ACTS 14:21–28 | WEEK

STAY THE COURSE

Diving Deeper • Small Group Bible Study

START HERE

Have you ever been in the middle of something difficult and wondered whether you had what it takes to keep going?

What helped you take the next step—and who encouraged you along the way?

LOOK AT THE WORD

Read Acts 14:21–28 together. Paul and Barnabas have preached the Gospel, made disciples, and planted churches during their first missionary journey. Along the way, they faced rejection, threats, and even the stoning of Paul in Lystra. Yet they continued the mission. After seeing many people come to faith in Derbe, they returned to the cities where they had experienced opposition to strengthen and encourage the new believers.

This passage shows us what it looks like to stay faithful through hardship, strengthen others, build up the church, and finish an assignment with gratitude to God. As you discuss, consider the reminder from Hebrews 12:1–3: run with perseverance and fix your eyes on Jesus.

DISCUSS

1. Keep going when the road gets hard

Read Acts 14:21 and Galatians 6:9.

Paul and Barnabas continued preaching after painful opposition in Lystra. They did not allow what happened in the past to keep them from the purpose God had ahead of them. In Derbe, they saw a harvest because they stayed the course.

What stands out to you about Paul and Barnabas continuing their mission after what happened in Lystra?

Where in your life are you tempted to give up because of weariness, disappointment, or past hurt?

What helps you remain faithful when you cannot yet see the outcome?

2. Strengthen and encourage one another

Read Acts 14:22 and Hebrews 12:3.

Paul and Barnabas returned to the believers and strengthened them, encouraging them to remain true to the faith. They were honest that following Jesus includes hardship. Trouble does not mean God is absent or that we have taken a wrong turn. Jesus said, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Why do you think new believers—and believers today—need both encouragement and truth?

What is the difference between encouraging someone and simply telling them what they want to hear?

Who in your life might need you to show up with a steady, hopeful, non-anxious presence?

3. Face the hard places with courage

Read Acts 14:21–22.

Paul and Barnabas chose to return to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch—places where they had faced rejection and danger. They went back because the new believers there needed to be strengthened. Their courage could help others stand firm.

Is there a difficult conversation, relationship, or situation you have been avoiding that God may be inviting you to face wisely and prayerfully?

How can courage be contagious? Think of a time someone's calm or faithfulness helped strengthen you.

What does it look like to return to a hard place without pretending the hurt never happened or putting yourself in danger?

4. Build something that will last

Read Acts 14:23.

Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in each church, prayed and fasted, and committed the believers to the Lord. They did not leave the churches without leadership or support. They were building something that could endure beyond their own presence. Their trust ultimately rested in the Lord, not merely in the strength of the leaders.

Why is it important for spiritual growth to happen in community rather than in isolation?

Who has helped shepherd, guide, or strengthen your faith? What did their investment mean to you?

Who could you intentionally encourage or invest in as they grow in faith?

5. Your purpose is bigger than your assignment

Read Acts 14:24–26.

Paul and Barnabas completed this missionary journey and returned to Antioch, where they had been entrusted to God's grace. An assignment may end, change, or last only for a season, but our purpose in Christ continues: to know God and make Him known. Our identity is not rooted in a job, title, success, or role. It is rooted in Jesus and what He has done for us.

Have you ever struggled when an assignment, role, or season of life changed or ended?

Which of these is easiest to tie your identity to: what you do, where you work, your success, or your relationships? Why?

What truth about Jesus can help anchor your identity when circumstances change?

6. Finish with grace, gratitude, and rest

Read Acts 14:26–28.

When Paul and Barnabas returned, they gathered the church and reported what God had done and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. They gave God the glory. Then they stayed with the disciples for a time. Faithfulness sometimes means going, and sometimes it means staying—resting, recovering, healing, and preparing for what comes next.

Where have you seen God's grace send, sustain, or bring you through a difficult season?

Why can it be hard to rest or receive care after a demanding season?

What might a healthy season of rest, healing, or reconnection with Christian community look like for you?

7. Fix your eyes on Jesus

Read Hebrews 12:1–3.

The secret to staying the course is not simply trying harder; it is fixing our eyes on Jesus. He endured the cross for the joy set before Him. He knows rejection, suffering, loss, and pain—and He endured for us. When we consider Him, we can keep from growing weary and losing heart.

What tends to capture your attention and shape your thoughts when you are tired or overwhelmed?

What does it practically mean for you to "fix your eyes on Jesus" this week?

Which part of Jesus' endurance and love gives you courage to keep going?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Take a few minutes to reflect silently:

1. Where am I weary or tempted to give up, and what would it mean to stay faithful one step at a time?

2. Who has strengthened and encouraged me? How can I thank or honor them?

3. Who might need me to show up, encourage them, or help them stay the course?

4. What assignment or identity do I need to release into God's hands?

TAKE IT WITH YOU

This week, take one step:

• Encourage someone who is weary with Scripture, prayer, or your presence.

• Take one faithful next step in an area where you have been tempted to give up.

• Reach out to someone in your church community rather than trying to run alone.

• Make time for rest and healing if you have been pushing through a difficult season.

Challenge: Choose one person who needs encouragement. Tell them specifically why you believe God is at work in their life, and pray with them.

PRAY TOGETHER

Pray that God would help your group:

• Stay faithful when the road is difficult and trust that hardship does not mean God is absent.

• Fix their eyes on Jesus and receive courage from His finished work.

• Become people who strengthen and encourage others through their presence and truth.

• Build up the church by investing in and supporting one another.

• Give God glory for what He has done, and recognize when it is time to rest and heal.

> *“Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus.” — Hebrews 12:1–2*