

BELIEVING THE PRAYERS YOU PRAY

ACTS 11-12

I. ICEBREAKER: Think of one memory in the past year where you realized: “Isn’t God good?!”

II. REMAIN TRUE TO THE LORD WITH ALL YOUR HEART

Acts 11:19-26 **19** Now those who had been scattered by the **persecution** that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. **20** Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. **21** The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

22 News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. **23** When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. **24** He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. **25** Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, **26** and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

1. How was God’s hand with them in time of persecution?
2. How did the persecuted believers’ actions show that they remained true to the Lord? What were the outcomes?

III. GOD IS WALKING YOU OUT OF A HARD SPOT BEFORE YOU RECOGNIZE IT

Acts 11:27-30 **27** During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. **28** One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe **famine** would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) **29** The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. **30** This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

3. What can we learn about our God who sent Agabus to foretell of the severe famine?
4. What does God say about helping one another in time of need? (Acts 20:35, Romans 12:13, James 2:14-17)
5. Why would help from the Antioch Gentiles to Judea Jewish believers be considered significant?

Acts 12:1-11 **1** It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to **persecute** them. **2** He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. **3** When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. **4** After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover. **5** So Peter was kept in prison, but **the church was earnestly** praying to God for him. **6** The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. **7** Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.

8 Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." And Peter did so.

*“Wrap your cloak around you and follow me,” the angel told him. **9** Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. **10** They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him. **11** Then Peter came to himself and said, “Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod’s clutches and from everything the Jewish people were hoping would happen.”*

6. How did God deliver Peter from prison?

7. What did Peter learn from this deliverance experience?

8. What does God promise in time of persecution? (Matthew 5:10, II Corinthians 12:9-10)

9. Can you describe a time when God intervened when others were praying for you?

IV. GOD IS ANSWERING YOUR PRAYERS AS YOU PRAY, NOT AFTER YOU HANG UP

Acts 12:12-19 **12** When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. **13** Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer the door. **14** When she recognized Peter’s voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, “Peter is at the door!” **15** “You’re out of your mind,” they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, “It must be his angel.” **16** But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. **17** Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. “Tell James and the other brothers and sisters about this,” he said, and then he left for another place. **18** In the morning, there was no small commotion among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter. **19** After Herod had a thorough search made for him and did not find him, he cross-examined the guards and ordered that they be executed.

10. Why were all the people (Peter, Rhoda and the people in the house) astonished when God delivered Peter while they were praying?

11. Have you been astonished when you have prayed, and realized later that all the while God was intervening? Have you prayed all the while not believing God will intervene, but God intervened anyway? What did you learn?

V. PRAY TO THE TRUE GOD & DON'T MAKE YOURSELF GOD

Acts 12:20-24 *Then Herod went from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there. **20** He had been quarreling with the people of Tyre and Sidon; they now joined together and sought an audience with him. After securing the support of Blastus, a trusted personal servant of the king, they asked for peace, because they depended on the king's country for their food supply. **21** On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. **22** They shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man." **23** Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died. **24** But the word of God continued to spread and flourish.*

12. Who was Herod's god? How did he display himself? What lesson came out of Herod's demise?

13. How was Herod's demise beneficial to the church? (12:23-24)

14. God's movements of blessings and judgment can be discerned in our world today. How ought they shape our world view and values?

15. Living as we do in a secular anti-Christ world; how should we behave as mature believers?