

## Paul's First Journey

**BIBLE PASSAGE:** Acts 13:1-3; 14:8-28

**MAIN POINT:** The Holy Spirit sent Paul and Barnabas to tell Jews and Gentiles about Jesus.

**KEY PASSAGE:** Acts 1:8

**BIG PICTURE QUESTION:** How do people hear about Jesus? God uses Christians to tell others about Jesus so they may repent and be saved.

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## Leader BIBLE STUDY

Jesus' followers preached the gospel in Jerusalem, and the good news spread to places like Judea and Samaria. More and more people believed, and new churches began as both Jews and Gentiles began to follow Jesus.

Barnabas went to Antioch—a city about 300 miles north of Jerusalem—where he brought Paul to help teach the believers. The church in Antioch grew. It was here that the disciples first became known as Christians. (See Acts 11:26.)

The Holy Spirit told the believers at the church in Antioch to send out Paul and Barnabas to preach the gospel. The church obeyed, and Paul and Barnabas traveled to several

cities and all over the island of Cyprus, telling both Jews and Gentiles about Jesus.

Consider Paul—once a devoted persecutor of Christians—now a Christian missionary, devoted to obeying God’s call to go and tell others the good news about Jesus. This was Paul’s first missionary journey, and it wasn’t easy. Paul and Barnabas faced rejection in every place that they traveled. Some of the people believed, but some of them were angry. Many people rejected the truth about Jesus. In some places, the Jews made plans to kill Paul.

In no place did Paul and Barnabas soften their message or abandon their mission. In Lystra, Paul healed a man, and when the witnesses to this miracle began to worship Paul and Barnabas, the two men emphatically gave credit to the one true God. When Paul’s enemies attacked him and left him for dead, Paul continued on. Paul and Barnabas shared the gospel in Derbe (DUHR bih), and many people believed.

The Holy Spirit sent Paul and Barnabas to tell Jews and Gentiles about Jesus. If Paul had not taken the gospel to the Gentiles, many of us would probably not be believers today. God uses people to tell others about Jesus so that people all over the world can be saved from their sin by trusting in Jesus as Lord and Savior.

# The BIBLE STORY

## Bible Storytelling Tips

## Paul's First Journey

*Acts 13:1-3; 14:8-28*

### • Display a map:

Show a map of Paul's missionary journeys. Trace Paul's first journey as you tell the Bible story. You may want to save the map to reuse in future sessions about Paul's other journeys.

**Saul, who became known by his Roman name, Paul, was with the church in Antioch. The Holy Spirit chose Paul and another believer, Barnabas, for a special work. So they obeyed and left Antioch to do the work. God led Paul and Barnabas to tell the good news about Jesus to not only the Jews, but the Gentiles—or people who were not Jews.**

**Paul and Barnabas traveled to Lystra (LISS truh), and Paul healed a man there who was lame; the man had never been able to walk. The people saw what Paul had done, and they thought Paul and Barnabas were gods! They began to worship them, but Paul and Barnabas tore their clothes and shouted, “No! We are not gods. We are men just like you! We want to tell you the good news of God.”**

**Then some people showed up from Antioch and Iconium (igh KOH nih uhm), cities where Paul and Barnabas had preached about Jesus. These people caused trouble so that the people in Lystra turned against Paul and Barnabas too. They threw stones at Paul and dragged him out of the city. They thought he was dead, but the believers in Lystra gathered around Paul, and he got up.**

**The next day, Paul and Barnabas went to the city of Derbe (DUHR bih). They told people there about Jesus, and many people believed. Then they went back to Lystra and to Iconium. They encouraged the believers there to continue in the faith. They told the believers that they would face suffering because they believed in Jesus. Paul and Barnabas also chose leaders for the churches there.**

**Finally, Paul and Barnabas returned to the church at Antioch. They reported everything God had done on their journey and how God had helped them share the good news with the Gentiles.**

*Christ Connection: Paul and Barnabas faced many people who rejected the good news about Jesus. But God had a plan for Paul to share the gospel with Gentiles, no matter what troubles Paul faced. Many believed in Jesus. The church grew and the gospel was shared so that people all over the world could be saved from their sin by trusting in Jesus as Lord and Savior.*

# Introduce the STORY

**SESSION TITLE:** Paul's First Journey

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**MAIN POINT:** The Holy Spirit sent Paul and Barnabas to tell Jews and Gentiles about Jesus.

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## Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to help new kids connect to your group. As kids arrive, ask them about a long trip they have been on. Where did they go? Why did they go there? How long were they gone?

**SAY** • People take trips for many different reasons and go to many different places. Sometimes people travel for work, and other times they travel to relax on vacation. Today we will hear a story about two men who traveled to spread the gospel of Jesus!

## Activity page (5 minutes)

- “Go and Grow” activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the “Go and Grow” activity page. Instruct kids to list or draw pictures of as many things that grow as they can think of. Let the kids share what they came up with. Who has the most? Does anyone have anything written down that no one else thought of?

**SAY** • Lots of things grow. Our bodies grow, and so do plants. The church grows too as new people believe in Jesus. Our story today is about men who spread the gospel to help the church grow!

## Session starter (10 minutes)

### OPTION 1: Globe toss

Invite the kids to sit together on the ground. Toss an inflatable globe around. After each kid catches it, she must look to see which country her left thumb is closest to, and come up with a mode of transportation that starts with the same letter as the country, saying for example, “I paddled to Peru,” or “I swam to Switzerland.” Toss the globe until each kid has had a chance to catch it.

**SAY** • The world is a very big place, and there are lots of people living all around the globe. Part of the Great Commission is going all over the world to share about Jesus. Today our story is about one of the earliest missionary journeys. Where do you think the missionaries went?

### OPTION 2: According to the plan

Read aloud step by step instructions to draw something. Give the kids paper and pencils to follow along. Afterward, see if anyone’s drawing looks like what you were imagining.

Suggested instructions: Draw a large circle. Above that circle, draw a smaller circle. Above that circle, draw an even smaller circle. Draw a triangle and two dots in the smallest circle. Draw a curved line under the triangle. Does it look like a snowman?

**SAY** • Sometimes following instructions can seem hard when you don’t know the end goal. Today we will hear about two men who obeyed God even when they didn’t know exactly where He would lead them next.



• inflatable globe

• paper  
• pencils

## Transition to teach the story

## Big picture question (1 minute)

**LEADER** • We have a big picture question: *How do people hear about Jesus?* Do you remember the answer? [Allow responses.] Exactly! *God uses Christians to tell others about Jesus so they may repent and be saved.*

## Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline or big story circle.

**LEADER** • Last week we learned about Paul's conversion.

He went from hating Christians, to being one! **Jesus saved Saul from his sin and chose him to spread the gospel.** This week we are going to hear about the first time Paul went on a missionary Journey and what happened to him on the way. Our story is called "Paul's First Journey."

• Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle

## Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Acts 13:1-3; 14:8-28. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story.

**LEADER** • Soon after Paul became a believer, he was staying with the church in Antioch. Antioch became a kind of "base of operations" for Paul, kind of like our port or harbor is for my exploration ship. Barnabas was another Christian in Antioch, and the Holy Spirit told the church that Paul and Barnabas would be set

• Bibles  
• Big Picture Question Poster  
• Bible Story Picture Poster

apart for a special journey. They obeyed, and went all over the place!

Paul and Barnabas went to a city in Asia that was also called Antioch. Next, they traveled to Iconium (igh KOH nih uhm), Lystra (LISS truh), and Derbe. In each city, they would go to the synagogue, where Jews would gather to hear the Scripture read. There, they would talk to Jews about Jesus and explain that He is the Messiah. They would tell people that believing in Jesus is the only way to be saved from sin. Some of the Jews believed the gospel, but many did not. Because many of the Jews rejected Paul's message, he began to preach to Gentiles, or non-Jews. **The Holy Spirit sent Paul and Barnabas to tell Jews and Gentiles about Jesus.**

Paul and Barnabas preached to all kinds of people. Some even thought Paul and Barnabas were false Greek gods! Paul and Barnabas explained that they were just men, sent by God to preach about Jesus. No matter what, Paul and Barnabas were faithful to tell people about Jesus so they could be saved from sin, too. *How do people hear about Jesus? God uses Christians to tell others about Jesus so they may repent and be saved.*

## Christ connection

**LEADER** • Paul and Barnabas faced many people who rejected the good news about Jesus. But God had a plan for Paul to share the gospel with Gentiles, no matter what troubles Paul faced. Many believed in Jesus. The church grew and the gospel was shared so that people all over the world could be saved from

become a Christian.  
Make sure kids know  
when and where they  
can ask questions.

their sin by trusting in Jesus as Lord and Savior.

### **Key passage (5 minutes)**

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Acts 1:8.

• Key Passage  
Poster

**LEADER** • This verse contains the last recorded words Jesus spoke to His disciples before returning to heaven to be with God the Father. Jesus was telling His disciples their mission. They would go to the end of the earth as Jesus' witnesses. A *witness* is a person who has seen, heard, or experienced something firsthand and tells others about it. To be Jesus' witness means to tell others about the wonderful things Jesus has done in your life and through you!

Lead boys and girls in singing "To the End of the Earth."

### **Discussion starter (4 minutes)**

**LEADER** • Paul and Barnabas were missionaries. **The Holy Spirit sent Paul and Barnabas to tell Jews and Gentiles about Jesus.** But you don't have to be called by God specifically to be a missionary to live your life on mission for the gospel.

Discuss with kids what it means to be a missionary. How is that different from living "on mission"? Who can they tell about Jesus this week? How can they support missionaries who have been called to other countries?

**LEADER** • In addition to calling people to go out with the gospel, God also calls people to send others. We can send others in many ways. We can give money to help support them, we can give gifts to encourage

them, and we can pray that God will give them the boldness and courage they need to share the gospel even in the face of danger. We share the gospel so that others may be saved. ***How do people hear about Jesus? God uses Christians to tell others about Jesus so they may repent and be saved.***

### **Pray (2 minutes)**

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

**LEADER** • God, thank You for Your awesome plans. Help us to live on mission for You. Give us courage to share the gospel anywhere we go. We love You. Amen.

### **Dismiss to apply the story**

# Apply the STORY

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## Key passage activity (5 minutes)

• Key Passage  
Poster

Say the key passage using the hand motions from the week prior. After saying the verse once or twice, play a charades-like game where you do the hand motions and the kids tell you the phrase of the verse that goes with each motion. Then take volunteers to say the verse with the motions from memory.

**SAY** • Jesus spoke the words of our key passage before He went back to heaven to be with God. Jesus was not only telling His disciples what to do, but how to do it. They were to go into the whole world by the power of the Holy Spirit. They were told to start close to their homes and work their way outward. We can do the same thing by sharing the gospel with the people who live near us and working our way out until the whole world hears!

## Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

• Bibles, 1 per kid  
• Main Point Poster  
• tennis ball

Distribute a Bible to each kid. Help the kids find Acts 13:1-3; 14:8-28. Ask a series of review questions, encouraging the kids to find the answers in their Bibles. Toss a tennis ball to kids you want to answer. If the kid who

catches the ball does not know the answer, he can toss the ball to someone else. After each question, the ball will be tossed back to you before the next question is read.

Questions:

1. Why did Paul and Barnabas go on the journey? (*The Holy Spirit set them apart for work, Acts 13:2*)
2. What did Paul do in Lystra? (*healed a man who couldn't walk, Acts 14:8-10*)
3. Who did the people of Lystra think Paul and Barnabas were? (*the Greek gods Hermes and Zeus, Acts 14:11-12*)
4. How did Paul and Barnabas react when the people wanted to offer sacrifices to them? (*They tore their robes and told the people they were just men, not gods; Acts 14:14-15*)
5. What did the Jews from Antioch and Iconium do? (*convinced the people in Lystra to stone Paul and drag him out of the city, Acts 14:19*)
6. What did Paul and Barnabas tell the disciples afterward? (*It is necessary to go through hardships for God, Acts 14:22*)

**SAY • The Holy Spirit sent Paul and Barnabas to tell Jews and Gentiles about Jesus.** They faced many hardships, and Paul was almost killed for preaching about Jesus, but they obeyed God. They knew that obeying God was worth the hardships they faced, and they cared more about sharing the gospel than they did about their own comfort or safety.

God wants all believers to live on mission and tell others about Jesus. We don't always know what trials we may face, but we know God is with us.

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

**LOW PREP**

- book or website about global missions
- globe (optional)

## Activity choice (10 minutes)

**OPTION 1:** Think global

Use a book about global missions or search online for information about places where people are unreached with the gospel or the church is heavily persecuted. Consider using a globe to help the kids visualize where the church exists and where people are trying to stop it from growing.

Then, spend some time with your kids praying that God will strengthen the persecuted church and give believers boldness to preach the truth even in the face of danger. Ask God to grow His kingdom and save more people.

**SAY • The Holy Spirit sent Paul and Barnabas to tell**

**Jews and Gentiles about Jesus**, and they faced many dangers as a result of the work God called them to. All over the world there are Christians who face incredible difficulties because of their faith. We can pray that God will give them strength and courage through hard times. God used hard times to strengthen the church in Bible times, and still does that today.

**OPTION 2:** Around the world

Use paper wads as basketballs and a small trash can as a basketball hoop. Place the trash can in the center of the room, and mark spots around the trash can with the names of different cities in Paul and Barnabas' first journey, such as Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Pisidia, Pamphylia, Perga, or Attalia. Allow the kids to take turns shooting baskets from each spot in the room. Each time they make a basket, they must move onto the next "city" and shoot from there. The first kid to make it all the way back to the first city, and make a shot from that city, wins.

- paper wads
- small trash can
- paper
- markers
- tape

**SAY • The Holy Spirit sent Paul and Barnabas to tell Jews and Gentiles about Jesus.** They traveled to many different cities and faced many different trials and hardships for the sake of the gospel. They cared more about seeing God’s glory spread in the world than they did for their own comfort or safety. What do you think the world would look like today if all believers put God’s glory first? We can share the gospel anywhere we are. People need Jesus even in our own town! Let’s pray that God gives us boldness to share with people we meet, and that one day, if He calls us, we will travel all over the world for His kingdom to grow.

### **Journal and prayer (5 minutes)**

Distribute each child’s journal. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

Make sure each child secures this week’s sheet in the journal, and then collect them. Keep the journals in the classroom so they will be available every week or as often as you wish to use them.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

- pencils and crayons
- Journal Page
- Bible Story Coloring Page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week’s *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.