

CALVARY CHAPEL COSTA MESA

– COMMUNITY GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE –

Studies in the Book of Acts

“The Word Increased & Multiplied” – Acts 12

MAIN IDEA

Normally we think of skepticism in the context of secularism and atheism. There are large sections in the Christian bookstore dedicated to answering the questions of critics or competitors to the Gospel. This kind of hesitation of belief and faith has really plagued humanity since the beginning of time. Even as God walked in the cool of the garden with Adam and Eve, the seed of doubt was powerful enough for them to second guess the promises of God. Unfortunately, free-will doesn't go away once you become a Christian. There are still everyday moments when the follower of Christ must decide whether they can trust God in a situation, or whether they should try to safely handle it on their own. The story in Acts twelve almost reads as if God and Luke are painting a picture so daunting, that there would be no way any natural explanation could explain the outcome. How many guards, chains, kings, crowds, etc. before the impossibility of the situation seems ridiculous. The reader can take heart that they are not alone in their daily struggle of doubt. Even Peter thought he was dreaming, the disciples thought Rhoda was crazy, and Herod blamed and executed his soldiers. The message is clear, God is patient in spite of our fears, He takes the initiative when we hesitate, and “The word of God will continue to grow and multiply.”

SCRIPTURAL INSIGHT

The death of Herod Agrippa is such an unusual and dramatic story. Considered by Rome as a figure head or puppet king of the Jews, his sin violated the first of the ten commandments. Almost cast as possible retribution for his persecution of the church, the event is significant because it is attested to by sources outside of the Bible. Luke records that Herod was struck by an angel and eaten by worms. Josephus, the first century historian, cites this account in chapter 19 of *Antiquities* as, “He was also gripped in his stomach by an ache that he felt everywhere at once and that was intense from the start.” While we may not have the specific medical diagnosis, history confirms the supremacy of God.

READ & DISCUSS

Read out loud together 12, paying special attention to the way God worked in spite of the believer's slow response. They modeled prayer very well, but *what can we learn from their expectations?*

Acts 12:24 *But the word of God grew and multiplied.*

- Note all the occurrences of the word, *angel* in this chapter. It is the Greek word ἄγγελος. While it certainly can refer to heavenly beings, it literally means, “messenger.” *Why does God use angels in this story? What message were they bearing? How did Peter's account of his freedom change each time? Who was given the glory? What was wrong with the early church's belief about angels in this chapter? What is the source of Christianity's theology of angels? Why should we limit the sources? Read Galatians 1:6-9. What are some doctrines of angels that believers should be wary of?*
- While the Christians prayed, God answered prayer in ways that didn't line up with their initial hopes. **Read Daniel 3:17-18, Isaiah 45:6-7 & Luke 12:4-12.** *Why was Peter spared and James wasn't? Why is it important or not for Christians to have all the answers to pain and suffering? How was that quest a temptation for Adam and Eve? What does God really want from us in the midst of life's circumstances? How can a believer be a witness in life and prosperity and also pain and death?*

RESOURCE

Fox's Book of Martyrs by John Fox. Bridge-Logos, 2001. <https://www.amazon.com/Foxes-Book-Martyrs-Pure-Classics/dp/0882708759>

PRAYER & TESTIMONY



Community Group Discussion Guide

Based on Pastor Brian Brodersen's message from April 8, 2018.

Watch: <https://cccm.com/teaching/the-spirit-the-church-and-the-world/video/the-word-of-god-increased-and-multiplied/>