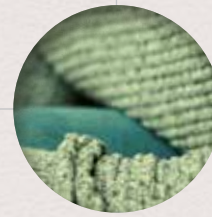
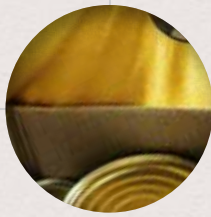


Acts 13–28 | *QuickSource*



EXPLORE THE BIBLE®

Adults • Fall 2024

STARTING NEW

Fall means a lot of different things to a lot of different people. For some, it's the start of football season and the roar of the crowd on Saturdays and Sundays. For others, it's a season of beauty as leaves change colors and fall to the ground. For many, it's all about cooler temperatures—moderated by the warmth of a firepit and the smell of pumpkin spice.

For kids (and their parents), fall represents the start of a new school year. Regardless of how things went for students in the past, a fresh school year means new opportunities and adventures. It's a chance to try new things and maybe meet new people. New doors open, and the future feels unlimited!

In Acts 13–28, the early church experienced the power of new opportunities to an even greater degree. After planting their roots in Jerusalem, the members of the early church got down to the business of fulfilling Jesus's command to take His message to the ends of the earth. Like the first day of school, Paul and his missionary partners walked through new doors that God opened for them. They dealt with highs and lows, excitement and even some anxiety.

But while the situations shifted from day to day, one thing remained the same: the message. Paul, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, Luke, and the entire cast of characters in Acts 13–28 never strayed from the central theme of the gospel. Wherever they went, they preached that Jesus is the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

It's the same message believers are commanded to share today. We may not worship idols like so many in Paul's audiences, but we have rebelled against God in our own ways. We have turned away from Him, something the Bible calls "sin." And, because we've all sinned (Rom. 3:23), we all need a Savior. We all need Jesus to help start new. If you're ready to accept the salvation that only He can provide, here's what you need to do . . .

- **Admit** to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning from your sin.
- **By faith receive** Jesus as God's Son and accept His gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross.
- **Confess** your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: "Dear God, I know that You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In the name of Jesus I pray, amen."

After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Show others your faith in Christ by asking for baptism by immersion in your local church as a public expression of your faith.

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*Evangelistic Emphasis

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Explore the Bible
QuickSource Leader Guide
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A WORD FROM **THE TEAM LEADER**

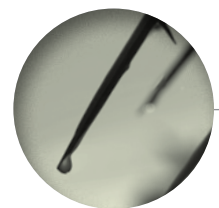
My city is growing by leaps and bounds. Every month a new restaurant launches, with the news finding its way to social media, local news outlets, and conversations. It doesn't take long to know if it's great food—word travels fast. A strong beginning is important. A solid launch hints at healthy business for months to come.

The book of Acts gives us an inside look at a different kind of beginning—an incredible one. In Acts, Luke recorded the launch and growth of the Christian church. From these early Christians, we learn what the early church was like. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, these believers faced opposition, dealt with difficult theological issues, and worked to fulfill the task of carrying the gospel far and wide. The church's beginning was extraordinary. May this study of these early believers serve to equip and energize us to continue the task we've been given. "For this is what the Lord has commanded us: I have made you a light for the Gentiles to bring salvation to the end of the earth" (Acts 13:47).

In Him,

Amber Vaden

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The Three Roles Your Bible Study Group Needs

Dwayne McCrary

For me, nearly forty years of marriage has included the wearing of many hats. Those responsibilities have included, but weren't limited to, the following: plumber, exterminator, cook, mover, and petroleum exchange engineer (better known as filler of the gas tanks). None of these titles were explicitly included in the wedding vows. The key word is "explicitly," since they are covered under words and phrases like "cherish," "better or worse," and "plight thee my troth." Turns out, all those other hats come with wearing the ring.

Accepting the responsibility of leading an ongoing Bible study group also comes with a variety of hats. Some of them were expected, but not all. Walking alongside a grieving class member as he or she buries a loved one, especially a child or spouse, was probably not what we thought about when we said "yes." Nor was setting up chairs or training another person to do what we do. Even if we did not fully grasp it at the time, these are things that come with the territory of being a Bible study leader.

Ten years ago, David Francis and Ken Braddy defined three roles individuals play when assigned a Bible study group: teacher, shepherd, and leader. (You can download a free copy of *3 Roles* by David Francis and Ken Braddy at Lifeway.com.) These three roles can help us handle the expectations that come with saying "yes" to a Bible study group.



TEACHER

This role is the most obvious of the three. Regardless of what else we may think we are supposed to do, teaching seems to be at the top of the list. Francis and Braddy defined this role as our ongoing goal of guiding group members to discover and apply biblical truth. They went on to say that for this to happen the group members will need to talk as much as (if not more than) we do.

The phrase “ongoing goal” stands out to me in the Francis and Braddy statement. The idea here is that we perform this task week in and week out. We are not a coordinator or part-time teacher. We carry out the role regularly and consistently.

As a teacher of preschoolers and adults, I can understand the value of being there every week. Preschoolers get accustomed to the patterns we follow. Seeing the same face each week eases some of their angst when being dropped off by a parent. The patterns bring security and give the child a framework for the learning experience.

The same is true when teaching adults. They also need some type of framework and a sense of security. We may hand over the teaching role to an apprentice on occasion; but, ultimately, we are the ones who must consistently fulfill the role of teacher if we want the class or group to gel and become a safe place to share and learn.

SHEPHERD

Most likely, before our first day with a class or group, we were presented with a ministry list, a set of people assigned to be in our group. This ministry list was assigned with the idea that we would care for the individuals on that list.

Teaching and shepherding actually go hand in hand. If we think about our favorite teachers over the years, we most likely will identify people who also had some type of relationship with us. As shepherds, we know the needs of the individual sheep which should make us better teachers. We can tailor the group Bible study time in light of these known needs. Our shepherding should also influence how we lead the group time, knowing who we may call on to share an experience that illustrates the main point being examined that day.

We will naturally find it easier to shepherd those who are more regular in the group, but we can't forget those who rarely or never attend. There is a reason they are on the class list assigned to us.

In a triad of parables, Jesus pointed to a lost sheep, lost coin, and lost (or prodigal) son (Luke 15). Jesus pointed out that the shepherd will search for that single lost sheep until it is found. We are responsible as a shepherd assigned to a specific number of sheep who also have names. They matter to God, so they must matter to us.

LEADER

Carrying influence makes a person a leader, even when they did not seek to be one. Teaching and shepherding automatically gives us influence; so, in a sense, we become leaders by proxy. We see this in how we help the adults in our Bible study groups understand the mission of reaching, teaching, and serving others.

Ongoing Bible study groups carry some responsibility in reaching people who are far from God. As the leader, we have to keep reminding our group of that responsibility. Otherwise, we will become comfortable with our Christian huddle to the exclusion of others. As we reach more people, we will inevitably reach a point when we are unable to teach and shepherd effectively on our own. That is one reason for planting a new group once twelve to eighteen people are attending the current one.

Of course, someone must lead those in the group to see the need for planting the new group and for apprenticing others who can teach/shepherd/lead. The more groups we plant, the greater the potential that we can reach our communities with the gospel, which is our ultimate mission.

GOOD NEWS . . . KIND OF

Since none of us are gifted in all three of these areas, we need others to come alongside us to be successful. That is good news, but it comes with a caveat. The three roles are interwoven. Even when we hand off a role, those roles stay closely connected.

All three roles are connected by assignment, as well as by relationship. All three require us to build relationships with all the people included on our assigned ministry list. If we neglect one of the roles, the other roles will suffer. With God's help, we can become the teacher/shepherd/leader that the people on our ministry list need. We also become the kind of ministers our church needs to reach the communities in which God has placed us.

Dwayne McCrary serves as the manager of adult ongoing Bible studies at Lifeway Christian Resources.

HOW TO USE QUICKSOURCE

Using *QuickSource* as your primary resource for preparing to lead a small Bible study group (with the group using the *Personal Study Guide*).

1. Read the core passage, using the Key Words as a quick commentary on the passage.

2. Review the outline provided on the Talking Points page (page two of each session) to organize your thoughts and identify the key points in the passage.

Tip: You can record your notes on the second page if you desire, giving you a way to remember insights gained.

3. Review the questions with response prompts on the Discussion Plan page (page three of each session), recording your response to the questions as you do so.

Some questions/prompts are included in the *Explore the Bible Personal Study Guide*. The corresponding PSG page numbers for these questions are noted. These page numbers correlate to the regular print version of the PSG and may differ from large print versions. The prompts are adapted from the comments in the *Personal Study Guide*.

Tip: Additional “Bonus” questions are also provided in the Discussion Plan, along with the For Further Discussion QR codes. These extra questions are found only in *QuickSource*.

4. Consider ways of using the Bible Skill and Object Lesson ideas to lead your group.

Look for ways of using these ideas, in addition to the questions included on the Discussion Plan page.

5. Read the Dig Deeper feature (page four of each session), looking for ways of using that information when leading the group.

The information found in the Dig Deeper feature is available only in *QuickSource*.

6. Review and refine.

- Add transition ideas to move from one question to the next.
- Consult the *Explore the Bible* Extra page (goExploreTheBible.com/leaderextras) for an idea about using a current news event to begin and end the group time.
- Listen to the weekly *Explore the Bible* adult podcast to gain further insights about this week’s study. The podcast can be found on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts, goExploreTheBible.com/adults-training, or on MinistryGrid (MinistryGrid.com/ExploreTheBible).

7. Gather the items needed to lead the group.

If you plan on using a visual from the *Explore the Bible Leader Pack* or creating your own (see p. 65 for a listing of items and suggested sessions for using them), do so early in the week. Be sure to have extra copies of the *Personal Study Guide* on hand to be given to guests.

8. Arrive early.

The group time starts when the first person arrives. Make sure you are that person so you can set the tone and direction for the group Bible study time.

9. Lead the group in a time of Bible study, following your plan.

10. Evaluate the group time.

Note what you learned about the people in the group as well as things you may need to work on to improve as a teacher. Also make sure any follow-up actions promised to the group are carried out.

Using *QuickSource* as a **Supplement**.

Leader Guide + QuickSource

As a supplement to the *Explore the Bible Adult Leader Guide*.

After completing your study using the commentary provided in the *Explore the Bible Leader Guide*, consult the Key Words section, the Talking Points page, and the Dig Deeper feature for additional insight or as a review. Reflect on the “Bonus” questions in the Discussion Plan and the extra questions provided in For Further Discussion, and add those to your plan as appropriate.

Daily Discipleship Guide + QuickSource

As a supplement to the Leader Helps in the *Explore the Bible Adult Daily Discipleship Guide*.

Look at the Key Words section to identify additional key words not included in the *Daily Discipleship Guide*, the Talking Points page, and the Dig Deeper feature for additional insight or as a review. Reflect on the “Bonus” questions in the Discussion Plan and the extra questions provided in For Further Discussion, and add those to your plan as appropriate.

Other resources that might be helpful.

Leader Guide

Explore the Bible Adult Leader Guide provides extensive group plans and additional Bible commentary that builds confidence when preparing to lead a group. Additional teaching options based on learning styles are also included. Available at goExploreTheBible.com

Pack

Explore the Bible Adult Leader Pack provides ready-made posters and handout masters that add to the learning experience and make it easier on the teacher. DOC files of the Leader Guide commentary and Leader Guide group plans are also included as a digital download. Available at goExploreTheBible.com

Commentary

Explore the Bible Adult Commentary provides an extensive Bible commentary written by recognized conservative Bible scholars. Available at goExploreTheBible.com.

Order resources at goExploreTheBible.com

BIBLICAL **BACKGROUND**

AUTHORSHIP

Luke, the author of the Gospel that bears his name, also wrote the book of Acts. While Luke's Gospel provided details about the life and ministry of Jesus, his purpose with Acts was to create a sequel, an account of the work of the Holy Spirit as the message of Christ and the church expanded across the known world.

Both books were addressed to an otherwise unknown individual named Theophilus (Acts 1:1). Through Acts, Luke reported on the earliest days of church history following Jesus's resurrection and return to heaven. In particular, chapters 13-28 focus on the gospel's movement through the missionary work of Paul and his companions. Having taken root in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, the gospel then went to the ends of the earth, just as Jesus had commanded (1:8).

For Acts, Luke relied on several sources, including eyewitness interviews and his own experiences with Paul. In chapters 13-28, he also described several people and places Paul met and visited on his three missionary journeys—as well as his trip to Rome. An inventory of key individuals and locations in Acts 13-28 would include the following:

ANTIOCH

While Jerusalem had been the primary base for the church to reach Judea and Samaria in the early chapters of Acts, the congregation at Antioch became the launching pad for the church's international missions ministry in chapters 13-28. Through this congregation, the Spirit set apart Saul and Barnabas as missionaries (13:2-3). This was also the first place where followers of the Way became known as "Christians" (11:26).

BARNABAS

Barnabas was a trusted member of the Jerusalem church. When the church leaders in Jerusalem heard about the happenings in the region around Antioch, they sent Barnabas to

investigate. Barnabas also went to Tarsus to find Saul and bring him to Antioch with him.

Barnabas later became Paul's first traveling companion. After their first journey, though, the two missionaries experienced a heated dispute related to a young man named Mark. Unable to reconcile their differences, they decided to break up their team. Each selected a new partner and carried on God's work.

THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL

The missionary work of Paul and Barnabas meant the gospel was penetrating regions dominated by Gentiles. While some Jews were responding to the message, most of the converts in the cities Paul and Barnabas visited were Gentiles. This created a new dynamic for the early church and raised several questions about what it meant to be a follower of Christ.

The thorniest of these questions related to the subject of circumcision. A group of strict Jewish believers contended that the new Gentile converts had to "become Jewish" (that is, had to be circumcised) before they could be considered true Christians. Having seen God work among the Gentiles in powerful ways, Paul and Barnabas strongly rejected this idea.

To settle the matter, church leaders met in what has been called "The Jerusalem Council" (15:6-21). After hearing arguments for both sides of the debate, James, speaking as leader of the church, decided that circumcision was not a requirement for salvation. The decision affirmed salvation by faith apart from religious rituals and works.

SILAS

After the dispute in Acts 15:36-41, Barnabas took Mark and headed for Cyprus. Meanwhile, Paul teamed with Silas and began retracing his steps from the earlier missionary journey. Silas, who was also known as "Silvanus," ministered alongside Peter, as well (1 Pet. 5:12).



TIMOTHY

When Paul reached Derbe and Lystra, he met a young man named Timothy. Being the son of a Jewish woman and a Greek man, Paul thought Timothy was perfect for the ministry to the Gentiles and Greeks (Acts 16:1-3). Timothy, who likely became a believer under Paul's ministry, eventually became like a "spiritual son" to Paul (1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Tim. 1:1-2,18; 2 Tim. 1:2).

PHILIPPI

Paul and Silas went to Philippi in obedience to a vision from God (Acts 16:6-10). While there, a woman named Lydia became the first European convert to Christ. While ministering in the city, Paul and Silas also caused an uproar when Paul exorcised a fortune-telling demon from a young girl. While the girl was set free from her oppression, the men who had been making money off her initiated a persecution against the missionaries.

Paul and Silas were arrested, beaten, and jailed, despite being Roman citizens. That night, they prayed and sang in prison. Without warning, a massive earthquake opened the prison's cells and unlocked the chains that were keeping the prisoners in place. Fearing that his prisoners had escaped (which would lead to his own execution), the jailer was ready to kill himself. But Paul and Silas assured him that all the prisoners were accounted for. When they witnessed to the jailer, he and his family became believers.

ATHENS

Named for the Greek goddess Athena, the city of Athens was a major hub for first-century culture, art, philosophy, and religion. Paul took notice of the many false gods worshiped by the Athenians. As a monotheistic Jew, Paul was appalled by the polytheism that enveloped the city. Still, he used these idols—along with his own understanding of Greek literature and philosophy—as a bridge for sharing the truth about the "unknown God."

CORINTH

In the Paul's day, Corinth was one the most important cities in the Roman Empire. In Corinth, Paul became acquainted with a Jewish tentmaking couple, Priscilla and Aquila. Being a tentmaker himself, Paul bonded with the married couple, and they supported his work.

Paul also experienced opposition and persecution in Corinth. However, in a vision, God told Paul not to be afraid and to keep preaching: "For I am with you, and no one will lay a hand on you to hurt you" (18:9-10).

EPHESUS

Paul initially argued with the Jews in the Ephesian synagogue. After the Jews rejected the gospel, he began teaching anyone who would come in a lecture hall (19:8-10). His ministry had a substantial impact on the city, as people turned from sorcery and idolatry to Christ. But this also raised the ire of local business leaders whose income depended on the city's passion for false gods, especially the goddess Diana. These leaders sparked a riot that threatened Paul's life and increased persecution aimed at the Ephesian church.

ROME

Paul's ultimate aim was to preach in Rome. After several years, he finally reached the city, albeit as a prisoner under house arrest. Still, the authorities were lenient with Paul and allowed him to enjoy a great measure of freedom.

Acts closes without resolving Paul's legal situation. Some scholars believe Luke was content to end the story in Rome because that essentially fulfilled Jesus's command to reach the ends of the earth with the gospel.

Most conservative scholars believe Paul had his day in court before Caesar (probably Nero) and shared the gospel with the emperor. After being released, he continued his ministry until he was arrested again. This time, Nero sentenced Paul to die, and he was beheaded.

OUTLINE

- I. The Church Empowered (Acts 1:1–2:47)
 - II. The Church's Early Days (Acts 3:1–12:25)
 - III. Paul's First Missionary Journey (Acts 13:1–14:28)
 - IV. The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1–35)
 - V. Paul's Second Missionary Journey (Acts 15:36–18:22)
 - VI. Paul's Third Missionary Journey (Acts 18:23–21:16)
 - VII. Paul's Arrest and Journey to Rome (Acts 21:17–28:31)
-

Sent

Believers are set apart for God's purposes.

Acts 13:1-12

1 Now in the church at **Antioch** **A** there were **prophets and teachers**: **B** Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, **Manaen**, **C** a close friend of Herod the tetrarch, and **Saul**. **D** 2 As they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “**Set apart** **E** for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” 3 Then after they had fasted, prayed, and **laid hands on them**, **F** they sent them off. 4 So being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to **Cyprus**. **G** 5 Arriving in Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish **synagogues**. **H** They also had **John** **I** as their assistant. 6 When they had traveled the whole island as far as Paphos, they came across a sorcerer, a Jewish false prophet named **Bar-Jesus**. **J** 7 He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man summoned Barnabas and Saul and wanted to hear the word of God. 8 But Elymas the sorcerer (that is the meaning of his name) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul away from the faith. 9 But Saul—also called Paul—filled with the Holy Spirit, stared straight at Elymas 10 and said, “You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery, you **son of the devil** **K** and enemy of all that is right. Won’t you ever stop perverting the straight paths of the Lord? 11 Now, look, the Lord’s hand is against you. You are going to be blind, and will not see the sun for a time.” Immediately a **mist and darkness** **L** fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand. 12 Then, when he saw what happened, the proconsul believed, because he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at goExploreTheBible.com.

Exploring Key Words

- A** A Syrian city about 300 miles north of Jerusalem. Christians fleeing the persecution in the early church relocated to Antioch.
- B** Prophets preached as the Lord directed them, while teachers instructed on salvation and how to grow spiritually.
- C** Luke focused on his close friendship with Herod Antipas, who had beheaded John the Baptist and questioned Jesus.
- D** Luke would later refer to him as Paul (see Acts 13:9). He was an apostle and missionary.
- E** The Greek word (*aphorizo*) means to “separate” or “mark off by bounds.” Paul used the same word in Romans 1:1 and Galatians 1:15.
- F** The congregation commissioned Barnabas and Paul for missionary work. This was the physical sign of setting them apart for service (v. 2).
- G** An island sixty miles off the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Barnabas was born there (Acts 4:36).
- H** Sharing the gospel with Jews first was something Paul did throughout his ministry.
- I** Also known as John Mark, he was a relative of Barnabas and the writer of the Gospel of Mark.
- J** Another name for Elymas, meaning “son of Jesus” or “son of Joshua.” Luke described him as a sorcerer (astrologer) and false prophet.
- K** Paul recognized the spiritual nature of the confrontation and Satan’s opposition to the message of Jesus. Instead of being the son of Jesus, Elymas was actually the son of the devil.
- L** What happened to Elymas was similar to what happened when Moses stretched out his hand over Egypt (Ex. 10:21-23). See also 2 Peter 2:17.



Listen (Acts 13:1-3)

- During a time of fasting and worship at Antioch, the Holy Spirit called the church to set apart Barnabas and Saul for mission work.
- After the believers fasted, prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them off to serve.

Share (Acts 13:4-8)

- Barnabas and Saul sailed to Cyprus, where they shared the message of Jesus the Messiah in the Jewish synagogues.
- In Paphos, they encountered a false prophet and sorcerer named Bar-Jesus (also called Elymas). Sergius Paulus, the proconsul, eagerly wanted to hear what Paul and Barnabas had to say. However, Elymas opposed the message of Jesus and tried to discourage Sergius Paulus from accepting the faith.

Rely on the Spirit (Acts 13:9-12)

- Saul (whom Luke would call “Paul” through the rest of Acts) was filled with the Holy Spirit and recognized the spiritual warfare being contested. He responded with boldness.
- Paul faced Elymas and declared the hand of the Lord to be against him. Immediately a “mist and darkness” fell on Elymas, and he was blinded for a time.
- After witnessing this incredible event, Sergius Paulus believed.

Summary Statements

Believers are set apart for God’s purposes.

- The Holy Spirit works in us, calling us to kingdom work.
- Believers should be prepared for opposition so that they will be ready to stand firm.
- The Holy Spirit empowers us to do the kingdom work He calls us to do.

Memory Verse

Acts 13:3

Key Doctrine

Evangelism and Missions

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. (See Luke 24:46-49; Romans 10:13-15.)



Explore the Bible Prayer Guide

Scan here for a weekly prayer guide based on this quarter’s Bible passages.

ENGAGE

Bonus: How would you explain the difference between having a calling and being sent?

- There's a difference between being sent and being called. The call comes from the Holy Spirit, but He uses churches to confirm the call and to do the sending.
- Missionaries depend on churches to send them and support them. While Barnabas and Saul were sent by the church in Antioch, Jesus calls every believer to make disciples wherever they go.

For what purpose in life can you say you are “set apart?” How do you understand God’s purpose for your life? (PSG, p. 10)

EXPLORE

1. LISTEN (ACTS 13:1-3)

Bonus: What are some of the most powerful voices in culture today? What makes these voices so compelling for people?

- Believers who fled persecution in Jerusalem came and proclaimed the gospel in Antioch. Soon, believers from Cyprus and Cyrene also arrived. The church had a strong mix of Jewish and Gentile believers.
- Along with Barnabas and Saul, other leaders served the church. These leaders guided the congregation in worship that included an emphasis on prayer and fasting. This helped believers stay sensitive to the Spirit.
- During a time of such worship, the Spirit singled out Barnabas and Saul for His service. In response, the congregation fasted and prayed some more before sending them out as missionaries.

What does being called look like for believers today? How can you encourage people as they follow God’s call? (PSG, p. 13)

2. SHARE (ACTS 13:4-8)

Bonus: When has someone made your job harder than it should have been? How did you respond to that situation?

- Barnabas and Saul (with John Mark) traveled to Seleucia, the closest port to Antioch. This was the most direct route to the island of Cyprus, the missionaries’ first destination and Barnabas’s homeland.
- After arriving in Salamis, they began preaching about Jesus in Jewish synagogues. They made their way from east to west across the island until they reached Paphos.
- In Paphos, they got the chance to share the gospel with the proconsul, a man named Sergius Paulus. But they also experienced opposition from a false prophet named Bar-Jesus. He was also known as Elymas.

What arguments do opponents make against Jesus today? How does an effective testimony and the truth of God’s Word combine to overcome opposition? (PSG, p. 16)

3. RELY ON THE SPIRIT (ACTS 13:9-12)

Bonus: When have you seen God’s Spirit work in an undeniable way? How did you respond to Him in that moment?

- For the first time in Acts, Luke used Saul’s Greek name, Paul. He would use this name exclusively for the rest of the book.
- Paul looked straight at Elymas and pronounced judgment on the sorcerer. Through Paul, God immediately struck Elymas blind. As a result of God’s power at work, Sergius Paulus accepted Christ as Savior.

How does the Holy Spirit’s presence influence our perspective on obeying God in faith? In what ways have you seen the effect of Spirit-filled witnessing for Christ? (PSG, p. 17)

- The Holy Spirit empowers us to do the kingdom work He calls us to do. As we testify for Christ in the power of His Spirit, we can see people come to faith in Jesus.

Bonus: How do you feel about the Holy Spirit’s work in your life? How does this session affect the way you view the Spirit?

CHALLENGE

As a group, discuss the similarities between one’s personal experience with God’s call and that of vocational Christian workers.

What opportunities do you all have for sharing the gospel? (PSG, p. 18)

Encourage adults to reflect on the kind of opposition they have encountered as they witnessed for Christ.

How has the Holy Spirit directed and empowered you to serve the Lord? How can you encourage others as they follow Christ? (PSG, p. 18)



For Further Discussion

Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week’s study.



BIBLE SKILL (P. 17, PSG)

Use other Scripture to help understand a Bible passage.

Paul's accusations against Elymas in Acts 13:10 express the sorcerer's intention to distort the straight paths desired by God. Old Testament passages also examine God's path for His followers. Read these passages from your Bible: Proverbs 10:9; Isaiah 40:3; 59:8; Hosea 14:9; and Micah 3:9. How do these Old Testament passages provide greater understanding of Paul's point in Acts 13:10? Write a brief description of God's path as depicted in the selected passages.

Allow adults time to read and reflect on the verses from the Bible Skill. After a few minutes, provide time for volunteers to share their descriptions. Lead a brief discussion on how believers can identify and counter false messages in our culture today.

OBJECT LESSON: INSECT TRAP

Before the session, find a trap used for crawling insects, flying insects, or small animals. Display the trap to the group and ask: **Why are animals attracted to devices that will ultimately harm them? How are they deceived? How are these similar to ways that people are turned from faith in God?**

Encourage adults to suggest possible faith traps people could encounter each day. Write these responses on the board. Briefly discuss ways to identify and avoid these traps. If time permits, give adults time to identify Bible verses that would be helpful to memorize to overcome each temptation mentioned.



SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Paul's confrontation with Elymas (Bar-Jesus) reminds followers of Christ that we are in a spiritual battle. Paul recognized the nature of the conflict between him and Elymas. Likewise, growing believers should understand the demonic source of their struggles as they serve the Lord in a hostile world.

Paul saw past Elymas to his true enemy. Indeed, the false prophet was trying to prevent Sergius Paulus from hearing the gospel. But, as Paul noted, he was taking his orders from the devil (Acts 13:10). Later in Paul's missionary work, he elaborated on this distinction. In Ephesians 6:12, he identified the enemy with unmistakable clarity. Often, believers tend to see our enemies as people who don't agree with us or persecute us. But such people serve only pawns in the hands of the unseen devil who directs their hostility.

It is also helpful to note Paul's response to the enemy. He acted with courage in the face of the devil by calling out his attempts to prevent Sergius Paulus from hearing about Jesus.

In Ephesian 6:13, Paul instructed followers of Christ to demonstrate similar steadfastness in their own encounters with Satan and those he tries to use for his purposes. A believer's ability to stand against the devil requires putting on the full armor of God before entering the fight (Eph. 6:14-17).

Paul's instruction about spiritual armor encourages believers to depend on the spiritual power of intercessory prayer (6:18-19). Not only do wise Christians value the priority of prayer for their own spiritual warfare, but they also take seriously the absolute necessity of praying for one another. We stand against the devil together, and we do our best to abide in spiritual unity when we pray for one another.

Of course, the enemy seeks to divide us in order to defeat us. Standing firm, suiting up with spiritual armor, and praying for one another disables the pawns of the enemy and enables the followers of Christ.