



For the week of May 22

Monday, May 23 — Acts 12



Chapter Summary: King Herod persecutes the church and kills James the Apostle. He puts Peter in prison. The church prays for his release and an angel comes to Peter in the night and sets him free. Peter is restored to the church while they are praying. Herod pridefully accepts honor due only to God and is struck dead. The word of God continues to spread and Saul and Barnabas return from Jerusalem and partner with John Mark.

Devotional: When James is killed and Peter is imprisoned, the church gathered to pray. As they prayed, an angel came to Peter in the night and walked out of the prison with him. Peter goes to the house where the Christians are praying and a servant girl answers the door. When she runs back to tell the others, they don't believe her. Even when they finally let Peter in, they are surprised.

Have you ever prayed for something and been surprised when God did what you asked Him to do? What can we do to strengthen our belief in God and His ability to answer our prayers?

Questions for more thought/discussion: We find that the church offered constant prayer for those who were preaching and teaching the gospel. How can we put this ministry of prayer into practice today?

Herod is killed because he accepted the praise people offered him. He did not ask for it, but they worshiped him like a god and he accepted it. We must be careful about what others say about us, even the good things! How can we guard against this kind of pride?



Tuesday, May 24 — Acts 13

Chapter Summary: God appoints Saul and Barnabas to a special mission. They leave with John Mark and on the island of Paphos, they confront Elymas the sorcerer. Mark leaves them and returns home. In Antioch of Pisidia, Paul preaches and meets opposition from the Jews so he turns to the Gentiles. The Jews stir up trouble and Paul has to leave the region.

Devotional: Paul and Barnabas are sent on a mission. This is often called Paul's First Missionary Journey. On a map, trace out their journey and notice how far God takes them.

Sometimes God wants us to take the gospel to far away places. Other times we need to share it with our next door neighbors. How can you be a missionary where ever you are? What do you need to do to be able to study the Bible with someone?

Questions for more thought/discussion: Paul caused the sorcerer Elymas to be blinded. This was Paul's way of teaching the proconsul a lesson about who to trust. What lesson did Paul want the official to learn? How did blinding Elymas show the power of God to the proconsul?



Wednesday, May 25 — Acts 14

Chapter Summary: Paul and Barnabas preach in Iconium but have to leave because of persecution. In Lystra Paul heals a crippled man and the crowd tries to worship Paul and Barnabas as gods. Paul used the opportunity to preach but after some Jews stirred up the crowd against him, Paul is stoned and left for dead outside the city. He and Barnabas returned to several churches and encouraged them before going to Antioch.

Devotional: Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch and reported on their mission work. What is a missionary? In what ways are missionaries today like Paul and Barnabas? How are they different? What mission works do you know about and how can you support their work?

Pray that God will bless the church with missionaries like Paul and Barnabas. Ask the Lord to bless all the mission works that you know about. Find out what mission works our congregation supports.

Questions for more thought/discussion: Paul and Barnabas spoke boldly to Jews and Greeks about Christianity. How can we practice that same evangelistic spirit today?

Since we don't have miraculous healings today to confirm the word, how does God demonstrate His power and the truth of His message to those who are interested in becoming Christians? How can we make sure to point people to the power of God, not our own power, to make the changes they need to make?



Thursday, May 26 — Acts 15

Chapter Summary: A dispute arises in the church over whether or not Gentiles must be circumcised. Paul and Barnabas oppose Judaizing brethren who try to bind the Old Law on Gentiles as necessary for salvation. The matter comes before the apostles and elders of the church in Jerusalem and is decided. A letter is sent to all the Gentile Christians explaining that they do not need to be circumcised. Paul and Barnabas have a personal disagreement and separate.

Devotional: Being united in Christ doesn't mean we always agree. In this chapter we see a disagreement over doctrine that is settled by the church and a personal disagreement that is settled among brethren. When it is a matter of doctrine, we appeal to the authority of God to decide what is right and wrong. That is what the church did in regard to the issue with the Gentiles. But Paul and Barnabas disagreed personally about John Mark. They couldn't find a way to agree and work together so they parted company but remained brethren. The work of the Lord was doubled as two missionary journeys happened now instead of one. What does this teach us about how to settle our disagreements? How can we work to preserve the unity of the brotherhood even when we disagree?

Questions for more thought/discussion: While some of the things mentioned for the Gentiles to do in Acts 15 are cultural and hard for us to relate to, sexual immorality is still very prevalent in our society today. How can we be careful to abstain from it and be an influence for the Lord in our culture today?

Why did Paul and Barnabas disagree over John Mark? How did they resolve their differences? What does 2 Timothy 4:11 teach us about how the situation ultimately was resolved?

Friday, May 27 — Acts 16



Chapter Summary: In Lystra, Paul and Silas add Timothy to their team. Paul is directed to go to Macedonia and teach the gospel. In Philippi, he converts Lydia and her household. After casting out an evil spirit from a slave girl, Paul and Silas are put in prison. The Lord releases them in a dramatic way and the jailer ends up becoming a Christian. Afterward, Paul and Silas are released.

Devotional: While in prison, Paul and Silas continue to sing songs and praise God. What could give them joy in such a difficult situation? The Bible notes that the other prisoners were listening to them. Even though they weren't directly preaching, their examples were teaching others. What influence can we have on others when we go through hard times? How can we show our faith on good days? How can we show our faith on bad days?

Questions for more thought/discussion: Paul added Timothy to the group because he wanted Timothy to join them. But later, when Paul wanted to go to Asia and preach, God did not allow them to do it. Sometimes what we want is in line with God's will or permissible in it and other times God does not allow us to pursue our own desires. How can we learn to tell the difference? What allows us to follow God even when we would like to do something different?

Join us all year as we read through the entire New Testament as a congregation. You can find each devotional guide online as well at www.hcofc.com.

