

Use the following thoughts and questions to have a spiritual conversation as a family. Don't emphasize having the right answer, but focus on spending time discussing the Word as a family.

## Scripture

Acts 11:19-30

## Session Summary

In Acts 11, we see that the Lord uses even persecution as a means to spread the gospel. That doesn't mean that we should desire persecution. However, it is encouraging to consider the fact that God does not waste our suffering and can even use it to advance His mission. There's really two reasons the persecution of the church in Jerusalem turned for good. Most importantly, Acts says that the "Lord's hand was with them" (11:21), but it also says they were "proclaiming the good news about the Lord" (11:20). They didn't use their trial as an excuse, but as an opportunity. They spread the gospel to new regions. As a result of their faithfulness to God in the midst of their trial, "a large number who believed turned to the Lord" (11:21).

Later, when a famine was predicted, the new believers in Antioch prepared to be generous and selfless. Hardships are a guarantee in a fallen world. It would've been natural for them to start thinking of their own interests—"I can't share and give because I have to save up for my family to make it through the famine." We must stop focusing on our own interests and start serving and encouraging others. If you are only thinking about yourself, you will miss the opportunities that God has for you in all circumstances; but when you are surrendering to God and considering others, God will use you in every situation.

- What are some ways that God has used trials in our family?
- How can difficulties be an opportunity for faith and growth?
- How can we be a family of encouragers like Barnabas?
- What are some ways that we could be more generous to people in need?

Each family member should do something every day (a note, a phone call, a gift, etc.) to intentionally encourage someone else. It could be someone you are close to or a total stranger. The point is to be an encourager this week. Also, as a family, brainstorm a way that you could bless another family or person together this week through generosity.