

# How God Calls People to Global Mission: Lessons from Acts 13

Have you ever wondered how God calls people to mission work? Whether it's across the globe or across the street, God has a plan for using your life to reach others with His love. In Acts 13, we see the first organized missionary journey of the early church, and it reveals powerful principles about how God sends His people on mission.

## What Makes a Church Ready for Mission?

### The Greenhouse is God's House

The church in Antioch wasn't just any church - it was a thriving, diverse community of believers. This cosmopolitan city of 200,000 people was full of idolatry and immorality, yet God established a powerful church there. The leadership included men from vastly different backgrounds: Barnabas (a Jewish Levite from Cyprus), Simeon (possibly the man who carried Jesus' cross), Lucius (from North Africa), Manaen (a personal friend of Herod), and Saul (a rabbi from Tarsus).

This diversity in leadership shows us something important: God uses different people with different gifts working together for His glory. A healthy church knows Jesus, grows in Jesus, and goes for Jesus.

### The Foundation: Ministry to the Lord

Before these leaders could minister to others, they first ministered to the Lord through prayer and fasting. This is crucial - you can't give out what you don't already possess. Effective ministry for the Lord first comes through seeking the Lord.

Just like Moses spent time with God and came down glowing from that encounter, we need that devotional time with Jesus. When you cultivate your relationship with God, you're giving Him the opportunity to use you in His mission.

## How Does God Call People to Mission?

### Four Keys to Being Sent Out

#### Key 1: The Calling

While the leaders were fasting and praying, the Holy Spirit spoke: "Separate to me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." This wasn't likely an audible voice, but rather a strong impression that became clear to the leadership.

God had already called Paul on the road to Damascus, telling him he would testify before Gentiles and kings. But Paul had to wait 12 years, making tents in Tarsus, before this calling became the "call of now."

#### Key 2: The Confirming

The church fasted and prayed again, seeking confirmation of what they had heard. God often confirms His calling through other believers, circumstances, or His Word. What God speaks to your heart, He will often confirm in different ways.

#### Key 3: The Connection

They laid hands on Paul and Barnabas, connecting them with spiritual authority and power. This wasn't a controlling gesture but a covering one - the church was saying, "We're behind you with prayer and support."

#### Key 4: The Commissioning

Finally, they sent them away. Both the church leadership and the Holy Spirit were working together in this sending. Missions is never a renegade activity - it requires both individual calling and church accountability.

## What Questions Should I Ask About God's Calling?

### Three Essential Questions

Are you surrendered?

Before the calling forward in mission, there's always a falling down in submission. Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up and fell down saying "Woe is me" before God asked "Who will go for us?" Surrender comes before service.

Are you listening?

The Spirit of God will reveal the plan of God that's connected to the Word of God. Often as we're reading and praying through Scripture, something highlights and God speaks to our hearts about opportunities or directions.

Are you willing?

To hear is one thing, to do is another. There comes a point where you must walk by faith, trusting that where God calls, He equips, and where He equips, He will finish the work He started.

## Where Does God Usually Send People First?

### Two Primary Directions

When Paul and Barnabas were sent out, they chose to go to Cyprus - Barnabas's hometown. This reveals an important pattern: God often sends us either geographically (to places we're drawn to) or relationally (to our friends and family).

Jesus told the healed demoniac, "Go back and tell your friends and your family the great things that God has done for you." Sometimes the first mission field is the people who know us best.

## **The Strategy: Start Where You Are**

When Paul and Barnabas arrived in Cyprus, they didn't take vacation time - they got right to work. Paul used his background as a rabbi to gain access to local synagogues where he could share about Jesus as the Messiah.

They also brought John Mark with them, even though he wasn't specifically called. This shows the importance of taking others along when possible - not only for accountability but because God might use them later. (John Mark eventually wrote the Gospel of Mark!)

## **What If I Don't See Immediate Results?**

### **Even Paul Didn't Always See Converts**

As Paul and Barnabas traveled across Cyprus from Salamis to Paphos, we're not told about any converts in the first city. Even Paul didn't have people accept his message every time he shared the Gospel.

Sometimes Paul was beaten, stoned, and run out of town. Other times there was great revival. The key is remembering that you're the messenger - the results aren't dependent on you. You just go where God sends and share what He says.

## **Life Application**

God has a mission for your life, whether it's across the globe or across the street. The beautiful truth from Romans 10:15 is that God calls those who carry His message "beautiful" - your feet are beautiful in His eyes when you're empowered by the Holy Spirit and willing to share His love.

This week, commit to spending time in prayer and fasting, asking God where He wants to use you. Start by being faithful in sharing His love with those around you right now. Whether it's a neighbor, coworker, or family member, begin looking for opportunities to demonstrate Christ's love and share the Gospel.

Remember: if God calls you to global missions, you're simply taking what you're already doing locally and extending it further. But it all starts with surrender, listening, and willingness to say "Here I am, Lord - send me."

Questions for Reflection:

- Am I truly surrendered to God's will for my life, even if it means stepping out of my comfort zone?
- Am I actively listening for God's direction through prayer, Scripture, and the counsel of other believers?

- What fears or excuses am I using to avoid answering God's call to share His love with others?
- Who in my immediate circle of family, friends, or neighbors needs to hear about Jesus?