

Session 12

MULTIPLICATION MATTERS

Acts 13:1-5

Memory Verse

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

– ACTS 13:3, CSB




Multiplication Matters

THEOLOGICAL THEME: xGod was working through the church at Antioch. Saul and Barnabas were strong leaders there, but the Holy Spirit called them to go out and spread the gospel to other places because multiplying the church matters. Because God cares, He sends the best.

The wedding industry is a huge market, and one lucrative piece of this business is wedding invitations. One of the first things people see regarding a wedding is the invitation, so couples will often spend a good amount of time, money, and energy to get their invitations to look just right. They can make decisions about every aspect of the invitations from weight of the paper, engraving or printing, wording, extras to be included, and addressing options.

When you think about it, you might wonder why people care so much about a card sent in the mail. But this invitation is announcing one of the most important events in their lives—it matters. They are excited to start their marriage journey, and every detail is important. When you care deeply about something, you want the best and will do whatever you can to make that happen.

 If you are married, how much did you focus on your own wedding invitations? What's the most elaborate wedding invitation you remember seeing?

 Why do you think wedding details matter so much to people?


Session Summary

The church at Antioch was led by several strong teachers and was flourishing. This group of believers were the first to be labeled as “Christians” (Acts 11:26). Although this was meant to mock them, they took it as a compliment and the name stuck. The church is to consist of people who belong to Jesus and are proud of it. The church is to be about the work of the kingdom of God, which means spreading the gospel in every way possible.

While ministry in the local area around the church is important, it is also Biblical to look for ways to multiply to reach more people. That is what happened at Antioch when the Holy Spirit called out Saul and Barnabas to go for His sake. In this, we see an example of sending out the best to do the important work God has given us. Because this is important to the Lord, we should also take it seriously and be willing to send our very best to multiply what God is doing.

1. Called Out (Acts 13:1-2)

To begin this chapter, Luke named and described each of the leaders of the church at Antioch. This group of believers had the privilege of enjoying teaching from several strong men of faith with diverse backgrounds. They brought value and insight from their various life experiences that blessed their congregation, and as a result, it was flourishing.

 What value do you see from having leaders with diverse backgrounds? How have you seen this reality in your own experiences?

Notice what the men were doing when the Holy Spirit spoke: they were worshiping and fasting. Many times in Scripture, we see God appear to or call out to people as they are going about their daily lives. In this instance, this continual worship was the daily activity of the early church. When we center our lives on the truth of Jesus that positions us to hear from the Lord more clearly. The term worshiping can also be translated as “ministering.” Some translations, such as the NKJV, describe what they were doing as ministering to the Lord and fasting. Think about the difference it makes to consider the work of the church as a ministry to the Lord.



How would considering your worship as ministering to the Lord change your perspective?

When people fast, it is often to seek the Lord in a more concentrated way. We are not told what this group was fasting and seeking to know from the Lord; they could have been seeking specific direction, or this could have been a general practice of discipline to grow their neediness for the Lord. Either way, this posture set them up to hear from the Lord clearly. When the Holy Spirit spoke, He called out Saul and Barnabas for a new work.

The phrase “set apart,” or in some translations “separate,” indicates that the work was going to be something different or somewhere different than their current involvement in Antioch. This can be challenging for many believers, as we easily get comfortable in our churches. We settle into a body of believers and find our niche there. Although a church should feel like family and home, we are not to become so settled that we are unwilling to listen if the Lord calls us somewhere else. There are times when the Lord wants to use us for a different work in a different place, and we must learn from Saul and Barnabas to respond immediately and obediently.



Application: How have you found yourself to be comfortable to the point that you resist new things the Lord may be calling you to? How might you seek change in this area?

2. Answering the Call (Acts 13:3)

Once the Holy Spirit spoke, it was time for a response. The church did not delay with questions about details or more specifics. These followers of Jesus sought God in their daily lives, and when He spoke, they responded immediately and without questions or excuses. That is an excellent example for us to follow. If we aren't careful, we'll become sidetracked by asking questions and making excuses about why this timing is not right, instead of doing what God directs us to do.

? When was a time you became sidetracked by asking questions or making excuses when God spoke? How might you seek to avoid this in the future?


Fasting and praying are two disciplines that remind us of our dependence on the Lord. As Christians seeking to make a difference in the world, it is always important to recognize that the powerful things happening in the church are not about the strength of men and women but about the power of God at work through His people. Saul and Barnabas were actively involved in spiritual habits that kept them grounded and connected to the Lord and reminded them of how much they depended on the Holy Spirit to indwell and empower them.

After fasting, they laid hands on Barnabas and Saul. This was a symbolic commissioning as they went off to do the work of the Lord. This laying on of hands was used to offer them to the Lord and convey the support and encouragement of the fellow Christians who were sending them out to this new place of ministry. There is power in praying for one another, and this is another means by which we display our dependence on the Lord to fulfill the things He calls us to do.

? When might our church lay hands on others to pray for them? How can we make this a regular habit of our group in appropriate times?

After this, they sent them off. Without any precedent or official network of support, the church at Antioch sent off Saul and Barnabas as the Spirit instructed. They were sent to do the work of ministry in a new place and were going with the support of a specific congregation. Saul and Barnabas were sent out with intentionality and purpose.


All these years later, it is not unusual to see churches send out some of their best and most gifted to join or plant churches in other places. Many regard this as the first sending of missionaries of the church. This was a concerted and organized effort to win to Jesus people who had not yet had the opportunity to hear about Him. Barnabas and Saul did not waste time. They did not overthink. They did not ask too many questions or come up with excuses. They simply went out in response to the call of the Spirit and in the power of the Spirit.

 **Application: What might God be calling you out toward in this season of your life? How do you need to respond?**

3. Living Sent (Acts 13:4-5)

Verse 4 says they went out in the power of the Holy Spirit. This may seem a bit redundant after the previous verses, but Luke emphasized that it was not by their own power that they went out. In their own strength, their impact would have been quite limited. In the power of the Holy Spirit, they had unlimited potential.

The first stop on this missionary journey was Seleucia. There is nothing mentioned about any specific ministry that happened there. It may have just been a first stop not too far from Antioch and a port city to enable them to catch a boat. There may also have been a church already established there since it was close to Antioch, where we know a thriving church existed. Even without details, it is safe to assume that Saul and Barnabas continued to minister at each destination.

 **What would it look like for you to minister relying on the power of the Holy Spirit as you go about your daily life and when you interact with other people?**

? Do you think about this kind of ministry regularly or do you view ministry as an activity that is limited to certain followers of Jesus or that takes place at certain locations? Explain.

After Seleucia, the two men headed to Cyprus and arrived on the island at the city of Salamis. We are told they proclaimed the Word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. The custom of the open synagogue allowed any learned man to speak to the people at the Sabbath meeting. This practice gave Saul and Barnabas numerous opportunities to speak and teach the gospel.

Imagine what it would have been like for the average Jew to hear the life-changing truths from these men who had seen and experienced so much. The power that comes from believers who tell their stories and share about their experiences with Jesus cannot be matched. There are too many Christians who neglect to tell their stories or testimonies because they don't feel like it has enough power. The truth is we are all sinners who deserve hell, but when we choose Jesus, we get heaven. That is a powerful story others need to hear from us.


We also read that John Mark was with Saul and Barnabas on this trip. This is the same man who wrote the book of Mark and grew up in Jerusalem. He would have been eyewitness to many of the stories of Jesus and events that took place while He was on earth. John Mark would have been an excellent assistant to help connect the powerful truth Saul and Barnabas preached with the average person they preached to. John Mark did not have to be the one preaching to still have a powerful effect on the ministry on this journey. Every role was important then, and every role is important today. For the gospel to reach those who need it, all Christians need to be willing to be involved in the effort, whether we are intentional about reaching a neighborhood in our city or somewhere else around the world. Saul and Barnabas were called and sent, and their obedience drew others into obedience also.


? Application: What is God calling you to do to be part of the effort to take the gospel to places and people who need Jesus? How can our group join this effort together?


Conclusion

The work of the gospel is bigger than any one town or church. There are people who need Jesus right in our communities as well as around the world. As part of the body of believers, are we willing to do what the church at Antioch did and send our best to help multiply what God is doing? When the Spirit called out two of Antioch's best, the church fasted, prayed, and responded immediately.

God is still in the business of calling out people to go and take His message to the ends of the earth. He is also calling out people to be involved in spreading the gospel right in their own communities. Saul and Barnabas show us what it looks like to live sent. All who love and follow Jesus are called to this same posture of openness and obedience. We are sent to people at our jobs. We are sent to people in our neighborhoods, on the ball field, or at the coffee shop. Making Jesus first in our daily lives and conversations is the beginning to living out the call of God on our lives. Ask the Lord to call you out and show you where He wants you to represent Him this coming week.

 How is God calling you to be part of multiplying the work of the church? How do you need to respond to Him this week?

 How will you seek a spiritual posture to prepare for what God may ask you to do?

 How can our group develop a culture of living as sent ones for the sake of the gospel?

Here's How to Become a Christ-Follower:

Read the following verses and ask after each one: "What does this say to me?"

- **All have sinned:** Romans 3:23 & 1 John 1:8
- **The wages of sin:** Romans 6:23 & John 3:18
- **But while we were sinners, salvation was provided:** Romans 5:8
- **Become a Christ-follower:** Romans 10:9-10 Confess and Believe

Accepting Christ is Just the Beginning:

Next Steps:

- Publicly profess your faith by being baptized (Matthew 10:32-33; Luke 3:21; Romans 6:4).
- Join a church which follows the Bible, where you can grow in your faith through prayer, Bible study and fellowship with other Christians.
- Get involved in groups for encouragement and accountability.
- Begin a daily personal worship experience with God where you study the Bible and pray.
- Share with others what Jesus has done for you. Tell your story (Romans 10:14; Matthew 28:19-20).
- Begin to live for God (Romans 12:1-2, 9-18; James 1:19-27).



FOR NEXT WEEK

Decisions

Main Passages

- Acts 15:1-11

Session Outline

1. The Dispute (Acts 15:1)
2. The Response (Acts 15:2-5)
3. The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:6-11)

Memorize

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

- Acts 13:3, CSB