Give God the Glory

Small Group Bible Study | Week 26
Acts 12:20–13:3 | October 11

START HERE

Have you ever received a compliment, accomplished something significant, or experienced success that made you feel really good about yourself?

What helps you remember to give God the credit when things are going well?

LOOK AT THE WORD

Read **Acts 12:20–13:3** together.

In Acts 12, Herod Agrippa receives the praise of the people and allows them to treat him as a god. Rather than giving glory to God, he accepts the attention for himself, and his story ends in judgment. Yet Luke reminds us that while Herod's power comes to an end, the Word of God continues to spread and flourish.

The story then shifts to the church at Antioch. While the believers are worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit calls Barnabas and Saul to a new work. The church responds by praying, laying hands on them, and sending them out.

These passages give us two very different pictures of life: one centered on receiving glory for ourselves and another centered on giving glory to God.

The sermon highlights three important principles:

- **The Agrippa Rule:** Treat normal people like they are gods. We fall into this when we give people the praise and devotion that belong to God alone.
- **The Antioch Rule:** Give glory to God and make Jesus the famous One.
- **Our calling:** We are stewards, not owners. Everything we have comes from God and is meant to be used for His glory.

The question is not simply whether we believe in God, but whether our lives reflect that He is the One worthy of our worship, attention, affection, and devotion.

DISCUSS

1. The Danger of Living for Approval

Read Acts 12:20–23.

Herod receives extravagant praise from the people, who declare that his voice is the voice of a god. Instead of correcting them and giving glory to God, he accepts their praise.

The sermon describes flattery as a compliment with an agenda. Encouragement is sincere and builds others up, while flattery seeks something for itself and puffs people up.

Discuss:

- Why do you think human beings are so drawn to recognition, praise, and approval?
- What is the difference between receiving genuine encouragement and beginning to live for the approval of others?
- How can the desire to be liked or admired influence our decisions, even when we know what is right?
- Where are you most tempted to measure your worth by other people's opinions?

Read Proverbs 29:5.

How does this verse help us understand the danger of flattery?

2. Don't Take What Belongs to God

Read Psalm 24:1.

The sermon reminds us that everything belongs to God: our lives, talents, intellect, opportunities, relationships, resources, influence, and success.

We are **stewards, not owners**. God gives us gifts and opportunities, not so we can make ourselves the center of attention, but so we can use them for His glory.

The goal is not to reject success or refuse compliments. Instead, we can receive encouragement with gratitude and redirect the praise to God.

Discuss:

- What are some gifts or opportunities God has given you that you might sometimes take credit for as though they were entirely your own?
- Why can success make it difficult to recognize our dependence on God?
- How can we receive a compliment graciously while still giving God the glory?
- What would it look like to use your influence, abilities, or resources more intentionally for God's purposes?

Read 1 Corinthians 4:7.

How does remembering that what we have is received change the way we view our accomplishments?

3. The Bigger the Ego, the Harder the Fall

Read Acts 12:21–24.

Herod's downfall did not begin in a single moment. Earlier in Acts 12, he persecuted believers because doing so gained him the approval of the people. His desire for human praise influenced his choices until he was unwilling to give God the glory.

The sermon reminds us that when the approval of people becomes our god, we can begin sacrificing what is right to get what we want.

But Acts 12 ends with a powerful contrast: Herod dies, while the Word of God continues to spread and flourish.

Discuss:

- Why is the approval of people such a powerful temptation?
- How can the pursuit of success, popularity, or influence slowly become more important than obedience to God?
- What warning signs might tell us that our ego is becoming too important?
- How does the truth that God's Word continues to flourish, even when earthly powers fail, encourage you?

Read Luke 14:11.

What does Jesus teach us about pride and humility? How can we practice humility without denying the gifts God has given us?

4. Make Jesus the Famous One

Read Acts 13:1–3.

The church at Antioch provides a different picture from Herod's kingdom. Instead of gathering attention for themselves, the believers worship the Lord, fast, listen to the Holy Spirit, and send Barnabas and Saul to serve God's mission.

The sermon calls this the **Antioch Rule: Give glory to God and make Jesus the famous One.**

The believers were willing to send two of their key leaders because they understood that the church, its leaders, and its future belonged to God.

Discuss:

- What stands out to you about the way the church at Antioch worshiped and responded to the Holy Spirit?
- Why might it have been difficult for the church to send Barnabas and Saul away?
- What does their willingness to release these leaders teach us about surrender?
- Where might God be asking you to use your influence or opportunities to point someone toward Jesus rather than toward yourself?

Read Matthew 5:16.

How can we live in such a way that people see the good we do and give glory to our Father in heaven?

5. Worship Is More Than What We Receive

Read Acts 13:2–3.

Luke tells us that the believers were worshiping the Lord and fasting when the Holy Spirit spoke to them.

The sermon points out that worship means to minister to the Lord. Worship is not only about what we receive from God; it is also about giving Him our praise, attention, affection, devotion, and obedience.

Fasting is not about getting God's attention. It is about giving God our attention and allowing Him to reorder our desires.

Discuss:

- When you think about worship, do you tend to focus more on what you receive from God or what you offer to Him? Why?
- What distractions make it difficult for you to give God your full attention?
- How might prayer, fasting, Scripture, or silence help you reorder your priorities around God?
- What is one practical way you could minister to the Lord this week beyond attending a church service?

6. Give God Your Best

Read Acts 13:2–3.

When the Holy Spirit called Barnabas and Saul, the church did not hold tightly to its best leaders. It prayed, laid hands on them, and sent them out.

The sermon challenges us to consider whether worship is simply something we sing or something we live. Our willingness to surrender what is valuable to us reveals whether we truly believe that everything belongs to God.

God may ask us to give our time, resources, gifts, influence, comfort, or opportunities to serve His purposes.

Discuss:

- What is something you find difficult to surrender to God?
- Why is it sometimes easier to sing about trusting God than to act on that trust?
- What might it look like for you to give God your best in your current season of life?
- Is there a person, opportunity, or resource you could release or use differently to help someone else know Jesus?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Take a few minutes to reflect silently. Be honest with God about what is competing for your attention and affection.

1. Where in my life am I tempted to seek the approval or praise of people more than the approval of God?
2. What gifts, relationships, opportunities, or resources do I need to recognize more clearly as belonging to God?
3. Is there an area where I have been making life more about me than about Jesus?
4. What would it look like for me to make Jesus the famous One in my home, workplace, friendships, or community?

TAKE IT WITH YOU

This week, take one step:

- **Redirect the praise.** When someone compliments you, receive it with gratitude and acknowledge God's role in your life.
- **Practice surrender.** Identify one resource, ability, or opportunity you can intentionally use for God's purposes.
- **Give God your attention.** Set aside time to pray, read Scripture, or fast as you seek to listen to Him.
- **Point someone to Jesus.** Use an ordinary conversation or interaction to encourage someone, serve them, or share the hope you have in Christ.

Challenge: At the end of each day this week, ask yourself: *“Where did I receive glory today, and how could I have redirected that attention to God? Where did I use what He has given me for His glory?”*

Choose one specific action you can take to make Jesus more visible through your life.

PRAY TOGETHER

Pray that God would help your group:

- Recognize that everything they have belongs to God.
- Resist the temptation to live for human approval, recognition, or success.
- Receive encouragement with gratitude while giving God the glory.
- Become people who worship the Lord with their attention, affection, devotion, and obedience.
- Trust God enough to surrender their gifts, resources, and opportunities to His mission.
- Use their influence to point others toward Jesus.
- Live in a way that makes Jesus the most famous One.

Closing prayer:
King Jesus, everything we have comes from You. Forgive us for the times we have taken credit for what You have given us or cared more about the praise of people than Your glory. Help us live as stewards of Your gifts, worship You with our whole lives, and surrender whatever You ask of us. Use our words, our work, our relationships, and our influence to make You known. May our lives point people to You, the One who alone is worthy of all glory, honor, and praise. Amen.