

## Community Group Discussion Questions

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### “Futility and Fruit”

#### Acts 12:20-25

**Sermon Series Title:** “Church Beginnings”

**Sermon Series Summary:** From now until around Easter, we will be in the book of Acts, covering chapters 1-12. After the Ascension of Jesus Christ, we see the NT church being born by the power of the Holy Spirit. Through this series, we see the church being built, the kingdom going forth, and the gospel being proclaimed.

**Setting:** The book of Acts is a transitional book between the resurrection of Jesus and the established local churches of the epistles. With Jesus’ call to the church in Acts 1, we see how the gospel spreads to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the end of the earth..

**Summary:** We are in the last passage of our sermon series. We see King Herod’s pride and punishment. The chapter starts off with Herod striking down apostles and the church. The chapter ends with Herod being struck down and the Word of God going forth through His church. We are challenged about our own pride, brought to the eternity of God’s word, and drawn to our Savior who was struck down so that we may be saved.

**Main Point:** *“Christ was struck down, so that we may have life.”*

#### **Sermon Points:**

1. The Conceit
2. The Consequence
3. The Christ

#### **Opening Question**

1. What has happened in this chapter so far?

*(The chapter starts with a new wave of persecution. We haven’t seen the church be persecuted since ch. 8. However, King Herod (Herod the Great’s grandson) persecutes the church by killing apostle James and imprisoning apostle Peter to please the Jews. However, God miraculously delivers Peter through an angel: waking Peter up, releasing the chains, and opening multiple doors and gates. He goes to the house of John Mark’s*

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*mom, where they are found praying. Peter knocks on the door, a servant girl (Rhoda) hears that it's Peter, she argues with the church that it's really Peter, Peter testifies to what has happened, and Herod kills the soldiers who were watching Peter.)*

***This chapter starts off with Herod's power, as he killed the apostle James and imprisoned Peter. But it ends with the futility of his glory and power, shown through his painful death.***

***Read Acts 12:20-25***

2. What are some ways we seek/take God's glory for ourselves?

*(Answers may vary.*

*Maybe we want to be popular and famous. Maybe we want others to "follow" us, instead of Christ. Maybe we want to be praised, commended, and glorified over other people and God.*

*There are times we take credit for the work God is doing. We think we are the cause of our wealth, success, and popularity. Or maybe we think we are the reasons why we or others have changed. Maybe we take pride in our giving, our obedience, and our service, so much so that we refuse to give thanks to God.)*

3. What is significant about the contrast between Herod's death and God's word going forth in our passage?

*(King Herod seems like a powerful king, killing an apostle and imprisoning another. He killed the soldiers that were supposed to watch Peter. He had two free cities submit to his rule. He seems powerful, and yet, he is nothing before God. Because of his pride, he is struck down in judgment and he dies a painful and humiliating death. What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and yet forfeit his own soul?*

*The powers of this earth and man are nothing compared to the power of God. It may seem formidable, but it is finite and futile, compared to God's life-giving, eternal Word. We see that the Word increases and multiplies. Even with persecution, the Word still goes forth.)*

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4. How does it encourage you that this powerful, life-giving, and eternal word goes forth through instruments of ordinary men?

*(Answers may vary.)*

*Barnabas is an encourager and not so much a teacher. Saul is an ex-murderer/persecuter who has been almost non-existent for years until Antioch. Mark is a Christian who will abandon the mission because of his fear. These are ordinary and broken men who will go on mission for the sake of the gospel. But the gospel is not just shared by these men. It goes forth through the church. It is the will of God that this life-giving, eternal word that is more powerful than kingdoms goes forth through broken and ordinary men.)*

***Final Thoughts:*** *This passage calls us to repent of the ways we are proud and take God's glory for ourselves. It draws us to the eternal, life-giving, unstoppable gospel of Jesus, which shows us that He took on the death we deserved so that we may receive life. That is how this gospel is more powerful than earthly kingdoms. And what's humbling is that God wants to use broken, ordinary people like us to share this good news with the whole world.*