**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.

*We live in a world of celebrity worship. We tend to idolize anyone who’s an influencer on social media, an all-star athlete, or a star in movies. In some ways, they’re like gods to some people. They follow them on social media, want to meet them, and would give anything to be known by them. This is somewhat like what Paul and Barnabas experienced in Lystra. After a man who couldn’t walk was healed during their ministry, people immediately thought of them as gods to be worshipped. Take notice of how Paul and Barnabas responded by challenging wrong thinking with God’s truth.*

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| ***You Will Need*** *• Smartphone or timer****Getting Ready*** • ***First time leading* Live *for Youth? Look here for 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**

**Welcome**

*Take this time to welcome everyone, introduce new students, learn names, and thank everyone for coming. Your friendliness here can create a comfort level that encourages student participation later.*

**Introduction**

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| **QUESTION**Has anyone here ever been corrected after giving wrong info? Maybe someone used a smartphone to find and quote the real facts to you. Would anyone share how it felt to be corrected? |

It can be a little awkward being told you’re wrong. But for each of us, the truth should be more important than how we feel about it. In previous sessions, we discussed the truth that putting others ahead of ourself is the way to lead in God’s kingdom. Then we talked about listening to the right voices to know truth. Today, we’ll look at how Paul and Barnabas confronted wrong thinking because they understood God’s truth.

**Opening Prayer**

*Prayer thoughts: Thank God for everyone present. Thank Him for His Word, which guides into all truth. Ask God to lead today’s discussion and help students live and walk in His truth. Pray that He would help everyone fall in love with the Bible and share its truth with others.*

**Group Activity**

**Mirror, Mirror**

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| ***You Will Need*** *• Smartphone or timer**No prep is needed for this activity.* |

Our game is called Mirror, Mirror. Pair up, guys with guys and girls with girls. Then face each other. You’ll have 30 seconds to notice everything you can about the person in front of you. Note things like how their hair looks or what they’re wearing. Try to remember every detail you can about them.

• *Once pairs are set, say go and start a 30-second timer.*

Stop. Now turn around and stand back-to-back. *(Pause while students follow this instruction.)* You have one minute to change anything you want about your appearance. Try to change at least three things that would be difficult for the other person to notice.

• *Say go and start a 60-second timer.*

Stop. Now turn around and face your partner. *(Pause while students do this.)* See if you can notice what changes the other person made.

• *Give students time to discuss their changes.*

• *Optional: Play again with new partners.*

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| **QUESTION**Who figured out all the changes your partner made? |

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| **QUESTION**What change was the most difficult for you to notice about your partner? What made it so? |

You did a great job looking carefully at your partner to figure out what was different. The opposite can happen in everyday life, too. Perhaps you thought you saw someone you knew, but after taking a closer look, you realized they weren’t the person you thought.

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| **QUESTION**Have you ever been mistaken for someone else? What happened? |

In our Bible story, there are two people who were mistaken for someone else. As you’ll see, Paul and Barnabas could have acted the part or ignored what people were saying, but they chose not to. Instead, they chose to tell people the truth. Let’s watch this video to help introduce the Bible story.

**Watch**

**Consider What the Bible Says**

*Ensure each student has access to a Bible, preferably the same version.*

Two church leaders, Paul and Barnabas, were traveling to cities and sharing the good news of Jesus. They had been preaching in Iconium, an ancient city that’s in modern-day Turkey. Some people there believed the truth of what the two preached, while others turned away. Those who turned away then made plans to stone Paul and Barnabas. But the two leaders discovered the plan. So they left town and went to a nearby region that’s also in modern-day Turkey. This is where we pick up today’s Bible story.

**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’ followers 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 Preaches Truth, and a Man Is Healed**

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

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| **QUESTION**What do we know about the man who was listening to Paul? |

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| **QUESTION**What did Paul notice about the man? |

This man, who had never walked, appeared to be captivated by Paul’s teaching. So much so, that it seems his attention grabbed Paul’s attention. And somehow, likely by listening to the Holy Spirit, Paul recognized faith in this man.

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| **QUESTION**How did Paul respond to the man’s faith? |

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| **QUESTION**Do you think your faith in God is strong like this man’s, getting weaker, or staying about the same? Why do you think that is? |

One way we can grow in faith is by reading God’s Word and listening to others preach and teach about it. As this man listened to Paul’s preaching, he had faith to be healed. And as our faith grows, we can trust that God can do amazing things in our life, too.

**The People Misunderstand the Miraculous**

Read [Acts 8:11–13](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac8.11-13).

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| **QUESTION**What did the people believe Paul and Barnabas to be? |

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| **Question**What did the people attempt to do to show their worship of Paul and Barnabas? |

These people often worshipped other gods. So, once the crowd saw that a man had been miraculously healed, they immediately assumed Paul and Barnabas were gods. After all, with the power to heal, who else could they be? Unfortunately, the people of Lystra confused their false gods with the one true God. As a result, the people set out to worship Paul and Barnabas by bringing them gifts and sacrifices.

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| **QUESTION**How might you have responded if you had been Paul and Barnabas in this situation? |

**Paul and Barnabas Confront Falsehood**

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

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| **QUESTION**What was Paul and Barnabas’s immediate response to being worshipped? |

Paul and Barnabas were really upset that the people thought that Barnabas was the god Zeus and Paul was the god Hermes. Some people may have tried to ignore what was going on. Others might have embraced people’s worship, convincing themselves of their self-importance. After all, a man was healed as a result of Paul speaking to him.

Instead, Paul and Barnabas immediately jumped in to confront this falsehood. They took this opportunity to point to God and the whole reason they had come to this region. They wanted people to know the truth of the good news about Jesus.

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| **QUESTION**Why do you think Paul and Barnabas responded this way? |

You may be familiar with Paul’s conversion to become a follower of Jesus. Prior to his encounter with Jesus that day, Paul had persecuted people who believed in Jesus. But when Jesus confronted Paul, he was faced with the truth of who Jesus is: the one true God. No doubt that impacted how Paul responded to people worshipping him.

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| **QUESTION**Do you think people were surprised at Paul and Barnabas’s response to being worshipped as gods? Why or why not? |

Paul and Barnabas immediately tried to redirect the crowd. They wanted to take the wrong thinking of the crowd and redirect it to the truth about God.

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| **QUESTION**What are a few things Paul said the living God had done for the people? |

Reminding others that even their basic needs had been met by God pointed the focus away from Paul and Barnabas. God had sent rain, provided food, and brought joy to their hearts. The one true God had met the people’s needs in life.

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| **QUESTION**What are some needs God has met in your life? |

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| **QUESTION**How can remembering what God has done in your life help you to focus on living for Him? |

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| **QUESTION**Have you ever been in a situation where you’ve had to defend who God is or what people thought of Jesus? What happened? |

* *You may want to have a personal story to help get this started.*

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| **QUESTION**Do you have a Bible verse or story you turn to that helps others know the whole truth about God? Share it with the group. |

**Paul Paid a Price for Speaking Truth**

As Paul and Barnabas explained the truth of who God is and what He has done, another group arrived. Their reaction was the opposite of those who worshipped Paul and Barnabas.

Read [Acts 14:19–20](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac14.19-20).

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| **QUESTION**What would you have done if you had been in this situation? Why do you think this would have been your response? |

Remember, the Jews who came supposedly believed in the one true God like Paul and Barnabas. But they didn’t agree that Jesus was the Savior. So they swayed the crowd against Paul and Barnabas. Then the group threw rocks at Paul until he appeared dead to them, and they dragged him out of town.

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| **QUESTION**Why do you think the enemy, the devil, does all he can to confuse people about who Jesus is? |

If the enemy can convince people that God isn’t real or that Jesus didn’t pay for our sins, then people will turn away from God for salvation. The challenge for each of us is to speak truth and confront wrong thinking from others.

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| **QUESTION**What did Paul do after being stoned and left for dead? |

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| **QUESTION**Why do you think Paul walked back into the town where people had tried to kill him that day? |

Think back to what we said about Paul’s background. Paul had changed because of his encounter with Jesus. Once, he had been just like these people who stoned him. He had been a part of putting Jesus’ followers in prison for their faith. But Paul was now on the other side. He was willing to face death to present the truth of who Jesus is to people.

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| **QUESTION**Have you ever been persecuted for your faith in Jesus? |

**Reflect**

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

We saw how two believers, Paul and Barnabas, were willing to risk their lives in order to preach and confront others’ false thinking. They could have simply ignored the people’s worship of them. Rather, they took a stand for God and confronted the lies. Their desire was that the truth of Jesus would be known so that others would worship Him, not them.

It’s especially difficult to speak out when there is a crowd. Paul and Barnabas faced two very different moments with this crowd. The first time, the crowd wanted to worship them. The second time, they wanted to kill them. In both cases, we see how Paul and Barnabas confronted the crowd. The two leaders stated that they were just people, not gods, and shared the truth of the real God.

**Listen to God**

Let’s take time to consider how our life demonstrates a real trust in the Bible. These questions are meant to serve as a conversation between you and God. Sharing your responses with the group is completely voluntary.

• *Pause for a few moments of silent reflection before asking students if they want to share.*

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| **QUESTION**Is it difficult for you to speak the truth of who Jesus is to those who speak against Him? Why or why not? |

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| **QUESTION**What are a few ways God might want to use you to confront the lies of the crowd when they come your way? |

**Activate**

Standing up against a person or crowd who speaks false things about God can be a challenge. Fear of what people may think, say, or do can prevent us from confronting them. But we can learn a lesson from Paul and Barnabas. They confronted the crowd by telling them what God did. They didn’t try to defend themselves, but rather they pointed to the good news of God. We can do the same.

There may be times when we face persecution for our faith as Paul did. We should be ready when people confront us about who God is. The real question for us is, are we willing to stand against the false ideas about God? Let’s be challenged to confront these lies with God’s truth.

**Conclusion**

Paul and Barnabas’s experience began with encountering a man who couldn’t walk. After a healing, it progressed to being worshipped by people who thought they were gods. Paul and Barnabas confronted this falsehood by representing themselves as just people who were simply doing what followers of Jesus did. The two of them discerned the lies of the people around them and challenged their wrong thinking with God’s truth.

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| **Salvation Opportunity***Include this if you think there may be some in the group who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus.*To boldly stand against lies like Paul and Barnabas did, we first need to know and believe God’s truth. God sent His Son, Jesus, to us to provide an opportunity for our salvation. This was the message Paul and Barnabas were trying to share with the crowd. Our response should be to surrender our life to Him.**Is anyone here that we can pray for who doesn’t have a relationship with Jesus or wants to renew their relationship with Him?***Take a moment to acknowledge those who respond, and thank them for their desire to make things right between themselves and God. Pray with them as you close in prayer or after the group time is over. Following group time, talk more about where they are in their walk with God and how you might be able to help.* |

**Prayer**

Jesus, thank You for loving us and giving Your life for us on the Cross. Thank You for those all over the world who are following You. We pray for those facing persecution for sharing the good news about You. Please strengthen them to speak with courage. Help us in this as well. We love You. Amen.

**Dismissal**

Let me challenge you to go through your personal devotions. I look forward to seeing each of you next time as we continue our journey in God’s Word.