

ACTS – Fall 2025 D-Groups

For Wednesday, October 22
Acts 13:1-14:28



The Big Picture - ACTS as a Whole

By Acts 13, we've reached a major turning point in the book. The gospel has spread from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria, and now it begins to reach "the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Chapters 13–14 mark the beginning of Paul's first missionary journey—a deliberate, Spirit-led launch of the church's global mission. What started as a small, persecuted movement in Jerusalem has now become a worldwide mission through ordinary believers empowered by the Spirit.

At Antioch, a diverse and Spirit-filled church listens to God's call and sends out Paul (formerly Saul) and Barnabas. This is the first time we see intentional missionary sending rather than accidental scattering. The church at Antioch models what it means to be both worshipful and missional—listening to the Spirit, fasting, praying, and releasing its best leaders to serve God's purpose. This moment signals the church's maturity and obedience to the Spirit's leading.

As Paul and Barnabas travel through Cyprus and into modern-day Turkey, the gospel continues to break boundaries—cultural, geographic, and religious. They proclaim the word first to Jewish audiences, but when rejected, they boldly turn to the Gentiles. The Spirit confirms their message through miracles and conversions, but opposition also grows. Some cities welcome the message with joy; others respond with hostility and persecution. Yet through it all, the gospel advances, new churches are planted, and disciples are strengthened.

By the end of chapter 14, Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch, reporting "all that God had done through them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles" (14:27). The mission that began in Jerusalem is now global, and the Spirit is the one driving it forward. Acts 13–14 reminds us that the church is not a passive institution but an active movement—one that listens, sends, suffers, and rejoices in the unstoppable advance of God's kingdom.

The Close-Up for October 22 - Acts 13:1-14:28

Please make sure you read the passage, perhaps even 2-3 times using different versions. We want to provide supplemental material, but what matters most is actually interacting with God's word.

Some notes on the overall flow of this section:

- **13:1–3** – The church at Antioch is worshiping and fasting when the Holy Spirit clearly calls Barnabas and Saul to be set apart for a special mission. This sending marks a new stage in God's redemptive plan: the gospel intentionally going to the Gentile world.
- **13:4–12** – On the island of Cyprus, they preach the word and confront spiritual opposition. In Paphos, Paul (now using his Roman name) confronts Elymas the sorcerer, who opposes their message. The Lord strikes Elymas blind, demonstrating His power over deception and clearing the way for the proconsul Sergius Paulus to believe.
- **13:13–43** – In Pisidian Antioch, Paul preaches his first recorded sermon, showing that Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel. His message highlights God's faithfulness, the resurrection of Jesus, and forgiveness through Him. Many believe, both Jews and Gentile God-fearers, and they beg to hear more.
- **13:44–52** – The next Sabbath, nearly the whole city gathers to hear the word of the Lord. Jealousy rises among some Jewish leaders, leading to rejection and persecution. Paul and Barnabas boldly declare that they are now turning to the Gentiles, quoting Isaiah's prophecy about being "a light for the nations." The Gentiles rejoice, and the word of the Lord spreads throughout the region despite opposition.

- **14:1–7** – In Iconium, the same pattern repeats: powerful preaching, mixed response, and increasing opposition. Signs and wonders accompany their ministry, confirming the message, but eventually they must flee for their lives. Even in flight, they continue to preach wherever they go.
- **14:8–20** – In Lystra, Paul heals a man crippled from birth, leading the crowd to mistake them for gods—Zeus and Hermes. Paul and Barnabas tear their clothes and insist that they are only human messengers of the living God. Yet soon after, opponents from Antioch and Iconium arrive, stir up the crowd, and Paul is stoned and left for dead. Miraculously, he survives and continues preaching.
- **14:21–28** – After strengthening the new believers and appointing elders in each church, Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch, reporting the incredible work God has done. Their mission is framed not as their achievement, but as the result of God’s open door of faith to the Gentiles.

Some of our Key Themes specifically on display in this section:

- **The Spirit’s Guidance** – The church doesn’t act on its own initiative but in response to the Spirit’s call. God still calls and sends His people to carry the gospel outward.
- **The Reach of the Gospel/Kingdom Expansion** – This section makes it unmistakable that salvation through Jesus is for all nations, not just for Israel.
- **The Good News** – Paul’s sermons show how the gospel fulfills God’s promises. The Word remains central to mission.
- **Mission and Community** – Paul and Barnabas model teamwork in ministry, sharing the burden, encouraging one another, and returning to strengthen the churches they planted.
- **Antagonism from Outsiders** – Every advance of the gospel faces resistance, but God uses even persecution to strengthen the church and spread His word.
- **Joy Amid Hardship** – Even in suffering, they rejoice that they are counted worthy to share in Christ’s mission.

Some additional questions to reflect on leading-up to next week’s D-Group:

- What stands out to you about the church in Antioch? What does their example teach us about listening to the Holy Spirit and sending others for mission?
- Why do you think the Holy Spirit often leads through worship, prayer, and fasting? How can our group or church make space to listen to God this way?
- How does the confrontation with Elymas the sorcerer illustrate spiritual warfare in mission?
- What key themes or truths from Paul’s sermon in Antioch stood out to you? How does he connect Jesus to the story of Israel?
- Why do you think the Gentiles responded with such joy while some Jews reacted with jealousy? What does that contrast reveal about our own hearts?
- What can we learn from Paul and Barnabas about perseverance when facing rejection or persecution?
- How do the miracles in these chapters confirm that God’s power accompanies His message?
- What do Paul and Barnabas mean when they tell the new disciples that “we must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God” (14:22)?
- How does their return trip—strengthening believers, appointing elders, and reporting back to the sending church—model healthy mission and discipleship?
- What might it look like for you personally, or for our group, to be part of God’s “sending” work today?

A Challenge for this Week: Pray for someone in your life—or even a people group or place—that has not yet heard or received the good news of Jesus. Ask God to open a door of faith, just as He did for the Gentiles, and to show you what role you might play in His ongoing mission.