

Life Group Studies

Acts 13-18



The Church on Mission

Study One - Proclaiming the Gospel, Empowered by the Holy Spirit

Acts 13

1. Think of someone you know who effectively shares the Gospel. What qualities do you see in that person?
2. What is the mission of the church? What is the mission of **our** church?

Read chapter 13 verses 1-12.

3. What procedure did the church at Antioch use to decide who should go on mission to the Gentiles? (vv.1-4)
4. What does it mean for someone to be 'filled with the Holy Spirit' as Paul was (v.9)? What did it empower Paul to do?
5. What convinced the proconsul Sergius Paulus to believe in Christ?

Read verses 13-41.

6. Why did Paul and his companions go to the synagogue first to share the gospel (vv.13-15, & also v.46)?
7. How does Paul introduce his 'good news' (vv.16-31)? Where else in the book of Acts is a similar strategy used?
8. What are the elements of the 'good news' in vv.32-39?

Read verses 42-52.

9. List the different responses of those who listened to Paul's presentation of the gospel. What is the significance of the Gentiles coming to faith (vv.46-48)?
10. What was the impact of this evangelistic encounter on the disciples (v.52)?

For Reflection:

11. How do you feel about the fact that witnessing to the gospel is part of being a Christian?
12. What would it take for you to experience the boldness and joy that Paul did in his mission?

Pray for each other, that the Holy Spirit would empower us for our mission and fill us with joy.

Study Two – Opposition and Misunderstanding

Acts 14

1. What responses have you received when you have shared the gospel (or the reality of your Christian faith)?

Read verses 1-6.

2. Why did Paul's preaching stir up so much opposition at Iconium?
3. How did Paul and Barnabas respond to this persecution?

Read verses 8-20.

4. How did the crowd at Lystra misunderstand the healing of the lame man (vv. 8-13)?
5. How did Paul and Barnabas respond (vv. 14-18)?
6. It is not likely in our day for displays of God's power to lead to pagan sacrifices being made to us! What might the contemporary version of this misunderstanding look like?
7. In 2 Corinthians 11:16 – 12:10 Paul 'boasts' about his sufferings and weakness in mission, including being beaten and left for dead (look at Acts 14:19). Why did he rejoice in this opposition and the suffering that it brought?

Read verses 21-28.

8. What did Paul and Barnabas do after they had finished preaching in Derbe?
9. Why was it important for them to return and set the new churches in order?
10. What were they able to report back to the church in Antioch (vv. 26-27)?

For Reflection:

11. In v.22 Paul and Barnabas say "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God". What is your response to this idea?
12. How can we deal with opposition and misunderstanding in our mission to share the gospel?

Pray for each other, for strength and joy in the face of suffering and misunderstanding, and for God to work through our weakness.

Study Three – Barriers to Growth

Acts 15:1-35

1. What does someone have to do in order to become a Christian?
2. Is it easy for someone who has not grown up as a Christian to 'get in', to become a member of the church?

Read verses 1-5.

1. Why would 'certain people' want to teach that the Gentile believers in Antioch and elsewhere would have to be circumcised in order to be saved (v1, and look at v5)?
2. Why would this cause problems for the new churches?
3. What do you think the response of the apostles should have been?

Read verses 6-21.

The Council at Jerusalem was the first time (and not the last!) that church leaders gathered together to debate an important issue affecting the mission of the church.

4. What reasons do Peter, Paul and Barnabas give for not requiring Gentiles to be circumcised (vv. 7-12)?
5. What is James' 'judgement' on the question (vv. 13-21)?
6. Why would the apostles ask for these specific things from the Gentile believers? What are the principles behind these prohibitions? (*this might need reference to a commentary*).

Read verses 22-35.

7. Why was it important for an 'official' letter to go out from the apostles and elders to the Gentile churches?
8. How did the church in Antioch respond to the letter?

For Reflection:

9. What are the 'minimum requirements' that should be asked of people seeking to become Christians?
10. How can we remove obstacles to people accepting the gospel?

Pray for our church, that we would not put barriers up for people to have faith in Jesus.

Study Four – Converts

Acts 16:11-40

1. How did you become a Christian? How did God prepare for that to happen?

On his second missionary journey, Paul and his companions received a vision from the Holy Spirit to travel to Macedonia to preach the gospel.

Read verses 11-15.

2. Where did they go first in Philippi to preach the gospel, and why did they choose that place?
3. What prepared Lydia to hear and believe Paul's message?
4. What did she do after being baptised?

Read verses 16-24.

5. How would you feel if you were in Paul's situation, being followed by the girl who could tell people's fortunes? What did Paul do?
6. Why were the owners of the slave girl so displeased with Paul and Silas?
7. What were the charges against Paul and Silas?

Read verses 25-40

8. What prepared the jailer to believe in Jesus and be saved?
9. What did he do after he (and his household) were baptised?

For reflection:

10. What would have been the consequences if Paul had failed to listen to the Holy Spirit's call to go to Macedonia?
11. How can we be prepared to take advantage of the Spirit's preparation in the lives of people that we know?

Pray for your group, that the Holy Spirit would open the hearts of people that you know so that they can respond to the Gospel. Pray also for courage to trust in him and to listen to where he is calling you to go.

Study Five – The Unknown God

Acts 17:1-33

1. What are some of the philosophies of life and beliefs about the nature of the world that you encounter among your friends, family and other people you meet?

Read verses 1-12.

2. What strategy did Paul use in Thessalonica and Berea to explain the gospel to the Jews in the local synagogues?
3. What responses did he receive?
4. What are the limitations of this approach? How much knowledge of the Bible would the average Australian have? What groups might it work for?

Read verses 16-33.

5. What approach did Paul take in explaining the gospel to the Athenian philosophers?
6. What pre-existing beliefs did the Athenians have that Paul used to help them understand what he was saying?
7. Why would many of them have ‘sneered’ when they heard him talk about the Resurrection (v. 32)? Have you ever heard a similar reaction from people in our own time?

For Reflection:

8. What would be the best way to explain the Gospel to people in your local area or social circles? Would you use the ‘Berean’ or the ‘Athenian’ approach?
9. What already-existing beliefs do Australians generally have that would prepare them to understand the Gospel?

Pray for all Christians, as we attempt to share the Gospel in ways that will speak to our own context.

Study Six – Many Here are Mine

Acts 18:1-23

1. Have you ever had the feeling that it is not worth witnessing to others about Jesus because there seem to be no results?

Read verses 1-23.

1. List the people that Paul spoke to in Corinth, and how they responded to his preaching.
2. Why might the Lord have spoken to Paul in a vision as he did (vv. 9-10)?
3. How would God's message have encouraged Paul to stay in Corinth to teach and preach?
4. In v.21 Paul says that he will come back to Ephesus 'if it is God's will'. How much of our decisions about mission and ministry should be based on an attempt to discern God's specific will?

For Reflection:

5. What have you learned about mission in this series of sermons and studies?
6. What are the specific challenges that we face individually, as a group and as a church in being the 'church on mission'?
7. Identify three areas that you need to grow in your ability and power to witness to Jesus and the Gospel.

Spend time as a group praying over the things you have identified in question 7.

