

# Bible Stories for Adults

## Paul's First Missionary Journey

### Acts 11-14

## Opening

- Gathering: Why would someone share the gospel in the face of rejection and threats to life?
- Today's Focus: God spent years preparing Saul & Barnabas to take His gospel to the world, then sent them.
- Key Verses: *Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.* Acts 13:2  
*Since you...do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.*  
Acts 13:46

Opening Prayer

## Lesson

Persecutor to Promoter (*Acts 7-9*)

- When is the first we hear of Saul? = *Young man* - thought to be in his 20s  
Acts 7:54-58 = He stood and watched the Jews stone Stephen
- Was Saul just a bystander to Stephen's stoning or was he involved in any way?  
Acts 7:59-8:1a = To approve of Stephen's death, he had at least seen the Sanhedrin trial
- How did Saul react to what he had seen from these Jesus followers, and why?  
Acts 26:4-5, 9-11 = Focused on everything he could do to oppose this cult of Jesus
- How was Saul's focus significantly changed?  
Acts 26:12-18 = He was personally called by Jesus to take the gospel to the world
- How did Saul respond to this change in plans?  
Acts 9:19b-22 = He immediately began preaching the gospel to Jews in Damascus
- What happened after preaching 3 years in Damascus and the surrounding area? = Galatians 1:17-18  
Acts 9:23-25 = Jews tried to kill this troublemaker, he escaped at night
- Where did he go and how was he received? = Galatians 1:18 - Stayed only 15 days  
Acts 9:26-28 = To Jerusalem - Disciples were afraid, but Barnabas spoke up for him
- Why did he leave after only 15 days? = Galatians 2:1 - Didn't return for 11 or 14 years  
Acts 9:29-30 = Jews tried to kill him - Went home to Tarsus

God's Church Growth (*Acts 1:8*)

- What was God's plan for this new church?  
Acts 1:8 = Believers spread gospel from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria to the ends of earth
- How well did the early believers respond to this calling?  
Acts 5:42 = They witnessed, but stayed mainly in Jerusalem
- What did God allow that spread the gospel despite the believers' stationary approach? = Church learned  
Acts 8:1, 4-5, 14, 25 = Persecution scattered Christians to Judea and Samaria, word spread

A New Church Center for the Greeks (*Acts 11:19-21*)

- How effective were the believers who had been scattered by the persecution? = Point out on map  
Acts 11:19 = They spread the gospel very far, but only to Jews
- Did anyone understand that "God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18)?  
Acts 11:20-21 = Yes, some from Cyprus and Cyrene brought non-Jews to Jesus

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### Help (Acts 11:22-30)

Antioch - 3rd largest city in Roman empire (after Rome and Alexandria), over 500,000 population  
Called "Antioch-on-the-Orontes" since on Orontes River, also called Syrian Antioch  
Seleucus Nicator established 16 Antiochs around 300 BC in memory of his father  
300 miles north of Jerusalem, 20 miles east of Mediterranean Sea, 80 miles from Tarsus

How did the mother church in Jerusalem react when word arrived of Gentile believers?

Acts 11:22-24 = They sent one of their best to help and to pastor the new church

What did Barnabas do when he saw that he needed help in this large city? = First called Christians

Acts 11:25-26 = He found Saul in Tarsus and brought him to Antioch

Why does this verse say their ministry only lasted a year?

Acts 11:27-30 = Barnabas and Saul went to Jerusalem with gifts for a famine

### John - Mark (Acts 12:25)

Who else returned with Barnabas and Saul from Jerusalem to Antioch?

Acts 12:25 = *John* (Hebrew name), *also called Mark* (Roman name)

How do we see that John-Mark was well acquainted with Peter and the Jerusalem church?

Acts 12:5, 7, 12 (1-19) = Believers gathered to pray in Mark's mother's house for jailed Peter

Early sources state that Mark recorded the story of Jesus as told by Peter (Gospel of Mark)

What story did Mark record at Jesus' arrest that many believe refers to him?

Mark 14:50-52 = Young man who followed Jesus ran away naked

Why might Barnabas and Saul have taken John-Mark with them to Antioch?

Colossians 4:10 = He was the cousin of Barnabas

### Antioch Leadership (Acts 13:1-3)

How was the church in Antioch able to operate while Barnabas and Saul were in Jerusalem?

Acts 13:1 = God raised prophets and teachers to lead the church

Was God satisfied with the ministry these men were doing in Antioch?

Acts 13:2 = He had greater plans and had them commission Barnabas and Saul for His work

How did this church respond to God's call for this birth of "foreign missions"?

Acts 13:3 = Fasted and prayed for God's guidance, sent them off

### To Cyprus (Acts 13:4-12)

Where did Barnabas and Saul head first?

Acts 13:4 = To the island of Cyprus

Why might they begin there? = Same reason Saul spent years witnessing in Tarsus

Acts 4:36 = Barnabas was from Cyprus

Where did these Christian Jews focus their missionary efforts on Cyprus?

Acts 13:5 = In the Jewish synagogues - Targeted Jews

What non-Jew did God lead them to as they reached the other end of the island?

Acts 13:6-7 = Sergius Paulus, the proconsul (reported to the senate instead of Caesar)

What did Bar-Jesus ("son of Jesus") do when this teaching threatened his relationship with S. Paulus?

Acts 13:8 = He opposed Barnabas and Saul and tried to stop their impact on Sergius Paulus

How did Saul respond, playing on his surname, his magical powers and his claim to be a religious light?

Acts 13:9-11 = Called him "son of the devil" and made him blind for a period

Did this have any effect on Sergius Paulus?

Acts 13:12 = Yes, he believed and became a Christian

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### A Different Missionary Group (Acts 13:13)

What transition did Luke make in the story we just read that highlighted a new focus to Gentiles?

Acts 13:9a = Saul now called Paul (his Roman name)

How did Luke also point out that the leadership of this effort changed from Barnabas to Paul?

Acts 13:13a = Instead of "Barnabas and Saul", he said "Paul and his companions"

Was anyone bothered by this change in leadership? = Luke didn't explain reason

Acts 13:13b = John Mark left and went back home to Jerusalem, maybe homesick since young

Was Paul upset by John-Mark leaving? = Led to two missionary groups

Acts 15:36-41 = Yes, He refused to take John-Mark on 2<sup>nd</sup> journey, split with Barnabas

Were Paul and Mark ever reconciled?

2 Timothy 4:11 = Yes, Mark became helpful to Paul in his ministry

### Preaching in Another Antioch (Acts 13:14-41)

Where did Paul and Barnabas head for our next story of this journey?

Acts 13:14 = Antioch in Pisidia - crossroads, many ethnic groups

Antioch - 110 miles from Perga past Taurus Mountains, 4000 ft elevation

Why did Paul always begin his ministry in a new city by going to the synagogues?

Acts 13:15-16 = Would be invited to speak as visiting rabbi, opportunity to share gospel

Luke recorded two examples two examples of Paul's typical sermons - Acts 13 (Jews) and 17 (Greeks)

What components did Paul include in a typical sermon to Jews? = Don't read aloud unless time

Acts 13:17-22 = God's faithfulness to His chosen people - the Jews

Acts 13:23-25 = God fulfilled His promise to send the Savior, the Messiah

Acts 13:26-29 = The Messiah was not recognized and was rejected and killed

Acts 13:30-31 = God's power overcame man's evil and the Savior was returned to life

Acts 13:32-37 = It happened just as God had foretold it would happen

Acts 13:38-39 = God gives forgiveness and salvation to those who have faith in Jesus

Acts 13:40-41 = Warning against unbelief and rejection

### Responding to the Message (Acts 13:42-52)

How did the listeners respond to Paul's sermon?

Acts 13:42-43 = They wanted to hear more and asked them back

Did they still want to hear more the next week, or was their request just excitement of the moment?

Acts 13:44 = They were very excited by the message, had spread the word and brought others

How did the members of the synagogue feel about this heavy attendance of all sorts of people?

Acts 13:45 = They were upset that non-Jews were included and could also receive the gospel

How did Paul and Barnabas respond that became typical in other cities they visited?

Acts 13:46-47 = They turned their focus to the Gentiles since the Jews rejected the message

Did Paul change his ministry to focus primarily to the Gentiles (non-Jews)?

Romans 1:14-16 = No, he went first to the Jews, then to the Greeks - Gospel is for all

How did the Gentiles feel about what Paul said?

Acts 13:48-49 = They were thrilled and many became Christians and witnessed to others

Did the Jews in Antioch just ignore Paul and Barnabas from that time on? = Christians joyful anyway

Acts 13:50-52 = No, they banded together and kicked them out of town

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Iconium (*Acts 14:1-7*) = Important crossroads and agricultural center in Galatia, Now Konya in Turkey

How were Paul and Barnabas received in Iconium?

*Acts 14:1-3* = Many believed, some Jews opposed them, able to stay a *considerable time*

Was the opposition in Iconium as strong as it had been in Antioch?

*Acts 14:4-5* = Even stronger, they made plans to have them arrested and executed

What happened?

*Acts 14:6-7* = They escaped and went to Lystra and Derbe and preached there

Gods in Lystra (*Acts 14:8-20*)

What kind of faith did Paul and Barnabas find in Lystra?

*Acts 14:8-10* = Responsive faith, Was able to heal a man crippled from birth

Why does verse 9 say "he had faith to be healed"?

*Matthew 9:28-29; 13:58* = Miracles were to build faith, withheld when hearts were hard

How did the people of Lystra respond to this miracle? = Barnabas more imposing, Paul more vocal

*Acts 14:11-13* = They thought Paul and Barnabas were Zeus and Hermes

Lystra legend was that Zeus and Hermes had visited and were recognized only by an old couple

Zeus was the patron god of Lystra and his temple was there

How did Paul and Barnabas react to being called gods?

*Acts 14:14-18* = They were upset by it and tried unsuccessfully to turn the people to God

How were the people eventually convinced that Paul and Barnabas were not gods?

*Acts 14:19-20* = Jews from Antioch and Iconium won the crowd over and stoned Paul

Back to Syrian Antioch (*Acts 14:21-28*)

Were Paul and Barnabas effective in Derbe?

*Acts 14:21a* = Yes, many became Christians

Where did Paul and Barnabas go after leaving Derbe?

*Acts 14:21b-25* = Retraced their path, encouraging the new Christians and calling leaders

Did they go back through Cyprus?

*Acts 14:26* = No, they sailed straight back to Antioch

What did they do in Antioch?

*Acts 14:27-28* = Told how God had worked through them, stayed a long time

Note: First journey understood to have taken about 2 years, Stayed 2 years before second journey

Closing Prayer

**Response** - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. In what ways have I been made effective for God that, in hindsight, took year to prepare me?  
(*Acts 13:17-22; Jeremiah 29:10-14; Acts 7:9-10, 14; 1 Cor 2:9; Gal 1:15-2:1; Eph 1:4-10; 2:10*)
2. When have I been impatient for God's timing?  
(*Acts 7:22-24, 29-30, 34; Psalm 90:4; Isaiah 30:18; Hab 2:3; Heb 11; 1 Peter 5:6-10; 2 Peter 3:3-9*)
3. When has God's timing been faster than mine?  
(*Matthew 24:27, 36-51; 25:1-13; Luke 12:35-40; Prov 6:6-8; Ecc 5:4; Heb 5:11-14; 2 Peter 3:10-13*)
4. What work has God called me to complete?  
(*Acts 13:2; Esther 4:14b; 1 Corinthians 12; Galatians 1:15-16; Ephesians 3:1-9; 4:1, 11-13*)
5. How responsive have I been to God's call to do His work?  
(*Acts 13:2-4; Genesis 12:1, 4; Judges 6:11-27, 36-40; Isaiah 6:8; Luke 1:5-22, 26-38*)