

Multiplication Matters

April 23, 2023

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

Acts 13:1-5

Session Outline

1. Called Out (Acts 13:1-2)
2. Answering the Call (Acts 13:3)
3. Living Sent (Acts 13:4-5)

Theological Theme

God 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.



Leader Guide

Multiplication Matters

Introduction

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.

- ❓ Share about a time your career grew rapidly. What was the catalyst for this to happen?
- ❓ How can you transfer that experience for kingdom impact?

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.

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.

- ❓ 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?

Commissioned

The Antioch church had already reached out to Gentiles in its own city. While some of its leaders were fasting and praying for further leading, the Spirit directed them to send Paul and Barnabas on a mission. The others then “commissioned” Paul and Barnabas to the new ministry, fasting, praying, and laying their hands upon them as an expression of solidarity and support. The Antioch church would be Paul’s sponsor on all three of his missionary journeys.

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.

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.

Multiplication is the strategic plan by which healthy churches and ministries extend God's Great Commission to the unreached and unengaged in our region. Multiplication moves a healthy congregation to fulfill their kingdom mandate among targeted People and Places with intentional Plans for the purpose of:

- Making Disciples
- Maturing Believers
- Multiplying Ministries

There are two steps which are essential to the development of an ongoing and effective Multiplication Culture:

1. Develop a Multiplication Mindset
2. Develop a Multiplication Culture

Where can your group go, help, and pray for one of Brentwood Baptist's multiplication efforts? College Grove, Smyrna, Nashville, Fairview, Columbia?

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?

DxD This Week

Call to Action

Our campuses and church starts all began with a small group of people committed to reaching their neighborhood. Get connected in a group and find a place to start going. Consider joining a group in an area in which the church can multiply.

Prayer of Response

Thank God for His great plans and for allowing you to be part of reaching people with the gospel. Ask Him to speak to you and show you what He has for you. Ask Him how you need to be prepared so that you will respond without delay when He calls.

Additional Resources

- *Be Daring* by Warren Wiersbe
- *Acts 13-28 For You* by R. Albert Mohler Jr.
- *Acts: NIV Application Commentary* by Ajith Fernando

- Global Mission Trips: <https://brentwood.church/serve/global/>
- Discuss your group's ongoing mission project. If you have not declared one yet, see BBC's local missions partner page to discover one - <https://brentwood.church/local-missions-opportunity-finder/>

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



Questions to Guide Your Group's Discussion

1. What does this passage say?
2. What did this passage mean to its original audience?
3. What does this passage tell us about God?
4. What does this passage tell us about man?
5. What does this passage demand of me?
6. How does this passage change the way I relate to people? (*How can you use this information this week at work or with friends and neighbors?*)
7. How does this passage prompt me to pray to God?

*Adapted from Seven Arrows by Matt Rogers pastor of The Church at Cherrydale, Greenville, SC

For Next Week

Session Title

- 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

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 13:1-5

13:1 Prophets and teachers apparently refer to functions and (possibly) offices within the early church. The teachers continued the apostolic function of transmitting Jesus's message (see note at 6:2–4), while prophets conveyed divine revelation via interpreting the OT or giving new insights (11:27). This is the only reference in Acts to teachers, although the function of teacher is described elsewhere in the NT (1Co 12:28–29; Eph 4:11; 1Tm 1:7; 2:7; 3:2; 2Tm 1:11; 2:24). The group of prophets and teachers was diverse, including people from Africa and Cyrene, and at least one person (Manaen) who was connected to Herod's household.

13:2–3 The routine of the prophets and teachers included worshiping the Lord and fasting. This helps to account for their openness to the Holy Spirit, who directed them to set aside Barnabas and Saul for a work to which the Spirit had called them. Barnabas and Saul were confirmed in their calling after a process of fasting, praying, and laying on of hands. This commissioning marks an important turning point in the history of the church, as Saul and Barnabas were selected to extend the gospel message beyond Judea and surrounding regions.

13:4 This verse 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).

13:5 Paul began his preaching efforts at local synagogues, continuing his early pattern. John ("John ... Mark," 12:25) was with them for now (but see 13:13).¹

References

1. M. David Sills, "Opportunities and Challenges in Global Missions," in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1739–1741.

Author Bio

Warren Wiersbe (Be Daring)

Warren W. Wiersbe, former pastor of the Moody Church and general director of Back to the Bible, has traveled widely as a Bible teacher and conference speaker. Because of his encouragement to those in ministry, Dr. Wiersbe is often referred to as “the pastor’s pastor.” He has ministered in churches and conferences throughout the United States as well as in Canada, Central and South America, and Europe. Dr. Wiersbe has written over 150 books, including the popular BE series of commentaries on every book of the Bible, which has sold more than four million copies. At the 2002 Christian Booksellers Convention, he was awarded the Gold Medallion Lifetime Achievement Award by the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association. Dr. Wiersbe and his wife, Betty, live in Lincoln, Nebraska.

R. Albert Mohler Jr. (Acts 13-28 For You)

Dr. R. Albert Mohler Jr. serves as president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary – the flagship school of the Southern Baptist Convention and one of the largest seminaries in the world. Dr. Mohler has been recognized by such influential publications as Time and Christianity Today as a leader among American evangelicals. In fact, Time.com called him the “reigning intellectual of the evangelical movement in the U.S.” In addition to his presidential duties, Dr. Mohler hosts two programs: “The Briefing,” a daily analysis of news and events from a Christian worldview; and “Thinking in Public,” a series of conversations with the day’s leading thinkers. He also writes a popular blog and a regular commentary on moral, cultural and theological issues. Called “an articulate voice for conservative Christianity at large” by The Chicago Tribune, Dr. Mohler’s mission is to address contemporary issues from a consistent and explicit Christian worldview.

Ajith Fernando (Acts: NIV Application Commentary)

Ajith Fernando (ThM, DD) served for thirty-five years as the National Director of Youth for Christ in Sri Lanka and now serves as its Teaching Director. He is a Bible expositor with a worldwide ministry. Ajith studied at Asbury Theological Seminary and Fuller Seminary and spends much of his time mentoring and counseling Christian workers. He is a visiting lecturer at Colombo Theological Seminary.