**Live in Community**

 Small Group Study

**Volume Overview**

**Be Different**

Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. ([Romans 12:2](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ro12.2))

*Christians have long understood that we live and walk a fine line. We are to be in the world—all things to all people, as Paul put it—yet not of the world. God’s people have always been a chosen people, holy and set apart from the world’s ways. To pull it off, to be truly different, means we must each hold fast to the truth, speaking it when needed, all while humbling ourself and faithfully serving others.*

**Session Overview**

**Speak Truth**

**Biblical Encounter:** Paul and Barnabas Confront Falsehood ([Acts 14:8–20](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac14.8-20))

**Outcome:** Challenge wrong thinking with God’s truth.

*In this session, we’ll see Paul and Barnabas share the good news of the gospel with the people of Lystra. These people didn’t reject or resist the truth. Instead, they distorted the truth to make it fit their culture. It seems that each society and even each generation defines their own truth. But if truth can change based on time or location, is it still accurate? As followers of Jesus, we must first determine to know truth by understanding the Bible and accepting it as God’s timeless Word. Then when we see distorted versions of the truth in those we know and love, it’s our responsibility to lovingly correct those distortions and point them to the truth of the Bible.*

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| *First time leading* Live *for Adults? Check out the* [Facilitator Guide](https://0b769b0ed3569ef9d18b-f88d8272f61086866d50d048b43ef630.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/sites/biblengagementproject/Listen_Facilitator_Guide.pdf). |

To access session content and videos from a computer, visit: [BibleEngagementProject.com/downloads](https://bibleengagementproject.com/downloads)

**Engage**

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| **QUESTION**Have you ever received a surprising response to a post on social media? |

Maybe you got a huge number of likes and shares or you attracted the attention of someone famous. In the opposite direction, maybe you were censored by the platform or blasted with critical responses.

Like posting on social media today, Paul was used to getting a variety of responses to his evangelistic message. Some people asked questions and wanted to hear more ([Acts 13:42](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac13.42)). Some heard and believed ([Acts 13:12](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac13.12)). Still others responded in opposition and anger ([Acts 13:8](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac13.8), [50](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac13.50)). Sound familiar?

Today, we’ll see the surprising response that Paul and Barnabas received when they shared the truth of the gospel with a group of “unchurched” people in the town of Lystra. But we can only wonder if this response had ever occurred to them as a possibility they needed to be prepared for. Regardless of others’ response, Paul and Barnabas continued to speak about Jesus wherever they went.

**Watch**

As we watch this video, think about your answer to this question: When is it easy for you to speak up about what Jesus has done for you? When is it most difficult?



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**Consider What the Bible Says**

Paul had been dramatically transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit. Later the Lord placed a special call on his life. Paul would go as God’s voice not only to fellow Jews, but also to the Gentiles, the non-Jews ([Acts 9:3–18](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac9.3-18); [13:1–3](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac13.1-3)). So Paul went on missionary journeys to share the gospel in many places. Today we catch up with Paul and Barnabas on one of these journeys, in the town of Lystra.

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| **QUESTION**Have you ever gone on a trip with the purpose of sharing the gospel (commonly called a missions trip)? If so, what were some needs you encountered? |

**Did You Know?**

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| Polytheism, the worship of more than one god, could only be found in a few towns in Israel during the days of the New Testament. But when Jesus’ disciples traveled to other countries with the gospel message, they were faced with a world entrenched in the worship of all types of pagan deities. In the Roman world, it was not uncommon to worship any number of gods based on day-to-day life. For example, a craftsman would worship the Greek god of metal work: Hephaestus. A hunter might worship the Roman goddess Diana, the patron goddess of the countryside. The desire to worship any possible god became so progressive and problematic that the Book of Acts reveals that some people even sought to worship gods they had yet to imagine! |

**Paul Responds to a Man’s Faith**

Read [Acts 14:8–10](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac14.8-10).

Wow! We see so many unbelievable things in such a short space. In fact, it’s difficult to determine which part of this text is most amazing. Was it the fact that the man was miraculously healed? Or how the man still had faith to be healed after living with a disability for years? Then there’s Paul who through the Holy Spirit was literally able to see this man’s faith and respond to it. One thing is for sure. God brought all the right pieces together at the right time for this miracle.

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| **QUESTION**In your opinion, which of these events in this passage is most amazing? |

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| **QUESTION**What do you think Paul saw in the man’s eyes that made him realize that the man had the faith to be healed? |

It’s worth noting that Paul was preaching to a crowd, yet he still looked into the eyes of one person. When we’re speaking about truth, we can’t lose sight of its impact on a person either. We must be willing to lovingly help people understand and walk in the truth. It’s a difficult thing to change all that you know, even if it’s right or necessary.

Jesus reminded us of His care for each person in His Parable of the Lost Sheep. The Good Shepherd left the ninety-nine other sheep to go and search for His one lost sheep ([Matthew 18:12](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt18.12)). We may speak truth to ninety-nine people, but Jesus may ask us to hold the hand of just one as that person makes their journey into His truth.

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| **QUESTION**What about Paul’s message might have inspired this man’s faith? |

**The Truth Twisted**

Read [Acts 14:11–13](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac14.11-13).

Roman society included the worship of many gods. These gods were often worshipped at shrines or temples. So, it’s possible that this preaching and healing took place at or near a local temple or shrine. The large crowds gathered at a place like this would have provided the perfect audience for Paul’s preaching. People who brought offerings as worship would have also provided an ideal opportunity for beggars.

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| **QUESTION**Contrast the crowd’s response to the healing miracle with the blind beggar’s response of faith. |

The beggar’s response of faith resulted in his healing. The crowd’s response was anything but apathetic. Their passion was evident, too. But just because someone is zealous about something doesn’t make it true. People can passionately pursue a lie just as easily as they can pursue the truth. Even Paul did that before he became a Christian.

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| **QUESTION**What are some lies people zealously pursue in our society today that are counter to God’s truth? |

While the Roman government allowed the worship of many gods, history shows us that the Roman Empire considered Christianity to be a threat. That’s because Christians preached that there is only one true God. So, Paul’s teaching was a threat to the Roman way of life.

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| **QUESTION**How do you see this same dynamic in our society today? |

**Grieved by the Deception**

Read [Acts 14:14](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac14.14).

Paul and Barnabas responded quickly to the claim that they were gods. The practice of tearing clothing was a familiar response in Judaism. In Old Testament times, prophets, priests, and even kings had been known to tear their clothes. Sometimes it was a sign of grief. And at other times people did it to humble themselves.

We can easily imagine that Paul and Barnabas may have wanted to counter people’s worship of them by humbling themselves. However, the Bible gives another possible reason: a response to hearing blasphemy ([Mark 14:62–64](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mk14.62-64)). They honored God in a way others could see.

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| **QUESTION**Have you ever taken a stand publicly for God’s truth? If so, what was the situation and what did you do? |

**Confronting the Lie**

Read [Acts 14:15–20](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac14.15-20).

Paul and Barnabas firmly stopped the crowd’s attempt to worship them. They made it clear that they had come to preach the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. They wanted the people of Lystra to understand that there is only one true God.

But instead, people ignored the truth Paul shared about Jesus. First, they treated Paul and Barnabas as earthly manifestations of their gods. When Paul tried to correct their misunderstanding, they didn’t want to hear the truth. Then some Jews swayed the crowd completely in the other direction. In a short time, Paul and Barnabas went from being considered gods to being left for dead on the edge of town.

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| **QUESTION**In what ways do you see people twist the message of Jesus today? |

**Reflect**

**Challenge wrong thinking with God’s truth.**

Paul and Barnabas were not traveling, enduring hardship, and suffering beatings for their own fame. They were doing it all for the glory of Jesus. Even during Jesus’ own life, people often misunderstood His purposes and tried to make Him into an earthly king.

We too must be on guard against the obvious lies and subtle deceptions of the enemy. These lies are all around us and, even more concerning, they can creep inside us. Our best weapon against the enemy’s lies and deception is God’s truth. We must engage with God’s Word regularly, so we won’t drift off course. Then we can be prepared to challenge others’ wrong thinking with God’s truth too.

**Listen to God**

Let’s pause and listen to what God might want to say to us about what we have read and shared. Be silent for a few moments and reflect on the following questions. Respond to the one that most resonates with what God is saying to you now. Then complete the others during Day 1 of your devotion time this week.

**Personal Reflection Questions**

*Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal.*

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| **QUESTION**What might it cost you if you were fooled into believing some distortion of biblical truth |

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| **QUESTION**Are there those in your life who are confused about God’s truth? If so, in what ways? |

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| **QUESTION**What do you believe Jesus is asking you to do in response to this revelation? |

**Activate**

Facing our own confusion about God’s truth can ultimately prepare us to speak truth to others. Determine to study and learn more about any area of deception that you’ve believed in the past. Look up Scriptures on the topic. Search for books written by trusted authors. Talk with a pastor or trusted spiritual leader to shore up your own understanding of truth in this area.

**Challenge**

Once you’ve anchored your faith in the truth of God’s Word and sound theology, be willing to share what you have learned with others. If you have believed a lie in the past, you most likely learned it from or were affirmed in it by family, friends, or coworkers. Ask God to give you opportunities to share what you have learned, and then be ready to speak His truth. You can do it!

**Prayer Requests**

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| Note any requests from the group and pray together. Also remember to pray for them during the week. |

It was normal for Jesus to teach crowds of people, but He taught His smaller group of disciples on a deeper level. In the same way, we can value what Jesus can teach us in our group. But we also want to set aside time to be alone with Him, so He can teach us in a deeper, more individual way. So make time to do the devotions in the Bible Engagement Project app this week. You’ll uncover so much more of His truth when He teaches you one-on-one.

**Live on Your Own**

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| *Before you begin each devotion, pray and ask God to speak to you through His Word. Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal.* |

**Day 1: Speak Truth**

Read [Acts 14:8–18](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac14.8-18).

Look back over Live in Community and complete your responses to the Personal Reflection Questions. Plan how to complete the Activate component if you haven’t already done so. If time permits, reread the Scripture too.

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| **QUESTION**What is God saying to you about being willing to speak His truth? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 2: The Lie of Blame**

Read [John 9:1–12](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn9.1-12).

We see here that people believed a lie that sickness or disease was always caused by their sin or their parents’ sin. But Jesus confronted this lie and reshaped their thinking. He wanted them to see that it was for God’s glory that this man had been born blind.

We may at times face great difficulties that aren’t caused by anyone’s actions. This story reminds us that we shouldn’t be quick to judge others based on their circumstances. Instead we should pray for them and ask the Lord to keep our heart tender toward those who are hurting.

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| **QUESTION**Have you ever felt judged by others for something that you couldn’t control? |

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| **QUESTION**Is there a situation or group of people that you admittedly are quick to judge without knowing the context? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 3: The Lie of Peer Acceptance**

Read [John 9:13–23](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn9.13-23).

The man’s parents were afraid of what the Pharisees would do to them if they supported their son’s claims that Jesus had healed him. Instead of declaring the truth, they deflected the question to their son.

Unfortunately, we’ve probably all had times when we were more worried about being accepted by people who treated us poorly than about standing up for God’s truth. The reality is that those people probably will never accept us anyway. And yet, we may be tempted to betray or ignore God’s truth in the hope that they will.

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| **QUESTION**Have you ever felt betrayed by someone who wasn’t willing to stand up for the truth? |

Because of our human nature, we can often quickly think of a time when others have wronged us. But we tend to easily forget times when we’ve been the one on the wrong side of truth.

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| **QUESTION**What’s a lie you’ve been tempted to believe when faced with peer pressure or the desire to be accepted by others? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 4: Set Free from the Lies**

Read [John 9:24–34](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn9.24-34).

Unlike his parents, the healed man didn’t seem to care what the Pharisees thought or might do to him. So he boldly spoke the truth about what Jesus had done for him without any regard for the social consequences.

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| **QUESTION**Why do you think the man had a different response than his parents’? |

In verse [34](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn9.34), the Pharisees were indignant and accused the healed man of lecturing them. If you look at what the man said to them in verse [31](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn9.31), he was likely quoting back to them some religious teaching that he had learned. To this point, the Pharisees’ questions had been focused on trapping the man into denying Jesus. But now they’re the ones who had been trapped by their own words. When we tell or promote lies, we just might be setting a trap for ourself.

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| **QUESTION**Have you have been caught in the trap of your own lie? |

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| **QUESTION**Looking back now, how much trouble could you have saved yourself by just being truthful from the beginning? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 5: The Rewards for Truthfulness**

Read [Psalm 34:11–22](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ps34.11-22).

This psalm contrasts all the benefits for those people who avoid evil and do good with those who do evil and tell lies. Go through this passage and list or underline the benefits you see. Then make another list of, or underline in a different color, the consequences of evil. When we look at the stark contrast between being on the right side of God or being counted as one of His enemies, we can’t help but be encouraged to do the right thing even when it’s difficult.

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| **QUESTION**Which of the things in these two lists stood out most to you? |

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| **QUESTION**Referencing this psalm, write out an encouragement to your future self. Then read it the next time you’re tempted to get on the wrong side of the truth. |