

▼ Building Up The Church - Part 4

Rocklyn Clarke Sr. - Sunday February 28, 2021

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• Read the Passage: Acts 14

At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed. But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders. The people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles. There was a plot afoot among the Gentiles and Jews, together with their leaders, to mistreat them and stone them. But they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding country, where they continued to preach the good news.

In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked. He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk.

When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker. The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them.

But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: "Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them. In the past, he let all nations go their own way. Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy." Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them.

Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead. But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.

They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said. Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust. After going through Pisidia, they came into Pamphylia, and when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.

From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

▼ Sermon's Purpose (what listeners should do)

- Observe how the early church was built up.
- Understand the phases of the church-building process.
- Going on a field trip with God.

- The Cost of the Good News
- Work the System
- ▶ Contrast this process with other stories:
- ▶ Setup for Next Week:
- ▶ **Observe how the early church was built up.**
- ▶ **Understand the phases of the church-building process.**
- ▶ **Going on a field trip with God**
- ▼ **The Cost of the Good News**
 - ▼ What is God trying to accomplish / show us in Acts 14?
 - God wants to build up the church.
 - Our salvation is the result of others who built up the church before us.
 - The gospel has power and it both draws people to Jesus and generates opposition. Those who proclaim the gospel should be prepared for success and opposition.
 - People who respond to the gospel need to be nurtured and folded into an existing congregation or formed into a new congregation.
 - When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another.
 - Jesus died in order to complete the Good News.
 - ▼ Paul, Barnabas, and other apostles were willing to die in order for the message to get to us.
 - People who keep pursuing a behavior despite persecution are motivated by something important enough to make them overlook their own self-interest.
 - How do we treat the message?
- ▼ **Work the System**
 - ▼ Bearing Fruit
 - Parable of the sower - Matthew 13:1-23
 - ▼ Ladder of Abstraction
 - concrete language
 - ▼ Physical Fitness:
 - You can't achieve it using only words like: fitness, health, flexibility, strength.
 - You must use words like: reps, squats, presses, push-ups, speed, incline, etc.
 - ▼ Education

- You can't achieve it using only words like: education, knowledge, learning, understanding.
- You must use words like: add, multiply, conjugate, microscope, experiment, essay, verb, noun, translate.
- ▼ Farming: seed, sower, scattering, harvesting
 - What is a crop and how do I know when I've produced one?
- ▼ Fishing: nets, fisherman, lake or sea, boat
 - What is a fish and how do I know when I've caught one?
 - How do I know when I've cooked one?
- ▼ An Apostolic Approach
 - a team: Paul & Barnabas
 - a calling: "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul . . .". (Acts 13:2)
 - a field: various cities
 - a message: "The Kingdom of God is here"
 - a method of delivery: synagogue first, then Gentiles
 - a method of reaping the harvest: invite listeners to follow Jesus
 - a method of processing the harvest: "strengthening the disciples and forming churches"
- ▼ A Relational Approach
 - a team: you and your partners (e.g. some folks from your life group)
 - a calling: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations . . ." (Matthew 28:18-20)
 - a field: existing unchurched social networks
 - a message: "The Kingdom of God is here"
 - a method of reaping the harvest: track unchurched people through the 5 thresholds.
 - a method of processing the harvest: disciple new followers
- ▶ **Contrast this process with other stories:**
- ▶ **Setup for Next Week:**
- ▼ **Make Disciples!**
 - Train people fully! Disciples are people who are in the process of being fully trained. A person is not your disciple just because you spent time with them and gave them good advice.

- Discipleship is only possible if you start with believers who are hungry and you have a specific plan.
- If you don't start with hungry people, they won't stick with your training. If you don't have a specific plan, you won't know when you're finished. How long should it take you?
- ▼ Eat Jesus' flesh and drink his blood - John 1:1-14; John 6:22-71
 - Jesus gave his disciples a powerful metaphor for how they were to follow him.
 - Meditate on it in order to fully incorporate it into your life.

▶ **Conclusion**

▼ **Followup**

• **Q&A**

▼ **Discussion Questions**

- What is a disciple? Is your definition of a disciple biblical? What passages come to mind?
- How do you know when you've become a disciple? How do you know when you've produced one?
- What needs does your community have? Would disciples make a difference in your community? How?
- If you produce a disciple every year, how many disciples would you have after 1 year, 2 years, 5 years, 10 years?

▶ **Discipleship / Skills Development**

Building Up The Church

Part 4

Work the System

Bearing Fruit

Parable of the Sower explained - Matthew 13:18-23

- “Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.” (NIV)

Work the System

Bearing Fruit

Parable of the sower - Matthew 13:1-23

Ladder of Abstraction

Concrete Language



Work the System

Concrete Language

Physical Fitness:

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Work the System

Concrete Language

Education

- You can't achieve it using only words like: education, knowledge, learning, understanding.
- You must use words like: spell, add, multiply, conjugate, microscope, experiment, essay, verb, noun, translate, 1492, 1620, 1776, George Washington, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglas, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King.

Work the System

Farming: seed, sower, scattering, harvesting

- What is a crop and how do I know when I've produced one?

Fishing: nets, fisherman, lake or sea, boat

- What is a fish and how do I know when I've caught one?
- How do I know when I've cooked one?

Shopping:

- What is a loaf of bread and how do I know when I've purchased one?
- What is a steak and how do I know when I've purchased one?
- How do I know when I've cooked one?

Work the System

An Apostolic Approach

- a team: Paul & Barnabas
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(Matthew 28:18-20)
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- a method of processing the harvest: disciple new followers

Discussion Questions

1. What is a disciple? Is your definition of a disciple biblical? What passages come to mind?
2. How do you know when you've become a disciple? How do you know when you've produced one?
3. What needs does your community have? Would disciples make a difference in your community? How?
4. If you produce a disciple every year, how many disciples would you have after 1 year, 2 years, 5 years, 10 years?