

# Vision: Disciples Making Disciples

*October 3, 2021*



Vision '22

## Lesson Summary

### **Main Passages**

Acts 13:1-4

### **Session Outline**

1. Set Apart for the Mission (Acts 13:1-4)
2. Living Out the Mission (Acts 14:21-22)
3. Equipping Others for the Mission (Acts 14:23-28)

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### **Theological Theme**

Discipleship centers on followers of Christ making other followers of Christ in response to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19). It's the expansion of Jesus's kingdom, one growing disciple at a time.



## Leader Guide

# Vision: Disciples Making Disciples

### Introduction

- ❓ What did you want to be when you grew up, and why?
- ❓ Do you feel called to your career? If so, how did you sense that calling?
- ❓ What things are we called to other than careers?

Typically, we consider a calling to be something associated with professional ministry and pastors. The truth is that many people feel called to their particular line of work, whether it is finance, service, or stay-at-home parenting. Understanding that calling goes beyond vocational ministry is incredibly important for the Christian walk. As Christians, we are called to live in ways that honor God and demonstrate our love toward Him and others. In Acts 13, the church at Antioch models obedience to the church's calling by gathering for worship, practicing spiritual disciplines, responding to the Holy Spirit's work in their lives, and going into the world to advance the gospel. They put themselves in the position to be used by God, and He did use them.


Over the next several weeks, we will be looking at the vision and mission God has given our church. Today, we are beginning with our vision of disciples making disciples. In response to God's leading, we will pursue ten thousand "disciples making disciples" relationships as a result of initiating five hundred thousand gospel conversations in which we will share the whole gospel of Jesus Christ with our neighbors and nations; and we will create a church multiplication movement that results in one hundred healthy congregations in Middle Tennessee and beyond.

### Session Summary

If our church wants to become a transformative community, we can't just wait for people to come to us. We must go to the people. This involves faith, risk, and dependence on the Holy Spirit. In Acts 13:1-4, we discover how God sends us on mission with Him. The church at Antioch had witnessed effectively to people in their metropolitan area, but the church had a much greater vision that went beyond the local community and into the entire world.

## 1. Set Apart for the Mission (Acts 13:1-4)

Acts 13 gives us the details of the apostle Paul's first missionary journey throughout parts of Asia Minor, which began the spread of Christianity to Gentile regions and around the world. For this first trip, he was accompanied by Barnabas, who traveled back to his hometown of Cyprus.

-  What do we learn about the overall culture of the church at Antioch from this passage? What does it mean that they were “worshiping the Lord and fasting” (v. 2)? Why are corporate worship and fasting important spiritual disciplines for the church to practice? What role does each discipline play in seeking God's vision for our church?

As the work in Antioch had progressed, so too had the mantle of leadership. At the time when Barnabas was originally dispatched by the leadership in Jerusalem to investigate the salvation phenomenon in Antioch, Barnabas was the only teacher and disciple-maker of new converts. However, after bringing Saul in from Tarsus to help, Barnabas and Saul continued to multiply the leadership of the congregation as its rapid growth demanded.


The church at Antioch had several leaders in addition to Paul and Barnabas. The men listed in verse 1 were key prophets and teachers who had distinct gifts. Out of their service in the church, God called Paul and Barnabas for the mission field. “Worshiping the Lord and fasting” (v. 2) indicated a period of focused, dedicated devotion to God, foregoing food or other needs or comforts to hear from God and sense His direction. This meant the leaders could be responsive to the Holy Spirit when He moved. In this instance, the Spirit directed the church to set apart Barnabas and Paul (whose name was Saul at this point) for specific service.

The Spirit clearly designated whom He wanted the church to send out as missionaries. He said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” It is God who selects and calls those He chooses to cross geographic and cultural boundaries with the good news of the gospel. The church at Antioch recognized that the Lord had called these two men for His special work. Recognizing and answering the Lord's call began with the individual believer. The church, however, played an important role in commissioning the missionaries the Lord had called.


The word translated “set apart” comes from a verb meaning to “mark off by boundaries.” Paul used the word to describe God's call on his life (Romans 1:1; Galatians 1:15). In Acts 13:2, the word communicates that the church was to mark off or put a boundary around Barnabas and Paul to serve elsewhere as led by the Holy Spirit. In this case, they would travel as missionaries to new frontiers to share the gospel story.

### Paul's Missionary Journeys

Verse 4 describes the beginning of the first of Paul's three missionary journeys. This journey included the island of Cyprus and a part of Asia Minor. The first two journeys began and ended in Antioch, which had become a center for world Christianity, committed to evangelizing Gentiles. Paul's third journey ended in Jerusalem because he was arrested there before he could make his way to Antioch (see chap. 21).

-  What is the significance of the church laying hands on Paul and Barnabas and sending them out? Why was it essential for Paul and Barnabas to be dependent on the Spirit on their journey? What do you learn about being sensitive to the Holy Spirit from this passage?


When the church leaders laid hands on Paul and Barnabas (v. 3), they were commissioning them for their mission to reach the Gentiles with the gospel. This act was a physical reminder that they weren't going alone on this mission; they were going with God and with the church's prayer and support. Their action conferred blessing and authority on these two men, endorsing their work as they departed to missionary activity. Next, the newly formed missionary team of Paul and Barnabas was "sent out by the Holy Spirit" (v. 4). The leaders in the Antioch church had one strategy for disciple-making success: find out what God wants for us to do and do it, whether that meant staying and serving the local church or taking the gospel to the world. Our strategy for discipleship should be the same.

-  Application: When the church is functioning in obedience to its calling, what should be happening in and through it?

## 2. Living the Mission (Acts 14:21-22)

The slogan, "Don't just go to church; be the church," provides a fitting reminder that when we live each day as followers of Jesus—going where God sends us and living for Him—we're being His church, representing Him and sharing His message. This was how Paul and Barnabas lived. As they traveled, the men actively shared the message of Christ, and people believed the gospel. Not only did people experience salvation, but Paul and Barnabas also ensured the new converts were growing as disciples (v. 22).

This was the pattern of the early church. People believed and then committed themselves to growing in their faith, as we read in Acts 2. Thousands of people experienced salvation and committed themselves to becoming disciples of Christ through prayer, fellowship with one another, learning the Word through the apostles' teaching, and breaking bread together. Paul and Barnabas were doing the same thing on the mission field (2:41-27). They were introducing people to Christ and equipping people to follow Him through discipleship.

-  Skim Acts 13:13–14:20. What is the significance of the cities mentioned in Acts 14:21?

The cities in verse 21 were places where Paul and Barnabas had already shared the gospel message and seen new people converted to Christianity. However, these were also towns where they had been threatened and persecuted. In retracing their journey to Antioch, they traveled through

dangerous territory to check on the new churches. Their first trip through these cities was about evangelism, but the return trip was about continuing discipleship.

- Have volunteers read Acts 13:48-52; 14:5-7, 19-20. How did Paul and Barnabas live out their teaching on passing through troubles on your way to the kingdom of God?

Despite Jewish hostility and painful experiences, Paul and Barnabas stayed with the task given by Jesus to make disciples.

- Application: What kind of troubles can we expect as we go on mission with God and as we commit to growing as His disciples? How have you experienced this to be true? What resistance to the gospel do you foresee our church having as we seek to fulfill our vision?

Encouragement comes from consistent, loving relationships in the body of Christ. Encouragement also comes from the Word of God. Putting yourself under the teaching and leadership of God's Word will strengthen you so you're ready for persecution and can stand firm in the Lord during whatever you face.

### 3. Equipping Others for the Mission (Acts 14:23-28)

After a year or two on their missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch. As described in Acts 14:24-26, their journey was an arduous one. They traveled through the mountainous region of Pisidia and the lowlands of Pamphylia. They also traveled intentionally through important cities such as Perga, a province capital, and Attalia, the seaport of Perga. All of this was to complete the work God had sent them out to accomplish. Once their mission was carried out, they sailed back to Antioch so they could share with their home church all the Lord had done.

- In addition to evangelizing and growing local churches, what else did Paul and Barnabas do in these communities (v. 23)? Why was it essential for these local churches to have leadership set in place?

The work of the local churches involved more than what Paul and Barnabas were capable of doing, so leaders ("elders," v. 23) needed to be in place in every church to ensure that the gospel continued to spread and disciples continued to grow in their faith. Just as Paul and Barnabas had been sent by God on mission, so too would God appoint others to carry on that work as these new communities of faith ministered in their cities.

With leadership in place, the church would continue to multiply and reach more people.

- ❓ What did the missionaries do when they returned to Antioch? Why was this important? Read verse 27 again. Who got the credit for their work? Why do you think Luke reiterated this?

Verses 27-28 record Paul and Barnabas' return to their home church, where they called together the people who sent them on mission and shared all that God had done. Through prayer, fasting, and encouragement, the church had actively supported the pair in their ministry and this was the opportunity for them to be encouraged by everything God was doing.

- ❓ Application: How might verse 27 impact our evangelism and missionary efforts today? How do you think the story of Paul and Barnabas's journey strengthened and encouraged the church in Antioch?

By opening “the door of faith to the Gentiles,” God ensured that no one would be alienated from the gospel’s saving grace. God doesn’t close the doors to any people group on our planet. Every human being should have an opportunity to hear the gospel and respond to it. Willing and available disciples like Paul and Barnabas are still needed to step through the door, venturing outside of comfort zones to engage a lost but receptive world with the gospel message.

## Conclusion

Our churches have the responsibility of discipling people in their faith and growing the kingdom of God around the globe. As people actively involved in the church, that means we share in the disciple-making responsibility. A change needs to happen within our churches so more people are hearing the gospel and committing their lives to Christ and to the ministry of the local church. As we’ve seen in today’s study, this change begins with a personal sensitivity to God’s leadership combined with a willingness to go and grow as God sends. It begins with us.

- ❓ In what ways does your engagement in corporate worship and spiritual disciplines need to change so you are more in tune with our church's vision?
- ❓ From today's passages, what role do you see the Holy Spirit playing in the life of the individual Christian? In the life of the church? How can you prepare your heart each week for worship and study so that you're sensitive to the Holy Spirit's movement in your life?
- ❓ What are you doing to grow now so that you will be ready to be used by God when He sets you apart for a specific service? How can our group encourage you in the growth process and vice versa?

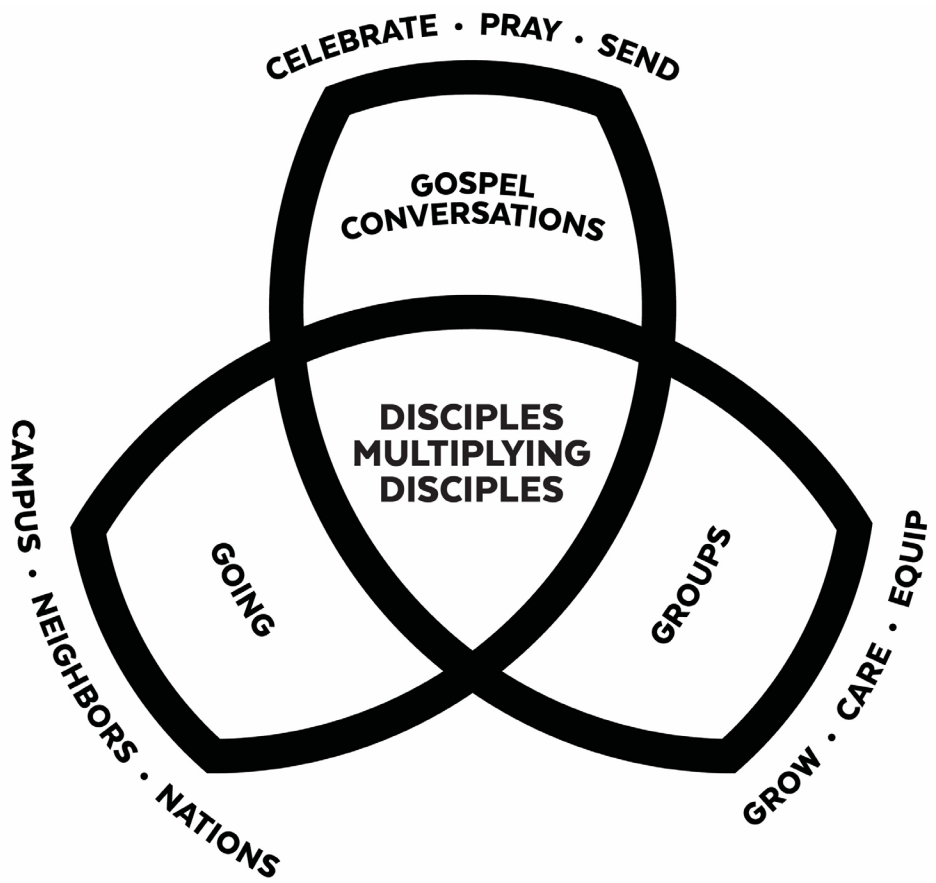
## Prayer of Response

*As you close in prayer, ask God to help you focus (or refocus) your priorities on building the kingdom of God through building disciples. Ask different people in the group to pray for each of the functions of the church we discussed today—corporate worship and spiritual disciplines, listening to the Holy Spirit, and responding in obedience to God's call.*

## Additional Resources

- *Growing Up* by Robby Gallaty
- *Multiply* by Francis Chan and Mark Beuving
- *Go* by Preston Sprinkle

# Disciples Multiplying Disciples





## For Next Week

### Session Title

- What We Value: Gospel First and Always

### Main Passages

- Romans 1:16-17

### Session Outline

1. The Power of the Gospel (Romans 1:16-17)
2. The Authority of the Gospel (Matthew 28:16-20)
3. The Responsibility of the Gospel (Acts 13:47; 20:24)

### Memorize

*Then after they had fasted, prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them off.*

- Acts 13:3

# Historical Context of Acts

## Purpose

The book of Acts emphasizes the work of God through the Holy Spirit in the lives of people who devoted themselves to Jesus Christ, especially Paul as he led the Gentile missionary endeavor. It is no exaggeration to say that the Christian church was built through the dynamic power of the Spirit working through chosen vessels. Another important concept is the radial spread of the gospel from Jews to Gentiles, from Jerusalem to Judea, from Samaria and on to the rest of the world (1:8). Thus Christianity transformed from being a sect within Judaism to a world religion that eventually gained acceptance everywhere, even in the heart of the pagan Roman Empire: Rome itself.

## Author

The book of Acts is formally anonymous. The traditional view is that the author was the same person who wrote the Gospel of Luke—Luke the physician and traveling companion of Paul (Col 4:14; 2Tm 4:11; Phm 24). As early as the second century AD, church leaders such as Irenaeus wrote that Luke was the author of Acts. Irenaeus based his view on the “we” passages in Acts, five sections where the author changes from the third person (“he/she” and “they”) to first-person plural (“we”) as he narrates the action (16:10–17; 20:5–15; 21:1–18; 27:1–29; 28:1–16). Irenaeus and many scholars since his time have interpreted these passages to mean that the author of Acts was one of the eyewitness companions of Paul. Luke fits this description better than any other candidate, especially given the similar themes between the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts.

## Setting

The date of composition of the book of Acts is to a large extent directly tied to the issue of authorship. A number of scholars have argued that Acts should be dated to the early 60s (at the time of Paul’s imprisonment). Acts closes with Paul still in prison in Rome (28:30–31). Although it is possible that Luke wrote at a later date, a time when Paul had been released, it is more plausible to think that he completed this book while Paul was still in prison. Otherwise he would have ended the book by telling about Paul’s release.

## Special Features

The book of Acts provides a glimpse into the first three decades of the early church (ca AD 30–63) as it spread and multiplied after the ascension of Jesus Christ. It is not a detailed or comprehensive history. Rather, it focuses on the role played by apostles such as Peter, who ministered primarily to Jews, and Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles.

## Extended Commentary

### Acts 13:1-4

13:1. Luke begins by telling us about the leadership resources of the Antioch congregation. Five men are named, and two spiritual gifts come into focus—prophecy and teaching. We should not be surprised to see Barnabas named first, since he was apparently serving as “senior pastor” in the Antioch congregation.

We know nothing of Simon Niger except that his first name was Jewish and his other name Latin rather than Greek. Since Niger means “dark-complexioned” (or black), some have speculated that he may have come from African descent. Some believe he may have been the Simon of Cyrene (Luke 23:26) who carried Jesus’ cross and whose sons Alexandria and Rufus were Christians in the church at Rome (Mark 15:21; cf. Rom. 16:13).

Much speculation surrounds Lucius of Cyrene, but the point is that we have no further information than what appears here. Luke tells us that Manaen had been brought up with Herod and uses the word *syntrophos* (indicating a foster brother or intimate friend) referring to Herod Antipas. Saul we know as a regenerated persecutor, now the chief teacher of the Antioch church.

Today we would call these men “missionary candidates.” Is there a distinction in this group between prophets and teachers? Some suggest that the Greek text allows for this, but the more simple reading of the verse seems to indicate in general that all five possessed and used these gifts. It is not impossible, and perhaps even probable, that they all had the opportunity to at least see and hear Jesus in his earthly ministry. Perhaps none of them were believers until after the resurrection, but the Son of God, whose message they would now proclaim, would have been known to them as eyewitnesses.

13:2. Pronouns are crucial throughout these early verses of our chapter. Does the word they refer to the five candidates or to the entire congregation? There is no way to fix that conclusion grammatically, but we certainly understand the Holy Spirit speaks to the entire congregation when he calls for two of the five candidates to be selected for the mission. The word called, transliterated *proskaleo*, clearly indicates a divine call.

Notice the climate in the congregation—worship and fasting. Not frantic activity with programs burning out everybody in the congregation. In an attitude of worship and fasting they understood the Spirit to select missionaries for God’s work. An interesting little word, so common in the Greek language and in English as well, yet in this case designating the missionary effort as a whole. It appears in the same context again in 14:26 at the conclusion of this first journey.

During this process of selection no one in the Antioch church, including the candidates, knew what lay ahead. We read these verses in the light of the entire chapter, and we know exactly where God’s will intends to take them. They offered themselves to the Lord for whatever

he wished and wherever he wished to send them. This verse strongly emphasizes call at two points—the Holy Spirit sets the candidates apart and announces that God has called them for a special work.

13:3. The congregation continued fasting. Here Luke introduces praying (though surely they had been doing this all along). They commissioned the chosen two with the laying on of hands and sent them off, an interesting word (*apelysan*) which means “to release them from their duties” at Antioch. What a joyous passage. Willing workers released by a worshiping congregation through a wise procedure. No apostles were present—the sending of the first missionaries was a people project.

In verse 3 we have less problem with the antecedent of they. Clearly by now Luke is talking about the entire congregation (a strong likelihood throughout both verses 2 and 3), for the candidates would hardly lay hands on themselves. This missionary commissioning service demonstrates a planned and orderly congregational project and shows that, to a large extent, early missions was a lay movement. Luke makes it plain throughout the rest of Acts that Barnabas and Saul always felt themselves under the authority of the congregation at Antioch which had commissioned (not ordained) them for this specific missionary project.

One can hardly overemphasize the significance of lay leaders, congregational involvement, and ministry teams throughout Acts. The church is not, and never has been, buildings, programs, and property. God’s church consists of people, and the emphasis always falls on them in Luke’s record.

13:4. Seleucia lies north and a bit west of Antioch, a sixteen-mile journey on foot. There the new missionaries boarded a boat and sailed for Cyprus, Barnabas’ home island. Though Luke does not tell us, we can safely assume that the Antioch congregation continued to pray for the missionaries and to thank God for selecting them, even though they had lost the two most prominent members of their pastoral staff.

As we leave the Antioch church along with Barnabas and Saul, let’s take a quick glance ahead 350 years. After the fall of Jerusalem in a.d. 70, Antioch became the world center of Christianity. By a.d. 400, one hundred thousand Christians lived in that city.

We may also assume that the church provided whatever they needed to at least begin this project. Cyprus was not untouched with the gospel (11:19), and Barnabas certainly had appropriate connection there to get the ministry started. The island was a senatorial, not an imperial, province since it remained under the leadership of a proconsul (v. 7) rather than a governor like Pilate.<sup>1</sup>

## References

1. Kenneth Gangel, *Holman New Testament Commentary: Acts*, ed. Max Anders (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1998).

## Author Bio

### **Kenneth Gangel (Acts)**

Dr. Kenneth O. Gangel (1935-2009): A prolific author and an experienced leader has been influential in the field of Christian education for over forty years. He's written numerous articles and over 50 books, while pastoring, teaching, raising a family and leading schools. His impact reaches around the world through students, co-authored books, and working with leaders of churches and schools.

### **Robby Gallaty (Growing Up)**

In addition to his leadership at Long Hollow Baptist Church, Robby is also the founder of Replicate Ministries and the author of several books, including *Growing Up*, *Firmly Planted*, *Rediscovering Discipleship*, and the LifeWay Bible study *Knowing Jesus*.

### **Francis Chan (Multiply)**

Francis Chan is the best-selling author of *Crazy Love*, *Forgotten God*, *Erasing Hell*, *You and Me Forever* and the host of the BASIC.series (*Who Is God & We Are Church*). Currently, Francis is planting churches in the San Francisco area and recently launched a countrywide discipleship movement called *Multiply* with David Platt.

### **Mark Beuving (Multiply)**

Mark Beuving is a professor at Eternity Bible College in Southern California, where he lives with his wife and daughters.

### **Preston Sprinkle (Go)**

Dr. Preston M. Sprinkle is the president of the Center for Faith, Sexuality, and Gender and a New York Times–bestselling author who's written a dozen books, including *People to Be Loved*, an award-winning book on faith and homosexuality. Preston and his wife, Chris, live in Boise, Idaho, with their four kids.