

Small Group Meeting on Acts 11:19 – 12:25

Review (20 mins)

Reflect together on your experiences over the last week. What has God been teaching you? Where have you been growing in your walk with Him? Had you set yourself a challenge in your discipleship? How is that going? Share those experiences with your small group.

Read (10 mins)

Recap on the sermon from last Sunday. Try to give a summary to those who were not able to be present.

Acts 11:19 – 12:25

Read the Bible passage for this week, slowly and prayerfully. It might help to use your imagination to picture the scene. Below, you will find helpful background information in our 'Setting the Scene' section.

As you read, look out for *shockers* and *blockers*.

Shockers – a phrase, word, image or something from the text that resonates, stands out or connects with you.

Blockers – something from the text that raises questions for you.

Reflect (20 mins)

After you have all had time to read the text, pause and be still to listen to God through the Scriptures.

Begin your reflection time by each naming your *shockers* and *blockers*. Listen carefully to each other, share your thoughts and reflect on this passage together.

You might also like to explore these questions:

Q1. What can we learn about God's dealings with us from what happened to these early Christians?

Q2. How does the example of Barnabas inspire you?

Q3. What lessons can we learn from the story of Peter's miraculous deliverance from prison? Notice the all-too-human details that ring so true.

Respond (20 mins)

As you draw near to the end of your session, consider how you might respond to your reading and reflection by "walking the talk". What are you going to be doing this week that will help you seal the faith you have? It may be a challenge or activity that you are currently engaged with over many weeks. Be prepared to share how you are growing in that.

Some new challenge ideas

1. Barnabas (11:23-24) exhorted them all "to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith." Literally he encouraged them with all the resolve and determination of their hearts to 'stick to'/'hold fast to' Jesus. Share ideas on how you all can do this better.
2. Would you consider trying to follow the advice of Brother Lawrence on practising the presence of God?

The first is a great purity of life; in guarding ourselves with care lest we should do or say or think on anything which might be displeasing to God; and when any such thing happens, in taking heed to repent thereof, humbly begging his forgiveness.

The second is a great faithfulness in the practice of his presence, in keeping the soul's gaze fixed on Jesus in faith, calmly, humbly, lovingly, without allowing an entrance to anxious thoughts.

Make it your study, before taking up any task, to look to Jesus, be it only for a moment, as also when you are engaged thereon, and lastly when you have performed the same. And forasmuch as without time and with great patience this practice cannot be attained, be not disheartened at your many falls; truly

this habit can only be formed with difficulty, yet how great will be your joy therein!

Those who set out upon this practice let me counsel to offer up in secret a few words, such as “My God, I am wholly thine. O God of love, I love thee with all my heart. Lord Jesus, make my heart even as thine.” Or such other words as love prompts on the instant. But take heed that your mind wanders not back to the world again; keep it fixed on Jesus alone, so that, thus subdued by the will, it may be constrained to abide in Jesus.

This practice of the presence of God is somewhat hard at the outset, yet pursued faithfully, it works imperceptibly within the soul most marvellous effects; it draws down God’s grace abundantly and leads the soul insensibly to the ever-present vision of Jesus, loving and beloved, which is the most spiritual and most real, the most free, and the most life-giving manner of prayer.

Remember that to attain to this state, we must mortify the senses, inasmuch as no soul, which takes delight in earthly things, can find full joy in the presence of Jesus; to be with him we must leave behind the creature.

3. Barnabas was a man ‘full of the Holy Spirit’. The preacher suggested that nothing is more guaranteed to grieve and/or quench the Holy Spirit in our lives than failing to show agape love, the love that never gives up, is always forgiving, wears no masks, is never judgemental and utterly selfless. If we are to honour Jesus in our human relationships we need to get better at agape-loving. What do you think God is prompting you to work on in your life?

Group Prayer

As a group, pray for one another this week as you explore a deeper life with God through prayer. Pray that your times of prayer and your attempt to walk in the light of God’s ways will increase and become more habitual throughout each day.