

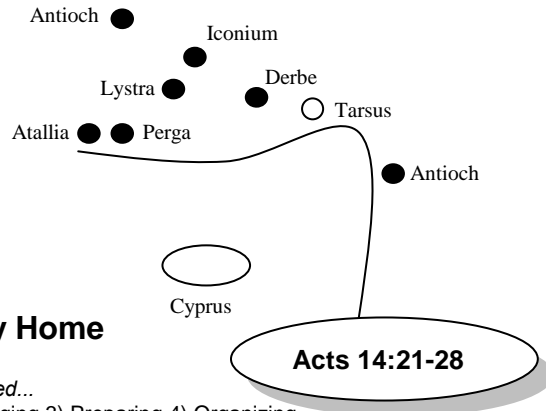
PLOT TWIST

When God Surprises His People

Part 9: Healthy Spiritual Communities

INTRODUCTION — The Geography of Making Disciples

The geography of Acts 14 illustrates that for Paul, evangelism is about making disciples and not just converts, about establishing healthy spiritual communities, not just calling individuals to believe in Jesus.



DINE IN – The Long Way Home

Paul's Program for Discipleship included...

- 1) Strengthening
- 2) Encouraging
- 3) Preparing
- 4) Organizing

New Testament Church Leadership...

- **Elders (*presbyteroi*)** – borrowed from synagogue life; suggests maturity
- **Overseers (*episkopoi*)** – not the deacons / ministers / doers of all ministry, but the equippers, organizers, leaders
- **Pastors/Shepherds (*poimen*)** – Servant leaders of a congregation
- **Deacons / Servants (*diakono*)** – All those involved in some form of ministry
Note: Elders, Overseers, and Pastors are interchangeable titles (e.g., Acts 20:17 & 28) and always listed in the plural, referring to teams and not individuals with authority.

Leadership at The Meeting House...

- **Elders (*presbyteroi*)** – pastors of our Home Churches
- **Overseers (*episkopoi*)** – elders who represent all elders at a leadership council
- **Pastors/Shepherds (*poimen*)** – elders who are given extra responsibility as paid staff
- **Deacons / Servants (*diakono*)** – All those involved in some form of ministry

TAKE OUT – I'll Have That to Go Please

TAKE OUT #1 – Making Disciples, Not Just Converts

Paul and Barnabas prioritize teaching and encouraging Christians, not just proclaiming the gospel to non-Christians. We carry out the Great Commission (Christ's command in Matthew 28 for us to go and make disciples) when we help people become students of Christ, who study and follow his way. Our emphasis should not be on mere conversion or mere education, but on application and obedience. At The Meeting House, this happens primarily through active participation in Sunday teaching, Home Church, and personal follow-through. **Matthew 28:18-20**

TAKE OUT #2 – Open to Innovation

Earlier in Acts, the apostles adjusted their leadership structure to better meet the needs of their growing movement (i.e., **Acts 6:1-7**). Now again, Paul and Barnabas establish elders in churches where before there were none (e.g., **13:1**). Acts is not written to give a static blueprint for church structure. Instead, Acts encourages innovation according to need. At the same time, this history of the early church illustrates the constant and unvarying priorities of team leadership, mutual submission, and the involvement of all Christians in some form of ministry. At The Meeting House, our leadership teams are open to innovation and committed to mutual submission. How committed are you to your role as an active participant in some form of serving within our church community?

TAKE OUT #3 – Suffering Well

In *The NIV Application Commentary*, Ajith Fernando writes, "Remember that the clear teaching about the inevitability of suffering comes in a section that describes the follow-through care of the new converts. This leads us to the conclusion that teaching on suffering should be considered part of the basic follow-through training given to new converts." Part of making healthy, mature disciples is helping each other embrace suffering as normative within the Christ-following life. Rather than the exception to a safe and secure and comfortable life, suffering should be viewed as an opportunity for glorifying Christ that we should all look forward to. Otherwise, when real suffering comes, it is often so unexpected that our faith is shaken, as though something surprising has happened.

1 Peter 4:12-13; 2 Corinthians 6:4-5; 11:25; 2 Timothy 2:12; 3:11-12; Galatians 6:17; Philippians 1:28-30; 1 Thessalonians 3:3; Luke 9:23-24; Romans 8:17

CONCLUSION – We Are God's "Plan A"

Matthew 28:18-20

Q & Eh? Text 647.330.2789 or email ask@themeetinghouse.ca (include your name/site).

HOME CHURCH QUESTIONS

Warming Up...

1. Think back over this series. Can you think of one lesson or idea that has been particularly helpful for you? Have you made any life changes or applied any lessons learned that have made a positive difference? Talk about it.
2. Coming up at The Meeting House are teaching series on spiritual gifts (Those Whacky Gifts), the meaning of the cross (Easter), the peace teaching of Jesus (Inglorious Pastors), and a summer series on evangelism. What are you most looking forward to and why?

Look to the Book...

3. Read this week's main text, **Acts 14:21-28**. A) What verse or idea stands out to you the most? Why? B) Notice how often Christ-followers are called "disciples" in the book of Acts. Might there be any value for us and others if we aligned our language more with Scripture and referred to ourselves as disciples or students or followers of Jesus more often rather than just "Christians"? C) What is the value of churches being organized around a team leadership principle? What are some dangers in the common western structure of a solo, senior pastor?

So What?...

4. Review TAKE OUT #1 – Do you ever find yourself learning but not applying? That is, do you sometimes attend church but don't take specific action steps to make changes in your life in light of what you're learning? Brainstorm ideas that you could implement in Home Church to help counter this unfortunately common tendency. Feel free to implement any that you all agree on
5. Take time to pray for our church to be strong, encouraged, and ready for hardships..

The Meeting House | Sunday, March 14/21, 2010 | Bruxy Cavey

Notes are available online at themeetinghouse.ca/teaching