



SENT: FROM WORSHIP TO THE WORLD

A love for Christ overflows. It cannot help itself. The heart that is filled with worship becomes a heart with a burden for the lost, and a church that magnifies Jesus becomes a church that sends. That is the story of Acts 13. The first missionary journey in church history that begins its outreach a worship service. While the church at Antioch was worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit spoke, and ordinary believers were set apart and sent to the world. Over these two weeks, our life groups will walk through the opening verses of Acts 13 and ask two simple questions. First, what kind of church sends? Second, what kind of people go? Our prayer is that by the end of this short series, every group member will see that sending is not a program for the few but the natural overflow of worship for all of us.

WEEK 1

What Kind of Church Sends?

Antioch was the church where believers were first called Christians, and in three short verses Luke shows us why it became the launching pad for world missions. Its leadership was remarkably diverse: a generous Cypriot named Barnabas, an African called Niger, a North African from Cyrene, an aristocrat raised alongside Herod, and a former Pharisee named Saul. But what set this church apart was not its diversity. It was its devotion. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit spoke, and the church responded by releasing its two best leaders to the mission. Sending was not an interruption of their worship. It was the overflow of it. This week we ask what kind of church sends, and what it would look like for us to become that kind of church!

ACTS 13:1-3

¹Now 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. ²While 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." ³Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

WEEK 1

LIFEGROUP QUESTIONS

OPENING QUESTIONS

1. What is one of the most memorable send-offs you have ever been part of? Maybe a going-away party, a graduation, or a farewell at an airport. What made it memorable?
2. When you hear the word missionary, what images, people, or emotions come to mind?

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3. Read verse 1 again slowly. What details does Luke give us about each of the five men he names? What do you notice about this group as a whole?
4. What was the church doing when the Holy Spirit spoke (v2)? What connection do you see between their worship and their sending?
5. Fasting is mentioned twice in these three verses. Why do you suppose fasting surrounded this decision, and what might it communicate about how seriously they were seeking the Lord?
6. Barnabas and Saul were arguably Antioch's two most gifted teachers, yet the Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul." Why do you think God asked for their best rather than their spare? What might that suggest about how God views the mission?

7. Compare this scene with Isaiah 6:1-8. What similarities do you notice between Isaiah's sending and the sending of Barnabas and Saul? What does worship have to do with willingness in both passages?
8. Our year-long theme is MAGNIFIED, drawn from John 3:30: "He must increase, but I must decrease." In what ways did the church at Antioch decrease so that Christ might increase? Where might God be inviting our church, or you personally, to do the same?
9. What conditions in the Antioch church made it ready to hear and obey the Spirit's call? Which of those conditions do you see in our church family today, and which do we need to grow?
10. What is one specific way you can move from worshiper to sender this week? It might be a missionary you commit to pray for by name, a gift you give, or a person you encourage toward going. Choose one step and share it with the group so we can ask each other about it next week.

WEEK 2

What Kind of People Go?

Sent out by the Holy Spirit, Barnabas and Saul sail for Cyprus and begin proclaiming the word of God. Almost immediately they discover that the mission field is contested ground. In Paphos an intelligent Roman proconsul wants to hear the word, while a sorcerer named Elymas works to turn him away from the faith. Saul, called Paul for the first time and filled with the Holy Spirit, confronts the opposition head-on, and God opens one man's eyes by closing another's. The people who go are not spiritual superheroes. They are ordinary believers who are Spirit-sent, word-centered, and unafraid of opposition because the power belongs to God. This week we ask what kind of people go, and we discover that the answer looks a lot more like us than we might think.

ACTS 13:4-12

⁴ So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. ⁵ When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them. ⁶ When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they came upon a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus. ⁷ He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. ⁸ But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. ⁹ But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him ¹⁰ and said, "You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord?" ¹¹ And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time." Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand. ¹² Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

WEEK 2

LIFEGROUP QUESTIONS

OPENING QUESTIONS

1. If you could be dropped into any country in the world for one month, all expenses paid, where would you go and why?
2. Who is someone who shared Christ with you or helped you along toward faith? What do you remember most about that person?

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3. Trace the journey in verses 4-6. Who goes, where do they travel, and what do they do first when they arrive in each place?
4. Notice the phrase "the word of God" in verses 5 and 7, and "the teaching of the Lord" in verse 12. What does this repetition suggest about the center of their mission? What might a mission look like that drifted from that center?
5. How would you describe Sergius Paulus from the details Luke gives us? How would you describe Elymas? What contrasts do you observe between these two men?
6. Why do you think Elymas worked so hard to turn the proconsul away from the faith (v8)? What did he stand to lose if Sergius Paulus believed?

7. Verse 9 is the first time Luke calls Saul by the name Paul, and he notes that Paul was “filled with the Holy Spirit” as he confronted Elymas. Where does courage for witness come from in this passage? What might that mean for believers who feel too timid to speak?
8. Imagine you are John, the young assistant traveling with them (v5). What might you be feeling as you watch Paul confront Elymas and then see the proconsul believe?
9. Barnabas and Paul faced open opposition the moment they began sharing Christ. In what ways is the opposition we face when we share Christ today similar to theirs? How is it different?
10. Who is one person in your world who, like Sergius Paulus, seems to be seeking and might listen if someone spoke? Write down their name, commit to pray for them each day this week, and take one concrete step toward a spiritual conversation. How can this group help you follow through?