

A SEVEN-WEEK CHALLENGE FOR THE BOOK OF ACTS WEEK FOUR

Chapter Thirteen of the Book of Acts – Stepping Out

Section One: Vocabulary Activities (including an analogy game and a crossword puzzle) for these words: fast (verb), proconsul, oppose, deceit, mist, astonish, sabbath, sojourn, inheritance, condemn, execute, psalm, generation, justify, scorner.

Section Two: Questions to Investigate in Chapter Thirteen—

What difficult mission was given to Paul and Barnabas?

What happened to the deceitful sorcerer on Cyprus?

How did Paul appeal to his audience in Antioch Pisidia (now in Turkey)?

How did his listeners respond to the message?



Chapter Fourteen of the Book of Acts – Admiration or Rejection?

Section One: Vocabulary Activities (including an Odd Man Out Game and a spelling challenge) for these words: prejudiced, considerable, side with, shamefully, gaze, in the likeness, garland, sacrifice, nature, vain, restrain, sway, presume, commend.

Section Two: Questions to Investigate in Chapter Fourteen—

What did Paul and Barnabas do in each city, and who started chasing them?

What showed the small value of people's praise?

Why was Paul stoned?

What did the apostles do after their mistreatment in the three cities?



Chapter Fifteen of the Book of Acts – Acceptance and Freedom

Section One: Vocabulary Activities (including a crossword puzzle and modern little tale) for these words: debate, appoint, deliberate (verb), distinction, yoke, on the contrary, conclusion, abstain, defile, idol, immorality, strangle, unanimously, burden, essential.

Section Two: Questions to Investigate in Chapter Fifteen—

What big question was sharply debated?

How did the Jerusalem council reach a conclusion?

What did the council tell the Gentiles to avoid?

Why did two spiritual giants go their separate ways?

Chapter Sixteen of the Book of Acts – Spiritual Warfare

Section One: Vocabulary Activities (including an analogy game and tic tac toe) for these words: pronouncement, issue, boundary, divination, drag, advocate, magistrate, strip, rod, jailer, stocks, hymn, rouse, wound.

Section Two: Questions fo Investigate in Chapter Sixteen—

Whose home became the center for the outreach in Philippi?

Why did the slave girl's owners drag Paul and Silas before the city officials?

What did an earthquake cause at the prison?

What happened to the prison's jailer?



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1. **In Acts 13, mark the fifteen vocabulary words listed in #2.** Also note the previous words: *sorcerer (sorcery), summon, wickedness, crooked, exhortation (exhort), wilderness, testify, descendant, repentance (repent), salvation, tomb, witness, decay, disperse, convert, stir up, persecution.*

Acts 13:1-3, ¹ Now in the church at Antioch, there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen, who had grown up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² As they served the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Set Barnabas and Saul apart for the work to which I have called them.” ³ Then, after they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them off.

Acts 13:4-12, ⁴ So sent out by the Holy Spirit, Barnabas and Saul went down to Seleucia and sailed to Cyprus from there. ⁵ When they were at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was also accompanying them. ⁶ After they had crossed the whole island, they reached Paphos and found a Jewish sorcerer, a false prophet named Bar-Jesus. ⁷ He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of understanding. The proconsul summoned Barnabas and Saul and desired to hear the word of God. ⁸ However, Elymas the sorcerer (for his name is interpreted as such) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. ⁹ But Saul (who was also called Paul), filled with the Holy Spirit, stared straight at him ¹⁰ and said, “You son of the devil, you are full of deceit and wickedness and are the enemy of all righteousness. Will you not stop making crooked the right ways of the Lord? ¹¹ Now look, the hand of the Lord is on you, and you will be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.” Immediately a mist and darkness fell on him, and he went around seeking people to lead him by the hand. ¹² Then when the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, being astonished at the teaching about the Lord.

Acts 13:13-26, ¹³ Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them and returned to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ But Paul and Barnabas traveled from Perga to Antioch of Pisidia, and there they went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down. ¹⁵ After the reading of the law and the prophets, the leaders of the synagogue sent word to them, saying, “Brothers, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, then give it.” ¹⁶ Paul stood up and gesturing with his hand said, “Men of Israel and you Gentiles who fear God, listen: ¹⁷ The God of the people of Israel chose our forefathers and made the people great when they sojourned in the land of Egypt, and with a mighty arm he led them out of it. ¹⁸ For about forty years, he supported them in the wilderness. ¹⁹ When he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land for an inheritance, all of which took about 450 years. ²⁰ After these things, he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. ²¹ Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for a period of forty years. ²² When God had removed Saul, he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified, ‘I have found David the son of Jesse, to be a man after my heart, who will do all I want him to do.’ ²³ From this man’s descendants, God has brought Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised. ²⁴ Before Jesus’ coming, John preached the baptism for repentance to all the people of Israel. ²⁵ As John was fulfilling his work, he said, ‘Who do you suppose I am? I am not he. But look, after me one will come whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.’

26 Brothers, descendants of Abraham and those Gentiles among you who fear God, the message of this salvation has been sent to us.”

Acts 13:27-31, ²⁷ “The people living in Jerusalem and their rulers, not recognizing Jesus [as the Messiah] nor understanding the words of the prophets that are read every sabbath, fulfilled the prophecies by condemning him. ²⁸ Though they found no cause for his death, they asked Pilate to have him executed. ²⁹ When they had fulfilled all things that were written about him, they took him down from the tree [cross] and laid him in a tomb. ³⁰ But God raised him from the dead. ³¹ For many days he was seen by those who had accompanied him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to the people.”

Acts 13:32-39, ³² “We bring you good news about the promise made to our forefathers. ³³ God has fulfilled this promise in that he raised up Jesus. It is written in the second psalm, ‘You are my Son; this day I have fathered you.’ ³⁴ And concerning the truth that he raised him up from the dead, not to decay, he has spoken in this way: ‘I will give you the holy and sure promises made to David.’ ³⁵ He said also in another psalm, ‘You will not allow your Holy One to see decay.’ ³⁶ For after David had served the will of God in his own generation, he fell asleep and was buried with his ancestors, thereby seeing decay. ³⁷ But the One whom God raised up saw no decay. ³⁸ Know, therefore brothers, that forgiveness of sins through this man is proclaimed to you. ³⁹ By him everyone who believes is justified from all which the law of Moses could not justify you.”

Acts 13:40-41, ⁴⁰ “Watch out, therefore, that what was spoken by the prophets does not become true of you: ⁴¹ ‘Look, you scorners, wonder and perish, for I will do a work in your days that you will not believe at all, even if someone declares it to you.’”

Acts 13:42-52, ⁴² As they went out, the people begged that these things might be spoken about on the next sabbath. ⁴³ After the assembly dispersed, many of the Jews and devout Gentile converts followed Paul and Barnabas, who urged them to continue in the grace of God. ⁴⁴ The next sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of God. ⁴⁵ But when the Jews saw the crowd, they were filled with jealousy. They spoke against what Paul said, and they angrily criticized him. ⁴⁶ Then Paul and Barnabas said boldly, “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first. Seeing that you reject it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, we are turning to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷ For so the Lord has commanded us, saying [in Isaiah 49:6], ‘I have placed you to be a light to the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth.’”

⁴⁸ When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and praised the word of God, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. ⁴⁹ The word of the Lord was spread throughout all the region. ⁵⁰ But the Jews influenced the God-fearing women of high status and the chief men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas and drove them out of the region. ⁵¹ But Paul and Barnabas shook off the dust from their feet against them and traveled to Iconium. ⁵² The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

2. Read Acts 13 in your own language. Then play this quick matching game. Time yourself. Can you do it in three minutes?

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| _____ 1. fast (verb) | A. To be or act against |
| _____ 2. proconsul | B. Dishonesty, trickery, hiding the truth |
| _____ 3. oppose | C. An official in charge of a province in ancient Rome |
| _____ 4. deceit | D. To go without or limit one’s food or drink |

- _____ 5. mist
- _____ 6. astonish
- _____ 7. sabbath
- _____ 8. sojourn
- _____ 9. inheritance
- _____ 10. condemn
- _____ 11. execute
- _____ 12. psalm
- _____ 13. generation
- _____ 14. justify
- _____ 15. scorner

- E. The people whose births and deaths are close in time
- F. To carry out a death sentence from an authority
- G. A person who looks down on something as worthless
- H. A day of the week set apart for worship and rest
- I. Many tiny water droplets, limiting visibility
- J. To make righteous in God's sight (in this context)
- K. To greatly surprise, amaze
- L. Sentence to punishment or death
- M. A religious song, such as those in the Book of Psalms
- N. Items, such as money or property, received after a death
- O. To stay somewhere temporarily

(Answers are at the end.)

3. Try to use the new words to fill in the blanks without looking at #2 above.

- a. Before Paul and Barnabas left on their first missionary journey, the church at Antioch _____ and prayed for them.
- b. At Paphos on Cyprus, a wise _____ wanted to listen to Paul and Barnabas.
- c. However, a sorcerer _____ the message about Jesus.
- d. The sorcerer used _____ to try to keep the proconsul from believing the truth.
- e. God sent a _____ and darkness on the sorcerer, so he was without sight for a time.
- f. The proconsul was _____ by the Lord's message and power, so he believed in Jesus.
- g. In Antioch of Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas went to the Jewish synagogue on the _____.
- h. Paul began his message by talking about their forefathers' _____ in Egypt.
- i. He emphasized God's grace to them, such as giving Canaan to them as an _____.
- j. When the people _____ Jesus to die, they fulfilled prophecies about the Messiah.
- k. Pilate allowed Jesus to be _____ even though he knew Jesus was not guilty.
- l. Paul quoted from two of the Old Testament prophets and from two _____.
- m. King David died after he had fulfilled God's purpose in his _____.
- n. People can be _____ before God by accepting Jesus as their Savior.
- o. Despite Paul's warning, some Jews became _____ of the message of salvation.

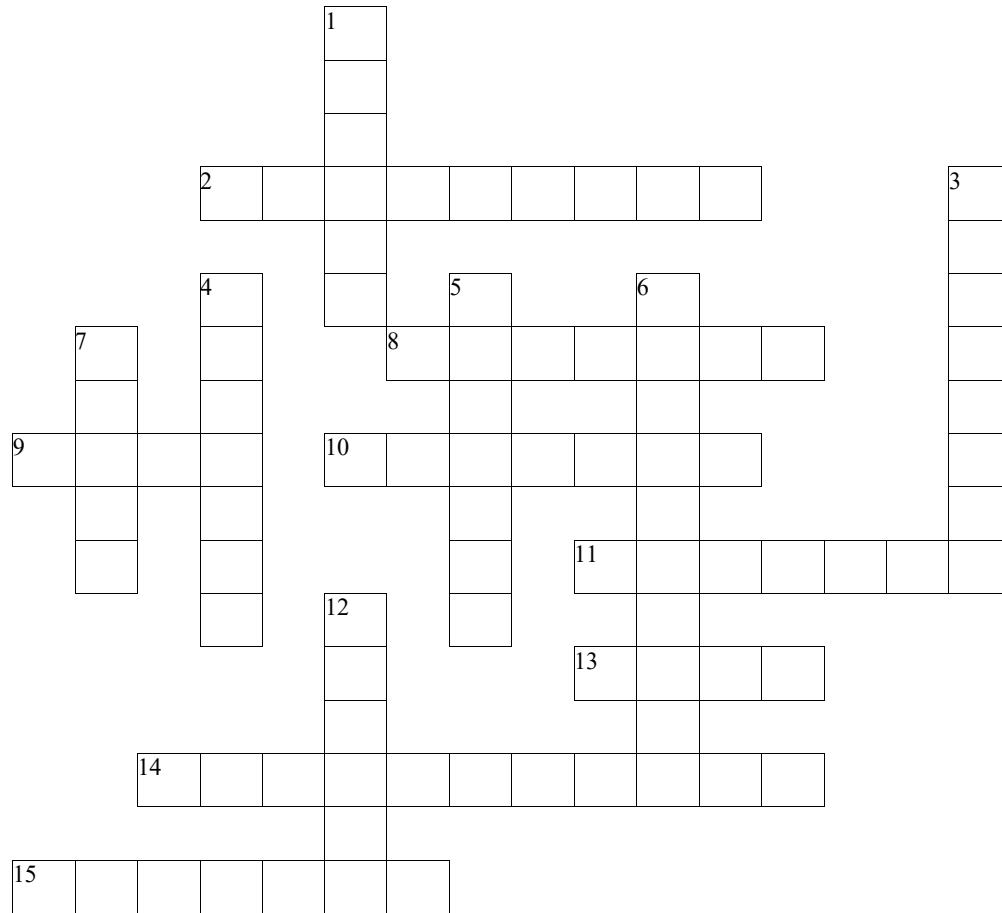
(Answers are at the end.)

4. An Analogy Game: Use thirteen of the vocabulary words to fill in the blanks.

- a. The Christian meeting day is to Sunday as the Jewish _____ is to Saturday.
- b. Exalt is to reward as _____ is to punishment.
- c. Hymns are to Fanny Crosby as _____ are to King David.
- d. A certificate is to marriage as a will is to _____.
- e. A decade is to ten years as a _____ is to seventy years (generally).
- f. Energy is to sunshine as water is to _____.
- g. Love is to hate as honesty is to _____.
- h. Admirer is to a skilled author as _____ is to a poor one.
- i. Travel is to journey as stay is to _____.
- j. Fork is to eat as sword is to _____.
- k. Sin is to make guilty as Jesus' sacrifice is to _____.
- l. Texas is to governor as Roman province was to _____.
- m. Laugh is to cry as support is to _____.

(Answers are at the end.)

5. Use the vocabulary words to fill in this crossword puzzle.



Across

- 2. A Roman governor of a province
- 8. Sentence to punishment or death
- 9. To go without food or drink
- 10. A person who considers something worthless
- 11. A day for worship and rest
- 13. Many fine droplets of water
- 14. Items received usually by a relative's death
- 15. To carry out a death sentence

Down

- 1. To be against something
- 3. To greatly surprise, amaze
- 4. To make righteous before God
- 5. To stay somewhere temporarily
- 6. A group of people living close in time
- 7. A religious song
- 12. Dishonesty, trickery

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Answers for the Matching Game: 1-D, 2-C, 3-A, 4-B, 5-I, 6-K, 7-H, 8-O, 9-N, 10-L, 11-F, 12-M, 13-E, 14-J, 15-G
(If you matched the words in three minutes, your fluency might astonish your friends! 😊)

Answers for the fill-in-the-blank exercise: a.) fasted b.) proconsul c.) opposed d.) deceit e.) mist f.) astonished
g.) sabbath h.) sojourn i.) inheritance j.) condemned k.) executed l.) psalms m.) generation n.) justified
o.) scorners

Answers for the Analogy Game: a.) sabbath b.) condemn c.) psalms d.) inheritance e.) generation f.) mist
g.) deceit h.) scorners i.) sojourn j.) execute k.) justify l.) proconsul m.) oppose

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Investigating Acts 13 Stepping Out

I. A Lighthouse

Acts 13:1-3, ¹ Now in the church at Antioch, there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen, who had grown up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² As they served the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Set Barnabas and Saul apart for the work to which I have called them.” ³ Then, after they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them off.

A. Barnabas’ real name was Joseph, but he was called Barnabas, “son of encouragement.”

1. He gave financially for God’s work. **Acts 4:36-37.**
2. He encouraged new Christians, standing up for Saul. **Acts 9:26-27**
3. He helped build up the church in Antioch. **Acts 11:23-26.**
4. Here he has become a partner in a difficult, long journey to preach about Jesus.

B. Manaen had been brought up with Herod Antipas. Herod Antipas killed John the Baptist and mocked Jesus. In 39 A.D., Herod Antipas was exiled having been accused of a plot. Compare Antipas’ worldly power with Manaen’s choice to follow Jesus. What matters most in life?

C. God gave Saul and Barnabas this special calling in about 46 A.D. Let’s look at Saul’s (Paul’s) early years: He was a Roman citizen and a Jew by birth. He came from Tarsus, an important city outside of Israel. He had studied under a famous Jewish teacher, Gamaliel, and was a Pharisee. He saw the resurrected Jesus. Then, he spent time alone with God and preached the gospel in Damascus, Jerusalem, and around Tarsus. He had met with Peter and James.

1. How had the experiences of Paul and Barnabas prepared them for the difficult missionary journey? When people are available to God, he makes good use of their experiences.
2. Paul may have been disappointed at being sent home from Jerusalem because of the danger there. (Acts 9:29-30.) But God’s plan was to use him even more in the future.

II. Proclaiming the Message in Cyprus

Acts 13:4-12, ⁴ So sent out by the Holy Spirit, Barnabas and Saul went down to Seleucia and sailed to Cyprus from there. ⁵ When they were at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was also accompanying them. ⁶ After they had crossed the whole island, they reached Paphos and found a Jewish sorcerer, a false prophet named Bar-Jesus. ⁷ He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of understanding. The proconsul summoned Barnabas and Saul and desired to hear the word of God. ⁸ However, Elymas the sorcerer (for his name is interpreted as such) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. ⁹ But Saul (who was also called Paul), filled with the Holy Spirit, stared straight at him ¹⁰ and said, “You son of the devil, you are full of deceit and wickedness and are the enemy of all righteousness. Will you not stop making crooked the right ways of the Lord? ¹¹ Now look, the hand of the Lord is on you, and you will be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.” Immediately a mist and darkness fell on him, and he went around seeking people to lead him by the hand. ¹² Then when the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, being astonished at the teaching about the Lord.

A. Saul and Barnabas began their outreach in Barnabas’s home province. What does this model for Christians? What is a good way to begin sharing with family and hometown friends?

B. From Acts 13:9 through the rest of Acts, Luke uses Saul's Roman name, which is Paulus, or Paul, instead of Saul, his name in Hebrew. Saul/Paul most likely decided to use his Roman name because he was being sent into the Roman Empire to reach Gentiles as well as Jews.

C. Why was temporary blindness suitable for Elymas? Was it possibly a blessing for him? Why?

III. Paul's Message in Antioch of Pisidia (which is now part of Turkey)

A. Paul spoke first about what he and his listeners agreed about. As he talked about their history, he pointed out God's grace, not punishment. Look at the verbs he used to do that in verses 17-23. **Acts 13:13-26, ¹³ Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them and returned to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ But Paul and Barnabas traveled from Perga to Antioch of Pisidia, and there they went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down. ¹⁵ After the reading of the law and the prophets, the leaders of the synagogue sent word to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, then give it." ¹⁶ Paul stood up and gesturing with his hand said, "Men of Israel and you Gentiles who fear God, listen: ¹⁷ The God of the people of Israel chose our forefathers and made the people great when they sojourned in the land of Egypt, and with a mighty arm he led them out of it. ¹⁸ For about forty years, he supported them in the wilderness. ¹⁹ When he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land for an inheritance, all of which took about 450 years. ²⁰ After these things, he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. ²¹ Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for a period of forty years. ²² When God had removed Saul, he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, to be a man after my heart, who will do all I want him to do.' ²³ From this man's descendants, God has brought Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised. ²⁴ Before Jesus' coming, John preached the baptism for repentance to all the people of Israel. ²⁵ As John was fulfilling his work, he said, 'Who do you suppose I am? I am not he. But look, after me one will come whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.' ²⁶ Brothers, descendants of Abraham and those Gentiles among you who fear God, the message of this salvation has been sent to us."**

A. Paul's listeners were probably nodding their heads as Paul reached the highest point of his history of God's kindness. What is the climax?

In verse 26, Paul gave his listeners the best possible news. How did he make it personal?

B. Paul dealt with the elephant in the room.

Acts 13:27-31, ²⁷ "The people living in Jerusalem and their rulers, not recognizing Jesus [as the Messiah] nor understanding the words of the prophets that are read every sabbath, fulfilled the prophecies by condemning him. ²⁸ Though they found no cause for his death, they asked Pilate to have him executed. ²⁹ When they had fulfilled all things that were written about him, they took him down from the tree [cross] and laid him in a tomb. ³⁰ But God raised him from the dead. ³¹ For many days he was seen by those who had accompanied him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to the people."

1. An obvious huge problem that people ignore is sometimes called "the elephant in the room." How did Paul answer the huge problem shown in Acts 13:27-28?
2. Paul pointed out the irony that the religious leaders had _____ the prophecies.
3. What did Paul give as the greatest proof that Jesus was the Messiah?

C. Acts 13:32-39, ³² “We bring you good news about the promise made to our forefathers. ³³ God has fulfilled this promise in that he raised up Jesus. It is written in the second psalm, ‘You are my Son; this day I have fathered you.’ ³⁴ And concerning the truth that he raised him up from the dead, not to decay, he has spoken in this way: ‘I will give you the holy and sure promises made to David.’ ³⁵ He said also in another psalm, ‘You will not allow your Holy One to see decay.’ ³⁶ For after David had served the will of God in his own generation, he fell asleep and was buried with his ancestors, thereby seeing decay. ³⁷ But the One whom God raised up saw no decay. ³⁸ Know, therefore brothers, that forgiveness of sins through this man is proclaimed to you. ³⁹ By him everyone who believes is justified from all which the law of Moses could not justify you.”

Paul’s core message was that Jesus is God’s _____, and he _____ from the dead. Through Jesus everyone can have salvation! No one can be _____ by keeping God’s commandments in the Law! This must have shocked many of his listeners!

D. Finally, Paul warned his listeners to think carefully about this life-and-death message. Acts 13:40-41, ⁴⁰ “Watch out, therefore, that what was spoken by the prophets does not become true of you: ⁴¹ ‘Look, you scorners, wonder and perish, for I will do a work in your days that you will not believe at all, even if someone declares it to you.’” This prediction also was being fulfilled unknowingly by those who opposed Jesus.

E. Acts 13:42-52, ⁴² As they went out, the people begged that these things might be spoken about on the next sabbath. ⁴³ After the assembly dispersed, many of the Jews and devout Gentile converts followed Paul and Barnabas, who urged them to continue in the grace of God. ⁴⁴ The next sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of God. ⁴⁵ But when the Jews saw the crowd, they were filled with jealousy. They spoke against what Paul said, and they angrily criticized him. ⁴⁶ Then Paul and Barnabas said boldly, “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first. Seeing that you reject it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, we are turning to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷ For so the Lord has commanded us, saying [in Isaiah 49:6], ‘I have placed you to be a light to the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth.’” ⁴⁸ When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and praised the word of God, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. ⁴⁹ The word of the Lord was spread throughout all the region. ⁵⁰ But the Jews influenced the God-fearing women of high status and the chief men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas and drove them out of the region. ⁵¹ But Paul and Barnabas shook off the dust from their feet against them and traveled to Iconium. ⁵² The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Paul and Barnabas traveled to the next city. What would many people have done instead? We may not always see God’s purpose as clearly as Paul and Barnabas, but God is always with his children. Trust and obedience to the Lord brings joy from his Spirit.

V. Making Memories

What is a key truth from Acts 13 that you want to remember?

Mark one important verse that will help you remember what took place in Acts 13.

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Vocabulary Activities for Acts 14
Admiration or Rejection?

1. **Hidden Treasure: In Acts 14, mark the fourteen vocabulary words listed in #2.** Also note these previous words: *reject, stir up, bold, testify, grant, wonder, portion, gospel, lame, womb, garment, generation, witness, exhort, suffering, and elder.*

Acts 14:1-7, ¹ At Iconium, Paul and Barnabas entered the Jewish synagogue, and as a result of the message they spoke, a large number of both Jews and Greeks believed. ² But the Jews who rejected their words stirred up the Gentiles and caused them to be prejudiced against the brothers. ³ Paul and Barnabas spent a considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who testified to the word of his grace, granting miraculous signs and wonders to be done through their hands. ⁴ But the people of the city were divided. Some of them sided with the Jews, and others with the apostles. ⁵ When a portion of both the Gentiles and the Jews urged their rulers to treat Paul and Barnabas shamefully and to stone them, ⁶ they became aware of it and fled to the Laconian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding region, ⁷ where they preached the gospel.

Acts 14:8–18, ⁸ At Lystra, a man was sitting whose feet were useless. He had been lame from his mother’s womb and had never walked. ⁹ While this man was listening to Paul, Paul gazed at him and saw that he had the faith to be healed. ¹⁰ Paul said with a loud voice, “Stand upright on your feet.” Then the lame man leaped up and began walking. ¹¹ When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they cried out in the Lycaonian language, “The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men.” ¹² They called Barnabas Zeus, and called Paul Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. ¹³ The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates in order for him and the crowd to offer a sacrifice to them. ¹⁴ But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard about it, they tore their garments and hurried into the crowd, crying out, ¹⁵ “Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with a nature just like yours. We bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. ¹⁶ In the previous generations, God allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. ¹⁷ Yet he did not leave himself without a witness, in that he did good and gave you rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling you with food and your hearts with gladness.” ¹⁸ With these words, they barely restrained the crowd from offering a sacrifice to them.

Acts 14:19-20, ¹⁹ Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came to Lystra. After swaying the crowd, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, presuming that he was dead. ²⁰ But as the disciples stood around him, he got up and reentered the city. The next day he traveled with Barnabas to Derbe.

Acts 14:21-28, ²¹ After they had proclaimed the good news in Derbe and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples and exhorting them to continue in the faith. They said, “We must enter the kingdom of God through many sufferings.” ²³ When they had appointed elders for them in each church and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord’s care, in whom they had believed.

²⁴ Then Paul and Barnabas passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. ²⁵ When they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. ²⁶ From there they sailed to

Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled. ²⁷ When they arrived and had gathered the church together, they reviewed all the things God had done through them and how he had opened a door of faith for the Gentiles. ²⁸ And they stayed quite a long time with the disciples there.

2. Read Acts 14 in your own language. Then play this quick matching game. Time yourself. Can you do it in three minutes or less?

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| _____ 1. prejudiced | A. Dishonorably, badly, disgracefully |
| _____ 2. considerable | B. To give up something of value, especially as an offering to God |
| _____ 3. side with | C. To look steadily at something |
| _____ 4. shamefully | D. A wreath made of flowers and leaves |
| _____ 5. gaze | E. To hold back or control, prevent |
| _____ 6. in the likeness | F. Characteristics, makeup, essence (in this context) |
| _____ 7. garland | G. Having an opinion not based on correct thinking; biased |
| _____ 8. sacrifice | H. Think something is true because of its probability |
| _____ 9. nature | I. Much, a large amount of, a large number of |
| _____ 10. vain | J. To favor one idea, action, or person over opposing ones |
| _____ 11. restrain | K. Entrust into someone's care (in this context) |
| _____ 12. sway | L. Being alike in some manner, looking like another thing |
| _____ 13. presume | M. To persuade, win over |
| _____ 14. commend | N. Useless, without value |

(Answers are at the end.)

3. Try to use the new words to fill in the blanks without looking at #2 above.

- The jealous Jews caused many people to be _____ against the message about Jesus.
- Even though Paul and Barnabas did miraculous signs in Iconium, part of the people _____ the Jews who opposed the apostles.
- Paul and Barnabas spent a _____ time in Iconium despite the opposition.
- When people threatened to treat them _____ and kill them, the apostles left Iconium.
- At Lystra, Paul _____ at a lame man to see if he had faith to be healed.
- Because of the miracle, a priest wanted to offer a _____ to Paul and Barnabas.
- The priest, who worshiped Zeus, brought oxen and _____ of flowers to the gate.
- The crowd believed the gods had come in the _____ of men.
- Paul told the crowd that he and Barnabas had the same _____ as every human.
- Paul said that the worship of the Greek and Roman gods was in _____.
- Paul's words eventually _____ the crowd from carrying out a sacrifice.
- The Jews who came to Lystra from previous cities _____ many people to turn against the apostles.
- The crowd who stoned Paul _____ he was dead, but he got up.
- After preaching in Derbe, Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch in order to strengthen the Christians and to _____ them in prayer to the Lord's care.

(Answers are at the end.)

4. Odd Man Out Game

Three words in each set have almost the same meaning. The Odd Man Out has a different meaning and does not belong to the set. Find all the words that are Odd Men Out without looking at the definitions in #2. You may use your dictionary if needed.

- a. Stare, gaze, perceive, look
- b. Vain, ignorant, useless, futile
- c. Garland, garden, wreath, lei
- d. Influence, persuade, sway, decide
- e. Restrain, hold back, guide, control
- f. Commend, recognize, commit, entrust
- g. Shamefully, dishonorably, disgracefully, disgustedly
- h. Likeness, kindness, resemblance, similarity
- i. Sacrifice, offer up, humiliate, give up

(Answers are at the end.)

5. A Spelling Challenge: Without looking at the exercises above, can you fill in the missing letters? 0-2 wrong = Fantastic; 3-4 wrong = Good; 5-7 wrong = Needs work; 8-12 = Ummm

- a. Re _ tr _ _ n = To hold back
- b. G _ _ _ _ = To look at steadily
- c. Sha _ _ fu _ _ y = Disgracefully
- d. S _ _ _ with = To favor a person or viewpoint
- e. L _ _ _ ness = Similarity, resemblance
- f. _ _ rlan _ = A wreath of flowers and leaves
- g. Com _ _ _ _ _ = Entrust
- h. Nat _ _ e = Characteristics, essence
- i. Pre _ _ d _ _ ed = Having an opinion not based on good thinking
- j. V _ _ n = Useless, without a good result
- k. Sa _ r _ _ _ ce = To give up something of value, especially as an offering to God
- l. S _ a _ = Persuade, win over, influence

Answers for the Matching Game: 1-G, 2-I, 3-J, 4-A, 5-C, 6-L, 7-D, 8-B, 9-F, 10-N, 11-E, 12-M, 13-H, 14-K (If you matched the words in three minutes or less, you have considerable ability in English!)

Answers for the fill-in-the-blank exercise: a.) prejudiced b.) sided with c.) considerable d.) shamefully e.) gazed f.) sacrifice g.) garlands h.) likeness i.) nature j.) vain k.) restrained l.) swayed m.) presumed n.) commend

Answers for the Odd Man Out Game: a.) perceive b.) ignorant c.) garden d.) decide e.) guide f.) recognize g.) disgustedly h.) kindness i.) humiliate

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Investigating Acts 14 Admiration or Rejection?

Background: After being forced out of the region of Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas traveled down from the mountains to three more cities in Galatia: to Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. Galatia was part of what is now Turkey. The date was about 47 A.D.

I. Success and trouble at Iconium

Acts 14:1-7, ¹ At Iconium, Paul and Barnabas entered the Jewish synagogue, and as a result of the message they spoke, a large number of both Jews and Greeks believed. ² But the Jews who rejected their words stirred up the Gentiles and caused them to be prejudiced against the brothers. ³ Paul and Barnabas spent a considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who testified to the word of his grace, granting miraculous signs and wonders to be done through their hands. ⁴ But the people of the city were divided. Some of them sided with the Jews, and others with the apostles. ⁵ When a portion of both the Gentiles and the Jews urged their rulers to treat Paul and Barnabas shamefully and to stone them, ⁶ they became aware of it and fled to the Laconian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding region, ⁷ where they preached the gospel.

A. The unbelieving Jews were upset by the teaching that people, even the Gentiles, could be saved without keeping the Old Testament Law. At the same time, most of the Gentiles would already have had their own belief system, such as belief in the Roman and Greek gods.

People who don't recognize any big problem with their lives often strongly defend their worldview. (Our worldview is how we see ourselves and the world. We base our whole life on our worldview.) **Luke 11:34-35,** ³⁴ "The lamp of your body is your eye. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but when it is diseased, your body is full of darkness. ³⁵ Watch out, therefore, that the light that is in you is not [actually] darkness." How does Jesus' analogy apply to worldviews?

Most people we know would not be upset by Paul's message about salvation by grace instead of the Old Testament Law. But aren't there some other worldviews that may cause people to reject Christ today? For example, what worldview causes many scientists to be very upset by the idea of intelligent design, i.e., that nature's design, such as DNA, points to an intelligent Designer? How would the false popular ideas of "follow your heart" and "believe in yourself" cause someone to reject the message of Christ? (Hint: See Jeremiah 17:9)

B. Despite the persecution and spiritual darkness, what did Paul and Barnabas do that took faith? (Acts 14:3)

C. The people opposed to the message were so closed-minded that they ignored or questioned the miraculous signs. They chose violence when they couldn't stop the Christian message.

II. Admiration at Lystra

Acts 14:8–18, ⁸ At Lystra, a man was sitting whose feet were useless. He had been lame from his mother's womb and had never walked. ⁹ While this man was listening to Paul, Paul gazed at him and saw that he had the faith to be healed. ¹⁰ Paul said with a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." Then the lame man leaped up and began walking. ¹¹ When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they cried out in the Lycaonian language, "The gods

have come down to us in the likeness of men.”¹² They called Barnabas Zeus, and called Paul Hermes, because he was the chief speaker.¹³ The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates in order for him and the crowd to offer a sacrifice to them.¹⁴ But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard about it, they tore their garments and hurried into the crowd, crying out,¹⁵ “Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with a nature just like yours. We bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.¹⁶ In the previous generations, God allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways.¹⁷ Yet he did not leave himself without a witness, in that he did good and gave you rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling you with food and your hearts with gladness.”¹⁸ With these words, they barely restrained the crowd from offering a sacrifice to them.

A. When God healed the lame man, he gave a sign to these people and to us. The author Luke later became a traveler with Paul. We can know this healing happened because Paul and Luke both devoted their lives to God, who does not approve lies.

B. What proof of his existence had God given to these people before they heard about Jesus?

In **Jonah 4:11** we again see God’s care for people who had not had the same opportunity as the Jews to know God. God said to the Old Testament prophet Jonah,¹¹ **“Should I not care about Nineveh, that great [Assyrian] city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know right from wrong, and also many cattle?”**

C. The crowds thought Paul and Barnabas were wonderful because the miracle seemed to support their beliefs and worldview at first. What shows that they did not want to change their minds?

1. What are a Christian’s responsibilities concerning the good news of Jesus?
2. What is in God’s hands?

III. Persecution at Lystra

Acts 14:19-20,¹⁹ Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came to Lystra. After swaying the crowd, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, presuming that he was dead.²⁰ But as the disciples stood around him, he got up and reentered the city. The next day he traveled with Barnabas to Derbe.

A. Antioch Pisidia was about ninety miles from Lystra, and Iconium was eighteen miles from Lystra. These Jews were angrily chasing Paul and Barnabas. The Jews believed in one Creator God and in the hope of a Messiah, but the believers in Zeus did not. What was strange about the Jews’ action? What was controlling them?

B. What do the actions of the crowd in Lystra tell us about seeking praise from people? Jesus said this about seeking honor from people for status: **John 5:44,**⁴⁴ **“How can you believe if you receive praise from one another, but do not seek the praise that comes from the only God?”**

When we are praised or criticized, we should remember Lystra! God’s opinion is what matters!

IV. Keeping on

Acts 14:21-28,²¹ After they had proclaimed the good news in Derbe and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch,²² strengthening the souls of the

disciples and exhorting them to continue in the faith. They said, “We must enter the kingdom of God through many sufferings.”²³ When they had appointed elders for them in each church and had prayed with fasting, they entrusted them to the Lord’s care, in whom they had believed.

²⁴ Then Paul and Barnabas passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. ²⁵ When they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. ²⁶ From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled. ²⁷ When they arrived and had gathered the church together, they reviewed all the things God had done through them and how he had opened a door of faith for the Gentiles. ²⁸ And they stayed quite a long time with the disciples there.

A. What especially shows that Paul and Barnabas did not give up in spite of hardship?

B. The writer of Hebrews said in **Hebrews 12:1-3**, ¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded with such a great cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily clings to us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, disregarding the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Think about him who suffered such opposition against himself by sinners, so that you do not become weary, fainting in your minds.

1. The Christian life is compared to a “race set before us.” In what ways are they the same?
2. What “joy” was set before Jesus as he faced his death and its shame? (Hint: What did his death do for us?) When Christians are persecuted for sharing their faith, what good thing is often taking place at the same time? (Think about how many people gained an eternal relationship with God through believing the gospel of Jesus that Paul proclaimed! Wow!)

C. While with his followers, Jesus said (**Luke 6:22-23**), “**Blessed are you when men hate you, and exclude you from their company, and insult you, calling you evil, on account of the Son of Man.** ²³ Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for your reward is great in heaven. . .”

V. Making Memories

What is a key truth from Acts 14 that you want to remember?

Mark one important verse that will help you remember what took place in Acts 14.

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Vocabulary Activities for Acts 15
Full Acceptance and Freedom in Christ

1. **Treasure Hunt: In Acts 15, mark the fifteen vocabulary words listed in #2.** Also note the previous words: *circumcised, Pharisees, sect, charge, gospel, testify, grace, wonder, restore, generation, sabbath, sacrifice, and commend.*

Acts 15:1-2, ¹ Now some men came to Antioch from Judea and taught the brothers, saying, “Unless you are circumcised following the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” ² Paul and Barnabas voiced strong disagreement and debated with them.

Acts 15:2-11, The brothers appointed Paul and Barnabas and some others in the church to go up to Jerusalem to ask the apostles and elders about this question. ³ Therefore, being sent off by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria and told how the Gentiles had come to faith. This caused all the believers to have great joy. ⁴ When they came to Jerusalem and were received by the church and the apostles and elders, they described all the things God had done through them. ⁵ But some men of the Pharisees’ sect who had believed stood up and said, “It is necessary to circumcise the Gentiles and to charge them to keep the Law of Moses.”

⁶ Then the apostles and elders gathered to deliberate about this matter. ⁷ After there had been much debate, Peter rose and said, “Brothers, you know that a good while ago God chose me from among you to give the Gentiles the gospel, and for them to believe. ⁸ God, who knows the heart, testified [to their salvation] by giving them the Holy Spirit, even as he did to us. ⁹ He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ Now, therefore, why do you test God by saying to put a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our forefathers nor we were able to bear? ¹¹ On the contrary, we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they are.”

Acts 15:12-20, ¹² All those gathered kept silent and listened as Barnabas and Paul reported the miraculous signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. ¹³ After they had finished, James responded: “Brothers, listen to me. ¹⁴ Simon [Peter] has described how God first came to the Gentiles to take a people for his name. ¹⁵ The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written,

¹⁶ ‘After these things I will return and rebuild the fallen tent of David;
And I will build again its ruins and restore it [King David’s family line], ¹⁷ So that
all other people may seek after the Lord—all the Gentiles who have my name,’

¹⁸ Says the Lord, who makes these things known from long ago.

¹⁹ “Therefore, my conclusion is that we should not trouble the Gentiles who turn to God, ²⁰ but that we write to them with instructions to abstain from eating what is defiled by idols, from sexual immorality, from eating food from strangled animals, and from blood.

²¹ For generation after generation has preached about Moses in every city, and he is read aloud in the synagogues every Sabbath.”

Acts 15:22-35, ²² Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leaders among the brothers. ²³ They wrote the following letter:

Greetings from the apostles and elders, your brothers, to the Gentile believers in

Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. ²⁴ Since we have heard that some men went out from among us, without any instruction from us, and have troubled you with their words, upsetting your minds, ²⁵ we have unanimously decided to choose men to send to you with our much-loved Barnabas and Paul, ²⁶ men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷ Therefore, we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will give you an oral report about these same things. ²⁸ For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything more than these essentials: ²⁹ that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.

³⁰ So when they were dismissed, they went down to Antioch; and having gathered all the believers together, they delivered the letter. ³¹ When it was read, they rejoiced at its encouragement. ³² Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words. ³³ After they had spent some time there, the church sent them back in peace to those who had sent them. ³⁵ But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, along with many others.

Acts 15:36-41, ³⁶ After some days, Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us return now and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord to see how they are doing.” ³⁷ Barnabas wanted take John, who was called Mark, with them too. ³⁸ But Paul thought it would not be good to take someone who had left them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them in the work. ³⁹ They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted ways. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, ⁴⁰ but Paul chose Silas and set out, being commended to the grace of the Lord by the brothers. ⁴¹ He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

2. **Read Acts 15 in your own language. Then play this quick matching game.** Time yourself. Can you do it within three minutes?

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| _____ 1. debate | A. Necessary; cannot be without; vital |
| _____ 2. appoint | B. All of a group in agreement about something |
| _____ 3. deliberate (verb) | C. A difference between similar things |
| _____ 4. distinction | D. To keep completely from doing something |
| _____ 5. yoke | E. To kill by squeezing the neck |
| _____ 6. on the contrary | F. To discuss or argue in which people give different opinions |
| _____ 7. conclusion | G. A wooden piece put on animals’ necks; a troublesome burden |
| _____ 8. abstain | H. A decision or realization based on reasons |
| _____ 9. defile | I. To harm the beauty or goodness of something; to ruin |
| _____ 10. idol | J. To consider carefully and deeply |
| _____ 11. immorality | K A load, weight; something hard to carry or bear |
| _____ 12. strangle | L. Sin; action breaking standards of right living |
| _____ 13. unanimously | M. To assign; to choose for a task |
| _____ 14. burden | N. Connecting words saying the opposite is true |
| _____ 15. essential | O. A false god, often with a likeness made of some material |

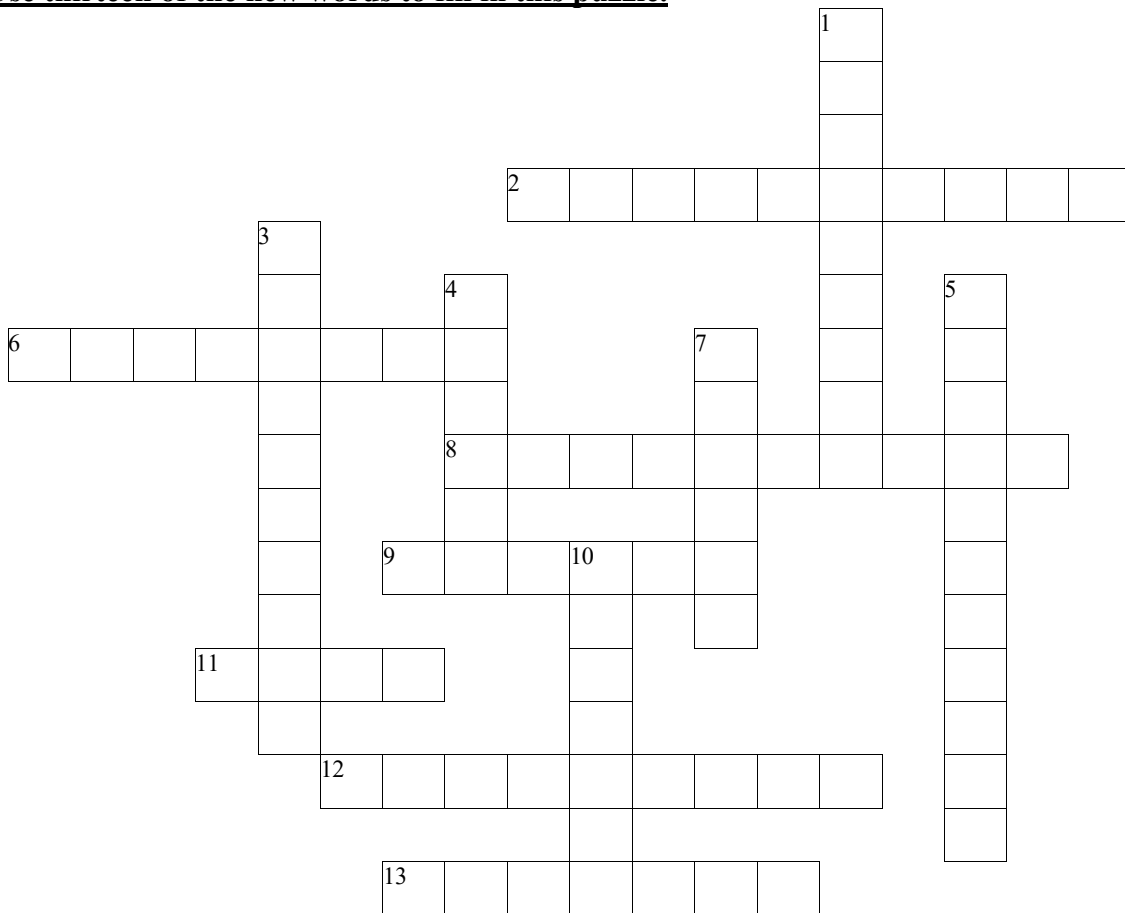
(Answers are at the end.)

3. **Try to use the new words to fill in the blanks without looking at #2 above.**

- Paul and Barnabas _____ with the teachers who were mistaken about the gospel.
- The Antioch church _____ Paul and Barnabas to go to Jerusalem.

- c. The leaders in the Jerusalem church _____ on the question about the Gentiles.
 d. Peter said that God didn't make a _____ in his treatment of the Jews and Gentiles.
 e. Requiring Gentiles to follow the Mosaic Law would put a _____ on them too heavy to bear.
 f. "_____", Peter said, "we believe we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus."
 g. James reached the _____ that the Gentiles should not have to obey the Mosaic Law.
 h. The worship of _____ gives the honor that belongs to the true God to false gods.
 i. The council instructed the Christians to _____ from eating food offered to idols.
 j. The Jews believed idols _____ anything offered to them.
 k. The Jews were also opposed to eating meat from animals that had been _____.
 l. The council further instructed the Christians to abstain from sexual _____.
 m. The church _____ decided to send Judas and Silas with Paul and Barnabas.
 n. The Gentiles rejoiced that they would not have the _____ of the Mosaic Law.
 o. The Christians were happy to follow the _____ practices given in the letter.
 (Answers are at the end.)

4. **Use thirteen of the new words to fill in this puzzle.**



Across

2. To consider carefully and deeply
 6. To kill by squeezing the neck
 8. Action breaking standards of right living
 9. To discuss with differing opinions
 11. A wooden piece put on animals' necks
 12. All being in agreement
 13. To keep completely from doing something

Down

1. A necessary item
 3. A decision or realization based on reason
 4. To harm the goodness of something
 5. A difference between similar things
 7. A load that is hard to carry
 10. To assign; to choose for a task

5. **Use each of the new words except *idol* to complete this little tale.**

- a. Mary Sue and her two friends, Jean and Laura, _____ exploring the cave they had found on a hike in the Ozark foothills. Mary Sue said a cave that was all above ground would be better than the cave they had found. Jean, who always talked like a college professor, said, “_____ , you silly goose, we don’t need to make such a _____. If the cave’s downward slant is gentle and we take _____, like flashlights and a rope, we’ll be safe enough.”
- b. “We have to take water and food too,” said Mary Sue, but Jean laughed and replied that food was too much of a _____ to carry. But she _____ Mary Sue to bring six water bottles for them. When Mary Sue frowned, Laura volunteered to carry three of them. The girls _____ a little more about the adventure and then _____ came to the _____ that they would explore the cave the next day and have fun doing it.
- c. The exploration started out well, but after fifteen minutes, Jean took the rope off her shoulders, complaining that it was like a _____. She deposited it in the middle of the cavern’s floor. “We’ll follow the cave’s wall, so we don’t lose our way back,” she said with a shrug. Of course, they soon got lost. Mary Sue muttered to Laura that she would like to _____ Jean with the rope. However, they both knew she didn’t mean it. Even the idea of such gross _____ made Mary Sue feel a little _____. However, when they were finally rescued two days later by a search party, Mary Sue promised herself to _____ from any more risky adventures with Jean.

(Answers are at the end.)

Answers for the Matching Game: 1-F, 2-M, 3-J, 4-C, 5-G, 6-N, 7-H, 8-D, 9-I, 10-O, 11-L, 12-E, 13-B, 14-K, 15-A (If you matched the words within three minutes, my conclusion is that you studied these words.)

Answers for the fill-in-the-blank exercise: a.) debated b.) appointed c.) deliberated or debated d.) distinction e. yoke or burden f.) On the contrary g.) conclusion h.) idols i. abstain j.) defiled k.) strangled l.) immorality m.) unanimously n.) burden or yoke o.) essential

Answers for the little tale: a.) debated or deliberated, On the contrary, distinction, essentials. b.) burden, appointed, deliberated or debated, unanimously, conclusion. c.) yoke, strangle, immorality, defiled, abstain.

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Investigating Acts 15 Full Acceptance and Freedom in Christ

I. The Disagreement

Acts 15:1-2, ¹ Now some men came to Antioch from Judea and taught the brothers, saying, “Unless you are circumcised following the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” ² Paul and Barnabas voiced strong disagreement and debated with them.

A. These Jewish Christians claimed that the Jews had to obey the Old Testament rules and the Gentiles had to become Jews in order to be saved. (They didn't argue about Jesus being the Son of God, dying for sins, or rising from the dead because they all agreed about those basics.)

These Jews may have also gone to the new churches in Galatia, which Paul and Barnabas had begun, and claimed their beliefs were the correct ones and even that they had more authority.

B. Paul responded to this problem in his letter to these churches. First, he stated his own _____ . **Galatians 1:1, ¹ Paul, an apostle—not from men, neither through man—but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.**

Then he told how the leaders in the Jerusalem church had agreed with his teaching.

Galatians 2:2-3, 9, ² I went there [to Jerusalem] because of a revelation, and I privately met with those of good reputation in order to present the gospel which I have been preaching among the Gentiles. I wanted to make sure I was not running, or had run, in vain. ³ But not even Titus, who was with me, was made to be circumcised although he was a Greek . . .

⁹ When they realized the grace that was given to me, James, Peter, and John, who have the reputation as church pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcision [Jews].

C. He quoted Scripture to demonstrate that faith in Jesus makes us righteous, not the Old Testament Law. Here is part of what Paul referred to in the Old Testament. **Galatians 3:6-8, ⁶ Even as [it is written], “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” . . . ⁸ The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, announced the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “Through you all the nations will be blessed.”** Jesus is Abraham's descendant, through whom all are blessed by belief in the gospel.

D. Paul firmly corrected the people who were accepting wrong ideas about this absolute truth. **Galatians 3:1-3, ¹ Oh foolish Galatians, who has cast a spell on you? . . . ² I would learn only this from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by faith in what you heard? ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now perfected by the flesh [self-effort in keeping the Law]?**

E. Paul told how to walk in freedom and please God: **Galatians 5:13-24, ¹³ For you, brethren, were called to be free. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh [old nature], but through love, be servants to one another. ¹⁴ For the whole law is fulfilled in one expression: You shall love your neighbor as yourself . . . ¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not fulfil the wrong desires of the flesh . . .**

II. The Final Answer to the Disagreement

A. **Acts 15:2-11, The brothers appointed Paul and Barnabas and some others in the church to go up to Jerusalem to ask the apostles and elders about this question. ³ Therefore, being**

sent off by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria and told how the Gentiles had come to faith. This caused all the believers to have great joy. ⁴ When they came to Jerusalem and were received by the church and the apostles and elders, they described all the things God had done through them. ⁵ But some men of the Pharisees' sect who had believed stood up and said, "It is necessary to circumcise the Gentiles and to charge them to keep the Law of Moses."

⁶ Then the apostles and elders gathered to deliberate about this matter. ⁷ After there had been much debate, Peter rose and said, "Brothers, you know that a good while ago God chose me from among you to give the Gentiles the gospel, and for them to believe. ⁸ God, who knows the heart, testified [to their salvation] by giving them the Holy Spirit, even as he did to us. ⁹ He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ Now, therefore, why do you test God by saying to put a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our forefathers nor we were able to bear? ¹¹ On the contrary, we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they are." Peter's words show the importance of God's sign to the Jews when Cornelius and the other Gentiles were saved.

B. The Council's Decision and Instruction

Acts 15:12-20 All those gathered kept silent and listened as Barnabas and Paul reported the miraculous signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. ¹³ After they had finished, James responded: "Brothers, listen to me. ¹⁴ Simon [Peter] has described how God first came to the Gentiles to take a people for his name. ¹⁵ The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written,

¹⁶ 'After these things I will return and rebuild the fallen tent of David;
And I will build again its ruins and restore it [King David's family line], ¹⁷ So that
all other people may seek after the Lord—all the Gentiles who have my name,'
¹⁸ Says the Lord, who makes these things known from long ago.

¹⁹ "Therefore, my conclusion is that we should not trouble the Gentiles who turn to God, ²⁰ but that we write to them with instructions to abstain from eating what is defiled by idols, from sexual immorality, from eating food from strangled animals, and from blood. ²¹ For generation after generation has preached about Moses in every city, and he is read aloud in the synagogues every Sabbath."

1. The final answer: Turning to God and trusting Jesus as Savior + nothing else = Salvation
2. James (Jesus' half-brother and a leader of the Jerusalem church) accepted Peter's words. He also paid attention to the words of _____ and _____ and to the Scripture. The council's openness to listen to each other and to think carefully confirmed an essential truth and prevented an early church division!
3. As well as telling the Gentiles to avoid sexual sin, the council asked them to follow some rules about eating so that their habits would not disgust the Jewish Christians.
4. The effects of this council have continued through the centuries. It affirmed that we cannot earn salvation by any good works! In Christ, we are fully accepted and loved!

D. Acts 15:22-35, ²² Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and

Barnabas, namely, Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leaders among the brothers. ²³ They wrote the following letter:

Greetings from the apostles and elders, your brothers, to the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. ²⁴ Since we have heard that some men went out from among us, without any instruction from us, and have troubled you with their words, upsetting your minds, ²⁵ we have unanimously decided to choose men to send to you with our much-loved Barnabas and Paul, ²⁶ men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷ Therefore, we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will give you an oral report about these same things. ²⁸ For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything more than these essentials: ²⁹ that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.

³⁰ So when they were dismissed, they went down to Antioch; and having gathered all the believers together, they delivered the letter. ³¹ When it was read, they rejoiced at its encouragement. ³² Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words. ³³ After they had spent some time there, the church sent them back in peace to those who had sent them. ³⁵ But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, along with many others.

III. A Separation

Acts 15:36-41, ³⁶ After some days, Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us return now and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord to see how they are doing.” ³⁷ Barnabas wanted take John, who was called Mark, with them too. ³⁸ But Paul thought it would not be good to take someone who had left them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them in the work. ³⁹ They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted ways. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, ⁴⁰ but Paul chose Silas and set out, being commended to the grace of the Lord by the brothers. ⁴¹ He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Even two spiritual giants did not agree about everything. Although there may have been some sadness in the parting of ways, we can see some good results:

1. Two teams set out instead of just one.
2. Barnabas was able to help John Mark grow in his relationship with God. Mark later wrote the third book in the New Testament. We can see Paul’s later approval of John Mark as a helpful, fellow worker in Colossians 4:10, Philemon 24, and II Timothy 4:11.
3. I Corinthians 9:6 helps show that Paul and Barnabas continued to care about each other.

IV. Making Memories

What is a key truth from Acts 15 that you want to remember?

Mark one important verse that will help you remember what took place in Acts 15.

*Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version, with the English updated to modern usage. The NET Bible® was consulted from time to time to confirm or adopt apt words or phrases.

1. **Treasure Hunt: In Acts 16 mark the fourteen vocabulary words listed in #2.** Also note the previous words: *vision, conclude (conclusion), presume, proclaim, salvation, charge, cell.*

Acts 16:1-5, ¹ Paul came to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple named Timothy was there, the son of a Jewish lady who was a believer, but whose father was a Greek. ² The Christians at Lystra and Iconium gave a good report of Timothy. ³ Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, so he circumcised him because of the area's Jews, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. ⁴ As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered the pronouncements which the apostles and elders at Jerusalem had issued for the Gentile believers. ⁵ So the churches were strengthened in the faith and daily increased in number.

Acts 16:6-10, ⁶ They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been prevented by the Holy Spirit from speaking the word in the province of Asia [now part of Turkey]. ⁷ When they came to Mysia's boundary, they planned to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them to do so. ⁸ Passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. ⁹ A vision appeared to Paul in the night, in which a man of Macedonia was standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰ After Paul had seen the vision, we immediately sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the good news to them.

Acts 16:11-15, ¹¹ Therefore, setting sail from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, ¹² and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city in the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony. We stayed in this city for some days. ¹³ On the sabbath day we went outside the city gate to the side of a river, where we presumed there would be a place of prayer. We sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered. ¹⁴ A woman named Lydia, a seller of purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, a worshiper of God, listened to us. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. ¹⁵ After she and her household were baptized, she urged us, "If you consider me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay in my house." And she persuaded us.

Acts 16:16-21, ¹⁶ As we were going to the place of prayer, a young woman having a spirit of divination met us. She brought her masters much money by fortune telling. ¹⁷ She followed Paul and us and kept crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming the way of salvation to you." ¹⁸ She did this for many days. But Paul, being greatly troubled, turned and said to the spirit, "I charge you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out of her at once.

¹⁹ But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the authorities. ²⁰ When they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, "These men are Jews and are exceedingly troublesome for our city. ²¹ They are advocating customs which are not lawful for us Romans to accept or put into practice."

Acts 16:22 –25, ²² The crowd rose up against them too. The magistrates ordered for Paul and Silas to be stripped of their clothes and beaten with rods. ²³ After having Paul and Silas struck many times, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them securely. ²⁴ The jailer, receiving such a charge, put them into the inner cell and fastened

their feet in the stocks. ²⁵ But about midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

Acts 16:26-34, ²⁶ Suddenly there was so great an earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. Immediately all the doors flew open, and everyone's chains were loosed. ²⁷ The jailer, being roused out of sleep and seeing the prison doors open, drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸ But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here."

²⁹ The jailer called for lights and rushed in. Trembling, he fell down at the feet of Paul and Silas. ³⁰ Then bringing them outside, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

³¹ They answered, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household." ³² Paul and Silas spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. ³³ He took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds. He and all those with him were baptized immediately. ³⁴ Then he brought them into his house and set food before them. Having believed in God, he and all his household rejoiced greatly.

2. **Read Acts 16 in your own language. Then play this quick matching game.** Time yourself. Can you do it in less than three minutes?

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| _____ 1. pronouncement | A. A person in charge of a jail or of prisoners |
| _____ 2. issue (verb) | B. Awaken from sleep |
| _____ 3. boundary | C. To remove all clothes or covering from |
| _____ 4. divination | D. A block of wood with holes to bind a prisoner's hands or feet |
| _____ 5. drag | E. An authoritative announcement, a formal statement |
| _____ 6. advocate (verb) | F. To recommend something; to promote |
| _____ 7. magistrate | G. A religious song |
| _____ 8. strip | H. An injury, such as one that cuts the skin |
| _____ 9. rod | I. An official who administers the law |
| _____ 10. jailer | J. The outer edge of an area that divides it from other areas |
| _____ 11. stocks | K. An attempt to get information by supernatural means |
| _____ 12. hymn | L. A straight, round stick used for punishment; a pole |
| _____ 13. rouse | M. To put out or send out a publication or an official order |
| _____ 14. wound (noun) | N. To pull along with force |

(Answers are at the end.)

3. **Try to use the new words to fill in the blanks without looking at #2 above.**

- Paul and Silas delivered the _____ to the churches from the Jerusalem council.
- These had been _____ to keep the Gentiles from being burdened by the Mosaic Law.
- After being stopped at Mysia's _____, Paul and his companions went on to Troas.
- In Philippi, an evil spirit enabled a slave girl to practice _____.
- After Paul freed the girl from the spirit, her masters _____ Paul and Silas to the marketplace.
- The girl's masters said that Paul and Silas were _____ unlawful customs.
- The _____ ordered that Paul and Silas be beaten and imprisoned.
- Paul and Silas were _____ of their clothes.
- Then they were struck many times with _____.
- The _____ locked Paul and Silas in the inner cell to make sure they did not escape.

- k. Their feet were fastened into _____, which increased their pain.
 l. In spite of their terrible condition, Paul and Silas prayed and sang _____.
 m. An earthquake _____ the jailer from sleep.
 n. After calling on Jesus to be his Savior, the jailer washed the men's _____.
 (Answers are at the end.)

4. **Analogy Game:** Think about how the first pair of words are related, and then fill in the blank with the best vocabulary word to relate the last pair in the same way.

- a. Yoke is to neck as _____ are to hands and feet.
 b. Pray is to prayer as sing is to _____.
 c. Zookeeper is to a zoo as _____ is to a prison.
 d. Witch is to a spell as an evil spirit is to _____.
 e. Brush is to paint as _____ is to beat.
 f. Resuscitate is to death as _____ is to sleep.
 g. Principal is to school rules as _____ is to the law.
 h. Shove is to push as _____ is to pull.
 i. Peel is to skin as _____ is to clothes.
 j. Edge is to yard as _____ is to country.
 k. Dislike is to hinder as like is to _____.
 (Answers are at the end.)

5. **Play this tic, tac, toe game with a friend (or even by yourself to test your memory).** Instead of using X or O, write the vocabulary word in the square that matches the meaning. Don't look at the vocabulary list above, and write the words from memory. Three in a row wins the game, but even one mistake makes the other person win.

religious song	to recommend, to promote	wooden block with holes for feet
authoritative announcement	straight, round stick	to send out, to put out
an injury	fortune-telling	an official who administers the law

Answers for the Matching Game: 1-E, 2-M, 3-J, 4-K, 5-N, 6-F, 7-I, 8-C, 9-L, 10-A, 11-D, 12-G, 13-B, 14-H (If you matched the words in three minutes, I pronounce your English ability to be superb!) ☺

Answers for the fill-in-the-blank exercise: a.) pronouncement b.) issued c.) boundary d.) divination e.) dragged f.) advocating g.) magistrates h.) stripped i.) rods j.) jailer k.) stocks l.) hymns m.) roused n.) wounds

Answers for the Analogy Game: a.) stocks b.) hymn c.) jailer d.) divination e.) rod f.) rouse g.) magistrate h.) drag i.) strip j.) boundary k.) advocate

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Investigating Acts 16 Victory in Warfare

I. The Start of the Second Missionary Journey (50 A.D.)

A. Acts 16:1-5, ¹ Paul came to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple named Timothy was there, the son of a Jewish lady who was a believer, but whose father was a Greek. ² The Christians at Lystra and Iconium gave a good report of Timothy. ³ Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, so he circumcised him because of the area's Jews, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. ⁴ As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered the pronouncements which the apostles and elders at Jerusalem had issued for the Gentile believers. ⁵ So the churches were strengthened in the faith and daily increased in number.

1. When Barnabas and Paul disagreed, they formed two teams. Barnabas took John Mark, and Paul took Silas. The teams delivered the letter from the council saying that Gentiles did not have to keep the Mosaic Law and that salvation came by faith in Jesus alone.
2. Paul returned to Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium. In Paul and Barnabas's first visit to these cities, there had been good responses but also much danger and even suffering.
 - a. In Iconium there had been a plot to _____ them on their first visit.
 - b. In Lystra, Paul had healed a lame man. At first the crowd thought Paul and Barnabas were gods. But after jealous Jews came from Iconium, the crowd _____ Paul. What does Paul's return to these dangerous cities show about Paul and about God's plan?
3. Timothy didn't have to be circumcised to be a true Christian. Why did Paul circumcise him? Hint: See I Corinthians 9:19-21. It's also significant that his mother was a Jew. Timothy became one of Paul's closest companions and partners in ministry. Since Paul addressed him as "my true son in the faith" in I Timothy 1:2, it is likely that he became a Christian when Paul preached in Lystra on his first journey.

B. Acts 16:6-10, ⁶ They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been prevented by the Holy Spirit from speaking the word in the province of Asia [now part of Turkey]. ⁷ When they came to Mysia's boundary, they planned to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them to do so. ⁸ Passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. ⁹ A vision appeared to Paul in the night, in which a man of Macedonia was standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰ After Paul had seen the vision, we immediately sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the good news to them.

1. What change in pronouns do you see? What does this tell us?
2. Paul started to go farther into Asia, but that wasn't God's plan for them. (Others did go later. See I Peter 1:1) It's important to stay close to God to be led by his Spirit.
3. Why might Paul have needed a vision? Visions are rare (even for Peter and Paul). God usually shows his followers the best plan through the Bible, prayer, counsel from others, a sense of peace, and their desires to serve God to fill a need that they have seen. Can you share a time God has guided you by using one of these ways?

II. Making Contacts in a New Place

Acts 16:11-15, ¹¹ Therefore, setting sail from Troas, we ran a straight course to

Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis,¹² and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city in the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony. We stayed in this city for some days.¹³ On the Sabbath day we went outside the city gate to the side of a river, where we presumed there would be a place of prayer. We sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered.¹⁴ A woman named Lydia, a seller of purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, a worshiper of God, listened to us. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.¹⁵ After she and her household were baptized, she urged us, "If you consider me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay in my house." And she persuaded us.

Ten Jewish men were required in order to hold a synagogue meeting. If there was no synagogue, the few Jews in the city would gather for prayer, often near a river. Since Paul always wanted to give his people, the Jews, a chance to believe, he sought out the faithful Jews in Philippi. The salvation of Lydia and her household was a small beginning compared to the numbers Paul had spoken to on the Sabbath days during his first journey, but God cares about people, rather than numbers. He also provided a place for Paul, Luke, Timothy, and Silas to stay.

III. Conflict

Acts 16:16-21,¹⁶ As we were going to the place of prayer, a young woman having a spirit of divination met us. She brought her masters much money by fortune telling.¹⁷ She followed Paul and us and kept crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming the way of salvation to you."¹⁸ She did this for many days. But Paul, being greatly troubled, turned and said to the spirit, "I charge you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out of her at once.

¹⁹ But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the authorities.²⁰ When they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, "These men are Jews and are exceedingly troublesome for our city."²¹ They are advocating customs which are not lawful for us Romans to accept or put into practice."

A. The slave girl was able to tell the future because an _____ spirit gave her information. Why do you think this source of the slave girl's true words troubled Paul?

B. Let's look at the response of the slave girl's owners.

1. They were upset by their loss of _____.
2. They ignored logic. Paul's message was about God, who was more _____ than the evil spirit. They should have followed the more powerful One. (See **Luke 11:21-22.**)
3. They didn't care at all for the girl's life as a slave both to people and to an evil spirit.
4. They told a _____ about Paul and Silas, who were not teaching unlawful customs. Neither the Jewish religion nor the Christian beliefs had been outlawed at that time.

IV. Facing Trouble and Pain

Acts 16:22-25,²² The crowd rose up against them too. The magistrates ordered for Paul and Silas to be stripped of their clothes and beaten with rods.²³ After having Paul and Silas struck many times, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them securely.²⁴ The jailer, receiving such a charge, put them into the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.²⁵ But about midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

Let's look at why Paul and Silas prayed and sang hymns in such a terrible situation. Paul wrote later while imprisoned in Rome: **Ephesians 3:8**, ⁸ **To me, less than the least of all the saints, was the grace given to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ to the Gentiles.** Paul and Silas had real joy in carrying out God's _____ for their lives. God had called them to Macedonia. They knew they were where God wanted them to be.

Paul lived at the turning point in history. He had one of the greatest missions of all time. Of course, he had no idea that his life and letters would be used by God for two-thousand years. God also has grand purposes for us, and our lives will have lasting effects as we trust and obey God.

V. God's Response

Acts 16:26-34, ²⁶ Suddenly there was so great an earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. Immediately all the doors flew open, and everyone's chains were loosed. ²⁷ The jailer, being roused out of sleep and seeing the prison doors open, drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸ But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here."

²⁹ The jailer called for lights and rushed in. Trembling, he fell down at the feet of Paul and Silas. ³⁰ Then bringing them outside, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

³¹ They answered, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household." ³² Paul and Silas spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. ³³ He took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds. He and all those with him were baptized immediately. ³⁴ Then he brought them into his house and set food before them. Having believed in God, he and all his household rejoiced greatly.

A. Satan wasn't allowed to have the final victory. The prison stood on God's _____! Why do you think the other prisoners didn't run away? Why was the jailer ready to believe in Jesus? How did he change?

B. Sometimes we may feel trapped—almost like being in prison—because we have too much pressure, trouble, heartache, or disappointment, but God, who loves us perfectly, is all-powerful. He can deliver us and use our trouble as a testimony to others of his reality and care. **I John 5:4**, ⁴ **For whoever is born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.**

VI. The Magistrates' Response

Acts 16:35-40 tells how officers brought an order to release Paul and Silas. Paul told the officers that they were Roman citizens and had been unlawfully punished. He demanded an apology, which the magistrates then gave. After Paul and Silas encouraged the believers, they left the city.

VII. Making Memories

What is a key truth from Acts 16 that you want to remember?

Mark one important verse that will help you remember what took place in Acts 16.

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