

## Our Confidence in Jesus' Plan for the Nations

It is likely that at some point we've all experienced things that have shaken our confidence in God. He didn't do what we thought He should. A desperate prayer wasn't answered. We experience trauma. Mind boggling evil happens. And when our confidence in God is shaken, we can pull back . . . from relationship with God and from involvement in the mission that He has given to us to make Him known in this world. This was the challenge facing Jesus' first disciples. As we will see in our passage today, they were facing an issue that had the potential to shake their confidence in Jesus. Ultimately, however, they trust in the sovereignty of God and continue to walk in confidence in Jesus and his plan for the nations.

### Read Acts 1:15-26

1. What sticks out to you in this passage? Make some observations. What do you notice?
2. Put yourself in the shoes of the disciples. How might you be thinking about Judas' betrayal of Jesus? How painful is the defection of Judas? What kinds of questions are in your mind?
3. Look closely at verse 16. How does this point to the fact that Peter understands Judas' betrayal not as some unexpected development, but as part of God's sovereign plan?
4. In verse 20, Peter quotes two psalms that he says HAD to be fulfilled through Judas. The first one is Psalm 69:25, which is David's cry to God for vindication against his enemies. From what you can understand, how does Peter apply this to Judas?
5. The second scripture that had to be fulfilled is found in the second half of verse 20 (i.e., "*Let another take his office*"). This is from Psalm 109:8. How does Peter apply this to Judas? What do they do in light of this understanding?

6. What do you notice about how the disciples went about finding the right replacement for Judas (vv. 21-26)?
  
7. How is a trust in the sovereignty of God reflected in the process of seeking a replacement for Judas?
  
8. Ultimately, their trust in the sovereignty of God kept the disciples from being derailed from the mission Jesus had given them. How can trusting that God is sovereign help us press forward in the mission he has given us when we experience difficult things?

Steve said:

What in today's passage and message got your attention? Pray about that.

- Perhaps you have unresolved issues that have shaken you, and you're in danger of losing your confidence in Jesus and his plan for the nations. Pray about that. . . talk with someone you trust and let them pray with you.
- Perhaps you have no idea how God might use you to be a witness to people near and far. In other words, you're just like the original disciples in Acts 1. Imitate them and pray, trusting that God will lead.

9. What got your attention from today's passage?

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Note about casting lots from Steve's sermon:

What do we do with this example of casting lots? The book of Acts (like all narratives) is descriptive, not prescriptive. In other words, it describes what happened; it doesn't prescribe what has to happen. Just because they chose lots to replace Judas doesn't mean we should cast lots or that we can't cast lots when we have two equal choices from our point of view. Having said that, we don't have any other examples in the new covenant of casting lots. The norm in the rest of Acts and the rest of the New Testament is to pray for wisdom and trust that God will lead through the indwelling Holy Spirit.