Harvester Christian Church

Life Groups | **PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY**

ACTS | Powered by the Spirit | Spirit Powered Mission

**WEEK 9 – ACTS 11-15**

**A Mission-Focused Church**

The early Church was a church on a mission. Their leaders, the Apostles, had heard Jesus teach that loving God and loving others were the two greatest commandments (Matthew 22:36-40). These same men had been given marching orders by Jesus to make disciples of all people groups (Matthew 28:18-20) and to be His witnesses (Acts 1:8). The church took those commandments and commissions to heart. What we see in the first half of the book of Acts is a powerful picture of the impact that a church can have when they stay focused on a **Spirit Powered Mission.**

We have seen, though, that this church was also facing some difficulties. Their mission-focus was tested by fear (Acts 5:11), persecution (Acts 12:1-4, 13:49-52), and internal conflict. The first bit of conflict had to do with certain widows in the church being neglected during the distribution of food (Acts 6:1-7). That problem was solved by raising up some new leaders to oversee the benevolence efforts of the church. Last week we saw a new wave of controversy sweep through the church when Gentiles (non-Jews) began receiving the gospel and trusting in Jesus as their Savior (Acts 10). The unity and mission-focus of this young church was being put to the test one more time.

**Pray for wisdom and understanding and then read Acts 11-15. (**Reading these chapters will keep you up-to-date with sermon series even though we are going off-script this week to take a closer look at the Apostle Paul.)

**Paul: A Mission-Focused Man**

A mission-focused church is a church made up of mission-focused people. The Apostle Paul, while far from perfect, serves as a strong example of a man who understood his mission and was able to maintain his focus on that mission over the long haul. Read the following passages about Paul’s mission and the obstacles he overcame to live it out.

**Read Acts 20:24**

* What does Paul say was his ultimate task in life?
* Based on this verse, how important was it to him to complete this task?

**Read Philippians 1:12-26**

* Paul wrote these words while under arrest in Rome. How did his perspective on his mission affect the way he viewed his circumstances? (1:12-14)
* What does he say the most important thing is? (1:18)
* What goal or deep desire does he express here? (1:20)

**Refer back to Acts 14:8-20**

* Extreme suffering wasn’t enough to deter Paul from his mission (2 Corinthians 11:16-33). Other believers stirring up trouble for him wasn’t either (Philippians 1:17). What temptation did Paul face in this passage that could have become a problem if not handled well?

**What’s My Mission?**

We all need a clear mission for our lives. Without a clear understanding of mission, we will end up going through the motions or allowing life’s circumstances to dictate our direction. The following scriptures describe different aspects of the mission that we all share as Christians. Read and summarize each.

Matthew 28:18-20

Ephesians 2:10

Colossians 3:17

Romans 12:6-8

What about your specific mission in life? What were you created to do, gifted to do, and called by God to do? What are the major priorities in your life? If you have never done so, take some time this week to write out a mission statement for your life in the space below.

We have seen this week that even mission-focused people and churches have to be vigilant against things that can derail them from their mission. What are some things that could derail you from yours?

**Discussion Questions:**

Is there anything you wanted to discuss from the reading this week?

What are some indications that a person is just going through the motions rather than living out a mission-focused life?

What do you think God’s specific mission is for you? If you took the time to write your personal mission statement, please share it with the group.

What are some things that tend to get in the way of your living out your mission?

Our mission at Harvester is “leading people to find and follow Jesus.” How do you see yourself being a part of that? What is a next step you can take in order to help that mission come to fruition?