

God's Church for God's Mission

Acts 13:1-4

Acts is a record of the unstoppable mission of God to reach the nations with the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

“The focus of the book of Acts is actually on God.” Alan Thompson, The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus

“It is not so much the case that God has a mission for his church in the world, as that God has a church for his mission in the world. Mission was not made for the church; the church was made for mission – God’s mission.” Christopher Wright, The Mission of God's People

The book of Acts is meant to engage us in the mission of Christ by elevating our adoration of God and fueling our expectation of His Spirit’s work through the church.

The strength of our conviction that Christ will build His church will directly shape our commitment both to the local church and global mission.

I. The Church in Acts is a Miraculous Community. Acts 13:1

“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. Acts 13:1

God is already on the move orchestrating His mission by saving and bringing these leaders together as a picture of God’s plan for His mission and for eternity and in preparation for its advance into the Gentile world.

“Our God is in the heavens, he does all that he pleases.” Psalm 15:3

“Remember the former things, those of long ago;

I am God, and there is no other;

I am God, and there is none like me.

I make known the end from the beginning,
from ancient times, what is still to come.
I say, 'My purpose will stand,
and I will do all that I please.'
From the east I summon a bird of prey;
from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose.
What I have said, that I will bring about;
what I have planned, that I will do." Isaiah 46:9-11

By His Grace and For His Glory: The local church exists because of the sovereign, intentional, and miraculous Lordship of the risen and reigning Jesus Christ and it exists for His purpose and glory alone.

II. The Church in Acts is a Worshiping Community. Acts 13:2

"While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'" Acts 13:2

"Where on earth will we find the church?" Answering this requires us to fall back on the three marks of the Reformers—preaching, practicing the ordinances, and practicing discipline. As Mark Dever likes to say, three Christians who bump into each other at the grocery store do not comprise a local church." Jonathan Leeman

The Spirit of God advances the mission of God as the people of God are doing the ordinary activities of worshipping and praying/fasting together.

Busyness is not the key to missional success but faithfulness in the simple and sacred things.

"Communion with God leads to more communion with God. Corporate worship is a proper context for the reception of the Holy Spirit." Patrick Schreiner

"If you are looking for a church with state-of-the-art production and a long menu of customized programs, that's fine, but River City Baptist may disappoint you. While we deeply value excellence, we will channel our best energies toward fostering an ecosystem of church cultures

– evangelism, discipling, hospitality, encouragement- rather than an array of programs. Church programs can be helpful , and we will benefit from some, but we believe they must be downstream from our primary priorities. We don't want our church to turn into a spiritual drive-thru, a mere purveyor of religious goods and services. Our collective central identity, after all, is the whole gathering and not the small groupings. Because spiritual growth cannot be manufactured, we will orient congregational life around the **ordinary means of grace**, emphasizing personal initiative and life-on-life relationships – with corporate worship as both centerpiece and springboard for all we do."

III. The Church in Acts is a Missional Community. Acts 13:3

"Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off." Acts 13:3

There is a clear shift from Jerusalem to Antioch and from "Come to us" to "Go to them."

"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. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them and a great number who believed turned to the Lord." Acts 11:19-21

"And in Antioch, the disciples were first called Christians." Acts 11:26

"Though Jerusalem is not eclipsed, there is a sense in which Antioch functions as the 'mother church' for the Gentiles." Patrick Schreiner

"It is the first time we see a church intentionally sending out Christian workers with a mission to another location. Paul and Barnabas traveled to Cyprus, then to Pisidian Antioch, then to Iconium, then to Lystra, then to Derbe, and from there back through Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch, and then to Perga, and then back to Antioch in Syria..." Kevin DeYoung

"And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matthew 16:18

The Church must:

- a. Marvel at who God saves and brings together.
- b. Meet regularly to worship and to pray.

c. Move in mission when the Spirit says move

Bible Study Questions:

Comprehension Questions

These questions help ensure basic understanding of the content.

1. According to Acts 13:1, who were the leaders in the church at Antioch, and what is significant about their diversity?
 2. What specific role does the Holy Spirit play in Acts 13:2-3?
 3. What activities was the church in Antioch engaged in when the Holy Spirit spoke (v.2)?
 4. What happened after the church heard from the Holy Spirit (v.3)?
 5. What is the significance of the shift from Jerusalem to Antioch in Acts?
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Interpretation & Reflection Questions

These go deeper into the meaning and implications of the text.

6. How does the quote from Christopher Wright (“God has a church for His mission...”) challenge common assumptions about the church’s purpose?
 7. In what ways does Acts 13:1 demonstrate God’s sovereignty in forming His church?
 8. Why do you think God often speaks and leads in the context of worship and fasting, as seen in Acts 13:2?
 9. According to the lesson, what is the danger of prioritizing “busyness” over “faithfulness” in church life?
 10. How is the church’s identity rooted more in *who it is together* than in programs it offers?
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Application Questions

These encourage personal and group application.

11. How might your local church more fully reflect the diversity and intentionality seen in Acts 13:1?
12. What practical steps can you take to participate more actively in corporate worship, prayer, and fasting?

13. Are you listening for how the Holy Spirit might be leading you personally or your church to “go” in mission?
 14. What would it look like for your church to become more like Antioch—a sending, worshiping, Spirit-led church?
 15. How does your view of church change when you see it as “God’s miraculous, worshiping, and missional community”?
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Gospel Connection Questions

These help tie the teaching back to Jesus and His mission.

16. How does this passage display the ongoing mission of the risen Christ through His church?
 17. What encouragement do you draw from Jesus’ promise in Matthew 16:18 that the gates of hell will not prevail against the church?
 18. How does the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in Acts 13 point to God’s commitment to fulfill His redemptive plan?
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Group Discussion Prompts (Optional Additions)

Use these for dynamic group interaction.

- What do you think would happen if more churches emphasized prayer and worship as central to mission strategy?
- How do you personally respond to the idea that *“the church was made for mission – God’s mission”*?
- In what ways does your church already reflect the church in Acts 13? In what ways does it fall short?