



May 24 – Sent Out

Weekly Reading – Acts 9-13

Today's Passages – Acts 13:1-3, 16-52

Main Point

The church is sent out by the Holy Spirit to spread the good news of Jesus Christ.

Background

Acts 13 marks a major turning point in the book of Acts as the focus begins shifting from the church centered in Jerusalem to the spread of the gospel among the Gentiles. The church at Antioch had become a thriving and diverse congregation made up of both Jewish and Gentile believers. Unlike many cities in the ancient world that were deeply divided by ethnicity and social status, the church in Antioch reflected the unifying power of the gospel. It also became a strategic center for missions and sending.

In Acts 13:1–3, the Holy Spirit sets apart Barnabas and Saul for missionary work, demonstrating that the mission of the church originates with God Himself. The laying on of hands symbolized the church's support, affirmation, and partnership in the mission. Beginning in verse 16, Paul preaches in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch, tracing God's redemptive work through Israel's history and proclaiming Jesus as the promised Savior. His message reveals both the hope of the gospel and the differing responses people have to it. Some believe with joy, while others reject it in jealousy and opposition. This passage highlights that the gospel advances through faithful proclamation empowered by the Holy Spirit, even in the face of resistance.

Christ Connection

This passage points to Jesus as the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan throughout history. Paul's sermon shows that the promises made to Israel ultimately find their

fulfillment in Christ, the risen Savior who brings forgiveness and salvation to all who believe. While humanity could never achieve righteousness through the law, Jesus accomplished what sinners could not through His death and resurrection. Through Christ, the gospel is now proclaimed not only to Israel but to all nations, and the church is sent out by the Holy Spirit to continue making Him known to the world.

Life Group – The Flow

- 15 minutes – Conversation and relationship-building
 - 15 minutes – Year of Prayer guided prayer time
 - 5 minutes – Introduction (icebreaker, activity, or illustration)
 - 35 minutes – Study and apply the Bible
 - 5 minutes – Optional activity
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Year of Prayer (15 min)

Always pause and ask the Holy Spirit to guide your time of prayer.

Father God, as we gather we acknowledge the significance of coming together in unity with our brothers and sisters' in Christ to focus on praising you and sharing our requests. We want to begin by acknowledging that you are the Great I Am, that you are Holy, Holy, Holy. You are El Shaddai—Almighty God, Jehovah Tsaba—the Lord of Host. We bless Your name O Lord.

You may share your words of praise now. (pause)

We humbly ask for a growing burden for the lost around the world. May we be faithful to pray for the missionaries who boldly share the gospel. We ask for boldness in sharing with family and friends—even the strangers we meet. May we begin to pray for the lost without ceasing—especially those who are part of our world.

Would you share aloud the names of those who weigh heavy on your hearts. Share their names now.

Father, we have so much for which to give thanks Isaiah 12:4-5 tell us to “give thanks to the LORD, call on His name. Make known His deeds among the peoples; make them remember that His name is exalted.” 1 Chronicles 16:34 “Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good for His steadfast love endures forever!

Lift up your words of thanksgiving now. (pause)

As we lift up our petitions and intercessions Father God, we pray for those who've been baptized recently. May they continue to grow in their faith. Make us aware of those around us who need to be encouraged and or challenged in their faith. Guide us in meeting those needs. We pray for our pastors and ministers—give them rest and a renewed commitment to the call on their lives.

Share your petitions and intercessions at this time. (pause)

- **Have group members start with those we are asking God to Save:**
 - **Friends**
 - **Family**
 - **Co-workers**
 - **Others**

Then have group members share Prayer Requests

Fill our minds with ways to encourage others to love and good works. Keep us focused on the gift of the Spirit causing our lives to be marked with love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control throughout each of our days. We pray in agreement and in faith in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Amen

Introduction (5 min)

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Lottie Moon spent almost 40 years serving in China as a missionary.

She lived through poverty, isolation, political unrest, and famine because she believed people needed to hear about Jesus.

During one famine, she reportedly gave away so much of her own food to help others that her health became dangerously weak.

Toward the end of her life, fellow missionaries had to force her onto a ship back home because she was starving. She died on that journey in 1912.

Most people would hear a story like that and think, “That’s extreme.”

But for Lottie Moon, the spread of the gospel was worth sacrificing comfort, security, and even her own life.

Acts 13 shows us where that kind of missionary urgency begins: the church being sent out by the Holy Spirit to take the gospel to the world.

Ask:

- What fears or comforts most often keep us from living with that same kind of gospel urgency today?

Transition to Passage 1:

“The gospel was never meant to stay in one place. In Acts 13, we see the church begin taking intentional steps to send people out with the message of Jesus.”

Study and Discuss (40 min)

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says about a particular topic.

Passage 1 – Acts 13:1-3

READ THE PASSAGE – Have a volunteer read Acts 13:1-3.

Barnabas and Saul Sent Off

[1] Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

[2] While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”

[3] Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. (ESV)

Commentary

Leader Prep: Use the following commentary to prepare ahead of time. As you lead, feel free to summarize key insights rather than reading it word-for-word.

13:1. The church at Antioch was marked by spiritual leadership and diversity, including men from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. This reflects the unifying power of the gospel and the maturity of the church. Antioch had become an important center for ministry and would soon become a launching point for missions.

13:2. As the leaders worshiped and fasted, the Holy Spirit directed them to set apart Barnabas and Saul for a specific work. This demonstrates that the mission of the church originates with God Himself, not merely human planning or ambition. The church’s posture of worship and dependence positioned them to hear and respond to God’s leading.

13:3. The church responded through fasting, prayer, and the laying on of hands, symbolizing affirmation and partnership in the mission. Barnabas and Saul were not

acting independently but were sent out with the support of the church community. This verse highlights the importance of both the Spirit's calling and the church's participation in gospel mission.

Guide Discussion

Leader Note: You do not need to cover every question. Use the questions that best help your group engage with the passage.

1. **Good for Students.** What was happening in the church at Antioch when the Holy Spirit called Barnabas and Saul to be sent out?
2. **Discuss.** What role does the Holy Spirit play in helping believers and churches carry out God's mission?
3. **Discuss.** What evidence of spiritual maturity and health do you see in the church at Antioch?
4. **Deeper Dive.** For what specific purpose or mission do you believe God may be calling or shaping you right now, and what makes it difficult to fully step into that?

Transition to Passage 2:

"After being sent out by the church and empowered by the Holy Spirit, Paul and Barnabas begin doing exactly what they were called to do—proclaiming the good news of Jesus."

Passage 2 – Acts 13:16–43

READ THE PASSAGE – Have a volunteer read Acts 13:16–43

[16] So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said:

"Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen.

[17] The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it.

[18] And for about forty years he put up with them in the wilderness.

[19] And after destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance.

[20] All this took about 450 years. And after that he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet.

[21] Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years.

[22] And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.'

[23] Of this man's offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised.

[24] Before his coming, John had proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

[25] And as John was finishing his course, he said, 'What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but behold,

after me one is coming, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.’

[26] “Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation.

[27] For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize him nor understand the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him.

[28] And though they found in him no guilt worthy of death, they asked Pilate to have him executed.

[29] And when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb.

[30] But God raised him from the dead, [31] and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people.

[32] And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, [33] this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm,

“‘You are my Son,
today I have begotten you.’

[34] And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way,

“‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.’

[35] Therefore he says also in another psalm,

“‘You will not let your Holy One see corruption.’

[36] For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption,

[37] but he whom God raised up did not see corruption.

[38] Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, [39] and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses. [40] Beware, therefore, lest what is said in the Prophets should come about:

[41] “‘Look, you scoffers,
be astounded and perish;
for I am doing a work in your days,
a work that you will not believe, even if one tells it to you.’”

[42] As they went out, the people begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath.

[43] And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, urged them to continue in the grace of God. (ESV)

Commentary

Leader Prep: Use the following commentary to prepare ahead of time. As you lead, feel free to summarize key insights rather than reading it word-for-word.

13:16-17. Paul begins by addressing both Jews and God-fearing Gentiles in the synagogue, grounding his message in Israel's history. He emphasizes God's initiative in choosing and delivering His people, showing that redemption begins with God's grace and faithfulness.

13:18-19. Paul recounts God's patience and provision during Israel's wilderness years and conquest of Canaan. These verses highlight God's continued faithfulness despite the failures of His people. Throughout Israel's history, God consistently acted to preserve and guide His covenant people.

13:20-22. Paul traces Israel's history through the judges, Saul, and David, focusing especially on David as a king after God's own heart. This prepares the audience for the connection between David's line and the coming Messiah. God's promises to David ultimately point forward to Jesus.

13:23. Paul clearly identifies Jesus as the promised Savior descended from David. This declaration connects the gospel directly to God's covenant promises and reveals Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament hope.

13:24-25. John the Baptist is presented as the forerunner who prepared the way for Jesus through a message of repentance. John understood his role was not to draw attention to himself but to point people toward Christ.

13:26-31. Paul proclaims the death and resurrection of Jesus, emphasizing that although Jesus was rejected and crucified, God raised Him from the dead. The resurrection becomes the central proof that Jesus truly is the promised Savior and Lord.

13:32-37. Paul explains that the resurrection fulfills God's promises and distinguishes Jesus from David, whose body remained in the grave. Jesus alone conquered death permanently, proving His divine identity and authority.

13:38-39. Paul announces the heart of the gospel: forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ. He explains that justification could never be fully achieved through the law of Moses but is available through faith in Christ. This was radical and freeing news for both Jews and Gentiles.

13:40-41. Paul warns the listeners not to reject the message God has provided. The warning reminds the audience that hearing the gospel demands a response and that rejecting God's salvation has serious consequences.

13:41-43. Many people respond with interest and eagerness to hear more, showing the gospel's power to draw people toward truth. Paul and Barnabas encourage these new listeners to continue in God's grace, emphasizing perseverance in faith.

Teaching Toolbox Tip

Help People See the Big Story

Paul doesn't begin his sermon with himself—he begins with what God has been doing throughout history. Before talking about Jesus, he walks through God's faithfulness to Israel and shows how Jesus fulfills God's promises.

When teaching passages like this, help your group see that the Bible is one unified story pointing to Christ, not just a collection of disconnected events and lessons.

People often understand individual Bible stories but struggle to connect them together. Taking a moment to show how a passage fits into God's larger redemptive plan can deepen both understanding and confidence in Scripture.

Guide Discussion

Leader Note: You do not need to cover every question. Use the questions that best help your group engage with the passage.

1. **Good for Students.** What are some of the major things Paul says God has done throughout Israel's history in verses 17–23?
2. **Discuss.** What are the key truths Paul emphasizes about Jesus in his sermon?
3. **Discuss.** According to verses 38–39, why is forgiveness through Jesus such good news?
4. **Deeper Dive.** What can we learn from Paul's sermon about how we should share the gospel with others today?

Transition to Passage 3:

"The gospel always demands a response. As more people hear Paul's message, we begin to see very different reactions to the truth about Jesus."

Passage 3 – Acts 13:44–52

READ THE PASSAGE – Have a volunteer read Acts 13:44–52

[44] The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.

[45] But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him.

[46] And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.

[47] For so the Lord has commanded us, saying,

“I have made you a light for the Gentiles,
that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.”

[48] And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.

[49] And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region.

[50] But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district.

[51] But they shook off the dust from their feet against them and went to Iconium.

[52] And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. (ESV)

Commentary

Leader Prep: Use the following commentary to prepare ahead of time. As you lead, feel free to summarize key insights rather than reading it word-for-word.

13:44-45. Large crowds gathered to hear the word of the Lord, demonstrating widespread interest in the gospel. However, some Jewish leaders became jealous and opposed Paul’s message. Their response reveals how pride and self-interest can harden people against the truth.

13:46-47. Paul and Barnabas boldly explain that since many rejected the message, they would now focus on taking the gospel to the Gentiles. This reflects God’s broader redemptive plan for all nations and fulfills Old Testament prophecy regarding the spread of salvation.

13:48. Many Gentiles respond with joy and belief, showing that salvation is available to all who trust in Christ. The gospel was not limited to one ethnic group but was intended for the nations.

13:49. The word of the Lord continues spreading throughout the region, demonstrating that opposition cannot stop God’s mission. Faithful proclamation leads to expanding gospel influence.

13:50. Opposition intensifies as influential leaders stir up persecution against Paul and Barnabas. This reminds believers that gospel mission often involves resistance and hardship.

13:51. Paul proclaims the death and resurrection of Jesus, emphasizing that although Jesus was rejected and crucified, God raised Him from the dead. The resurrection becomes the central proof that Jesus truly is the promised Savior and Lord.

13:52. Despite persecution, the disciples are filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. Their joy was rooted not in circumstances but in God’s presence and the advance of the gospel.

Guide Discussion

Leader Note: You do not need to cover every question. Use the questions that best help your group engage with the passage.

5. **Good for Students.** How did different groups of people respond to Paul's message?
 6. **Discuss.** Why do you think some people responded with joy while others responded with jealousy and opposition?
 7. **Discuss.** How did Paul and Barnabas continue moving forward even when they faced rejection?
 8. **Deeper Dive.** How does Paul's example challenge the way you think about your personal responsibility to share the gospel with others?
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Optional Activity (5 min)

Choose one of the following activities if time allows.

Option 1: Share Your Story

Transition from Passage 4: "The gospel spread in Acts because ordinary believers were willing to speak boldly about Jesus. One of the simplest ways we can do that today is by learning to clearly share our own story."

Time: 5-7 minutes

Instructions

Say: Paul boldly shared the story of what God had done through Jesus. While not everyone is called to preach a sermon like Paul, every believer has a story of how Christ has changed their life.

Invite group members to pair up and practice sharing a short 15–20 second testimony using this simple format:

- Before I knew Christ, my life was like...
- I came to know Christ when...
- Since I came to know Christ, my life has been...

Encourage participants to keep their testimony simple, clear, and centered on what Jesus has done.

Followup Questions:

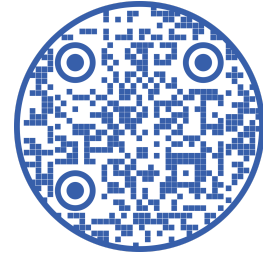
- What part of sharing your story felt easiest?
- What part felt most difficult or uncomfortable?
- How could God use your story to point someone else to Christ?

Option 2: Song Reflection - “Facing a Task Unfinished” by the Gettys (scan the QR code for [click here](#) for link!)

Transition from Passage 3: “Before we close, let’s reflect on the privilege and responsibility we have to carry the gospel to the people God has placed around us—and to the world.”

Time: 5–6 minutes

Supplies: Index Cards



Instructions

Play the song as a group (or read a portion of the lyrics). Have members write down what stands out to them as the song plays.

Then ask 1-2 of the questions below:

- What line from the song stood out to you most?
- How does this song reflect the urgency we see in Acts 13?
- How does this song challenge the way we think about comfort, sacrifice, and the mission of the church?

Final Takeaway and Prayer

After discussion concludes, read the takeaway statement:

The gospel advances when believers are willing to step out in faith and boldly speak about what Jesus has done.

Either pray something like the guide below, or invite someone in the group to close in prayer.

Father, thank You for the good news of Jesus Christ and for the people You used to faithfully share the gospel with us. Fill us with the courage and compassion to boldly live as people sent out by the Holy Spirit, ready to share what Jesus has done in our lives. Use our church to faithfully point others to Christ and to make Your name known wherever You lead us. Amen.