



Irresistible JG Curriculum Guide

Week of Oct 12 – All for Jesus

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

Acts 11:19-21; Acts 12:1-19 – Persecution / Peter escapes from Prison

Overview: As both Jewish and Roman leaders persecuted the early church, believers were scattered throughout the known regions and 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 powerful testimony to being “All for Jesus.” Only Jesus, who’s own life sacrifice led to our salvation, is worthy of this full allegiance. Only Jesus, who provides a way for us to be more 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.”

Journey 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 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 those trials.

Bible Study¹:

- **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”?*

¹ Most notes on the text come from *The IVP Bible Background Commentary (New Testament)* by Craig Keener (IVP, 1999, 2014)

- While we may have trials in this world, nothing American Christians are facing comes close to the persecution happening around the world.

- Background statistics on current persecuted church

<https://factsandtrends.net/2019/01/17/christian-persecution-worsens-around-the-globe/>

- **Read Acts 12:1-5**

- Set up the text with some overview.

- This Herod (vs 1) is the first official Jewish king since his grandfather Herod the Great (he's 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 vs 3 "When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews..."
- "Feast of Unleavened Bread" (vs 3) – it's been a year since the Passover when Jesus was crucified.
- On the number of soldiers (vs 4-6) – Peter is chained between 2, with 2 more watching the door. 16 total, four shifts. Herod may have feared armed resistance; with this many guards Peter would have had "no hope" of escape... (but God!)

- "But the church was earnestly praying to God for him..." (vs 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;" this might explain why Peter assumed he was dreaming.
- The humor in this story is amazing. (vs 7, "struck Peter," vs 8 "put on your clothes")
- Angel disappears (vs 10)
- Think about a time you were awakened suddenly in the middle of the night and how disorienting it is. Peter assumes he is dreaming and stumbles along following the angel in this way.

- **Read Acts 12:12-17**

- Believers met in homes rather than church buildings for first 3 centuries. This particular household is headed by a woman, likely middle class or more well-to-do (has slaves)
- Additional humor – the purpose of this meeting seems to be "praying earnestly for Peter's release" but when he appears, 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 description of Herod's death (ew!) but **note vs 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 other examples in Acts 4:19-22; 5:18-20; 5:40-41). 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 our trials when God decides NOT to deliver?** (at least, not in the way we would like) (see also James 1:2-4; 1 Pet 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 may be?**

- **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."