

Desperate Times

There are times in this world when we find ourselves in a desperate place. We feel hopeless, helpless, powerless. Trapped in circumstances that we can't escape. What do we do? What SHOULD we do? In Acts 12, the believers in Jerusalem were in a desperate spot. One of their leaders had been killed and Peter is arrested. Talk about a desperate place! Though our situations are different, this passage offers both hope and guidance in the midst any desperation we might be feeling now or in the future. This passage shows that God is willing and able to show up in our desperate times, and when he does, amazing things can happen.

Opening Discussion: When was a time you truly felt desperate?

Read Acts 12:1-24

1. What sticks out to you in this passage?
2. How would you describe the desperate situation the church is facing?
3. How would you describe the church and how it responds to the desperate situation?

Sam said:

As we consider our church, and how we react to our own desperate and troubled times...how often would we be able to say we pray just like the believers in v5? How often do we pray with the same earnestness, sincerity, conviction, or commitment that they displayed? At the moment of their greatest need, they turned to God. When they were hopeless, helpless, and powerless they invoked the awesome privilege of speaking to God, of being heard by the Lord of all Creation, because they genuinely believed that unless God acts, nothing about their circumstance would change. Where do we tend to go when everything is going wrong? What do we do when we're overwhelmed by how hopeless, helpless, and powerless the troubles of this world make us feel? In the midst of our desperation, do we earnestly seek God in continuous, ongoing prayer?

4. How do we as a church react to desperate times? How about you personally, how do you react?

5. How is God revealed in this passage? What kind of divine action do we see in this passage?

6. Considering what we read in this passage, what is significant about the summary statement in verse 24?

7. Surely the church had prayed for James just as they prayed for Peter and yet he was not delivered. How do you make sense of the fact that Peter was delivered while James was martyred?

8. What is your main application from this passage?