

THE LOOKOUT

NOVEMBER 2023

Unit: Acts (Part 2)

Theme: The Church Goes Global

Overview: Shrunk spirits and miserly hearts have no place in God's global mission. His plans are always larger than ours (Genesis 1:28; 11:4, 9; 12:3; Isaiah 49:6; Daniel 7:13-14; Zechariah 9:9-10). Clearly God's mission for the church has always been worldwide. The International Conference on Missions realizes this; the theme for their gathering Nov. 16-18 in Oklahoma City is "Hope for the Nations." In Part 2 of this study from Acts, students will learn of this global mission by studying one family (Cornelius's household), a first journey (by Paul and Barnabas), and two cities (Ephesus and Rome).

HOW TO USE

Each week has a **lesson aim**, **lesson text**, and **supplemental text**.

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 8, 2023

LESSON AIM: Celebrate the inclusiveness of God's love and grace.

SCRIPT: Acts 10:1-11

THEME: The Church Goes Global

LESSON TEXT: Acts 10:1-11, 34-35

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Acts 10:1-11, 34-35, 11:1-18

STUDY

TITLES ARE ADDED TO THE CHURCH
BY PAUL SCOTT

After the initial and difficult work of the Bible study, the next step is to apply the lessons to your life. This is done by reading the Bible and applying the lessons to your life. The Bible study is a journey of discovery and growth. It is a journey that leads to a deeper understanding of God's Word and a closer relationship with Him. The Bible study is a journey that leads to a deeper understanding of God's Word and a closer relationship with Him. The Bible study is a journey that leads to a deeper understanding of God's Word and a closer relationship with Him.

Tabs indicate the week of each lesson.

Each week features three sections: **Study**, **Application**, and **Discovery**.

APPLICATION

GO WHEREVER GOD SENDS YOU
BY DAVID FAUST

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DISCOVERY

BY DAVID FAUST

1. How do you think you can "bring good tidings of peace" to your neighbors? (Acts 10:1-2)
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9. How do you think you can "bring good tidings of peace" to your neighbors? (Acts 10:1-2)
10. How do you think you can "bring good tidings of peace" to your neighbors? (Acts 10:1-2)
11. How do you think you can "bring good tidings of peace" to your neighbors? (Acts 10:1-2)

Use the **Discovery** questions to study, discuss, and apply the Scripture passages in a group or class.

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 12, 2023

LESSON AIM: **Find how God is calling
you to take the gospel
beyond your locality.**

UNIT: Acts (Part 2)

THEME: The Church Goes Global

LESSON TEXT: Acts 13:1-13, 26-31, 38-39

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Psalm 96; Isaiah 6:1-8; Acts 1:8; 13:14-25, 32-37;
40-52; 14:1-28

FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

BY MARK SCOTT

In the animated movie *Toy Story*, Buzz Lightyear's famous catchphrase was, "To infinity and beyond!" One could use that same line upon coming to Acts 13. The chapter continues the geographical expansion of the church outlined by Jesus in his commission to the apostles, with the goal of reaching "the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Acts 13–20 contain the missionary journeys and the church-planting efforts of "Team Paul." The first journey is recorded in Acts 13–14. Barnabas and Saul (and those who assisted them, such as John Mark) traveled more than 1,200 miles in perhaps two to three years and planted several churches. Not bad for the ancient world. Acts 13 is rich with gospel content and missionary principles.

A Divine Calling

Acts 13:1-3

Following the death of Herod Agrippa I, the gospel spread effectively and multiplied fruitfully (Acts 12:23-24). Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem to the missionary-enterprising church in Antioch of Syria where they had spent time earlier (Acts 11:19-30). Armed with resources of people and funds, the Great Commission church in Antioch would lay evangelistic claim to the Roman world.

The church in Antioch included *prophets* (inspired speakers) and *teachers* (those who gave formal instruction). Five of them are mentioned by name. The list of five is quite diverse, for it includes at least one African, a Levite, a Jewish man who was a Roman citizen, and one brought up with royalty. God would set *apart* two-fifths of the leadership of this church for the mission field.

The divine call to the mission field came in the context of worship and the spiritual disciplines of fasting and prayer. "*The Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'*" We do not know if this was an audible voice (which would be the most natural way of understanding the text), or was spoken through one of the prophets, or was some kind of inner impulse. But the Holy Spirit was a missionary Spirit, calling *Barnabas and Saul* to leave Antioch and travel to places yet unreached with the gospel.

A Large Obstacle

Acts 13:4-13

The road forward made perfect geographical sense. Most likely Barnabas and Saul left Antioch and boated down the Orontes River to the port at *Seleucia* on the Mediterranean Sea. From there they sailed to the island of *Cyprus* and

worked their way from one end of the island to the other (from *Salamis* to *Paphos*). Since Barnabas was from *Cyprus* (Acts 4:36), he may have influenced where they went first. They *proclaimed the word of God* (i.e., preached the gospel) in the *Jewish synagogues* (a typical starting point for Paul in his church planting). John Mark was *their helper* (or servant).

But whenever and wherever the gospel is preached, one can be sure Satan will rear his ugly head and try to nip the growth of the church in the bud. The primary obstacle in the city of *Paphos* was a *Jewish sorcerer* named *Bar-Jesus*—later referred to as *Elymas*—who is identified as a *false prophet* (that's a lot not to like—see Deuteronomy 18:9-14, 22—plus his name mocked Jesus' name). This man attended to the *proconsul* (who may have been the governor of *Cyprus*), *Sergius Paulus*.

Elymas did everything in his power to turn the *intelligent* leader of the island away from Christianity. *Saul*, now identified as *Paul*, confronted the *sorcerer*. Paul exposed Elymas for who he really was (child of the devil, enemy of everything right, one full of deceit and trickery, and one who had perverted the right ways of God). Through Paul, God's hand was against Elymas. A *mist* came over him that caused him to go blind. (Is history repeating itself, for Paul also was blinded [Acts 9:9]?) Having witnessed such a clear demonstration of the Lord's power, the proconsul *believed*. The missionary team then sailed from the island to what is now southern Turkey, where they commenced their treacherous climb to the cities of southern Galatia.

A Road Sermon

Acts 13:26-31, 38-39

Upon coming to Antioch of *Pisidia*, Paul followed his established strategy of going to the Jewish synagogue first. At the right time in the liturgy, Paul was asked to deliver the exhortation. He launched into what could easily be called his road sermon. Luke shares much of what Paul said because most likely this was Paul's go-to sermon upon entering synagogues. It offered a bird's-eye view of the Bible and mirrored Stephen's speech in Acts 7.

Paul traced Israelite history and brought it down to its fulfillment in the saving message of Jesus. The message was that Jesus came, people did not *recognize* him as God's Son, he was condemned, crucified, buried, and then *God raised him from the dead*. This saving event was witnessed by many people. Therefore, *the forgiveness of sins* is now offered to everyone. *Justification*, not possible through the *law of Moses*, is now provided. The gospel was being boldly proclaimed by those whom the Spirit had commissioned. ■

APPLICATION

WHY DO THEY GO?

BY DAVID FAUST

Why would anyone voluntarily leave their native culture and move to a different land? Why would anyone choose to give up the conveniences of home and adjust to unfamiliar languages, climates, customs, and foods—and raise their own financial support to pay for these inconveniences?

What Paul Might Have Said

The apostle Paul's missionary work required sleepless nights and exhausting days. Along with the ordinary stresses of ministry, he often was hungry, thirsty, and cold. His adversaries hated him. They beat him with rods, pelted him with stones, and locked him in prison. It would be traumatic to go through even one shipwreck, but that happened to Paul not once but three times; and it must have been terrifying when he "spent a night and a day in the open sea" (2 Corinthians 11:25).

But if you asked Paul, "Why did you go on all those missionary journeys?" I imagine he might have said something like this: "I went because everyone everywhere needs to hear that Jesus the Messiah died for their sins and rose from the dead. Faith comes by hearing the Word. How can they hear if no one tells them? The Father's grace saved me, Christ's love compelled me, and the Holy Spirit sent me. After all the Lord has done for me, how could I do anything less than spread the gospel every chance I get?"

Paul's letter to the Philippians, written from prison, is filled with joy and peace. His confident assertion, "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation" (Philippians 4:12), shows he had no regrets.

We all can't travel the world as Paul did, but making disciples, baptizing them, and teaching them is every Christian's mission.

What Missionaries Say

Several years ago, I asked some of my missionary friends what motivated them to serve the Lord cross-culturally.

A church planter in New Zealand said he was motivated by "the simple fact that God asked me to do it." He added, "What gets me through the difficult times is an obligation of obedience to a Savior who once felt the same way."

Missionaries living in Africa told me, "Christ's passionate love for his lost sheep compels us to go and serve."

A young couple in Europe explained what it's like to minister amid "post-Enlightenment apathy, enormous influxes of non-Western religions, and a divided evangelical population of at best 3 percent." Why did they go? "To bring faith in Christ to a place filled with despair where the bride of Christ has been wounded by cynicism and unbelief."

Missionaries in India described their nation as "a complex mosaic of cultures, religions, and peoples" where "everyone seems to be looking for something—anything—to satisfy their deepest needs." Their dream "is to see Indian Christians and churches look more like what we find in the pages of the New Testament—single-minded, sacrificial, and sold-out to Jesus and his agenda."

The Bible speaks of faithful servants like these when it says, "Please send them on their way in a manner that honors God. It was for the sake of the Name that they went out, receiving no help from the pagans. We ought therefore to show hospitality to such people so that we may work together for the truth" (3 John 6-8). If we agree with "why they go," we should help them keep going.

Personal Challenge: Send a care package to a missionary you know. Include a note of appreciation for their work, along with special foods or other treats they can enjoy. **L**

DISCOVERY

BY DOUG REDFORD

1. How did you assess and address any issues of favoritism in your relationships with others over the past week? (Make this a matter of personal prayer, and if keeping a journal of both your progress and your struggles helps, do that.)

Ask two people to read aloud **Acts 13:1-13, 26-31, 38-39** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to briefly summarize the passages.

2. Suppose you were helping your church to select, send out, and support a missionary. What are five character qualities you would most want to see in your recruit?
3. Fasting is mentioned as part of the process by which the church in Antioch worshiped, then sent out Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:2-3).
 - Have you ever participated in a fast?
 - What would you say are the spiritual benefits of fasting?
4. John (also called Mark in the New Testament) is described in Acts 13:5 as a "helper" to Barnabas and Saul. What kinds of "help" do you think John may have provided?
5. Sergius Paulus, the official in Paphos to whom Barnabas and Saul spoke the word of God, is described as an intelligent man (Acts 13:7). Eventually he became a believer (v. 12). Do you think it is harder for intelligent or highly educated people to accept the Christian message? Explain your answer.
6. Elymas the sorcerer tried to turn Sergius Paulus from the faith (Acts 13:8).
 - What influences in contemporary culture do you see as especially powerful in turning people from the Christian faith?
7. Sergius Paulus was "amazed at the teaching about the Lord." What portions of the Bible do you find especially "amazing," and why?
8. Acts 13:13 says that at one point in the missionary journey, "John left [Barnabas and Saul] to return to Jerusalem."
 - Why do you think John made the decision to return to Jerusalem?
 - What kind of spiritual help might John have needed when he returned?
9. Based on our study and discussion, complete the sentence: "I will . . ."
10. Note the "Personal Challenge" that David Faust included with his essay that accompanies this lesson.
 - What are some other steps you can take to become more familiar with missions, both locally and worldwide?
 - Why is such familiarity important for all Christians to possess?

For Next Week: Read and reflect on **Acts 19:8-10, 23-41**. You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study. ■