



JOURNEY WITH PAUL: CALLED TO GO

Study Guide

September 25, 2022

Opening Prayer

Holy God, help us to continue to discern your call that we might be responsive as we listen to your voice.

Prepare us for the work you have in store for your church that the world may know your deep love found in Jesus. In our time of reflection and introspection, make clear your vision for us. And finally, encourage us, that is give us courage to go live out a vibrant, outwardly focused faith. Amen.

Video Teaching

Read Galatians 1:15 - 2:10

Paul wrote to his converts in Galatia about a part of his life the book of Acts did not include. He did not start working right away as a traveling evangelist. He spent time praying and studying to think through the meaning of his encounter with Christ (and did some preaching in Syria and Cilicia—1:23).

Only then did he meet with the Jerusalem Christian leaders. Paul had once thanked God he was not a Gentile. Now they agreed that God had sent him to those very Gentiles, a calling that re-shaped the emerging church.

- Paul's references to "three years" and "fourteen years" are enigmatic enough that scholars have always struggled to identify an exact chronology. Nor can we be sure of exactly what he did during that time span. But it's clear that Paul (and his Lord) were more patient than we often are in our "immediate gratification" culture. When have you had to wait for something you wanted right away? In what way(s) are you having to wait today for God to act in your life?
- As a Roman citizen born in Tarsus, and a rabbi trained in Jerusalem by the eminent teacher Gamaliel, Paul knew both the Greco-Roman and Hebrew cultures as few people in his time did. How did that background prepare him for the mission to which God called him? In what ways do you think his ambitious temperament, once turned to God's purposes, might also have qualified him for this groundbreaking mission?

Read Acts 13:1-6, 13-14

Before leaving earth, Jesus laid out for his followers a vision of an ever-expanding global mission (cf. Acts 1:7-8). Antioch, in ancient Syria, was a large city, and an important community of Christians was growing there. But Antioch couldn't be a stopping point; it needed to be a launching pad. So the Holy Spirit moved the Antioch church to send Paul and Barnabas out into the wider world.

- Paul must have known Abraham's story, in which God said, "Leave your land, your family, and your father's household for the land that I will show you" (Genesis 12:1). He may not have been bothered when the Holy Spirit just told the Antioch church to appoint him and Barnabas "to the work I have called them to undertake" without filling in any details. How well are you able to trust and follow God even when God does not lay out all of the details in advance for you?
- Though confident God had called him to spread the gospel to the Gentiles, Paul did not make a beeline for Rome or Athens. In a sense, he "practiced his trade" first on the island of Cyprus and in the important but less visible Roman province of Galatia (see map). When is there value in "starting small," even on important missions? Do you believe there are times when it is vital to make an immediate, large impact?



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Read Acts 14:1-7

In Iconium, many people (“Jews and Greeks”) became Christians through Paul’s preaching. He and Barnabas “stayed there for quite some time.” But opposition built once again. The irony was that unwittingly, Paul’s enemies kept spreading the gospel. This time their plotting drove Paul and Barnabas on to the cities of Lystra and Derbe.

- Luke chose expressive language—he said Paul and Barnabas were “confidently speaking about the Lord.” Even when they felt they had to flee to Lystra and Derbe, they “continued to proclaim the good news.” In what ways did their trust in Jesus sustain their resilience in the face of opposition? In what parts of your life would you like to ask God to help you be resilient like the apostles were?
- In verse 5, Luke wrote that some Jews and Gentiles “hatched a plot to mistreat and stone Paul and Barnabas.” Paul had approved of Stephen’s stoning (cf. Acts 7:55-8:1), and scholar William Barclay said, “What was proposed in Iconium was nothing other than a lynching.” What do you think led Paul and Barnabas to choose to move on to other cities, rather than retreating to the safety of Antioch? How would you respond if you realized people wanted to kill you for your faith?

Paul’s Journey

Find Tarsus, Jerusalem, Pisidian Antioch, and Syrian Antioch on the map



Closing Prayer

Key points after Paul’s conversion

- Paul goes to the Arabian desert for 3 years
- Paul visits the apostle in Jerusalem for 15 days
- Paul flees Jerusalem and returns to Tarsus for 10 years.
- Barnabas is sent to Syrian Antioch
- Barnabas recruits Paul from Tarsus and brings him to Syrian Antioch