

Small Group Discussion Guide

Series: To Be Sent

Week 4: Acts 12

Main Idea: When the church is pressed by suffering, opposition, and uncertainty, God calls His people to pray fervently, trust His sovereign hand, and give Him all the glory as His word continues to flourish.

Reference Text

Acts 12:1-24, Acts 12:5, Acts 12:11-17, Acts 12:21-24, Psalm 91:11, Hebrews 1:14

Context

Acts 12 shows the early church facing serious opposition. King Herod Agrippa violently attacks the church, executes James, and arrests Peter with the intention of bringing him out after Passover. Humanly speaking, the situation looks hopeless: James is dead, Peter is chained, and Herod appears to be winning. But right in the middle of that darkness, Luke tells us, “the church was fervently praying to God for him.”

Pastor Seth framed this passage around the struggle and necessity of prayer. He reminded us that many believers struggle to pray, especially when life feels bigger than us, when we believe God can but struggle to trust that He will. Acts 12 gives both encouragement and warning: Peter is rescued, Herod falls, and “the word of God flourished and multiplied.” The church’s primary weapon was not power, politics, or control. It was prayer.

Key Takeaways

- **The struggle in prayer is real.**
We may struggle because we cannot see God with our eyes or hear Him audibly with our ears, but we are still invited to pour out our hearts to Him.
- **The church’s primary weapon is prayer.**
Rome fought with swords, but the church fought on its knees.
- **God is sovereign over chains, prisons, kings, and circumstances.**
Peter was guarded by soldiers, locked behind gates, and still the Lord brought him out.
- **Prayer should be fervent, even when faith feels weak.**
The believers prayed for Peter, yet they were shocked when God answered. Weak faith can still cry out to a strong God.
- **Pride has no place before God.**
Herod accepted glory that belonged only to God, and his downfall became a warning that pride comes before the fall.

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- **The word of God cannot be chained.**
Acts 12 begins with Herod attacking the church, but it ends with Herod dead, Peter free, and the word of God multiplying.

Small Group Questions

1. **Read Acts 12:1-5.** James has been executed, Peter has been arrested, and Herod seems to be gaining power and approval.
What tension do you see in the opening of this chapter? Where do you see the church facing fear, grief, and uncertainty all at once?
2. **The sermon opened by asking, “What does your prayer life look like today?”** Pastor Seth said that “the struggle is real” when it comes to prayer.
Why do you think many believers find it hard to talk honestly about struggling to pray? What makes prayer difficult during seasons of pain, distance, anxiety, or disappointment?
3. **Read Acts 12:5.** Peter was kept in prison, “but the church was fervently praying to God for him.”
What does this verse teach us about the church’s dependence on God? How is fervent prayer different from casual, surface-level prayer?
4. **The message highlighted the difference between believing that God can and trusting that God will.**
Why is it sometimes easier to believe God is able than it is to trust His heart and His timing? What does Acts 12 teach us about trusting God even when we do not know what He will do?
5. **Read Acts 12:6-11.** Peter is sleeping between soldiers, chained and guarded, when the Lord sends an angel to rescue him.
What stands out to you about Peter’s rescue? What does this scene reveal about God’s power over circumstances that seem completely locked down?
6. **Read Acts 12:12-17.** The believers are praying, but when Rhoda announces that Peter is at the gate, they struggle to believe it.
Why is this moment both funny and convicting? Have you ever prayed for something while still struggling to believe God might actually answer?

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7. **Pastor Seth said that when hardship came, the church was “between a rock and a hard place,” and they came together to pray.**

What would it look like for our group or church family to become more honest and united in prayer? Where do we need to stop carrying burdens alone?

8. **Read Acts 12:20-23.** Herod receives praise as though he were a god, but he does not give glory to God.

What warning does Herod’s downfall give us about pride, control, and self-reliance? How can neglecting prayer become a quiet way of saying, “I’ve got this”?

9. **Read Acts 12:24.** After all the opposition, Luke says, “But the word of God flourished and multiplied.”

How does this verse change the way we view opposition, discouraging statistics, or spiritual decline in our community? How might God use praying people as part of His mission to rescue others?

10. **The sermon ended by calling the church to pray for God to launch a movement through us, beginning with the prayer, “Do a work in me first.”**

Where do you need God to do a work in you this week? What concrete step of prayer, trust, obedience, or surrender is He calling you to take?