

## Missionaries on Mission

Acts 13:1-12 **“Wherever we go, our job is to proclaim Jesus to everyone.”**

Dreams are very special. Dreams breathe life into you. Dreams motivate you to step out in faith and live on purpose. Dreams lead you to strive for a goal, and never give up, even when it's very hard. In fact, that's what dreams are made of, right? Dreams are what can be. Dreams push us to challenge the odds. Sometimes dreams scream it can be done. Other times they whisper it is possible.

Do you have anything you are dreaming about? I hope you do.

One of my dreams was to become a Marine. I love America. America has a lot of challenges, things that can be changed and even some that should be changed. But it also has done many things right, things I'm proud of. I love my country. I loved it so much I purposed to defend it.

I signed up for the Marine Corps and prepared for their 13-week bootcamp. When I joined the Marines, their physical fitness test was challenging. To get a perfect score, you needed to run 3 miles in 18 minutes, do 20 pull-ups, and 80 sit-ups in two minutes. I wanted a perfect score. The obstacle course was another huge challenge. At that time, the obstacle course had the stairway to heaven, the slide for life, and the repelling tower which had a hole you repelled through that simulated quick roping out of a helicopter. For a boy with a fear of heights from Silvis, Illinois – the City of Progress – it was a huge challenge.

I can honestly say it was my strong ambition to be a Marine that helped me through the difficult times and helped me conquer my fears. My dream told me I could survive jumping through that hole and quick roping to the ground. My deep motivation to be a Marine yelled in my head that I could go down the slide for life head-first, It was my dream that challenged the odds, encouraging me to climb the stairway to heaven, go over the top log and descend the other side. Well, it was my dreams and the drill instructor threatening to throw me off as he madly climbed after me when I froze in place at the top log. He helped motivate me too.

My plan was to be a Marine. I was determined. I put in the hard work. This dream actually became the purpose of my life and helped me conquer my fears. What are you determined to accomplish? Have you considered what is your purpose?

Today we will continue with our series in Acts “On Mission.” We will pick up where we left off last week in Acts 13:1-12. Our big idea is, “Wherever we go, our job is to proclaim Jesus to everyone.”

**“Now 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. <sup>2</sup> While 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.” <sup>3</sup> Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.**

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**<sup>4</sup> So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. <sup>5</sup> When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. <sup>8</sup> But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. <sup>9</sup> But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him <sup>10</sup> 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? <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord."**

I love the of the scripture. The Bible can be so simple to understand, yet when we dig into the clear meaning of scripture, we can dive into its beautiful depths. Right here in our passage, three main things jump out at us: the Senders, the Sent, and the Field.

The church clearly finds our mission in the Great Commission, where we learn to go and make disciples. So, if our mission is to go and make disciples, what's up with Acts 1:8? This verse describes how the church was supposed to fulfill the Great Commission. Acts 1:8 reads, **"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."**

The Senders are the church at Antioch. Looking back at verse 1 and 2, we get a glimpse of the church. **"Now 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. <sup>2</sup> While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting,"**

Not that long ago, we learned about the church of Antioch, how it began, and the important role God assigned them in the history of the universal church. Acts chapter 11 teaches us, **"Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews."** In Acts 1:8 we learned how the gospel was going to spread out from Jerusalem, but we never learned the means, or motivation for spreading it. God used persecution to help the gospel spread out to the world. Persecution is a scary word. In this passage, our English word persecution come from the Greek word *thlipsis*, which means to press together hard, or apply pressure. When you hear persecution, think of the stomping or pressing of grapes to the point where the juice is pressed out.

When I am reminded of how the church spread through persecution, I wonder how the prosperity gospel came about? The church spread out from Jerusalem because the disciples

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were hard pressed, chased down, imprisoned, and even killed. Stephan was stoned to death in Acts Chapter 7. In fact, you may recall, the people who stoned Stephan to death, laid their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. The same Saul in our passage.

Although the prosperity gospel sounds good, it’s just not accurate. God doesn’t necessarily want us to be happy, healthy, and wealthy. The early believers fled to Antioch because Stephan was stoned. In chapter 12 we read that James the brother of John was killed by a sword and Peter was thrown in Jail. There’s not much there about being happy, healthy, or wealthy. Although persecution rarely happens in America, it still happens to our brothers and sisters around the world. Two of our Edgewood family members, Chasidy and Ken, are representatives of Voice of the Martyrs. If you’d like to know how you can pray for the persecuted church, you can visit [persecution.com](http://persecution.com) or sign up for their podcast VOM Radio.

In our passage, God gives us a picture into the church of Antioch. Verse one **“Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.”** Most of these names will mean little or nothing to most of us. But they are a much-needed reminder of some clear basic biblical principles. The church is made up of ordinary people. You and I, we are the church. The word translated “church” in verse one is from the Greek word *ekklesia*, which means the called out. If you have put your faith in Jesus as your sin substitute, you are called out. You are the church.

There are many things in life I don’t understand. There are also many things in the Christian life I do not fully understand. Please listen closely as I read Romans 8:30, **“And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”** Maybe, today, you need to hear this? Can you set aside the challenges life is throwing at you and listen to the love of God. If you trust Jesus’ death on the cross as a sufficient payment for your sins, this verse is for you. If the Holy spirit is urging you to trust Jesus as your sin bearer, this verse can be for you. This verse says, I don’t know why, God *chose you and I*. He predestined us to be the recipient of His love. It doesn’t matter what is happening in your house, with your spouse, with your children, or at your work, God wants you and He predestined you to be in His family. Don’t let any theological arguments break your attention or ruin this moment. The secret things belong to the Lord. God called you, a sinner, out of the darkness, to be His child. Then He justified you. He wiped the debt of your sin clean and nailed it to the cross, when Jesus died. He will call you to heaven and give you a glorified body sometime in the future. You are called, one of the people God called out of the darkness to be His church. God didn’t call bricks or mortar, or steel or wood, no matter how beautiful the building. God called us, sinners saved by grace, to be His children. Church, He chose us.

The church in Antioch was made up of normal people like us. Antioch was made up of sinners saved by grace from different areas, with different backgrounds and ethnicities. This is by God’s design. Saul was a Greek speaking Jew from the city of Tarsus who sat under the teaching of Gamaliel. Barnabas was a Levitite from Cyprus whose given name was Joseph. He was so encouraging he was given the nick name Barnabas, which means “son of encouragement.”

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But who is Simeon, or Lucius, or Manaen? Simeon was a man of color. He may have been from Africa; we are not sure because the Bible doesn't say. Maybe Simeon came to Antioch with Lucius. Lucius was from Cyrene, a city in North Africa. Manaen was a very interesting person. Manaen is described as a lifelong friend of Herod. Some of the other translations say, “brought up with.” The Greek word translated “life-long friend” or “brought up with” is a compound word which means nursed with. Manaen may have been a foster brother of Herod's or a very close friend. Yet he was a believer.

This we know: The church is made up of people from many different races and ethnicities. The church is *beautifully diverse*, and racism has no place in the church. The church is also made up of sinners saved by grace who many believed would never come to faith. Manaen was a hard case. Manaen grew up with Herod, the same Herod who killed John the Baptist and who also wanted Jesus dead. Manaen was far from God, like you and me, and he put his faith in Christ alone. The gospel has the power to save even a hard case like Manaen

In our passage, we see the church in action. The church was gathering and worshiping Jesus, corporately, together at the same time and place, just like we are doing today. During a normal worship service, a miracle happened within the church. The Holy Spirit called Barnabas and Saul to be the church's first missionaries. Missionaries are called to serve God from within the church, and the church sent them out.

God has blessed Edgewood in this area too. Edgewood has sent out many missionaries from Edgewood and we have been able to partner with many Go Team partners. Here are a couple of maps to show you where all our current Go Team partners are serving. This first map shows you where our local Go Team partners are. This second map shows you where our Go Team partners are at in the United States, with Puerto Rico in the lower right corner. The third map is where all of our Go Team partners are all over the world. We have a part in sending missionaries to the ends of the world. Edgewood gives approximately 10% of its budget to missions. You can also give to missions individually. When my wife and I were missionaries with Ethnos 360, about 75% of our support came from individuals and 25% from churches.

The church is also actively involved in missions supporting those who Go with the gospel. Verse three reads, **“Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.”** The church recognized how important this decision was, so they fasted. Have you ever fasted, seeking wisdom and power from God for an important decision? Fasting isn't spoken about all that much, but it's a very powerful act of submission to God. When you fast, you are saying, God I need spiritual sustenance more than I need physical sustenance. I need Your wisdom, and I put You in the position of preeminence you deserve. I need you! When I felt God was opening a door for missions in my life, it was such an important decision that I fasted for a time while I sought God's leading.

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The church also prayed for Barnabas and Saul. Prayer moves the hand of God. Do you pray for missionaries? May I suggest you adopt a missionary, correspond with them, and pray for them? When you are a missionary, there are so many decisions that need to be made. Decisions about things you may know little or nothing about. You fight loneliness, discouragement, homesickness, new debilitating diseases, homeschooling, boarding school, and often challenging situations with coworkers, if you are fortunate enough to have coworkers. You may want to visit a sick family member, but plane tickets are expensive and there is a stack of governmental paperwork that needs done prior to leaving so you can re-enter the country after your visit. Our missionaries need our prayers to succeed. When you take a step of faith and start corresponding with a missionary, you can earn their trust and know exactly what their prayer requests are and actively lift them up to the Lord.

The church is the foundation of missions. Without the church, there is no mission. Mission agencies exist to assist the local church. When we gather together like we are today, either in person or virtually, we are challenged to accept the Great Commission. We get training in evangelism, encouragement to walk with Christ. We are disciplined in how to serve our community and surrender to go with the Gospel. The church sends missionaries to the field, supports them, prays for them, and even fasts for them when led by the Lord. **“Wherever we go, our job is to proclaim Jesus to everyone.”**

II The Sent- Barnabas and Saul are the ones Antioch sent out. Both are great examples of a changed lives. They left their friends and family to try and win people to Christ in a culture that was full of animosity towards Christians. Barnabas was being asked to work with Paul, and I am sure he was leery about this at first. Saul seemed like such a hard case. As I read about Saul in Acts 7 and acts 8, I think how can this guy be saved? I believe most of the Christians he was chasing after would have felt the same way. In Acts 7:58, we see Saul is present at Stephen’s stoning, **“Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.”** In Acts 8 we read of Saul’s zealotness to wipe out the church. Verse 1 says, **“And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem”** and we read in verse 3, **“But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.”** In chapter 9 we see Paul’s hatred growing stronger, **“But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest<sup>2</sup> and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.”**

Imagine the miracle of Saul being sent out to spread the Gospel! This man who was perhaps the greatest persecutor of the early church was commissioned as one of the first missionaries to take the gospel to the ends of the world. The one who had been killing Christians was giving his life to spread Christianity. His new life goal was to take the gospel to other people in other places. This goal would lead him to make many sacrifices as he followed God’s will for his life, and he was going to experience suffering.

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The first miracle here is the miracle of a changed life. Saul’s life. But there is also the miracle of God calling men and women into full-time ministry. Verse 2 says, **“the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”**” Can you imagine what it was like for them to be called into missions? It would have been truly amazing to be a part of that worship service.

It’s no less amazing today when God calls men and women into cross-cultural full-time missions. Today, God doesn’t speak to us audibly, but He still speaks. Today, God predominantly speaks to us through His Word. God says “Go and make disciples...” and many successful believers leave productive jobs, sell their homes, and move to an unfamiliar country or city. God says, “You will be my witnesses...” and many believers accept this call, leaving their families and friends to learn new languages and cultures and share the good news. Reading the Bible was where God first challenged me into full-time ministry. God also used a missionary, Quentin Reese, to challenge me further and call my wife Beth and I into missions.

Today, it is our privilege to interview Tom and Phyllis Bassett. Tom and Phyllis Bassett are our Go Team partners who have just finished their race. They have run a good race and have now moved back to the Quad Cities to retire from full time ministry and serve our community. God has graciously allowed Tom and Phyllis to fulfill the dream every missionary has, completing their mission well.

1. Edgewood has changed a lot since the last time you updated us. Would you please tell us where you served, and what you did? Could you please share with us how God called you into missions? (3 minutes)
2. Would you please share with us how you have seen God work in France? God is always at work and sometimes we have the privilege of seeing Him work. Would you please share a story or two of life transformation that God allowed you to see? I was 30 when I went to Bible school to be trained in cross cultural missions. Could you encourage the person who the Holy Spirit may be prompting to consider full-time ministry in missions, whether they’re young adults or even older like I was? (3 minutes)

The call to missions is so important. Missionaries on mission are sent by the church, the launch pad of all Christian activity. Missionaries on mission need the support of the church to help them answer God’s call to full-time ministry wherever they are in the world. **“Wherever we go, our job is to proclaim Jesus to everyone.”**

The Field- After answering the call to missions, Barnabas and Saul headed out.

**So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.<sup>5</sup> When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them. <sup>6</sup> When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos,”**

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Once they landed on the Island of Cyprus, they began proclaiming the gospel. This word translated as proclaim can also be translated as preach, or teach, or publicly declare.

The state of the world in the apostles’ day was similar to ours today. It was chaotic, full of hate, and seemed like it was spinning out of control. Barnabas and Saul understood what man’s deepest and most profound need was. In Acts 13:38 Paul proclaims, **“Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you,”**

People need the life transforming power of the gospel. When life is smooth and going well, people need Christ. When life is chaotic and violent, people need Christ. It was true then, and it is true today. So, let me ask, how are you doing? Are things chaotic or spinning out of control? Maybe you are trusting Christ, and everything is okay in your world, but maybe you know someone whose life is out of control? The life-changing gospel can give you or your loved ones peace in the storm.

Here is a map of all the places God is leading our missionaries from Edgewood. Look at all the places where we are spreading the gospel. Isn’t that amazing? I love it! At this point in Acts, the gospel was just beginning to spread out from Antioch. Today, the reach of the gospel is spreading throughout the entire world.

But right out of the gate, there was opposition to gospel. Picking up in verse 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. <sup>7</sup> He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. <sup>8</sup> But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.”** Please understand that whenever the gospel is preached, we should expect opposition. It doesn’t always happen that someone openly resists us, but it often does. Most of the opposition I have faced is minor.

But our brothers and sisters around the world face much more serious opposition, verbally and physically. Our missionaries, Mike and Pam Hillhouse, are perfect examples of our Go Team partners who had to flee Burkina Faso for fear of physical harm. If you see initials such as PS and JS, or ST and BT, these initials are from our Go Team partners who are serving in areas of the world where they face so much opposition that using their names could put them in danger.

Our passage ends with this verse, **“Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.”** We can face opposition when we preach the gospel, but let’s remember the gospel is powerful and lives can be transformed when we share the truth. Romans 1:16-17 reminds us, **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith,<sup>[e]</sup> as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.””** The gospel is more powerful than any opposing

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force and we can hold on to the that truth. Church, **“Wherever we go, our job is to proclaim Jesus to everyone.”**

What a great challenge! What now? How can we apply these truths to our lives?

1. The church is essential to missions. Choose today to be actively involved in church. Let's making gathering together for a weekly worship a priority. When we are unable to gather in person because of health concerns or new protocols, let's choose to gather virtually with our livestream worship sessions on Saturday at 5:00 p.m., or Sunday at 9:00 a.m. and 10:45 a.m. We can also gather virtually on COZI TV at 8:00 a.m., or on demand through our Edgewood App or website, Edgewoodbaptist.net. The church is essential to missions. We are the launch pad, the foundation to taking the gospel to the ends of the earth.
2. Let's commit to pray for our missionaries. Prayer is one of the ways we can support and encourage our missionaries. In fact, it is the most important way we can help them because prayer works. Are you praying for our Go Team partners? It's easy, just decide today that you will pray for the missionary who is highlighted in the Go Team update every week. You can also “adopt” a missionary that you will pray for daily.
3. Financially support a missionary. When Beth and I were missionaries, approximately 75% of our financial support came from individuals and only 25% came from churches. Prayer is the most important support we can give a missionary, but without enough money they will not be able to serve full-time. Have you ever prayerfully considered supporting a missionary or an organization?
4. Here's a big step: Maybe God is calling you into full-time missions? Perhaps you could be one of our Go Team partners taking the gospel to the ends of the world, an unreached people group? Some missionaries go straight to the field after high school and Bible college. Both Pastor Brian and I were missionaries a little later in life when we had families. I know some missionaries who did not go into full-time service until they had retired.

We have some exciting things we are working on to help raise gospel awareness at Edgewood. Pastor Kyle will share some of this next week.

5. Another step is to serve God right here in our community. You can serve in our nursery, children's program, Awana, or Celebrate recovery. You can serve at Habitat for Humanity, Riverbend Foodbank, or King's Harvest. You can even serve at one of our local Go Team partners like Youth Hope or Safe Families.

One practical way you could serve is through Operation Christmas Curbside. Operation Christmas Curbside will help families and individuals who are in need and who are

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connected with our local Go Team partners. Operation Christmas Curbside will happen Tuesday, December 8, from 4-7 PM under the portico in front of the East Entrance. There is a list of specific gifts they need at the resource kiosks, on our website, and on our app.

Church, let’s remember, **“Wherever we go, our job is to proclaim Jesus to everyone.”**  
**Pause for a few seconds.**

Tim / Andy / Tim will be giving us some closing announcements. He will give directions on how we will exit to help maintain social distancing.