

Continuing the Acts of Jesus Acts 12: 1-19 Answered Prayer

Notes for Homegroup leaders

These study notes have been prepared to help you lead your group through Acts 12, in particular focussing on answered prayer.

Please be creative and adapt this study to suit your group. The aim of this study is to help us pray more, to encourage believing prayer, and remember some of the ways God answers prayer. The questions below are suggestions to help you get discussion going. I suggest you use the study to help lead you to prayer, knowing that God answers those who sincerely call on him.

1. Can you think of times when you have seen God's answers to your prayers? What happened? Did the answer surprise you? How did you feel? You may like to think about this for a few minutes individually and then share stories with the rest of the group.

Read Acts 12:1-19

Through the book of Acts, we read about the early church experiencing rapid growth. Not everyone is happy about this. There is some opposition from the Romans, but far more from the Jews.

2. In Acts 12:1-4 what is the response of Herod and the Jews?
3. Why do you think they acted so strongly against the church?
4. In the first four verses, things look pretty bleak for Peter, but from verse 5 onwards, this all changes. What is the catalyst for this change in v5?

Peter is stuck in prison, with no obvious means of escape, but in case we were losing hope, we are told that the church is earnestly praying for him. Herod's might and power is against Peter, but the inference in this verse is that prayer is more powerful.

5. Do we believe in the power of prayer to make real changes to real life situations? What other examples can you think of which illustrate the impact of prayer on a situation? (eg. 2 Kings 6:15-18, Daniel 2:17-23)
5. Look at v6-11 again, imagining you are Peter. Describe the experience and how you feel as you escape from the prison.
6. v12-17, how do the people praying for Peter respond to his arrival? Is this similar to the way we often respond to answered prayer?
7. v16-17, the people only finally believed when they saw Peter. Can you think of other times in the bible when people only believed when they saw with their own eyes? 2 Corinthians 5:7 reminds us to "live by faith, not by sight."
8. Knowing that God answers prayers is powerful. How can this knowledge affect our prayers? How should we pray?
9. Maybe you have prayer requests that seem as unlikely as getting Peter out of prison. Share your requests with each other and pray, believing in God's power and ability to answer.