



Day 11: January 21
Read Acts 12:1-25

GREEKS

But while Peter was in prison, the church prayed very earnestly for him. Acts 12:5

In college, one of the best times of the year was the fall. Freshmen scurried around campus trying to find their classes and organizations bribed the student body with free food in hopes of drawing in new members. But one of the most interesting sights was watching the Greeks. Hundreds of students made their way to fraternity and sorority houses to “rush.” They were willing to endure almost anything in order to belong, to be a part of something bigger than themselves. We aren’t so different. We all long to be apart of something bigger, something that matters.

In Acts 12 we get a glimpse of the ultimate society, the church. Read Acts 12:5 again. The chapter goes on to tell the amazing story of God setting Peter free from prison, but the miracle doesn’t start with the appearance of an angel, it starts with a group of people called the church.

We are apart of that same ancient society. The church was designed to be so much more than a college fraternity. It was created to be a place where people could live life together. It was created to be a place where everyone is welcome, a place to love, laugh, cry and hurt as one. The early church understood that through the good and the bad times they would devote themselves to praying for each other. Today we are still committed to praying for one another.

NOTES:

Prayer Focus: Take a few moments to pray for someone specific in the church: a member of your small group, a volunteer you see each week, someone who is hurting.



Day 12: January 22
Read Acts 13:1-52

SALVATION

For the Lord gave us this command when he said, “I have made you a light to the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the farthest corners of the earth.” When the Gentiles heard this, they were very glad and thanked the Lord for his message; and all who were chosen for eternal life became believers. So the Lord’s message spread throughout that region. Acts 13:47-49

Acts 13 chronicles the Apostle Paul’s first missionary journey after Jesus’ death and resurrection. Paul and Barnabas are led by the Holy Spirit as they head off into the countryside to bring the good news. Their journey led them through Paphos, and then onto Perga, and eventually to the inland port of Antioch of Pisidia.

One of the most encouraging things about Paul’s time in Pisidia was his bold preaching of the Word. He clearly makes no apologies for what the Holy Spirit has asked him to do. Paul has followed God’s plan and first preached to the Jews. And in verse 46 he decides to bring the good news to the Gentiles, in order to fulfill the prophecy from Isaiah 49 that commands us to “bring salvation to the farthest corners of the earth.”

God clearly called Paul to preach first to the Jews, then Gentiles, and finally the entire world. Our calling in life is not to just reach those around us, but instead to take the light that God has given us and bring it to the farthest corners of the world. Paul’s journeys are a perfect example for us. He had an unflinching commitment to bring the good news to the world. His light shined brightly; how bright is your light shining?

NOTES:

Prayer Focus: Ask God to help you in your effort to shine brightly for Him. Boldly ask God to show you what practical steps you can take in your life, that will bring His good news to the farthest corners of the Earth.



Day 13: January 23
Read Acts 14:1-28

HUMAN

Friends, why are you doing this? We are merely human beings - just like you! We have come to bring you the Good News that you should turn from these worthless things and turn to the living God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them. Acts 14:15

If you walk into a Bed, Bath, & Beyond, and go to the kitchen organization section, you will find a line of products made by the company simplehuman®. This company was created upon the premise that we as humans are not perfect and need help with organization and efficiency. Their products are designed specifically to reduce the number of ordinary mistakes that we make on a daily basis, because we are “simply human.” Their dish rack is designed to dry your dishes faster, their paper towel holder is guaranteed to not unravel, and their trash cans have a special finish that won’t smudge or leave fingerprints. Now their \$200 trash can may not fit into your budget, but the point is, they realize that human beings, even at their best, will always be human.

Paul and Barnabas in their wisdom realized their “humanity” in verse 15. They knew the only power they had to change lives, or to proclaim the Good News, was through the living God.

As we continue to move through God’s Unfolding Story in our own lives and in the life of WRCC, we expect God to move. That expectation does not come from the belief we have in ourselves as human beings, but through our faith in God. We know that God can use our weaknesses for His strength, and use our shortcomings to further his Kingdom.

NOTES:

Prayer Focus: Pray that as God unfolds His story here at WRCC, we will trust that He can work through the humans of our church to do the things that He planned for us long ago. Ask God to give you the faith that you need to believe that He can work through you to further the Kingdom.



Day 14: January 24
Read Acts 15:1-41

WILL?

God knows people’s hearts, and he confirmed that he accepts Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he cleansed their hearts through faith. ...We believe that we are all saved the same way, by the undeserved grace of the Lord Jesus. Acts 15:8-9, 11

This chapter starts off with a disagreement and we are shown how these differences can be handled in a Christian manner...they chose to seek godly council, to not get caught up in doing their own will but God’s will. How many times do we go into a situation with our own agendas? Do we seek Him for direction and answers in all circumstances? If we allow the Holy Spirit to lead our decisions, our paths will be drawn closer to His plan instead of our own agenda or will.

We don’t need to get caught up in earthly plans while here on earth. There are many issues that can take our focus off our Heavenly Father; how we want things done or if something being done isn’t done our way. Instead of focusing on a law, rule, or opinion of man, we should have our daily focus on the end goal, and that is to bring people to Jesus. Jesus doesn’t give us what we deserve, praise the Lord. Instead, because of His love and mercy, He extends undeserved grace to all who believe. So, the next time something is not going the way you think it should, just ask yourself “does this really matter in the big scheme of things?” May your hearts be filled totally with His will instead of man’s will.

NOTES:

Prayer Focus: Pray for our entire congregation to strive to do His will and not to let our human ways get in the way of doing God’s work. Pray that He will give each one of us the strength and wisdom to finish our earthly race with boldness. Ask God to help us share His good news with everyone we come in contact with and that they will see Jesus in our actions and deeds.



Day 15: January 25
Read Acts 16:1-40

REPRISALS

The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten...(and) thrown into prison. Acts 16:22, 23

How do you react when someone belittles the faith? What do you do or say when an unbeliever criticizes you for being a believer? How puzzling it is that we are so concerned about what others think of us, that we are willing to keep silent when our faith is assailed. Paul and Silas were not only criticized, but beaten and jailed. Yet they were still able to give voice to their faith. The events of that incident lead the jailor to confess Christ and be baptized in the middle of the night! No one can say that if you are bold when your faith is attacked that your assailant(s) will be converted. But no one can say they won't, either. We never know, at the time, how effective our boldness will be. Our motivation to be bold in our faith is not in how effective we may judge those efforts to be, but a simple conviction to our stated beliefs and a desire to obey the tenets of discipleship. Ours is not to demand, or even plan on, success from our vocalized convictions, but to simply obey Jesus in sowing the seed of faith. (See Matthew 13:3-23).

NOTES:

Prayer Focus: Pray for strength of spirit to remain firm in conviction when there are occasions of opposition to your expressions of faith.

January 26 & 27

WEEKEND REFLECTIONS



SUNDAY SERMON NOTES:
