

God Opens A Door (Acts 14)

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- [0 : 00] Acts chapter 14 verse 1 to 28 At Iconium, Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue.
- There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Greeks believed. But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the other Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers.
- So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of His grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders.
- The people of the city were divided. Some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles. There was a plot afoot among both Gentiles and Jews, together with their leaders, to mistreat them and stone them.
- But they found out about it and fled to the Lycanian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding country, where they continued to preach the gospel.
- [1 : 14] In Lystra, there is said a man who was lame. He had been that way from birth and had never walked. He listened to Paul as he was speaking.
- Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed, and called out, Stand up on your feet. At that, the men jumped up and began to walk.
- When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycanian language, The gods have come down to us in human form. Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermas.
- Because he was the chief speaker, the priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates, because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them.
- But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting, Friends, why are you doing this? We too are only human, like you.
- [2 : 20] We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them.
- In the past, he let all nations go their own way, yet he has not left himself without testimony. He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons.
- He provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy. Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them.
- Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead.
- But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day, he and Barnabas left for Derbe. They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples.

[3 : 24] Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. You must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God, they said.

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.

After going through Pisidia, they came into Pamphylia. And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Atalia.

From Atalia, they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door for faith to the Gentiles.

And they stayed there a long time with the disciples. Thank you, Terrence.

[4 : 35] Please keep your Bibles open. I'll just move this away. It'd be great if you can keep your Bibles open in Acts chapter 14, which is what we just heard read for us.

And that was a really great reading. Thank you, Terrence, for that. And half as long as last week's chapter, about no less important. So I'm William, one of the pastors here.

Thank you for joining us, whether you're here in person or online, including Pastor Albert. I do pray for him. And Janice, they are recovering.

But I think, yeah, just a little bit of coughing still. So just keep them in your prayers. And hopefully we'll see them both out of the house soon. Yeah. Would you pray with me? Let's hear from God's word.

Father, we thank you, as we've just heard, that our door of faith is open to the Gentiles. Help us believe this, even when we look around and we see discouraging things, nations turning away from you, our own hearts being drawn away from faith in Christ.

[5 : 45] Do revive our hearts today as we hear how you have opened a door and that door is still open for your gospel, for your kingdom, for your glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

I'm not as good as activities as Fran, but I do have a very short activity for you. So I'm going to show a picture for you and I want you to tell me what you see. Okay. Who sees a duck?

Hands up. Okay. Who sees the rabbit? All right. This is another picture. All right. Okay. Who sees the wife or the woman?

Young woman. Who sees the older woman? Okay. All right. One more. Okay. Okay.

Here's a bunch of trees. Now put your hands up the moment you see the man's face. Okay. Still looking for the man's face, someone? Yeah. Okay. All right. Hopefully everyone's hands should be up by the time.

[6 : 41] Yep. By the end of it. Well done, Fran. A bit slow on the uptake. Not your fault. The moment you see the other picture is what psychologists call the gestalt switch, right?

It's the click moment, right? It's the, oh, snap. I see the other side. In today's chapter, there's also a key mind switch, a key snap moment.

It's what Luke recorded for us in verse 27, okay, that we just heard read. Have a listen again to verse 27. They gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how, what does it say?

He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. Picture this. This is Antioch City Church, right? We heard last week how they had just sent out Paul and Barnabas, the first missions team, and they've been waiting around for about two years, I think, up till now, waiting for them to come back home.

Paul and Barnabas now home, but in the meantime, perhaps they were wondering. Maybe some of those in Antioch City Church were a bit skeptical. We sent two of our best.

[7 : 53] What's the result? Paul nearly killed. A bunch of new Christians in foreign places that we won't see. All those new issues that come up when there are other churches to deal with.

What was the point? And perhaps, as a church, we may have these kinds of thoughts from time to time. Here we are, PCBC English, three years in.

We've offered our best to share the gospel. And yet for what? A congregation about the same size as we started? Maybe people who have since left the church?

Maybe new people coming in, bringing new questions? What's the point? But maybe like Luke's first readers, we too need a click moment.

A mind shift from a church full of problems and questions to a family full of possibilities. From a country becoming more and more secular to a land ready for a fresh move of God's spirit.

[8 : 57] From seeing annoying barriers and obstacles in our church to seeing an open door for Jesus to walk through and touch the lives of people.

So this is what Acts 14 is all about. And over the next few minutes, we're going to have a look closer at how this is possible. How God has opened a door of faith.

Now for those of you who weren't here last week, just a reminder that at this point in Acts, Paul and Barnabas, they're kind of in the middle of their OE, right? Overseas evangelism. So just like last week, I think we want to do the same thing as what we try to do.

We walk through the story and I'll try and point out things that are helpful for us to know along the way as PCBC. I think we'll learn a lot about who God is, about what we're like, and what perhaps our purpose for PCBC could be today.

Anyway, yeah, so in honor of the door idea, today's sermon is brought to you by the letter D. All right, so the first D we've got. First, let's see in our passage how Paul and Barnabas' gospel ministry divides a city, the city of Iconium.

[10 : 05] So have a look at verse 1 to 7 again in your Bibles. And when you turn there, you'll see, right? Now at Iconium, they entered, they went into the Jewish synagogue and started to speak in such a way that a great numbers of people believed.

Remember how in Pisidian Antioch last week, we had Paul, right? He had a go at kind of guest preaching in the synagogue. And it led to not just Jews, but Greeks rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord.

And now verse 1 tells us this is the same thing that's happening again, except even more. All right, they use the same method. They go to the synagogue first. Okay, there's a ready crowd of people ready to listen.

And they speak similarly to before, I think. That's what the verse is trying to say. And again, here it says both Jews and Greeks believed in Jesus as their Savior.

Again, like last week, though, the Jewish leaders, they seem to get upset, don't they? What do they do? It says here they poison the minds of the Gentiles against the Iconian believers.

[11 : 16] That's why I say there's division in the city. And yet regardless of this division, what do the missionaries do? Verse 3 tells us they remained, they stayed for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord.

Just like last week, how we heard of people who witnessed powerful preaching and supported by marvelous miracles. This is what God gives again, this time to another city.

All right? Here we get Paul's kind of edging, cutting-edge ministry getting special, miraculous support. Don't we see that? All right? Signs and wonders coming along with their hands.

This past week, I read recently of a brother's testimony. His name is Elijah Oguni. He grew up in Nigeria, and the family that practiced idol worship and witchcraft.

And Elijah knew no Christians in his life. And as I was reading his testimony from the Voice of the Martyrs magazine, it said that one night he started having nightmares of a frightening, dark figure.

[12 : 23] So frightful that he couldn't sleep. I wonder if you can relate to this. But then in one of his dreams, he saw that he received a Bible, and he was able to use that to slay the dark figure.

And then he never had those dreams again. And Elijah said that was the moment that actually drove him to surrender his life to Jesus, to find a church and learn more about the gospel.

And eventually, him and his wife, Felicia, they became missionaries to unreached Muslims in his country. And you might hear this and think, wow, I've never had this kind of experience.

I certainly haven't had that kind of dream, specifically. And yet my reaction was this. Praise God for speaking to Elijah in this way. But you notice how his dream pointed him to Christ, didn't it?

Right? To who disarms all powers and authorities at the cross, it says in Colossians 2. So you see Luke, in the same way, he puts signs and wonders in Iconium in the same context.

[13 : 26] What are they for? It says here in verse 3, right? Granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. And what is it for? To bear witness to the word of his grace.

Signs and wonders are not an end of itself. They're not to be used to magnify ourselves. Any church or ministry that pushes or praises signs and wonders over the gospel of grace has lost sight of its purpose.

And you'll notice too, right, how Paul and Barnabas, they know the gospel divides, don't they? Okay? In these three verses, they know what they're saying is going to divide the city.

But what do they do? It says here they stayed for a long time, right? My translation says they remained for a long time. I'm sure yours does too. Because they did.

They knew to stay put was what mattered. Maybe they were well taught by the apostles. You remember in Matthew's gospel, Jesus said and warned, He would turn a man against his father.

[14 : 31] He would turn a daughter against her mother. Sometimes the gospel will divide. We cannot serve two kings, two masters. And here it's no different.

Some side with the Jews and some side with the apostles from Antioch. But it does seem that Paul and Barnabas know when to leave, right?

It says here when they hear plans to mistreat and stone them, in verse 5 it tells us they choose to make like a banana and split. As the door closes on Iconium, though, it seems like they head down, kind of southwest-ish, and there's another door that opens in Lystra.

And it's here in Lystra that we see our second D, right? Secondly, we see Paul and Barnabas' gospel ministry dazzle a town, the town of Lystra. So from verse 8 to 18, that's what we see.

If Lystra was a town along State Highway 1, it will probably, might have a kiwi fruit or a carrot outside it, or maybe like a little kooky sign that said, Welcome to Lystra, population, not many people.

[15 : 42] It's a bit rural. It's about 30 kilometers south of Iconium, the biggest city. And historians talked about Lystra as less developed, which is a very polite way of saying it's a bit of a country town.

No one goes there. Maybe lots of farmers. And you notice that there's no synagogue mentioned in this section, because perhaps it wasn't big enough to have one.

And yet Lystra is an area steeped with its own history. So my wife knows Latin, so I had to ask her to help me out on this one. The Latin poet Ovid, he writes in a book called Metamorphoses, he recounts a local legend that was circulating around this area at the time.

And it's a local legend where two gods, Jupiter or Zeus and Mercury or Hermes, they visit the area disguised as human travelers. And in this legend, they go from house to house, but no one takes them in, except for a poor elderly couple who give them a goose as their best meal, and they give up a goose.

And afterwards, the gods return to reward the couple. And then they destroy the rest of the town for being so inhospitable to them. So this is kind of the story that was surrounding them at the time.

[17 : 01] And so if you're a Lystra or Lystra, and maybe you were taught by your parents and grandparents growing up, you probably would have been told, watch out for any foreigners coming through, okay?

Don't be like our ancestors who missed out on a blessing. And so what's your reaction then when two guys, and maybe others, come through to the village square, and miraculously heals your neighbor who's been sitting there lame from birth, stand up on your feet.

And amazingly, he does. What's your reaction? At this point, we're meant to connect the dots here, right? At this point, when we hear of Paul's miraculous healing, we as Christians, we should see, wow, I think this has happened before in the Bible, okay?

Where has this happened? Actually, all the way back in the Old Testament, the prophet Isaiah said, your God will come to save you. Isaiah 35, verse 6 says, and at that time, the lame will leap, the blind will see again.

Huh. And then when Jesus of Nazareth comes along, that's precisely what happens, right? Think of Jesus. Think of how he comes to save a paralyzed man. Luke records this in Luke chapter 5, 25.

[18 : 16] He says to the man, get up, take your mat, and go home. And it shows, right? He has the power, not just to heal, but to forgive sinners.

It's also precisely what Peter did. Do you remember that story, right? Early in the book of Acts, chapter 3, Pastor Richard reminded us how he gave the beggar at Gate Beautiful power to walk again.

And he told the astonished crowd, right? That Jesus has power to heal. Power to bless you and you and you if you turn away from your sins, from your wicked ways.

And so we want to remember this. And so when we come to this part and we see Paul doing the same kind of thing, we need to connect the dots.

Paul's healing miracle, again, is not to glorify himself. It's not just a sign and wonder for the sake of it. It's to point the way back to Jesus, the great physician, that we would trust him and turn to him.

[19 : 18] So that's what we should get out of this healing, right? What do the locals do? Unfortunately, they don't quite get it, do they? What does verse 11 tell us?

When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycanian language, the gods have come down to us in human form. I feel like they haven't quite got the point.

It's almost as if this time, the townsfolk, they're saying to each other, we're not going to make the same mistake again, right? Get the priests. We're going to do this right.

We're going to make sacrifices. These are gods come down to us. But of course, they're speaking not in a language that Paul and Barnabas understand. They're speaking in Lycanian, whatever it sounds like. And so perhaps not knowing Lycanian, there's Paul and Barnabas, right?

And they're going, oh, they're shouting, and they're thinking, well, they seem friendly. That's nice. And it's only as they see the bulls being brought in, all the flower wreaths and garlands about to be put around their neck, they're about to sacrifice all these offerings for them, that it clicks.

[20 : 25] And they are horrified. You notice what the passage says. What do they do? Verse 15. They tear their garments even.

And they rush out and they cry out, why are you doing this? But you know, if I were in Paul's shoes at this point, I have to be honest, I might have just gone along with it.

Would you? Maybe it's because I'm a bit Asian, and my Asian side would say, oh, let's not offend them, right? They're just being nice hosts, okay? I don't want to break any cultural taboos.

What are they doing? I don't know. I'll just go along with it. Yeah, I'll sit in the chair. I'll take the garland. They're just being good hosts. Or maybe there's the individualistic side of me, and it would have said, finally, some recognition.

Yeah, I've been slaving away, going from town to town. Finally, someone appreciates me. But either way, both responses would not be what God wants.

[21 : 29] It would be sin, wouldn't it? Are you sensitive, friends, to how others adore you and idolize you? Do you even encourage it by how you use your time, your money, your social media?

I think in a church culture like ours as well, where everyone seems to know someone who's above them, maybe experienced, auntie, uncle, that sort of thing, group leader, someone beyond your group leader, it can be a trap, can't it, to idolize someone above you.

A trap that we could all fall into, often. But we want to be careful. The moment you start believing your own hype, that's when you get into trouble, right?

We've seen this in the book of Acts. Ananias, he died in his deceit. King Herod of Agrippa, he was struck dead. Be careful. Don't idolize yourself.

Paul responds rightly. He knows he's not a god. He's a child of God. A child of God. A slave of Christ, that's what he calls himself, in letter after letter to the churches.

[22 : 38] And because of this, what does he do? He doesn't want to be idolized. Instead, he points his hand up, perhaps, and starts sharing the good news, not about him, but about Jesus.

You notice how he draws, right? You can see what he says. On their own experiences and background. Verse 15. We're telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God.

God made all of this, friends. And yes, you may not have heard of him before, clearly in the past. But get this, friends. It's not like you haven't seen his kindness at work.

Look how you get rain from heaven. Look how your crops grow. Imagine this. All these agriculturally bound people.

People who would be farming all their life. Telling them, you have so much food here. So much joy and gladness. Don't you want to thank someone for this? Don't you want to thank someone for this?

[23 : 42] You see, what Paul's trying to do here is something we can learn from as Christians, even today. Paul shows us to share the gospel, the good news of Jesus well, we need to go beyond just behaviors.

Right? Paul could have said, stop being idol worshippers. Stop your bad behavior. He doesn't. Because we always want to dig as good Christians, as cross-cultural communicators.

We want to dig under the iceberg. Don't just look at the bad behaviors. Things that make you shocked. Go down and go, why do they do that? What are their values? Their beliefs?

Their hopes and fears? And then we want to connect that to the person and work of Jesus Christ in a way that clicks. That's what we want to do as Christians.

You notice how he's already been doing that, right? Paul. To the religious, you know, people who knew the Old Testament Pisidian Antioch, right? Last chapter. He told them, Jesus, he's your promised one.

[24 : 42] You've been reading your Bibles all your life. Jesus is the one you've been looking for. He'll make you right in a way that keeping rules can't. Click. People believe.

Later on, to the guys of PhDs in Athens and Acts chapter 17, he's going to tell them, all right? You're toying with new ideas all the time. Look, Jesus is the unknown God that you need to know.

Let me tell you how he's made himself known. He died and rose again at the cross of Calvary. Here are some witnesses. And he is the crucified and risen Lord that you and I need to turn to.

Click. To the Sa'i tribe in Papua New Guinea, people were trying to reach these people for years and years. Totally foreign culture to us. But then missionaries discovered the key.

In their legends and myths, they learned, right, that there was the idea of a peace child. That's the name of a book. You can read more about it here. But if one warring tribe offered to the other warring tribe, one of their children as a peace child, someone who would live with them and grow up with them, that would make them stop fighting each other and stop eating each other.

[25 : 59] And so these missionaries came in and they said, this is it. Friends, friends, Jesus is your peace child. He is the offering that brings peace not just between you and each other but ultimately between you and a holy God.

So stop destroying yourselves. Turn to the peace child that you need. Click. Can you see? Can you see this? Every culture needs a gospel that speaks to their heart and their values.

And so perhaps to the culturally confused person may be sitting here at PCBC English, may be listening online. Perhaps the picture could be this.

Jesus is your fellow misfit. Don't know what passport he would hold. He's probably confused too because he came down from glory into this world. He was despised and rejected by men.

He knows how you feel to be mistreated, bullied, mocked. But go ahead and put your life into his nail-pierced hands.

[27 : 04] Why? Because in him you can be a citizen not of New Zealand, not of wherever you came from, but of heaven. And you can be part of a cross-shaped culture.

In Christ God offers you and you and you an identity that is way better and surer as the fact that Jesus died and he rose again.

You can count on it. You can count on it. So let's trust him. Let's follow him. So we've seen so far Iconium divided, Lystra dazzled, but here comes trouble, right, because it seems like Paul and Barnabas' gospel ministry draws religious opposition, right, 19 to 20.

It seems like as the Lystrans, they're puzzling over Paul and Barnabas' kind of ungodly behavior. They're trying to work out why did they kind of rip their clothes off and tell them the opposite of what they wanted to do.

Here come the Jewish cowboys, right? It seems like they've been trying to chase after these missionaries and they've come all the way from Iconia. That's what the text says. And you can imagine them riding in like cowboys and they announce, they're not gods.

[28 : 16] They're just a bunch of naughty boys. Maybe they said it differently. I'm not sure. Regardless, verse 19 tells us what happens next. They win the crowd over.

They win the crowd over. And what do they do? They stone Paul. They drag him out of the city and left him for dead. If ever you and I need a picture of what people's hearts are like, here is one.

One moment, people are worshiping Paul and Barnabas like they're the next K-pop star. Next minute, they're picking up stones and they're trying to kill him. How fickle our hearts can be.

We can be impatient, jealous. We can be so protective of our own patch, our own traditions. And if we're honest, that's us a lot of the time, isn't it?

We can be raving about a show on Netflix one moment and then next week we've totally forgotten about it. All right? One day the food at this place, this cafe is bomb. Next minute it's meh.

[29 : 23] Come on. It's true, isn't it? Our hearts are so fickle. And that's because our hearts are idle factories as one reform would say. One minute we're on fire for God, next minute we shout at our family.

Today we pray for the lost in Korea when everyone's watching. Maybe tonight we perv over the lost and the privacy of our rooms. How fickle our hearts. And so friends, where in your life, where in our lives have we flip-flopped like the Listerins?

Have we been jealous and protective like the Jews? I think maybe we're not supposed to look at ourselves as Paul and Barnabas in this story. Maybe we need to look at ourselves and say, we're the angry mob.

Maybe we need to repent of trusting a better God than money or achievement. Those are not God's worth trusting and we need to repent and turn to Jesus. Only He deserves the adoration that you are pouring out in your life right now.

We do well not to pause, sorry, not to gloss over this verse. Paul did not sign up probably to be stoned to death. But, in a painful and ironic moment, he is clobbered and stoned by angry people left for dead.

[30 : 46] Because remember, not so long ago, he was the one approving of stoning someone else, Stephen. Art imitates life. Listen to our brother again from Nigeria, Elijah.

Elijah says this, persecution is a part of Christianity, sorry, Christian life. If truly we are called by God, we should expect persecution. I'll say that again.

If truly we are called by God, we should expect persecution. Our Lord Jesus said, if anyone should come after me, let them deny themselves, take up their cross and follow me.

In other words, bring your coffin with you when you follow Jesus and bring the nails too and the hammer. Come and die. But take comfort too, friends, that it is the Lord Jesus we follow.

It is a suffering saviour who has been buried and then resurrected again. And so therefore, not only do you die with him when you follow Jesus, you are raised with him.

[31 : 48] We are raised with him, friends. No suffering can take away the sweetness of being included with Christ in his kingdom. No hardship can ever separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul knew this. That's why he was prepared to suffer. And it's as Paul and Barnabas' ministry keeps going, right, it progresses to Davi that we see God win over many, many new followers of Jesus.

That's what we see in verse 21. And here, I think, it's lost in translation, but Luke is just being funny. The word Davi comes from an ancient Syrian word which means a blocked gate.

Think about that for a moment, right? If you think persecution closes the door to the gospel, persecution as a blocked gate to God's kingdom, think again. Many disciples in the city of the blocked gate.

Think about that for a moment. This is such a revelation, right, to Paul and Barnabas that you notice, right, that they don't go on. You can see the map. There's Davi. What's the quickest way to Antioch?

[33 : 02] Syrian Antioch on the right. You keep going forward, right? Okay. If you put it on the GPS, you'd say, Siri, let's keep going, right? But no, they don't. They say, Siri, let's turn back. Yes, let's turn back to Lystra where I was nearly stoned, to Iconium where they pushed hard against us, back to all the towns we visited, verse 21, back where they tried to kill us.

Why do this? Why take the suicidal route? Because this is what real gospel ministry looks like. It's more than just sharing about Jesus and then running.

It's coming back, doubling back to disciple. It is sharing the gospel and then sharing your life. It is strengthening and encouraging people you have met who believe in Christ.

A youth camp may start a fire, but day in, day out, discipleship keeps that flame alive. If you want to know what it looks like to be a disciple-making disciple of Jesus, it looks exactly like what Paul and Barnabas have just done in these verses, right?

And we see this, right? Let's zoom in on 22 to 23. I think there's kind of three things we can do too. Every Christian can do. One aspect of discipleship is to strengthen people's faith in Christ.

[34 : 22] The NIV says here, strengthening the disciples. But actually, I think the original literally reads strengthening the souls of the disciples. That word has kind of been left out just to smooth it out.

But strengthening the souls of the disciples. Now, the word soul there could be not just like an airy-fairy soul, but actually kind of yourself, the real you, the inner life.

How do we strengthen believers? We try and encourage and build up their souls, their identities. In what? In the gospel of Jesus.

It's only the gospel that grounds us with the freedom not just to think about ourselves all the time, whether good or bad, but just to stop thinking about ourselves and think more of Jesus.

That will change and renovate and build up your souls to think of ourselves less and more of Jesus instead. There's a song, right, that says if more of you means less of me, take everything.

[35 : 22] That is discipleship. Living that out week after week. Telling each other, stay true to Jesus. Forget everything else until it's Jesus that defines who you are.

That's discipleship. That's one key aspect of discipleship. The other one is to prepare them, right, it says, for suffering. Verse 22. What does Paul tell them? It is through many tribulations that we must enter the kingdom of God.

And no one can argue with Paul when he says this, right? Especially when he's just teaching at the same gates where they tried to stone him to death. When someone gives their life to Christ, tell them it will be costly.

Don't try and hide that. Tell them it will be costly, but Jesus is worth far more. And then finally we see too, right, strengthen their faith and their identities in Christ.

Prepare them for suffering for the kingdom of God. And then actually appoint trustworthy leaders. With prayer and fasting, they're committing qualified people, right?

[36 : 28] Qualified elders to the Lord. People they could trust. I'm sure they were people who are godly, reliable, available, people who are faithful and teachable that Paul and Barnabas had discovered by that time.

I wonder what we could do in that vein here even at English service, here even as Pakaranga Chinese Baptist Church. Our church must have Jesus as our head.

It must have the Holy Spirit guiding our hearts. And yet, every church needs faithful leaders and servants. So we thank God for everyone he calls.

We are less of a church without you and your service. And I love how it all wraps up. Because as they finally arrive home, report back to their home church.

What did they report back? Oh, wow, that was so dangerous and risky. Never again. Oh, what a waste of time and money. Nearly died doing that. No, of course not.

[37 : 30] What did they hear? They heard of how God had done a marvelous work through them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.

How did he do that? How he opened a door of faith? And I wonder if this is the image you have in mind. When you look at this picture, what do you see? Do you see?

Oh, we keep doing that every year, don't we? So annoying. Oh, I don't meet with half of those people anymore. There's so much hurt and bitterness. Oh, and that's so old school.

Let's not do that anymore. Look at that building. Oh, it needs a wash. Can we have a click moment for a moment? Because the door of faith is still open through this hodgepodge of people.

Through you and through me. In this church family, there are children growing up speaking English that we can disciple, the next generation.

[38 : 35] There are dozens and dozens of them. You know this. At our workplaces in East Auckland, there are people who need to hear about Jesus. And we speak their language, don't we?

At our family dinners, there are people, relatives, that they might not join English services. They could join the Cantonese services. They could hang out with Auntie Yoko, right?

And come to faith in Christ. And look at all these people. Yes, they look like they come from a different country. But that's okay because the countries need Jesus.

And look at all those connections that we can have. Some of you could even move and live in places that Kiwis can't. In distant lands, there are people groups who need a suffering saviour.

And maybe you are their way to Jesus. So what do you see? Do you see an open door? I pray you do. Because it is open.

[39 : 31] God has opened that door. It is wide open still. Let's pray. Father, if more of you means less of us, please take everything.

Forgive us when we have built our life not on you but on ourselves. Thank you for this click moment, this change of perspective that you are worthy to be praised everywhere.

And that the door of faith is definitely open. Would you show us how we can be your disciple-making disciples? We pray all these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.