

The Characteristics of a Servant of Christ

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Acts 14

The Book of Acts could be called the *Acts of the Apostles*—Proclaiming the Gospel. Week after week, through our study, we see the apostles proclaiming the message of the Gospel. They started in Jerusalem, and now, under Paul’s leadership, the Gospel influence is proliferating towards the “uttermost.”

In Acts 14, we trace Paul and Barnabas's steps during their first excursion to share the gospel. The two missionaries have made their way to Iconium in modern Turkey. Iconium, now known as Konya, is one of the oldest cities in Turkey. Lystra was a Roman colony market town located about 20 miles south of Iconium. Derbe is about 60 miles from Lystra. This is the region of Galatia, to whom Paul wrote the book of Galatians, which was directed to the churches in this area.

Paul followed Jesus' divine command to “make disciples” (**Matthew 28:18-20**). The main verb of that commission is “make disciples” (to disciple). This instruction was to believers. It was not institutional or directed to a subset of believers.

Making disciples is divine instruction for all believers. Disciple means to initiate or instruct a “learner/disciple” in the ways and teachings of a specific teacher or leader, in this case, Jesus Christ.



I. Servants of Christ are Dependent on the Gifts of the Spirit.

1 Peter 4:10, *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace:*

- A. Prophecy – to proclaim God’s word with clarity and power
 1. **Acts 14:1**, *Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed.*
 2. **Acts 14:21**, *When they had preached the gospel to that city*
 3. **Acts 14:25**, *And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia,*
- B. Teaching – to explain clearly the Scripture
 1. **Acts 14:22**, *strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.*
 2. **Acts 14:21b**, *and had made many disciples, they returned...*
- C. Encouragement – the ability to encourage people in their faith to live for God.
 1. **Acts 14:22** *encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.*
- D. Leadership – appointed elders and established structure for the new churches.
 1. **Acts 14:23**, *And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.*
- E. Paul also exhibited “sign” gifts as an apostle.

II. Servants are Bold Witnesses (Acts 14:1-7)

- A. Verse 2, “unbelieving” “disbelieved” – (*apeitheō*) – could be translated as “disobeyed.” Throughout the NT, unbelief is associated with disobedience, and belief is associated with obedience. (John 3:36, Romans 2:8, 1 Peter 4:17. Acts 17:30-31.
- B. Enemy “poisoned” public opinion against Paul and Barnabas

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- C. Persisting in the face of opposition (Note the tension of vs. 3)
1. **1 Thessalonians 2:2**, *But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict.*
 2. **Ephesians 6:19–20**, *And also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.*
 3. Peter in **Acts 4:19–20**, *But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, 20 for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.”*

III. Servants Serve in Humbleness. (Acts 14:8-18)

- A. Paul exercised miraculous sign gifts of healing in great humility (Acts 14:8-10)
- B. The Lycaonians, upon seeing the miracle, proclaim Paul and Barnabas as gods (Acts 14:11-12)
- C. Paul and Barnabas reject their offering and glory (Acts 14:13-15a)
- D. Paul uses “natural revelation” to declare the glory of God (Acts 14:15b-18)
 1. **1 Peter 5:5–6**, *Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you,*
 2. **James 4:6**, *But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” James 4:10, Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.*

IV. Servants are Persistent in Serving (Acts 14:19-21)

- A. Persistent under threat (Acts 14:19)
- B. Persistent during attack (Acts 14:20)
- C. Persistent in mission (Acts 14:21)
 1. Note, “made many disciples.”

V. Servants Nurse Young Believers (Acts 14:21-23)

1 Thessalonians 2:7, *But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.*

- A. “Made disciples” – Paul and Barnabas were busy teaching (Acts 14:21)
- B. *Strengthened (episterizo)* – means to establish, strengthen; Paul was used by God to “cause these believers to become stronger in the sense of firmer and more unchanging in their attitudes and beliefs.” (Acts 14:22)
- C. Appointed leadership (Acts 14:23)

VI. Servants are Committed (Acts 14:24-25)

- A. Did not skip over cities in the travels back to Antioch (Syria)

VII. Servants are Reverent (Acts 14:26-28)

Mark 1:14–15 (ESV) — **14** Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, **15** and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

Acts 17:30–31 (ESV) — **30** The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, **31** because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

John 3:36 (ESV) — **36** Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

Romans 2:8 (ESV) — **8** but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.

Romans 15:31 (ESV) — **31** that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints,

Ephesians 2:2 (ESV) — **2** in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—

Ephesians 5:6 (ESV) — **6** Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

2 Thessalonians 1:8 (ESV) — **8** in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

Titus 3:3 (ESV) — **3** For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.

1 Peter 4:17 (ESV) — **17** For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?