




OPENING UP: Following the example of the church in Jerusalem, how should we respond to opposition, threats, and persecution?

 *How quickly and persistently do you or your group resort to prayer? What's one way you could step up your participation in "earnest prayer" this week?*

1 **What were some of the threats Christians faced in the first century according to Acts 12?** What threats do Christians face today both locally and around the world?

 *Consider the stories of James and Peter. What do they tell us about God's sovereign plan for those who follow him? Discuss both what God's people should expect and how they should live it out. See also Exodus 2:25, 3:7-8, John 16:33, 1 Peter 4:12-13, Psalm 34:15, Daniel 3:17-18, Job 23:10.*

2 **Why is it sometimes hard for us to expectantly trust God in prayer?** What gets in the way of your whole hearted trust in God when you pray?

 *What difficult situations are you facing (physical, emotional, spiritual, financial, professional, etc) for which you need to offer prayer and expect God's answer?*

3 **Have you ever seen God respond to a group of people who were earnestly praying?** Can you recall a time when God answered one of your prayers? Describe the joy of receiving those kinds of gracious blessings.

♥ *What do we know about God and how He responds to the prayers of His people that can renew our prayer life? See also Jeremiah 29:12–13, 33:3, 1 Peter 3:12, 5:7, 1 John 5:14–15, Philippians 4:6–7, Psalm 145:18–19, 50:15, James 4:2, Mark 9:23.*

4 **What seemed to motivate Herod's actions in (Acts 12:1-5)?**

🗨️ *How does Herod's death highlight the centrality of the glory of God? In what ways do people today act like Herod in their vain attempts to steal (or even have a share in) God's glory?*

♥ *How are you tempted to live for the approval of others (by the fear of man)? Have you ever acted wrongly for the sake of pleasing someone? What did you learn through that circumstance?*

5 **In Acts 12 what conflicts and contrasts does Luke draw explicitly and implicitly between King Herod and King Jesus?** Remember God's word from the prophet Isaiah, "My glory I will not give to another" (Isaiah 42:8; 48:11).

⚙️ *What lessons should we learn about the Lord's sovereignty from the way the events unfold?*