Session 1

Some background in what are major themes in Acts

1. God’s missionary heart: he directs his people in mission e.g sending Peter to Cornelius, of sending Barnabus to Antioch, the vision of Paul to go to Macedonia.

2. The Good News of Jesus’ death and resurrection, and the saving grace through faith in him spreads through the known world. It begins in Jerusalem, but spreads throughout Judea and Samaria, touches Africa and heads into Europe. Wherever the message is preached people put their faith and trust in Jesus.

3. The presence of the empowering Spirit is very evident. From the beginning in Acts 2 or in chapter 10 and the household of Cornelius, the role of the Spirit is emphasised. The Spirit affirms the ministry of table service, the discipling of new believers, the transformation of converts into courageous and sacrificial servants of the Gospel

4.God’s sovereignty in a hostile word. God will inevitably bring his purposes to fulfilment. This can be seen in the protection of his people, of the way he uses imprisonment to get Paul to Rome, the way that the church continues to grow despite persecution and opposition, the way in which significant people (e.g. Lydia) are drawn to the Gospel of Grace and become key members of the early church.

Read Acts 13:1 – 14:28

Why do you think Barnabas and Saul began their ministry in the synagogue?

Why does Paul react so strongly to Elymas? What is at stake that justifies such a reaction?

Paul’s sermon in Pisidian Antioch has two major sections. Can you identify them? What are the different themes in each of the two parts? What can we learn from this for when we share our faith today?

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is of central importance to Paul’s presentation of the Gospel. Why do you think it was so important then? Is it still as important today when sharing Jesus with others? Why/why not?

How do Paul and Barnabas deal with opposition that comes their way? What do you think were the reasons behind their approach?

Paul’s sermon in Lystra (!4: 14 – 18) is very different to the one in Pisidian Antioch. What reasons lie behind this marked difference?

What efforts do we make to be able to understand the values and reasons that underline our culture to enable us to speak about Jesus relevantly? What in our message needs to change with the times, and what needs to stay unchanging?

When Paul and Barnabas return home, what do they report on? What does this tell us about what is important in ministry? How can we make sure that the important things in church life are talked about in pur own church?