

Jacob's Well

Lesson Title: The Life of Paul—Commission and Missionary Work



Key Concept: Paul was highly influential in the early church, and examples from his life still guide us individually and as a church body. Paul was called by God and commissioned by the body to fulfill the Lord's mission to reach the world.



Scriptures:

¹⁸Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you."

(Matthew 28:18–20 *New Living Translation*)

²One day as these men were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Appoint Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them." ³So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way. ⁴So Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the Holy Spirit. (Acts 13:2–4 *New Living Translation*)

Context Scriptures: Acts 13; Isaiah 49:6



Lesson Thoughts:

After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the disciples became empowered by the Spirit to go and establish communities of Christians from all nations. Yet until Acts 13, the followers of Jesus were still primarily Jewish. Then Paul's first missionary journey initiated his role as God's chosen instrument to take the message beyond the Jewish community.

Called by God, Paul and Barnabas spread the gospel further abroad than any before them: from Cyprus through modern-day Türkiye and into Greece. This involved both a call from God and recognition of the call by fellow disciples. With the laying on of hands, Paul and Barnabas were commissioned and sent out by their fellow disciples to do the work that God called them to do.

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The evidence of Paul and Barnabas's call followed the disciples as they went from town to town. They preached the gospel with boldness as they followed the leading of the Holy Spirit, and many turned to the Lord. Even when some did not receive the message, the disciples did not abandon the mission in the face of resistance. When they were invited by the governor of Paphos, a false prophet tried to interfere. But Paul, filled with the Spirit, confronted the false prophet and struck him blind. The governor became a believer when he saw what happened and was amazed at the teachings about Jesus. When they were later run out of town by mobs, they dusted off their feet and moved on, determined to spread the good news of salvation and the resurrection of Jesus.

Paul also established churches (e.g. Galatia, Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, Ephesus) and trained local leaders. He knew that people *in* a community were best reached by people *from* the community. We are still a part of the mission today. The Great Commission in Matthew 28:19 and Paul's reference to "be a light to the Gentiles, and bring salvation to the farthest corners of the earth" (Acts 13:47; Isaiah 49:6), is a message to all who become disciples of Jesus. Every Spirit-filled believer is called by God, commissioned by the body of believers, and led by the Holy Spirit to fulfill the mission of spreading the gospel.

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) What is the importance of Paul and Barnabas being commissioned by fellow disciples?
- 2) What can we learn from the examples of Paul and his fellow missionaries when facing resistance and opposition?
- 3) Has God ever filled you with boldness when sharing the gospel? What was the response of the person you were sharing with? What was your response?
- 4) All disciples are called to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 29:19). Where is your mission field right now?

Next Lesson: Disagreement in Discerning God's Will

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Notes and Reflections

- 1) Read Acts 13 and consider the hardships that Paul and Barnabas faced. Reflect on how they persevered and stayed committed to the mission despite the difficult circumstances.

- 2) Paul used his knowledge of the road and maritime networks built by the Roman Empire to efficiently spread the gospel. What modern day tools can we utilize to spread the gospel?

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Notes and Reflections, cont.