoned in Rome for at least 2 years	61	
Acts 28	Paul, under house arrest in Rome, <i>writes Ephesians, Philippians,</i> <i>Colossians, and Philemon</i>	62	James, Jesus's brother, is martyred by Sadducees
-	<i>Luke compiles/writes Acts</i> (date is approximate) <i>Paul writes 1 Timothy</i>	63	1 Peter is written , approximate date for <i>writing of Hebrews</i> (possibly by Paul, Luke, or Apollos, but mostly unknown)
-	<i>Paul writes Titus</i> , is arrested again	64	Rome is set on fire, Nero blames Christians and intense persecution begins
-	<i>Paul writes Titus</i> , is arrested again	64 65	Rome is set on fire, Nero blames Christians and intense persecution
	Paul writes Titus, is arrested again Paul writes 2 Timothy		Rome is set on fire, Nero blames Christians and intense persecution begins
		65	Rome is set on fire, Nero blames Christians and intense persecution begins
	Paul writes 2 Timothy Paul is martyred in Rome (date	65 66	Rome is set on fire, Nero blames Christians and intense persecution begins <i>2 Peter is written</i> Peter is martyred in Rome (date is approximate), Dead Sea Scrolls are hidden in caves before Rome
- - - - -	Paul writes 2 Timothy Paul is martyred in Rome (date	65 66 67	Rome is set on fire, Nero blames Christians and intense persecution begins 2 Peter is written Peter is martyred in Rome (date is approximate), Dead Sea Scrolls are hidden in caves before Rome destroys the Qumran community