

June 17, 2018

“Empowered: The Church on Fire!”

“A Journey through the Book of Acts”

“Adding Fuel to the Fire”

“Meanwhile, the word of God continued to spread, and there were many new believers.” Acts 12:24

A. Peter recounts the new inclusive direction of the gospel...

“Soon the news reached the apostles and other believers in Judea that the Gentiles had received the word of God.” Acts 11:1

1. Peter faces criticism from other believers.

“But when Peter arrived back in Jerusalem, the Jewish believers criticized him.” Acts 11:2

2. Peter holds firm to his new message that is now open to the Gentiles, as well as the Jews.

“When the others heard this, they stopped objecting and began praising God. They said, ‘We can see that God has also given the Gentiles the privilege of repenting of their sins and receiving eternal life.’” Acts 11:18

B. Antioch, another major city...

“Meanwhile, the believers who had been scattered during the persecution after Stephen’s death traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch of Syria. They preached the word of God, but only to Jews.” Acts 11:19

1. Antioch was another major trade city and was along one of the major trade routes to Jerusalem.
2. Antioch was 300 miles north of Jerusalem in Syria.
3. It was at Antioch that believers were first called Christians!

“When he found him, he brought him back to Antioch. Both of them stayed there with the church for a full year, teaching large crowds of people. (It was at Antioch that the believers were first called Christians.)” Acts 11:26

C. Barnabas, “Son of Encouragement”...

“Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and strong in faith. And many people were brought to the Lord.” Acts 11:24

1. Barnabas was a strong believer! He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and strong in faith. He saw many people come to the Lord!
2. Barnabas was from the island of Cyprus, just west of Syria.

“For instance, there was Joseph, the one the apostles nicknamed Barnabas (which means ‘Son of Encouragement’). He was from the tribe of Levi and came from the island of Cyprus.” Acts 4:36

3. Barnabas was one of the first to defend Paul.

“When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to meet with the believers, but they were all afraid of him. They did not believe he had truly become a believer! Then Barnabas brought him to the apostles and told them how Saul had seen the Lord on the way to Damascus and how the Lord had spoken to Saul. He also told them that Saul had preached boldly in the name of Jesus in Damascus.” Acts 9:26-27

4. The church sent Barnabas to Antioch.

“When the church at Jerusalem heard what had happened, they sent Barnabas to Antioch.” Acts 11:22

5. Barnabas and Paul become a teaching team.

“Then Barnabas went on to Tarsus to look for Saul. When he found him, he brought him back to Antioch. Both of them stayed there with the church for a full year, teaching large crowds of people.” Acts 11:25-26a

D. Another Herod on the scene...

1. King Herod Agrippa had James killed.

“He had the apostle James (John’s brother) killed with a sword.” Acts 12:2

2. King Herod Agrippa had Peter imprisoned.

“When Herod saw how much this pleased the Jewish people, he also arrested Peter. (This took place during the Passover celebration. Then he imprisoned him, placing him under the guard of four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring Peter out for public trial after the Passover. But while Peter was in prison, the church prayed very earnestly for him.” Acts 12:3-5

3. Peter escapes by the power of the Holy Spirit.

“Peter finally came to his senses. ‘It’s really true!’ he said. ‘The Lord has sent his angel and saved me from Herod and from what the Jewish leaders had planned to do to me!’”

4. The church prayed but was surprised at the answer!

“When she recognized Peter’s voice, she was so overjoyed that, instead of opening the door, she ran back inside and told everyone, ‘Peter is standing at the door!’ ‘You’re out of your mind!’ they said. When she insisted, they decided, ‘It must be his angel.’ Meanwhile, Peter continued knocking. When they finally opened the door and saw him, they were amazed.” Acts 12:14-16

5. Herod’s love of popularity and power was his disaster.

“When the day arrived, Herod put on his royal robes, sat on his throne, and made a speech to them. The people gave him a great ovation, shouting, ‘It’s the voice of a god, not of a man!’ Instantly,

an angel of the Lord struck Herod with a sickness, because he accepted the people’s worship instead of giving the glory to God. So he was consumed with worms and died.” Acts 12:21b-23

E. Who do you identify with most?

Peter:

- Peter faced criticism from his friends and fellow believers! In spite of their criticism, he continued to hold fast to his belief in what God had shown him. In spite of the fact that this new belief contradicted all of his previous beliefs and understandings. Are you willing to remain strong, even if those around you criticize your faith and belief in Christ?
- Peter continued to hold strong, even though his partner in ministry was killed. Peter continued in ministry and believing that God would work all things for good, in spite of significant setbacks. Are you able to hold on, in spite of trials that seem beyond reason or understanding? Are you able to trust God even when it’s hard?
- God brought Peter through a miraculous escape. Peter’s trust brought him through a near-death experience and back to sharing the message of Christ with others. Are you trusting God for a miraculous work in your life or your loved ones? Keep believing!

Barnabas:

- Barnabas was known for his empathy to outsiders. Are you willing to reach past your comfort level to be inclusive in your love and acceptance?
- Barnabas was willing to follow the call of God to Antioch. Are you willing to go where God sends you to follow His will?
- Barnabas saw the evidence of God working and was filled with joy. What excites you in life? Do you get excited about God working powerfully in the church and the lives around you?
- Barnabas was not only a great encourager, he was trustworthy. Are you one who encourages those around you? Or do you wait for them to encourage you? Are you the type people trust with their secrets, their resources, and their lives?

Herod Agrippa:

- Herod was most concerned about the praise of people and pleasing people. Do you allow the praise of people to direct your steps? Do you depend on other people’s praise rather than God’s? Are you more concerned about being popular with your friends than popular with God?
- Herod was willing to take credit and praise and put himself in the place of God. How do you handle the praise of men? Do you accept it willingly or do you realize that the credit goes to God?

“Meanwhile, the word of God continued to spread, and there were many new believers.” Acts 12:24

Want to take this message deeper?

Want to dive deeper in thought and application?

Go to our podcast on iTunes or our website at:

www.cwc.life/dive-deep