

Bible Study Group Notes

Acts 14.8-20

THE BIG PICTURE

Paul and Barnabas have moved on from Iconium to Lystra. When a man who has never walked is healed, the crowd concludes that the missionaries are gods in human form and prepares to offer sacrifices to them.

Paul and Barnabas urgently reject this worship. They are ordinary human beings, bringing good news that calls people to turn from worthless things to the living God. He is the Creator, whose generosity is seen in rain, fruitful seasons, food and gladness.

The crowd is difficult to restrain, and later turns against Paul after opponents arrive from Antioch and Iconium. He is stoned and left for dead, yet rises and continues his journey. The passage shows both the danger of misplaced worship and the instability of human approval.

INVESTIGATE

Read Acts 14.8-20.

1. What does Luke tell us about the man in verses 8-10? What happens when Paul speaks to him?
2. How does the crowd explain the healing in verses 11-13? What do they intend to do?
3. How do Paul and Barnabas respond in verses 14-15? What do they insist the crowd must understand about them?
4. What change are they calling for in verse 15? How does their description of God challenge the crowd's beliefs?
5. What do verses 16-17 say about God's dealings with the nations? In what ways has he left a witness to himself?
6. Compare this speech with Acts 13:16-23, where Paul addresses a synagogue. Why might he begin differently when speaking to the people of Lystra?
7. What happens in verses 18-20? What does this reveal about the crowd's response and the opposition to Paul's ministry?

REFLECT & APPLY

Feel free to choose the questions that will be most helpful for your group, allowing time for prayer.

8. Which good things can most easily take God's place in our lives? How might we recognise when enjoyment or gratitude has become misplaced worship?
9. How can noticing God's everyday gifts lead us to worship him more deliberately? What have you received from him this week?
10. What might turning to the living God involve for someone today? What might need to change in their loyalties, habits or hopes?
11. How can we appreciate Christian leaders without giving them the place that belongs to God? What should leaders do when attention centres on them?
12. What can we learn from Paul's approach about speaking to people with little knowledge of the Bible? How can we begin where they are while still calling them to turn to God?
13. How much does other people's approval shape your decisions? How does Paul's experience help put praise and rejection in perspective?
14. Where do you need to turn afresh from something you have treated as ultimate, and trust the living God?

PRAY

- Praise the living God who made heaven, earth and sea, and thank him for his daily generosity.
- Confess the ways we give created things the place that belongs to God.
- Ask that our church and its leaders would direct attention towards God and make the good news of Jesus clear.
- Pray for faithfulness when we face either praise or rejection, and for those suffering because they speak about Christ.

NB The Church Prayer Pointers for October are available in church or on the WhatsApp group.