

# It Takes a Village

Acts 12:11-17

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## A. God at Work (v. 11):

1. Peter came – Peter, on his own initiative, realized that what he was experiencing was not a vision. He came to himself by himself.
  - a) Peter was imprisoned (Acts 12:3–5) and released through God’s power (12:6–11). The significance of this and the other releases from prison was to show God’s power to overcome physical hindrances and God’s verdict of “not guilty” on the activities of his witnesses.<sup>11</sup>
2. Know – Peter came to a complete understanding that what he was experiencing with the angel, was exactly what was taking place.
3. The Lord – Even though an angel came, he was sent by the Lord and functioned by the power and authority of the Lord. The Lord initiated the activity of the angel.
4. Has sent forth – God, on his own initiative sent an angel with the specific mission of releasing Peter. This was no accident. It was designed by God.
5. Has sent forth - Peter’s call and faithful committed service for the Lord allowed him to experience what the Lord promised in Matthew 28:20.
6. Has sent forth - The Lord may not stop people from coming against us while we serve Him, but He does promise that He will never leave us nor forsake us. We are never alone. He is ever present fighting for us (1 Peter 2:8-18).
7. Rescuing - The person who plucked Peter out of jail, regardless of the chains, the guards or the manner in which he was imprisoned. Nothing was too hard for God to do without the help of anyone. This is because nothing is impossible for the Lord (Luke 1:37, 18:27).
8. Hand of Herod - Herod was a brutal dictator and had a lot of power and control over Jerusalem, but he was not stronger or more powerful than the Lord who, whenever He chose to, released Peter from the control of Herod.
9. Expecting - The Jewish people were waiting to receive exactly what Herod was planning to do because they were aware of the power and authority Herod had.

## B. When the Church Prays (vs. 12-14):

1. He went - Peter, once and for all, set his mind to actively go to Mary's house, the mother of John Mark.
  - a) This verse introduces the reader to John Mark who fits prominently in Paul's first missionary journey. Evidently his mother Mary was a woman of prominence and means. Her house was probably a principal meeting place of the church, so it must have been spacious. Because John Mark's father is not named, Mary may have been a widow. This same Mark is considered to be the writer of the Gospel bearing his name (cf. Mark 14:51-52; 1 Peter 5:13).<sup>[2]</sup>
2. Gather together - The believers who gathered in John Mark's mother's house were specifically there for the purpose of praying for Peter's release. It seems like they knew how desperate the circumstances were that were taking place.
  - a) John Mark: The aunt of Barnabas (Col. 4:10). Apparently, her home was a gathering place for Christians. It may have been the location of the upper room where the Last Supper was held (Mk. 14:13-15; Ac. 1:13) and the place of prayer in 4:31. (NASU Bible Study notes)
3. Prayer – This word used for prayer means everything that encompasses prayer. They assembled and did not take anything off the table on how they would approach the Lord. They did this continually. It does not seem like they had any plans to stop praying.
4. Prayer - It does not matter that we are called and may have significant impact - because of God's work in our lives, we still need others to pray for us.
5. Came to answer – Rhoda the servant girl for John Mark's mother decided to respond to Peter knocking, already willing to do whatever the person at the gate tells her to do.
  - a) When Peter arrived, he stood at the outer gate that entered into the courtyard. Rhoda probably was responsible for keeping the gate, a task often delegated to female servants (cf. John 18:16f.). Responding to Peter's knocking, she hurried out to the gate and discovered who was there. Filled with joy, she ran back into the house to announce the good news, forgetting altogether that Peter would really like to have come in. This heightened the suspense all the more. Peter did not need to be standing out-

side in the street, exposed to possible recapture. "Peter is at the door!" Rhoda announced excitedly, interrupting the prayers of the Christians who had gathered there. "No, it can't be," they replied; "it must be his angel."<sup>31</sup>

6. Recognized - Rhoda understood completely who Peter was but did not do what Peter expected her to do, even though she was willing. This only exposes how she really felt when she saw Peter. It also highlights how she felt about all that was taking place with Peter and how much she hoped for a good result.
7. Joy – Rhoda's joy is best described by the true meaning of this word in Greek; "her heart dances with exuberance and great happiness".
8. Joy – Rhoda seems to deeply care about Peter and was deeply concerned for his well-being and was so relieved that he was safe that, even though she was very willing to open the gate for whoever it may have been since she was a servant, she left Peter at the gate.
9. Joy – Rhoda seems to deeply care about Peter and was deeply concerned for Peter's well-being; she was so relieved that he was safe that, even though she was very willing to perform her duties as a servant, she left Peter standing at the gate.
10. Ran in and announced - The Lord names this young lady in the scriptures when she was a slave girl (very few slaves were ever mentioned). God can use whoever he chooses because all it takes is for them to believe.
11. Stood – Her willingness to serve led to her need to lead. Rhoda believed it was Peter, because she saw him, but those who were praying did not believe her.
12. They said to her – All those who were praying, knowing the power of Herod and the Sanhedrin, expressed specifically how they felt. Who we are (Rhoda a servant girl) may not cause people to believe us but it must not change what we know to be true.
13. You are out of your mind - All those who were praying said that Rhoda had made herself habitually mad. She so desired good for Peter that she was now continuously beside herself. They repeatedly said she was mad.
14. You are out of your mind - The fact that they would say it is Peter's angel means that Peter had died and his angel came to let them know. This is because they believed that each person has an angel which Hebrews 1:14 says is true.
15. You are out of your mind - Maybe because of James being killed, Herod being so evil and the Jews being so relentless in their attacks, they were praying but did not have any expectations. Faith is exercised based on what we hope for (Matthew 18:11; Hebrews 11:1).

a) This statement implies a belief in personal angels, that is, angels who are assigned to individuals (cf. Dan. 10:21; Matt. 18:10). It also suggests a belief that an angel may look like the person with whom he is identified!<sup>[4]</sup>

16. Insisting - Rhoda did not back down she continuously became firmer and spoke more vehemently about what she had seen.
17. Peter continued knocking; Persist - Peter entire disposition was to get their complete attention so he persistently kept knocking.
18. Peter continued knocking; Persist – Peter’s was not planning to remain with them because once he told them what happened he left. So, I am not sure if his persistent knocking also means that he was in a hurry to leave.
19. They saw him – Not sure if the knocking brought them to the door or Rhoda’s persistence or both.

### **C. The Village Extends the Gospel (v. 17):**

1. Motioning to be quiet – It seems like Peter still felt that he was in danger especially with James the brother of John being put to death (12:2) by Herod. He only signals them to come to him and persistently kept communicating by hand signal for them to be silent. He did not speak out to get their attention but kept vigorously waving at them to come.
2. The Lord had led him out of prison - The point Peter wanted to make sure was communicated to all was that the Lord who has all might, power and authority is the one who released him from prison. It was not Herod who released him; it was someone who was greater and had more authority and did so by His sovereign will. Herod may have killed James the brother of John but if the Lord said no concerning Peter, then there was no way Herod could harm Peter. Peter’s work was unfinished.
3. Report these things to James and the brethren – Peter commands those who had been praying for him to declare to the other committed believers, who were of the community of faith, the very words he shared with them. He also wanted James the pastor of the church in Jerusalem, to know what took place.
4. Report these things to James and the brethren – We may never understand why God would allow someone to die (James the brother of John); the Lord has a way of demonstrating that He is always in control.

a) The James who was to be informed of Peter’s deliverance was

James the oldest brother of Jesus, who from this point on assumed the leadership of the church in Jerusalem (cf. 15:13–21; 21:18). It is interesting that “the brothers” are to be informed along with James. Perhaps this refers to the elders, who were assuming an increasing role in the governance of the Jerusalem church (cf. 11:30). The other apostles are not mentioned. At this time they may have been absent from Jerusalem, having taken refuge from Agrippa’s persecution. <sup>[5]</sup>

5. He left and went to another place – There is nothing in the text to say that the Lord instructed Peter to leave the city. Peter may have done this for the safety of the other believers.
6. He left and went to another place – The gospel continued to spread and 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter were written.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). *Tyndale concise Bible commentary* (p. 508). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>[2]</sup> Toussaint, S. D. (1985). *Acts*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 385). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>[3]</sup> Polhill, J. B. (1992). *Acts* (Vol. 26, p. 282). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>[4]</sup> Toussaint, S. D. (1985). *Acts*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 385). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>[5]</sup> Polhill, J. B. (1992). *Acts* (Vol. 26, pp. 282–283). Broadman & Holman Publishers.