



LIFEgroup Discussion Questions
Politics, Parasites, and Progress
July 17, 2016

Text: Acts 12. 20-25

1. After Herod's death, Luke makes it clear that "the word of the Lord continued to grow and be multiplied." This happened during a time when there were major political changes happening as well as a famine (see Acts 11:28). What is it about the Gospel message and/or such difficult periods of history that allow God's word to spread? What are the elements of today's world, if any, that cause you to see this as a difficult period of history for God's word to spread? To what degree does this passage renew or restore your hope in the spread of God's word today?
2. This passage features a "progress report" similar to other sections in Acts (e.g., 6:7, 19:20). In what ways do such moments rely on the "no namers" God uses? Does anyone have a story from their life or the life of a family which revolves around God's use of a "no namer" who played an important role in the spread of God's word? ("No namers" were referenced earlier in the book of Acts by Pastor Jerry; they are those people who are not specifically named in the text yet were used by God.)
3. Jeremiah quotes God as follows: "Is not my word like fire," declares the Lord, "and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?" (Jeremiah 23:29). In what ways are such qualities of value when we consider the growth and multiplication of God's word in a culture which is not friendly to it?
4. The storyline of Acts 12 features some of the worst elements of politics: a ruler who was willing to sacrifice individuals in order to gain favor with the influential group that hated them, an assistant who likely required a bribe in order to arrange an audience with his boss, and people who seemingly worshipped a ruler as a god. Rather than simply look for present-day equivalents in our modern politics, consider what this chapter teaches us about how to engage in and respond to "politics as usual."
5. Herod Agrippa's death symbolizes in some ways the basic problem of our lives and our society: the desire to "keep up appearances" on the outside while we are dying on the inside because we fail to care for the "internal life of our heart and mind" --- the way we think, the affections of our heart, the things we value and worship, and so on. If/when we fail to care for our heart and mind as God calls us to do so, evil desires take root and conceive sin, and sin gives birth to death (James 1:13-15). Take some time to discuss this principle by identifying an evil desire, the sin to which it gives birth, and the "death" to which it leads (e.g., the evil desire to protect self above all else can lead to many sins, one of which is lying – to protect one's self from trouble – which typically leads, among other things, to the death of trust in a relationship.)
6. Gates serve to protect by keep intruders out and/or keeping that which is valued safely "in." Consider Matthew 16:18 when Jesus told Peter that the gates of Hades would not be able to overcome or overpower the church. Acts 12 features both a literal moment in verse 10 and a more figurative picture in verse 24 of "gates" which could not withstand the power of the body of Christ. What is it that Satan seeks to protect with the figurative "gates of Hades?" Consider the big picture of what we've learned thus far in the book of Acts to identify what elements equip the church to be able to break through the gates of Hades and make a difference in this world.

Pray.