

WE ARE ALL FOR JESUS

CCC DNA Statements

Jesus saves us from our past, remakes us to be like him, heals our broken places, and is coming back as our King.

Scripture Passages: Acts 11:19–21, 12:1–19

OVERVIEW

As Jewish and Roman leaders persecuted the early church, believers scattered throughout the known regions and thus the message of the gospel spread. This was a fulfillment of Acts 1:8, when Jesus told the disciples they would be his witnesses in Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Persecution often included death and these early martyrs stand as a powerful testimony to being “All for Jesus.” Only Jesus, whose life’s sacrifice led to our salvation, is worthy of full allegiance. Only Jesus, who provides the way for us to be like him, is a worthy example to follow. Only Jesus, whose resurrection heals our brokenness, invites us to enter into the brokenness of others. Only Jesus, who will come again and reign as King, rightly calls us into full submission and obedience. The early church and her leaders invite us to join them in living *All for Jesus*.

GROUP OBJECTIVES

- Acknowledge and engage with the presence of God; respond to Holy Spirit promptings.
- Read through Acts 11:19–21 and 12:1–19 as a group.
- Discuss aspects of the text that stand out to you.
- Reflect on how we can learn from the experience of Peter and the other gathered believers.
- Encourage one another and build each other up to live biblical, Spirit-empowered lives.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- Share about a time you felt you had been persecuted. What were the circumstances and how did you respond?
- Have you ever experienced a situation where some difficulty you went through actually served to further the gospel? How did that come about?

OPENING PRAYER

- Pray for the Holy Spirit’s presence in the group. Ask God to give you strength when facing trials of various kinds and wisdom to press into deeper obedience, even in midst of those trials.

BIBLE STUDY

Read Acts 11:19–21.

- What word or phrase stands out to you from these verses?
- When you hear our DNA statement *All for Jesus*, what does that mean to you? How might a Christ-follower live in such a way that testifies to the fact they are all for Jesus?
- While we may have trials in this world, nothing American Christians face comes close to the persecution happening around the world. View background statistics on the current persecuted Church at bit.ly/christianpersecution).

Read Acts 12:1–5.

- Set up the text with this overview.

- » This Herod (v. 1) is the first official Jewish king since his grandfather Herod the Great. He was ethnically Jewish, popular with the people, and pro-Pharisee, which led to his opposition to the Way.
- » Herod catered to the whims of the Jewish people, more than his pagan subjects did (see v. 3, “When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews...”).
- » The Feast of Unleavened Bread (v. 3): it has been a year since the Passover, when Jesus was crucified.
- » Soldiers (vs. 4–6): Peter is chained between two soldiers, with two more soldiers watching the door. There were four shifts each day, for a total of sixteen soldiers. Herod may have feared armed resistance. With this many guards, Peter would have had no hope of escape, but for God!
- “But the church was earnestly praying to God for him...” (v. 5). How often do we pray for persecuted Christians? (Individually? Corporately?)

Read Acts 12:6–11.

- Some ancient literature includes stories of doors opening by themselves, which might explain why Peter assumed he was dreaming.
- The humor in this story is amazing. (v. 7, “struck Peter,” v. 8 “put on your clothes”)
- The angel disappears (v. 10)
- Think about a time you were awakened suddenly in the middle of the night and how disorienting it was. Assuming he was dreaming, Peter stumbled along, following the angel to leave the prison.

Read Acts 12:12–19.

- For the first three centuries, believers met in homes rather than church buildings. This particular household was led by a woman, who was likely middle class or more well-to-do, as the household had slaves.
- Additional humor: the purpose of this meeting seemed to be “praying earnestly for Peter’s release” but when he appeared, they tell the slave girl, “You’re out of your mind!”
 - » Reflect: Think about a time when God’s response surprised you, even though you had been praying earnestly for the result.
 - » Why do you think the believers responded in this way? Why do we?
- Skim vs. 20–24 about Herod’s death and note especially v. 24.
 - » “but the word of God continued to spread and flourish.”
- This story is an example of God showing up in power to release Peter, which led to further expansion of the gospel (see Acts 4:19–22, 5:18–20, 40–41). However, there are also times when persecution leads to the ultimate sacrifice, death (see Acts 7:54–60).
 - » When trials come, is it appropriate to pray for deliverance? Why or why not?
 - » What can we learn from trials when God does not deliver or does not deliver in the way we would like (see James 1:2–4, 1 Peter 3:8–18)?
- How might these experiences help us testify that we are **All for Jesus?**
- Reflect: Is there an area in your life that you need to release to God, no matter what God’s response is?
- What questions does the passage raise for you?

CLOSING PRAYER

- Pray for specific countries where persecution rates are the highest.
- Pray for our own trust that God will provide what we need, even during trials or persecution.
- Pray for the Holy Spirit to keep your heart soft and focused on what it means to live **All for Jesus.**