**Description:** **K.E.Y. Bible Study** introduces the essential biblical narratives, concepts, and themes, and teaches the student how to apply the message of the Bible to daily living. Each teaching session is self-contained, which allows participants to join in the study at any time during the five years.

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| **Purpose:** | To teach the most significant events, passages, and doctrines of the Bible in a manner and using methods which encourages and empowers the student to: **K**eep the faith that we have received Be **E**quipped to serve the Body of Christ Become **Y**oked, or connect, with others for the purpose of ministry  |

**How to Strengthen Other Christians**

#### January 6, 2016

#### Acts 14:21-28

**Background**

Jesus continually prepared His followers for the difficulties and realities of living in a fallen world. He did not want His followers to be disillusioned. As a result, the Sermon on the Mount begins with strong statements regarding the persecution and rejection they would experience. If they were forewarned about the persecution, they would not be discouraged when it came. The early church planters and missionaries not only engaged the lost world in the name of Jesus, but they also followed the practice of Jesus of preparing the new Christians to face difficulty. Encouraged Christians will be strong Christians. In this section, Luke showed how the early Christian missionaries strengthened and encouraged the early followers of Jesus. This section takes place during the concluding leg of Paul’s first missionary journey.

These events occurred approximately 20 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus (46 A.D. – 48 A.D.) in the cities of Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, which are part of modern-day Turkey.

**What Happened**

**Acts 14:21:**

**They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch**,

* Paul and Barnabas preached the gospel to the people at Derbe, a relatively small city. Two of the smaller cities provided two future Christian leaders: Timothy was from Lystra, and Gaius was from Derbe. Even now, smaller communities often provide more pastors and missionaries than larger cities. This may be because in smaller communities you learn how to relate to people more intensely than in a major city. Also, in smaller communities, people usually have more intergenerational responsibilities.
* After leaving Derbe, they returned through the cities they had visited earlier. This is an early example of intentional follow-up. Teaching and nurturing is a necessary aspect of church planting that cannot be neglected.

**Acts 14:22:**

**strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,” they said.**

* Follow up requires both strengthening and encouraging. The strengthening would include teaching and explanation of Scripture. Encouraging contains an emotional as well as a relationship component. Encouragement is not as much taught as it is “caught” through relationships. New Christians need both cognitive learning and emotional support.
* “Strengthen” means “to cause to rest on” or “to be established.” Strong Christians are to be a source of stability for others.
* Like Jesus, Paul and Barnabas taught that the Christian life would require suffering and persecution. Christians who are surprised by suffering and rejection have not been exposed to the whole counsel of Jesus, or they have heard it but chosen not to receive it. Christians do not seek suffering, but it does seek them. The world is not just passive to the truth of Jesus; it is resistant to Him and to His followers. Christians do not pay for their sins through suffering. However, suffering can be used redemptively in the lives of others.

**Acts 14:23:**

**Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.**

* Although the word “appoint” can mean “chosen by show of hands” or “selected” by individuals, the setting here suggests that Paul and Barnabas selected the church leaders.
* Prayer and fasting are associated with leadership selection. This can be translated “having prayed while fasting.” These two disciplines are often connected.
* In the early churches, the terms elders, bishops, and overseers were used functionally. They did not necessarily show formal position or structural organization.
* The first required attribute of a spiritual leader is trust, not talent.

**Acts 14:24-26:**

**After going through Pisidia, they came into Pamphylia, 25 and when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. 26 From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed.**

* Luke does not tell us of any unusual events or results from preaching in these cities. We assume in some communities there were conversions, and others there were not. It would have been tempting for an overly zealous writer to exaggerate the response, but Luke is very committed to providing an accurate account.
* Paul mentioned that they preached in Perga. This was a port city. The early church planters always attempted to leave a witness or plant a church in cities in which there were international travelers. This was an early missionary strategy.

**Acts 14:27-28**

**27 On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. 28 And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.**

* When they returned to Antioch, they gave a report of what God had done. The only way they could explain the success they had in the Gentile communities was that God had moved in a mighty way.
* The analogy of a door being opened is very descriptive. In matters of faith, we do not make a door or even open doors; instead, we choose to go through the doors God creates and opens.
* Reporting was a form of accountability. The early church practiced both individual and corporate accountability. The leaders knew that accountability was an expected and required responsibility.
* Luke wanted the readers and hearers to realize that the gospel was for Gentiles, as well as the Jews.
* While these first-century church planters travelled, they also spent a significant amount of time in fellowship with their fellow Christians. Acts 14:28 provides a biblical reference and foundation for missionaries having extended furloughs.

**K.E.Y. Truth**

Christians need to be strengthened and encouraged, as well as intentionally strengthen and encourage other believers.