

TAKEAWAY:

God gathers His church so that He can send His church.

INTRODUCTION QUESTIONS:

What has been your experience of Church? How has the Church equipped you to live sent?

UNDERSTANDING:

Have a group member read Acts 13:1-4; Matthew 28:18-20

- How did this sermon help you better understand this passage of scripture? Is there anything that was mentioned during the sermon that stuck out to you?
- The church in Antioch was praying and fasting when God gave them their assignment. What practices (spiritual disciplines) in your own life position you to hear what God is calling you toward?
- The heart posture in the church in Antioch was open and ready for God to move. When He moved, they responded. How have you seen God move in our church and how have you seen the church respond? How did you respond?
- Who in your life is not yet part of the church? How does thinking about that specific person change the way you think about investing in spaces where they might hear the gospel?

APPLICATION:

- Jesus left us with one command, "Go and make disciples...", upon His return if He were to ask, "How did it go?", what would your answer be?
- Who is your ONE person you will reach out to this week that doesn't know Jesus?

GO DEEPER:

The Go Deeper section has two potential functions. It can supplement your small group discussion by providing extra discussion material.

You can also use these sections as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting and to deepen your study of our text from this week. Here are two "Going Deeper" discussion prompts that build upon the above provided questions without repeating them:

***Missio Dei* ("The mission of God"):** The classical doctrine of missions recognizes that God the Father sends the Son, the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit, and the Triune God sends the church into the world. In Acts 13, when the church in Antioch gathered to worship and fast, they were not inventing a novel

missionary strategy; they were participating in the ongoing, eternal mission of the Trinity that is well encapsulated by John 3:16: "God so loved the world that he gave"

- In what specific areas of daily life (e.g., family, community, vocation) is the Holy Spirit currently inviting your participation in God's ongoing mission? John 3:16 highlights that God's mission is driven by love and characterized by radical giving. In your own participation in the *missio Dei*, what might you be called to "give" or sacrifice (e.g., comfort, time, cultural preferences) to faithfully engage those around you?
- Because God's mission is directed toward the "world" (John 3:16), it is inherently boundary-breaking. How does participating in this eternal mission challenge our natural tendency to stay within comfortable, familiar social or cultural bubbles?
- When evaluating the success of a church, church metrics often focus on facilities, attendance, and giving—each important in their own right. What might additionally adopting a *missio Dei* framework to measure the health of a church look like?
- If mission is defined primarily as participating in God's mission rather than a program of the church, how does this shift the pressure or expectations placed on what we do, why we do it, and when we do it? What are some practical ways we can discern and align with the Holy Spirit's active, ongoing work in our neighborhoods rather than trying to manufacture ministry opportunities from scratch?
- In Acts 13, the sending of Paul and Barnabas flowed directly out of corporate worship and fasting. How does prioritizing worship and prayer change the way we approach outreach, compared to starting primarily with human strategy and planning?

The Holy Spirit as the Sovereign Director of Mission: A critical exegetical observation in Acts 13:2–4 is the absolute agency of the Holy Spirit. The text explicitly states that the Holy Spirit spoke, the Holy Spirit called Barnabas and Saul, and they were "sent on their way by the Holy Spirit". While the church fasted, prayed, and ultimately laid hands on them to release them, the actual commissioning authority belonged exclusively to the Spirit. Eckhard Schnabel, in his monumental two-volume work *Early Christian Mission*, points out that this passage clarifies that the church is not the author of mission; the church is merely the vehicle.

- Lesslie Newbigin suggests that treating mission like a "military campaign" or "commercial enterprise" is inappropriate because it relies on human strategy rather than the Holy Spirit. Where is the line between wise planning and relying on the Spirit's direction?
- The Holy Spirit asked the Antioch church to give up their two best teachers (Paul and Barnabas) for the sake of the global mission. How should a church or a Life Group respond when God calls its most vital members to move away for ministry?
- Karl Barth argued that the church has no life or legitimacy of its own apart from what the Holy Spirit provides. If this is true, how should it affect the way a believer prays for their local church's outreach efforts?
- If the Holy Spirit is the ultimate "director of mission," how can believers better identify and join the work He is already doing in their workplaces and neighborhoods, rather than trying to start their own initiatives?

QUOTES:

- **J. D. Greear:** "The greatest metric of a church's success is not its seating capacity, but its sending capacity. Our goal is not just to gather a crowd, but to equip and send out disciples who will make disciples in their neighborhoods, workplaces, and the nations."

- **Dallas Willard:** "The greatest issue facing the world today, with all its heartbreaking needs, is whether those who, by profession or culture, are identified as 'Christians' will become disciples—students, apprentices, practitioners—of Jesus Christ, steadily learning from him how to live the life of the Kingdom of Heaven into every corner of human existence."
- **John Stott:** "We must not divorce evangelism from discipleship. The Great Commission is not just to preach the gospel, but to make disciples... learning to submit to the lordship of Jesus in every area of life."
- **A.B. Bruce:** "The work of the kingdom of God is too great for any one man. The wisest thing a leader can do is to invest his life in a few people who will multiply themselves in the lives of others."
- **F. F. Bruce:** "The church at Antioch was a cosmopolitan fellowship, as is indicated by the names of its prophets and teachers. It was uniquely fitted to be the springboard for the Gentile mission." Likewise, **N.T. Wright** states, "The church in Antioch was a microcosm of the new world that God was making. A multi-ethnic, socially diverse community... It is exactly when the church is being this kind of community that the Spirit speaks to send out its best leaders."

GROUP ACTIVITY:

- As a group, identify one person or one community outside your church that you could intentionally move toward together over the next month. It does not have to be a large effort; it simply needs to be outward-facing. Discuss what that might look like and make a specific plan before you leave your meeting.

GROUP PRAYER: Pray for God to lead you to someone to either share the gospel with or to disciple and help them in their walk with Jesus.