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OPEN DOORS AND OPPOSITION

ACTS 14



Trials and triumphs. Paul's first missionary journey was a tale of extremes. Yet, when he and Barnabas returned from their journey, they reported back full of excitement to the church which sent them out. God had done tremendous things: many who heard believed, churches were established, elders were appointed, their messages were accompanied by miracles, and the Word of God spread ... but not without *great* opposition.

INDECISION IN ICONIUM (14:1-7)

1. Paul and Barnabas “spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed”. That sounds like some powerful speaking! Describe what you think that type of speaking was like and why, as a result, “a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed”. How do other texts like 1 Corinthians 2 help inform our understanding of what this means?
2. How involved was the Lord in this work? How would you describe this type of holy partnership? Does this fulfill any promises the Lord made to the Apostles?
3. What impact did the message of the apostles have on the city of Iconium? Is it ever ok to flee persecution? What results are persecutions like these causing in Acts? Any patterns?

LAUDED AT LYSTRA, THEN STONED (14:8-23)

Versatility. This first missionary journey of Paul is marked by the apostle's ability to adapt himself to different situations; he appears to be equally at ease with individuals and crowds, Jews and Gentiles, the religious and irreligious, the educated and uneducated, the friendly and the hostile. The responses were as varied as the hearers.

4. Do you suppose this crippled man was a "fixture" in the city of Lystra whom everyone knew and saw regularly? Sound similar to the any other accounts in Acts? What impact could his healing have on the hearts of those hearing the message spoken by Paul and Barnabas? Was this man's heart open to the gospel? What evidence is there in the text?
5. Describe Paul and Barnabas' response to the city's attempt to deify them for their miracles and list the key points of their gospel message.

"A DOOR OF FAITH OPENED" (14:24-28)

Among the most notable features of this first missionary journey was the missionaries' sense of divine direction. It was the Holy Spirit of God himself who told the church of Antioch to set Barnabas and Saul apart, who sent them out, who led them from place to place, and who gave power to their preaching so that converts were made and churches planted. The sending church had committed them to the grace of God for their work and, on their return, reported all God had done. The grace had come from him; the glory must go to him.

6. Pretend you are a new believer of the good news about Jesus spoken by Barnabas and Paul. You now witness his stoning and the events afterward, what are you thinking? Are you emboldened or defeated, scared or excited, or all the above, why?
7. How did the Apostles shepherd the new believers? Did they abandon them? Describe the route the Apostles took back to Antioch. What purpose did that serve? How is this being a good Shepherd? Hint: What did they do along the way?