

group Bible Study – April 25, 2007

Read Acts chapters 13-15

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This week, instead of giving you a reflection on what I think is so important in these chapters, I'd like to give you some questions to think about as you read this passage yourself. Important things are happening in Acts chapters 13-15. In order to understand what this means for us today, we simply need to make a commitment to really study it and pray over it for ourselves.

I urge you to commit to study this passage, by yourself or in a small group. Read the passage several times throughout the week. Take time to meditate in silence and let God's Spirit speak through the text. Take a long walk or go somewhere private to listen for the voice of God. Pray for eyes to see and ears to hear. God meets us when we seek, but it often takes discipline and patience. And silence and solitude. And talking about it with others. There are no shortcuts – we have to be serious about hearing from God in our lives.

One of the main lessons from the book of Acts is that God has given his Spirit to the community of Jesus-followers. If you are a Jesus-follower, that means that God intends to speak to you through his Spirit. In fact, he wants you to live your whole life with an intimate connection to his Spirit. Please – make time and space to connect with the Spirit this week – and LISTEN.

Questions to ponder, from Acts chapters 13-15:

1) In chapter 13, the church is praying and fasting when they receive a new message from God's Spirit: send Paul and Barnabas. Immediately they obey. What is God speaking to you through this text as you pray and listen this week? To whom are you being sent?

2) In the second part of chapter 13, Paul teaches in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch. In order to explain the Gospel – the Good News – he tells the story of God's relationship with the people of Israel. He highlights their freedom from slavery in Egypt, the judges and the early kings of Israel, the message of the prophets... and finally Jesus. What is the significance of this history? Why does Paul speak about Israel's history with God when he is asked to share the Good News?

3) In chapter 15 we read about one of the first big divisions among the followers of Jesus: some insisted that believers had to agree to follow the ancient Jewish religious practices (like circumcision) and some taught that the new believers were free from these laws. As you read this chapter, think about what issues we face in our communities today that might be similar to this early question about proper practice. What do you learn in this chapter about how the church decided to address this issue?