

Antioch do for the predominantly Jewish church in Jerusalem? (Q14) *They provided for their physical needs.*

Prophets from Jerusalem alerted the church in Antioch that a famine was coming. The Antioch church, despite being mainly Gentile, did not hesitate to reach out to the church in Jerusalem. They took a collection and sent it to Jerusalem by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

ASK: How would the gift from Antioch affect the church in Jerusalem? Remember that Jews disparagingly called Gentiles dogs. (Q15) *The gift from the Gentiles would have helped the Jews understand their responsibility to all men regardless of their ethnicity.*

V. The Persecution of the Church at Jerusalem (Acts 12:1–24)

Luke added a brief description of how Herod Agrippa, the grandson of Herod the Great, sought to please the Jews by persecuting believers (12:1–3). Luke again illustrated the truth that no one or thing can stop the church of Jesus Christ. He recorded a series of miraculous interventions (12:4–17) and the death of Herod, whom God Himself struck down (12:20–23).

Luke ended Acts 12 with another progress report.

RESOURCE: Display resource 2 to review the markers in the book of Acts that show nothing could stop Christ from building His church.

MAKING IT PERSONAL

Overlooked

RESOURCE: Display resource 9. **ASK:** Who are some of the lost we tend to overlook? (Q16) *Grocery store clerk, waitress, neighbor, people we don't like, relatives we are not close to, doctors and nurses. (Record answers on the resource.)*

ASK: What are some strategies we could use to help us see people as lost? (Q17) *Create a prayer list of people we come into contact with, ask God for open doors to share the gospel, develop a plan for guiding conversations to the gospel. (Record answers on the resource.)*

Next Step

Ask your learners to write down what they believe is the best next step for them to take to share their gospel message with the people they overlook. Encourage them to include any time, date, or way that seems practical. (Q18)

Review Resource

Use resource 1 to review the response for this lesson: Witness to all people.

Progress in the Book of Acts

Luke gave regular reports of continued church growth:

2:47	6:7	9:31	12:24	16:5	19:20
"and the Lord added to the church"	"and the word of God increased; and the number of disciples multiplied"	"the churches ... were multiplied"	"but the word of God grew and multiplied"	"so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily"	"so mightily grew the word of God"

Nothing can stop Christ from building His Church!

Seeing the Overlooked

The Overlooked	Strategies

The Word Spreads

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Paul's First Missionary Journey



Topic

Missions

Theme

The church is involved in the missionary work of its members.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will commit to faithful prayer for present and future missionaries.

Materials

• Resources 1, 10, and 11

Scripture Focus

Acts 12:25–14:28

Summary

Lesson 8 gives attention to Paul's first missionary journey. The lesson considers the divine commission of Saul and Barnabas, their initial trip and separation, Paul's emergence as God's chosen leader, and his ministry style. The lesson concludes with Paul's report to the Antioch church.

Outline

I. The Divine Commission of Paul and Barnabas (12:25–13:3)

A. The church at Antioch (13:1–3)

1. Thrived spiritually
2. Understood the Holy Spirit
3. Valued quality leadership

B. The call to ministry

II. The First Missionary Journey (13:4–14:28)

A. Ministry in Cyprus (13:4–12)

B. Ministry in Pamphylia and Pisidian Antioch (13:13–52)

1. Departure of John Mark (13:13)
2. Paul's sermon in the synagogue (13:14–41)

C. Ministry in Iconium (14:1–5)

D. Ministry in Lystra and Derbe (14:6–20)

E. The return to Antioch of Syria (14:21–28)

Memory Verse

"And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles" (Acts 14:27).

Live Report

Invite those who have served on the mission field in any capacity to share a brief description of missionary life. Ask them to contrast the concept of missionary life with its reality.

Called to Missions?

ASK: Has God called you to be a missionary? (Q1)

In a sense, God has called all believers to be missionaries. All believers have the responsibility to tell the lost world about Christ.

ASK: Have you ever made yourself available to God to go wherever He wants you to go? If so, how did you know what God's answer was? (Q2)

This lesson will look at Paul and his first missionary journey. Missions is the work of local churches. All believers should take be active in and support missions.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

I. The Divine Commission of Paul and Barnabas (12:25–13:3)**A. The church at Antioch (13:1–3)**

The church at Antioch was the first church in Acts to witness to Gentiles in its own city (11:19–21) and the first church to send its own missionaries into the world. Thus the church at Antioch was a *missions church*. We can learn a great deal from looking at its nature.

1. Thrived spiritually

Luke recorded that the church at Antioch *ministered to the Lord, fasted, and prayed* (13:2, 3). The use of *Lord* denotes both *master* and *deity*. The church at Antioch realized that Jesus is Lord and that He owns the church.

ASK: Why is a spiritually thriving church ripe for missions work? (Q3) *Spiritually mature believers desire to share their faith and see people saved and disciplined.*

2. Understood the Holy Spirit

Another indication of the church's spiritual health involved the people's understanding of the Holy Spirit. They realized that the Spirit directed and empowered their ministry. Notice that in reference to the sending of Saul and Barnabas, Luke stated, *They sent them away* (13:3), but in the next verse he explained that the Holy Spirit had sent them. The Antioch church relied on and had a close relationship with the Spirit.

ASK: If a church makes excuses for not being active in and supporting missions, what might that indicate about their understanding of the Holy

Spirit? (Q4) *They might not understand that the Holy Spirit should be directing their ministry. He will direct them to be involved in and supportive of missions.*

ASK: Who might they be relying on to empower their ministry? (Q5) *They are most likely relying on their own wisdom and strength to guide and empower their ministry.*

Luke listed Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, and Saul as *prophets and teachers* (13:1). The role of the New Testament prophet involved both foretelling future events and telling forth prior revelation. The New Testament depicts the role of the prophet as a gift/office related to the Spirit: Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28; Ephesians 4:11. As with the Old Testament prophet, those who told the future never had more authority than those who spoke what God had previously revealed (Deut. 13:1–5; 18:9–14).

Furthermore, the actual gift/office of prophecy ceased with the dying of the apostles and prophets and with the firm establishment of the church's foundation (Eph. 2:20). While the Holy Spirit leads differently today, He does lead, and He leads churches that are involved in the work of the ministry.

READ: Acts 13:2, 3. ASK: Why is devoting time to prayer, even to the point of not eating, an important step in following the Holy Spirit? (Q6) *It is through prayer that we surrender self and find the strength to live by the Spirit.*

3. Valued quality leadership

The church at Antioch placed a high value on quality leadership. While we know a great deal about Paul and Barnabas, we know little about the remaining three prophet-teachers mentioned: *Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch* (13:1). However, what we do know or can guess reveals some truths about the church at Antioch.

Many scholars believe that the name *Niger* is the Latin word for *dark-skinned*. The Latin name also suggests that Niger was Roman. Niger was a leader, so neither his social status nor his ethnic background caused the church to give him a lesser role. Apparently Manaen had been reared with Herod Antipas; thus Manaen must have had considerable social standing.

ASK: Is there such a thing as the ideal missionary? Explain. (Q7) *No, God needs all kinds of missionaries from various backgrounds and ethnicities to meet the equally diverse needs on mission fields.*

Luke portrayed the church at Antioch as a spiritually healthy, growing, diverse community. The believers there set aside their own ideologies to live in community together.

B. The call to ministry

Throughout Acts, God was the One Who took the initiative to prosper and preserve His church. Luke emphasized that not only the church but also the ministry belonged to the Lord. He wrote that the *Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them* (13:2). They received a divine call to

ministry, which the church recognized. The church did not make Paul and Barnabas missionaries; the church simply recognized God’s call of the men into service.

Paul later reinforced this truth of divine calling in Acts 20:28 when he addressed the Ephesian elders. The Holy Spirit was the One Who provided the call to ministry; the church community simply confirmed the call.

ASK: Is not being called to vocational ministry an excuse for not being active in and supporting missions? Explain. (Q8) *No, all believers are called to be active in sharing the gospel. No one is excused from Christ’s call.*

II. The First Missionary Journey (13:4–14:28)

Paul and Barnabas along with John Mark, Barnabas’ cousin, departed the church at Antioch in early spring AD 48. After visiting more than eight major cities and traveling well over twelve hundred miles, Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch in late summer AD 49. Luke recorded the details of this journey to illustrate God’s supernatural blessing upon the missionaries in spite of major opposition to the gospel.

MAP: Display resource 10 to track Paul’s first missionary journey.

A. Ministry in Cyprus (13:4–12)

The island of Cyprus lay approximately one hundred miles from the port at Seleucia. During the time of the events in Acts, Rome governed the island as a province. The Roman senate appointed a deputy, or proconsul, named Sergius Paulus to administrate Cyprus (13:7).

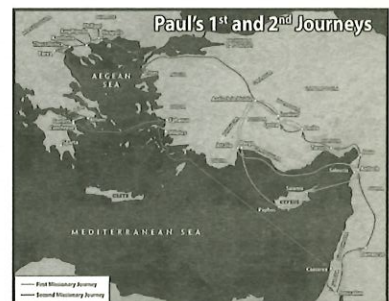
While at Paphos, a city in Cyprus, Paul encountered a Jewish false prophet named Bar-jesus, also called Elymas the sorcerer. This sorcerer had influence with Sergius Paulus (13:6–8). Since Luke did not mention demonic involvement, his use of the term *sorcerer* may suggest that Bar-jesus was a trickster, charlatan, and magician who claimed supernatural abilities. Such clever, knowledgeable individuals were usually revered by the superstitious Roman governors.

From the beginning of the encounter between Paul and Bar-jesus, Luke presented a conflict between the Holy Spirit and the forces of evil. In Aramaic the name *Bar-jesus* means *son or child of the Savior*. Perhaps because of that meaning, Paul accused Bar-jesus: *Thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?* (13:10). Paul exercised apostolic discipline and temporarily blinded Elymas (13:11). No doubt God intended this form of judgment to teach Elymas that he was blind to truth and that he lay in danger of even more severe judgment.

As a result of Paul’s actions, Sergius Paulus, the highest Roman official of the island, turned to Christ (13:12).

READ: Acts 13:9, 12. **ASK:** What is the important connection between verse 9 and 12? (Q9) *Serving in the power of the Spirit is essential to seeing results in ministry.*

Luke started referring to Saul as Paul (13:14). He never again called him Saul. Perhaps Luke used *Paul* because it was a Roman name or because he wanted to



illustrate that Paul had become a fully functioning apostle to the Gentiles. Some scholars suggest that Paul would naturally have used his Roman name anyway as he moved into Greco-Roman territory.

B. Ministry in Pamphylia and Pisidian Antioch (13:13–52)

1. Departure of John Mark (13:13)

From Cyprus Paul and his company traveled to Pamphylia, where John Mark departed to return to Jerusalem (13:13). Acts 13:5 states that they had John Mark to *their minister*. While the term for *minister* usually meant an official in the synagogue who led in worship (Luke 4:20), Luke most likely used the term here in a nontechnical sense. John Mark was a helper. But he left anyway. Commentators give several possible reasons for his departure: (1) He disagreed with Paul's approach for full inclusion of uncircumcised Gentiles in the church; (2) he felt afraid after the encounter with Elymas, so he went home; or (3) he was intimidated by the upcoming arduous journey to Pisidian Antioch. This journey would encompass traveling one hundred miles north into a Roman colony. The road took them from approximately sea level to an elevation of 3,600 feet. The way there would have been infested with bandits and other perils, including crossing the Taurus Mountains.

While none of these views can be fully substantiated, John Mark's departure became a serious issue of debate as Paul and Barnabas later planned a second missionary journey.

Note the different perspective on John Mark's leaving: in Acts 13:13 Luke stated that John Mark departed (*apochresis*), while in 15:38 Paul claimed that John Mark actually deserted (*aphistemi*) them. Paul later indicated that he and John Mark had reconciled their differences (Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11).

ASK: What might John's departure tell you about the need to pray for missionaries? (Q10) *All missionaries need prayer. None of them are exempt from disagreements, fears, or intimidations.*

2. Paul's sermon in the synagogue (13:14–41)

While in Pisidian Antioch, Paul visited a Jewish synagogue and exhorted the assembly. Although Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles, he always presented the gospel to the Jews first (Rom. 1:16; 11:11–24).

Paul's sermon illustrates how Paul addressed both Jews and God-fearers in the synagogues (Acts 13:16–41). The sermon has three sections.

The first section was about the preparation for Messiah (13:16–25). Paul reviewed Israel's history, illustrating God's favor and blessing from Israel's inception to John the Baptist. Paul rehearsed and emphasized God's sovereign intervention and plan through such terms and phrases as *chose* (13:17), *destroyed, he divided* (13:19), *gave unto them* (13:20, 21), and *he had removed and raised up* (13:21, 22). Paul reminded the Jews that God was the One Who had acted to develop Israel. He also illustrated how Christ indeed is the promised Davidic king (13:22–24; see 2 Samuel 7:12–17). In current discussion, some scholars argue that Christ is currently seated on the Davidic throne, exercising Davidic, kingly prerogatives. However, the prophecy of Christ's reign and employment of Davidic privileges refers to a future

earthly reign, not to Jesus' heavenly reign and ministry.

The second section was about the rejection, crucifixion, and resurrection of Messiah. In verses 26–37 Paul carefully narrated the gospel message. He noted how Jesus was innocent (13:28), how God Himself raised Jesus from the dead (13:30), and how Jesus had appeared to many witnesses (13:32). Paul appealed to three Messianic passages to support the gospel: Psalm 2:7 (Acts 13:33), Isaiah 55:3 (Acts 13:34), and Psalm 16:10 (Acts 13:35). The entire narration in verses 26–37 parallels the gospel presentation in 1 Corinthians 15:3–5.

The final section was a direct application of the message to the hearers (Acts 13:38–41). The application of the sermon involves personal belief in the gospel message, resulting in forgiveness of sin. Notice how Paul said, *And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses* (13:39). *Justification* is a technical term that refers to God's view of a person in a legal sense. This term conveys the idea that God has declared a person righteous. Because, through the cross, Christ met the Father's righteous demands, the Father imputes Christ's righteousness to the believer's legal standing (2 Cor. 5:14–21; Rom. 3:23–31; 4:5; Gal. 3:6–8). Therefore, God instantly considers righteous anyone who believes the gospel. In a legal or judicial sense, the Father sees the Son's righteousness in our place, since our faith in Christ identifies us with the Son and with His victory over sin. Throughout a Christian's life, that person can obtain the actual righteousness of Christ for daily living. However, God does not declare the believer righteous based on the believer's holiness. God views us as righteous through Christ's righteousness, and *justified* articulates how God views us in a legal, judicial sense.

ASK: How would you describe Paul's grasp of theology? (Q11) *Paul had a thorough grasp of theology. He supported it with Scripture and explained it carefully.*

ASK: How would you describe his understanding of the people he was trying to reach? (Q12) *Paul understood the message his audience needed to hear. And he didn't hesitate to make clear the decision they needed to make.*

The Jews did not appreciate Paul's sermon; they rejected the gospel. This rejection led Paul to turn to the Gentiles there in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:46). Again in his reporting Luke emphasized the sovereignty of God: *And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed* (13:48). Notice how God chose specific individuals who would believe. Even though God chose them, each individual had to believe personally.

The Bible affirms God's sovereign choice of who will believe and, at the same time, emphasizes the personal responsibility to believe. The ultimate resolution of this paradox takes place in the mind of God. Believers should allow this tension between human responsibility and divine sovereignty to exist and should not attempt to deny, de-emphasize, or overemphasize one truth above the other. The Biblical writers never sought to harmonize or resolve this tension between God's sovereignty and human responsibility (Rom. 9:19–21).

C. Ministry in Iconium (14:1–5)

After leaving Pisidian Antioch, Paul traveled approximately ninety miles southwest into Iconium, located in the Phrygian region. Paul and Barnabas stayed in Iconium from approximately October AD 48 to February AD 49. Iconium was a Greek city-state; thus the city itself maintained a large Greek influence. Paul and Barnabas followed their regular method of evangelizing the Jews first. Some Jews believed (14:1), while others rejected Christ and then provoked the crowds to anger (14:2). Although Paul and Barnabas were performing signs and wonders, the incited crowds sought to stone Paul and Barnabas (14:3, 5). The Roman government generally allowed a high degree of self-government by its colonies and by various people groups, though it did not allow capital punishment without an official Roman trial. Thus a *stoning event* could have led to serious repercussions.

D. Ministry in Lystra and Derbe (14:6–20)

The missionaries fled Iconium because of the threat of being stoned (14:6). They ended up in Lystra and Derbe.

READ: Acts 14:6. **ASK:** Were the missionaries wrong to flee from Iconium because of the threat of stoning? Explain. (Q13) *No, they were not wrong to flee. They were following God's leading. They would have times when God allowed them to be stoned. But in both cases, God was working His plan through them.*

Paul's ministry at Lystra, about twenty miles south of Iconium, occurred between March and June AD 49. In this account Luke stressed the hopelessness of a lame man whom Paul healed. The healing occurred by the spoken word of Paul instantaneously and completely (14:8–10).

The crowd thought the two missionaries were Greek gods and tried to worship Barnabas and Saul (14:11–14). Paul quickly responded by teaching that God is the living Creator Who has blessed all people with rain and harvests as a testimony to His existence and goodness (14:15–17). But still the crowd wanted to sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas, who barely restrained them from doing so (14:18).

Certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium went to Lystra and stirred up the very people who had just considered the disciples gods. As a result, the people stoned Paul and left him for dead (14:19). The crowd's reaction and persecution indicated their fickleness toward truth.

ASK: God's will was for Paul to be stoned rather than worshiped. What does this sequence of events say about the trust Paul had in God? (Q14) *Paul trusted in God based on Who God is. He did not base it on whether he found the circumstances in his life to be agreeable.*

ASK: How might a missionary respond to being stoned if his trust in God was based on the circumstances God allowed in his life? (Q15) *He would most likely quit and go home.*

E. The return to Antioch of Syria (14:21–28)

After departing Lystra and Derbe, Paul and Barnabas retraced their steps

through the Galatian region to encourage the new believers (14:21). Eventually they returned to their sending church at Antioch to celebrate God's work with the disciples (14:26, 27). Paul probably wrote his first epistle, Galatians, to the churches in the region of Galatia after returning to the church at Antioch in AD 49.

READ: Acts 14:27. **ASK:** Despite being stoned and left for dead, Who was the focus of the missionaries' report to their sending church? (Q16) *God.*

MAKING IT PERSONAL

Consider

RESOURCE: Display resource 11. **ASK:** What should we consider when we see a world full of lost souls? (Q17) (Record learners' answers on the resource.) *What's God's part for me in reaching the world? Who has yet to be reached? Where is God working?*

Pray

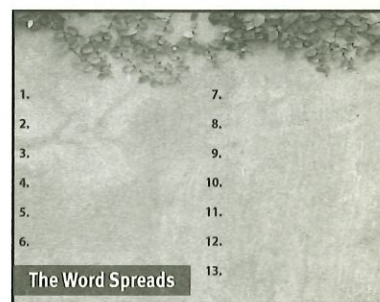
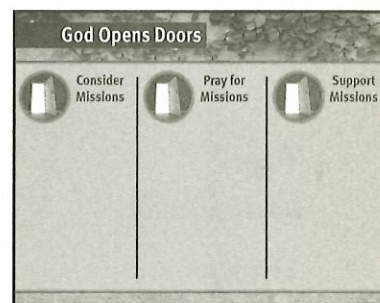
ASK: What should we pray for in regard to missions? (Q18) (Record learners' answers on the resource.) *For God to send workers, for salvation decisions, for boldness to share the gospel.*

Support

ASK: How should we support our missionaries? (Q19) (Record learners' answers on the resource.) *By asking God to give them the wisdom and strength to be faithful, by giving resources to further their ministries, by considering whether God would have us join them as vocational missionaries.*

Review Resource

Use resource 1 to review the response for this lesson: Be active in and support missions.



The Jerusalem Council



Topic

Doctrinal purity

Theme

Doctrinal purity is essential in a church.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will determine to hold to pure doctrine and confront bad doctrine in a godly manner.

Materials

- Resources 1 and 12

Scripture Focus

Acts 15:1–35

Summary

Lesson 9 summarizes the work of the first major council of the church and presents the importance of doctrinal content and purity. The lesson also gives attention to how the council addressed the controversy.

Outline

I. The Importance of Doctrinal Purity and Clarity

- A. Doctrinal importance of the content of faith
- B. Doctrinal importance of pure faith

II. The Issue before the Council (15:1–35)

- A. The problem of the Judaizers (15:1–5)
- B. The discussion of the council (15:6–21)
 - 1. Peter’s address (15:6–11)
 - 2. Barnabas and Paul’s testimony (15:12)
 - 3. James’s recommendation (15:13–21)
- C. The decision of the council (15:22–35)

Memory Verse

“But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they” (Acts 15:11).

GETTING STARTED

Jury Service

Invite one or two learners to share their experience serving on jury duty. Ask them to focus on the importance of the law and the way both parties in the case treated each other.

ASK: How did the verdict reflect the law and the rights of the two parties?

Acts 15 presents the proceedings of the first major church council. From this study we will learn that clear, pure truth is essential to the church. You will also learn that the process of handling conflicts with fellow believers in the church is important.

Infectious Disease

ASK: How might you respond if a fellow church member came to church with an infectious, deadly disease? (Q1)

ASK: How might an infectious disease be like doctrinal impurity? (Q2) *Doctrinal error can spread and can choke the life out of a church.*

Acts 15 presents the first major church council to deal with doctrinal error. From this study we will learn that clear, pure truth is essential to the church. We will also learn that the process of handling conflicts with fellow believers in the church is important.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

Luke's record of the meeting of a council in Jerusalem appears halfway through the book of Acts. This location is critical not only from a literary standpoint but also from a theological standpoint. Luke had illustrated the spread of the gospel from the Jews to the Samaritans to the Gentiles. However, one major obstacle remained. Some Jewish Christians, along with non-Christian Jews, believed that Gentiles needed to keep aspects of the Mosaic law. A council of church leaders, referred to as the Jerusalem council, addressed this issue of full Gentile inclusion into the church. The issue revolved around the very nature of the gospel and the nature of the church.

I. The Importance of Doctrinal Purity and Clarity

Prior to our study of the actual Jerusalem council, we need to review the subject of doctrinal purity. In today's climate of relativism, many churches fail to emphasize doctrinal commitment. Many people today simply have faith in faith. As a result, many think that believing, or having faith, is vital. However, the process of faith does not provide salvation. It is the content of what we believe—the gospel message—that ensures salvation.

A. Doctrinal importance of the content of faith

Paul affirmed the essentials of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15. The first essential involves the historical substitutionary death of Christ (1 Cor. 15:3). Jesus died in our place. He took the punishment for our sins.

READ: Galatians 3:13. **ASK:** What does this verse say about the punishment for our sins? (Q3) *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by dying on the cross and being made a curse for us.*

Jesus took the punishment of humanity upon Himself. In theological terms He propitiated the wrath of God for us (Rom. 3:25). Propitiation is the once-for-all turning away of God's wrath because of the sacrificial death of Christ on behalf of sinners.

Another essential component of faith involves Jesus' literal bodily resurrection from the dead. Jesus didn't stay buried; He rose again (1 Cor. 15:4). The resurrection indicates that God accepted His sacrificial death and that Jesus overcame the penalty of sin (Rom. 4:25).

READ: 1 Corinthians 15:20–22. **ASK:** What does Jesus resurrection mean for those who have trusted in Him as their Savior? (Q4) *Those who believe in Christ will also overcome death.*

We can have confidence that Jesus' resurrection was a real historical event. Paul wrote that it was witnessed by over five hundred people (1 Cor. 15:6).

Other essentials of faith involve the deity and humanity of Christ, which confused some believers in the latter part of the first century. John taught that those who deny the actual deity and humanity of Christ are not believers, but false teachers (1 John 2:22, 23). He also taught that whoever transgresses, or leaves Christ out of their doctrine, does not know God (2 John 9).

B. Doctrinal importance of pure faith

Another key essential of faith involves how one receives the gospel. A person can receive the gospel only through personal faith.

READ: John 1:12; 3:16, 17. **ASK:** What connection do these verses make between salvation and belonging to a particular church of performing a specific ritual? (Q5) *John doesn't link salvation to belonging to a church or performing any rituals.*

READ: Romans 3:23, 24, 28. **ASK:** What does Paul clearly teach about salvation in these verses? (Q6) *Salvation comes by faith apart from the law or any other requirements.*

Pure faith in relation to how one receives the gospel is essential for a church. If a church compromises on this doctrine, it undermines its ministry.

ASK: Why might a church be tempted to compromise its doctrinal stand? (Q7) *To be tolerant and accepting; to appeal to a broad number of people; to be progressive; to keep from offending people.*