

Paul's First Journey **decide whether to use Jesus the Messiah or Christ and correct thru-out**

Scripture Passage: Acts 12:25-14:28

Memory Verse: Acts 13:32-33a "We are telling you the good news. What God promised our people long ago he has done for us, their children. He has raised up Jesus.

Beliefs:

Actions:

Materials

*additional passage versions & reference passages are included at the end of the lesson plan	maps map markers for each group cup of lemonade page per group napkin or bandana
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Main Teaching Passage: Acts 12:25-14:28

Barnabas and Saul finished their task. Then they returned from Jerusalem. They took John Mark with them. ¹³ 1 In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers. Among them were Barnabas, Simeon, and Lucius from Cyrene. Simeon was also called Niger. Another was Manaen. He had been brought up with Herod, the ruler of Galilee. Saul was among them too. 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit spoke. "Set apart Barnabas and Saul for me," he said. "I have appointed them to do special work." 3 The prophets and teachers fasted and prayed. They placed their hands on Barnabas and Saul. Then they sent them off.

Events on Cyprus

4 Barnabas and Saul were sent on their way by the Holy Spirit. They went down to Seleucia. From there they sailed to Cyprus. 5 They arrived at Salamis. There they preached God's word in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper.

6 They traveled all across the island until they came to Paphos. There they met a Jew named Bar-Jesus. He was an evil magician and a false prophet. 7 He was an attendant of Sergius Paulus, the governor. Paulus was a man of understanding. He sent for Barnabas and Saul. He wanted to hear God's word. 8 But the evil magician named Elymas opposed them. The name Elymas means Magician. He tried to keep the governor from becoming a believer. 9 Saul was also known as Paul. He was filled with the Holy Spirit. He looked straight at Elymas. He said to him, 10 "You are a child of the devil! You are an enemy of everything that is right! You cheat people. You use all kinds of tricks. Won't you ever stop twisting the right ways of the Lord? 11 Now the Lord's hand is against you. You are going to go blind. For a while you won't even be able to see the light of the sun."

Right away mist and darkness came over him. He tried to feel his way around. He wanted to find someone to lead him by the hand. 12 When the governor saw what had happened, he believed. He was amazed at what Paul was teaching about the Lord.

Paul Preaches in Pisidian Antioch

13 From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia. There John Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem. 14 From Perga they went on to Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath day they entered the synagogue and sat down. 15 The Law and the Prophets were read aloud. Then the leaders of the synagogue sent word to Paul and his companions. They said, "Brothers, do you have any words of instruction for the people? If you do, please speak."

16 Paul stood up and motioned with his hand. Then he said, "Fellow Israelites, and you Gentiles who worship God, listen to me! 17 The God of Israel chose our people who lived long ago. He blessed them greatly while they were in Egypt. With his mighty power he led them out of that country. 18 He put up with their behavior for about 40 years in the desert. 19 And he destroyed seven nations in Canaan. Then he gave the land to his people as their rightful share. 20 All this took about 450 years.

"After this, God gave them judges until the time of Samuel the prophet. 21 Then the people asked for a king. He gave them Saul, son of Kish. Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin. He ruled for 40 years. 22 God removed him and made David their king. Here is God's witness about him. 'David, son of Jesse, is a man dear to my heart,' he said. 'David will do everything I want him to do.'

23 "From this man's family line God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus. This is what he had promised. 24 Before Jesus came, John preached that we should turn away from our sins and be baptized. He preached this to all Israel. 25 John was coming to the end of his work. 'Who do you suppose I am?' he said. 'I am not the one you are looking for. But there is someone coming after me. I am not good enough to untie his sandals.'

26 "Listen, fellow children of Abraham! Listen, you Gentiles who worship God! This message of salvation has been sent to us. 27 The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus. By finding him guilty, they made the prophets' words come true. These are read every Sabbath day. 28 The people and their rulers had no reason at all for sentencing Jesus to death. But they asked Pilate to have him killed. 29 They did everything that had been written about Jesus. Then they took him down from the cross. They laid him in a tomb. 30 But God raised him from the dead. 31 For many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. Now they are telling our people about Jesus.

32 "We are telling you the good news. What God promised our people long ago 33 he has done for us, their children. He has raised up Jesus. This is what is written in the second Psalm. It says,

" 'You are my son.

Today I have become your father.' (Psalm 2:7)

34 God raised Jesus from the dead. He will never rot in the grave. As God has said,

" 'Holy and sure blessings were promised to David.

I will give them to you.' (Isaiah 55:3)

35 In another place it also says,

“ ‘You will not let your holy one rot away.’ (Psalm 16:10)

36 “David carried out God’s purpose while he lived. Then he died. He was buried with his people. His body rotted away. 37 But the one whom God raised from the dead did not rot away.

38 “My friends, here is what I want you to know. I announce to you that your sins can be forgiven because of what Jesus has done. 39 Through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin. Moses’ law could not make you right in God’s eyes. 40 Be careful! Don’t let what the prophets spoke about happen to you. They said,

41 “ ‘Look, you who make fun of the truth!

Wonder and die!

I am going to do something in your days
that you would never believe.

You wouldn’t believe it even if someone told you.’ ” (Habakkuk 1:5)

42 Paul and Barnabas started to leave the synagogue. The people invited them to say more about these things on the next Sabbath day. 43 The people were told they could leave the service. Many Jews followed Paul and Barnabas. Many Gentiles who faithfully worshiped the God of the Jews did the same. Paul and Barnabas talked with them. They tried to get them to keep living in God’s grace.

44 On the next Sabbath day, almost the whole city gathered. They gathered to hear the word of the Lord. 45 When the Jews saw the crowds, they became very jealous. They began to disagree with what Paul was saying. They said evil things against him.

46 Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly. “We had to speak God’s word to you first,” they said. “But you don’t accept it. You don’t think you are good enough for eternal life. So now we are turning to the Gentiles. 47 This is what the Lord has commanded us to do. He said,

“ ‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles.

You will bring salvation to the whole earth.’ ” (Isaiah 49:6)

48 When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad. They honored the word of the Lord. All who were appointed for eternal life believed.

49 The word of the Lord spread through the whole area. 50 But the Jewish leaders stirred up the important women who worshiped God. They also stirred up the men who were leaders in the city. The Jewish leaders tried to get the women and men to attack Paul and Barnabas. They threw Paul and Barnabas out of that area. 51 Paul and Barnabas shook the dust off their feet. This was a warning to the people who had opposed them. Then Paul and Barnabas went on to Iconium. 52 The believers were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Paul and Barnabas Preach in Iconium

14 At Iconium, Paul and Barnabas went into the Jewish synagogue as usual. They spoke there with great power. Large numbers of Jews and Greeks became believers. 2 But the Jews who re-

fused to believe stirred up some of the Gentiles who were there. They turned them against the two men and the new believers. 3 So Paul and Barnabas spent a lot of time there. They spoke boldly for the Lord. He gave them the ability to do signs and wonders. In this way the Lord showed that they were telling the truth about his grace. 4 The people of the city did not agree with one another. Some were on the side of the Jews. Others were on the side of the apostles. 5 Jews and Gentiles alike planned to treat Paul and Barnabas badly. Their leaders agreed. They planned to kill them by throwing stones at them. 6 But Paul and Barnabas found out about the plan. They escaped to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding area. 7 There they continued to preach the good news.

Paul Preaches in Lystra

8 In Lystra there sat a man who couldn't walk. He hadn't been able to use his feet since the day he was born. 9 He listened as Paul spoke. Paul looked right at him. He saw that the man had faith to be healed. 10 So he called out, "Stand up on your feet!" Then the man jumped up and began to walk.

11 The crowd saw what Paul had done. They shouted in the Lycaonian language. "The gods have come down to us in human form!" they exclaimed. 12 They called Barnabas Zeus. Paul was the main speaker. So they called him Hermes. 13 Just outside the city was the temple of the god Zeus. The priest of Zeus brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates. He and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas.

14 But the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard about this. So they tore their clothes. They rushed out into the crowd. They shouted, 15 "Friends, why are you doing this? We are only human, just like you. We are bringing you good news. Turn away from these worthless things. Turn to the living God. He is the one who made the heavens and the earth and the sea. He made everything in them. 16 In the past, he let all nations go their own way. 17 But he has given proof of what he is like. He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven. He gives you crops in their seasons. He provides you with plenty of food. He fills your hearts with joy." 18 Paul and Barnabas told them all these things. But they had trouble keeping the crowd from offering sacrifices to them.

19 Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium. They won the crowd over to their side. They threw stones at Paul. They thought he was dead, so they dragged him out of the city. 20 The believers gathered around Paul. Then he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.

Paul and Barnabas Return to Antioch

21 Paul and Barnabas preached the good news in the city of Derbe. They won large numbers of followers. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch. 22 There they helped the believers gain strength. They told them to remain faithful to what they had been taught. "We must go through many hard times to enter God's kingdom," they said. 23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church. The elders had trusted in the Lord. Paul and Barnabas prayed and fasted. They placed the elders in the Lord's care. 24 After going through Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas came into Pamphylia. 25 They preached the good news in Perga. Then they went down to Attalia.

26 From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch. In Antioch they had been put in God's care to preach the good news. They had now completed the work God had given them to do. 27 When they arrived at Antioch, they gathered the church together. They reported all that God had done

through them. They told how he had opened a way for the Gentiles to believe. 28 And they stayed there a long time with the believers.

Large Group Worship - 15 minutes

2 songs as closely related in theme as possible

- Family Service Project Info
 - Small Group Challenge: Raise your hand if you worked on your verse this week and you know it in your heart!!
 - Awesome! I'm excited to find out how many people learned it this week!!! Be sure to update the graph in your room.
 - Dismiss to small groups.
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Opening Illustration - 5 minutes: Lemonade Character

- What is this? *cup of lemonade*
 - What do we expect to come out of this cup? *a drink*
 - Do you know what to expect it to taste and look like? *accept answers*
 - Let's see! I need someone who learned last week's verse to help me.
 - have student take a sip of the drink
 - Is this what you expected to be? *accept answers*
 - Put the cup under a napkin or behind your back and tell the kiddos it's undergoing a magical transformation!
 - Present it to them again with an excited face and voice. Say - Now the lemonade has become milk! It decided it wanted to be a NEW kind of drink that is healthy and makes your teeth strong, isn't that great?!
 - Ask - What do you think? Should we see how great it tastes?
 - Ask another child who learned the verse to taste it.
 - Ask - What do you think? Is it milk now?
 - look at it, taste it, smack your lips, test your teeth
 - Say - Hmmm have you ever known someone who says they've changed and you're not sure if it's true or not? Let's keep our lemonade in mind as we move on to our lesson.

Teaching

- Review background of the book of Acts
 - Who wrote it: Luke
 - Who was it for: Theophilus & other Christians who would read it
 - What was it about: living life as a Christian without Jesus, but with the Holy Spirit
- Review last week's lesson:
 - Ask - Who can tell me super quickly about Paul?
 - Saul, Jew, formerly hater of Christians because didn't believe Jesus was the Messiah, super educated, light on the road/Jesus, Ananias, became a Christian, God had a big God Job for him

PreK - 1st Grade

- Give children something to put on the map to mark each of the cities where Paul stopped.
- Have them add it as you get to that location.

2nd Grade - 5th Grade

- Use a main classroom map as well as a smaller map for each child to mark as you teach.

- Say - Last week we left Saul as a new Christian in Damascus. Let's hear some of what he does over the next few years.
 - Saul began preaching the truth of Jesus as Messiah right away and many people believed, but some were not sure whether they could believe him or not because of who he had been before. Finally, some people planned to kill him. He escaped because the night his friends put him in a basket and lowered him down the big wall surrounding the city.
 - When he got to Jerusalem the same thing happened! The people there didn't know which side he was on. Was he a Christian and they shouldn't be afraid of him OR was he an Orthodox

Jew being sneaky to catch them? And the Orthodox Jews didn't know if he was telling lies about Jesus against God or if he was tricking the Christians. No one trusted him!

- Finally his friend, Barnabas, took him to the Apostles and told them all about what had happened and that Saul REALLY was a Christian! Saul started preaching and teaching some other Jews about Jesus as Messiah and made them really mad so they tried to kill him. Friends helped him to escape again to Tarsus.
- Some Christians had escaped Jerusalem and gone to Antioch around the same time and were sharing the Good News about Jesus. Many people became Christians there! The Apostles heard about it and sent Barnabas to Antioch to teach them even more. After he'd been there a little while he decided to go to Tarsus, get Saul, and bring him back to Antioch to help teach the new Christians and tell others about Jesus. After the church members started being missionaries themselves Barnabas and Saul went back to Jerusalem.
- Say - So, you can see Saul didn't waste any time getting started on his God Job! He was telling everyone he met about Jesus the Messiah! He even almost got himself killed a few times - and that won't be the end of that happening. Oh man. He has some skills for making people angry!
- Say - Tonight we are going to learn about the first BIG trip Saul goes on to teach others about Jesus. We're going to need maps! (pass out maps, etc)
- Read Acts 12:25-13:3

Barnabas and Saul finished their task. Then they returned from Jerusalem. They took John Mark with them. 13 1 In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers. Among them were Barnabas, Simeon, and Lucius from Cyrene. Simeon was also called Niger. Another was Manaen. He had been brought up with Herod, the ruler of Galilee. Saul was among them too. 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit spoke. "Set apart Barnabas and Saul for me," he said. "I have appointed them to do special work." 3 The prophets and teachers fasted and prayed. They placed their hands on Barnabas and Saul. Then they sent them off.

- Ask - How did the church at Antioch know what to do? *worshiping, fasting, praying*
 - Say - That's right. They were paying attention to what the Holy Spirit told them by worshiping God, probably with music and teaching. They were fasting so that they could pay better attention and they were praying. They also paid attention to those people in their church who had the Spiritual Gifts of prophecy and teaching.
- Say - The church prayed for Barnabas and Saul and sent them on their way to do what God told them to do.

- First, they walked to Seleucia, a city on the water, so they could sail to the island of Cyprus. (Have students draw a boat at Seleucia or between there and Cyprus.) It's about 150 miles long and 40 miles wide. They started at one end in Salamis and traveled teaching about Jesus all the way across to Paphos. This is what happened there.

13:6 They traveled all across the island until they came to Paphos. There they met a Jew named Bar-Jesus. He was an evil magician and a false prophet. 7 He was an attendant of Sergius Paulus, the governor. Paulus was a man of understanding. He sent for Barnabas and Saul. He wanted to hear God's word. 8 But the evil magician named Elymas opposed them. The name Elymas means Magician. He tried to keep the governor from becoming a believer. 9 Saul was also known as Paul. He was filled with the Holy Spirit. He looked straight at Elymas. He said to him, 10 "You are a child of the devil! You are an enemy of everything that is right! You cheat people. You use all kinds of tricks. Won't you ever stop twisting the right ways of the Lord? 11 Now the Lord's hand is against you. You are going to go blind. For a while you won't even be able to see the light of the sun."

Right away mist and darkness came over him. He tried to feel his way around. He wanted to find someone to lead him by the hand. 12 When the governor saw what had happened, he believed. He was amazed at what Paul was teaching about the Lord.

- Whoa! There was a false prophet, a lie teller, who was trying to keep his boss, Sergius Paulus, from learning about Jesus and becoming a Christian! Paul, this is the first time we hear this name for Saul, looks straight at him and says, "You're evil! Now the Lord is against you and you're going to be blind for a while!" and right away the evil man did! And what happened next? *his boss believed in Jesus because of the miracle*
- Ask - Who else can you think of became blind and then believed in Jesus? *Saul-Paul*
 - We don't know if the evil man decided to believe in Jesus or not, but I hope he did.
 - (Have students draw blind eyes or something similar on the island of Cyprus to represent this miracle.)
- After this Paul, Barnabas, and John sailed to Perga, Pamphylia. John went back to Jerusalem then and they kept going to Pisidian Antioch in Galatia. (Acts 13:13-52)
- One Sabbath they were at the Synagogue to worship and the leaders asked them to speak.

Meta-Narrative Link

Paul got up and told them all about the whole story of Jesus, starting with Abraham! He told them all the way through God calling his people and saving them to Jesus being born, working miracles and teaching, to his dying on the cross. He told them most of the Jews in Jerusalem didn't believe that Jesus

was the Messiah and he told them he hoped they believed.

- As they were leaving the people invited them to speak again the next week and some of them followed Paul and Barnabas and kept asking them questions!
- The next week almost the whole city had gathered at church to hear about Jesus! How do you think the Jewish leaders felt about it? *angry, jealous*
- The leaders began to argue with what Paul was saying and saying ugly things.
- Paul and Barnabas answered back that, "We had to tell you the truth about Jesus first since you are Jews (God's chosen people), but since you don't accept him we will go to the Gentiles! (everyone who isn't a Jew by birth is a Gentile)
- The Gentiles were super excited! Paul and Barnabas kept teaching the Gentiles and some of the Jews too. Finally some of Jews who were leaders of the city got them kicked out of town. Paul and Barnabas shook the dust of the city from their sandals as a warning that they were not responsible for what the people believed. *Verse 52 tells us something interesting...*

13:52 (NIV) The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

- Were Paul & Barnie angry that they "failed" with the Jews or that the Jews refused to believe them? No! They had done the job God gave them to do and celebrated that the Gentiles got to hear the Good News of Jesus and be Christians too! They didn't focus on what they could have perceived as unfair or wrong. They understood each person has to make their own choice about belief in Jesus and that not only will some people not believe, some of those people will try to hurt people who do.
- Paul and Barnie went to Iconium next (Acts 14:1-7) where the things go pretty well the same. They preach at the Synagogue, lots of people - both Jews and Greeks (Gentiles) are excited and believe in Jesus the Messiah/Christ. Some Jews refused to believe, convinced other Jews and Gentiles to get mad. Paul and Barnie remained there teaching anyway until some of the new Believers heard there was a plan to stone them so they ran out of the city.
- The next stop was the city of Lystra (Acts 14:8-20). This is a city where we don't see record of them teaching in a synagogue, but it does say the people there worshipped the Greek gods

check word
study with
maddie

we refer to in mythology, remember Zeus? I bet you remember Thor from the movies! He is supposed to be Zeus's son.

- Anyway, one day Paul was teaching and he noticed a handicapped man listening. Paul could tell he believed the Good News of Jesus and healed his legs so that the man could walk as a way of showing everyone the power of Jesus. Of course the man was excited, but so were the others! They thought Paul was Zeus in person and Paul was Hermes (Hermes was known as the spokesperson for the gods and Paul was doing the preaching & healing.) The people went and got bulls to sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas and wreaths to give them to honor them!!
- Paul freaked out and finally convinced the people they were just men, not gods, and especially not those gods! They were there to share the love of the One True God! How frustrating!
- Then the angry leaders from Iconium, the last city they'd been in, showed up and convinced the people to stone (kill by throwing stones at them, usually in a pit) Paul! The people quit throwing stones when they thought he was dead.
- Thankfully, some of the new Believers from Iconium also came and Paul wasn't dead, just really hurt. Paul and the Believers dragged Paul out of town and to the next city.
- Again in Derbe we don't see a synagogue (Acts 14:21), but we do see Gentiles accepting the love and forgiveness of Jesus the Messiah.
- After Paul and Paul wrap up in Derbe they head back home stopping in the cities where people became Believers (Acts 14:21-26). They stay in each town a little while to teach more and appoint some of the Believers as Elders to help lead the new churches. Paul and Paul also taught a very important lesson. Look at verse 22.
22 There they helped the believers gain strength. They told them to remain faithful to what they had been taught. "We must go through many hard times to enter God's kingdom," they said.
- Does our life turn super easy when we become a Christian and the Holy Spirit moves in? Do we not get angry any more and everything is always fair and great? *No*.
- We still struggle with sin and Jesus even told his disciples that things would get even LESS fair when we follow Him because of our new big rule. Can you remember the 1 new rule Jesus replaced all the old rules with? *Love everyone, all the time*
 - That's good for us to remember too. Life as a follower of Christ is hardwork.
- Finally, Paul and Paul stop in another city, Perga, to share the Good News of Jesus the Messiah, people believe, and finally they sail from Attalia back to Antioch in Syria.
- When they get home, about 2 years later, (Acts 14:26-28) they gathered all the Believers, told them all about their Journey, and that God had begun working in the Gentiles.
- Ask - Do you think Jesus's instruction in Matthew 28 still applies to us? *yes*
- Ask - Ok, so what can we learn from Paul and Paul's Journey to share the Good News of Jesus the Messiah? *accept answers and help with ordinary life application*

Scripture Memory

- Spend a few moments creating motions or a rhythm to go with the bible verse.
 - Session Verse:
Acts 13:32-33a "We are telling you the good news. What God promised our people long ago he has done for us, their children. He has raised up Jesus.
 - Theme Verse:
Matthew 28:19 So you must go and make disciples of all nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Application Activities - 20 minutes:

Wrap Up

- Say - Tonight we learned all about Paul and Barnabas's first Journey to tell people, Jews and Gentiles, about Jesus the Messiah.
 - Say - Next week we will learn about Paul's second Journey.
Be sure to send home their Family Page and Personal Study materials.
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Family Component

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Personal Study

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Related Sources:

Additional Passages

Main Teaching Passage: Acts 12:25-14:28 (NIV)

25 When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, they returned from[a] Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark. 13 1 Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

On Cyprus

4 The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. 5 When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper.

6 They traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos. There they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, 7 who was an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The proconsul, an intelligent man, sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God. 8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith. 9 Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, 10 "You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? 11 Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind for a time, not even able to see the light of the sun."

Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand. 12 When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.

In Pisidian Antioch

13 From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem. 14 From Perga they went on to Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down. 15 After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the leaders of the synagogue sent word to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have a word of exhortation for the people, please speak."

16 Standing up, Paul motioned with his hand and said: "Fellow Israelites and you Gentiles who worship God, listen to me! 17 The God of the people of Israel chose our ancestors; he made the people prosper during their stay in Egypt; with mighty power he led them out of that country; 18 for about forty years he endured their conduct[b] in the wilderness; 19 and he overthrew seven nations in Canaan, giving their land to his people as their inheritance. 20 All this took about 450 years.

"After this, God gave them judges until the time of Samuel the prophet. 21 Then the people asked for a king, and he gave them Saul son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, who ruled forty years. 22 After removing Saul, he made David their king. God testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.'

23 "From this man's descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised. 24 Before the coming of Jesus, John preached repentance and baptism to all the people of Israel.

25 As John was completing his work, he said: 'Who do you suppose I am? I am not the one you are looking for. But there is one coming after me whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.'

26 "Fellow children of Abraham and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent. 27 The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath. 28 Though they found no proper ground for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed. 29 When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the cross and laid him in a tomb. 30 But God raised him from the dead, 31 and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people.

32 "We tell you the good news: What God promised our ancestors 33 he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm:

"'You are my son;
today I have become your father.'[c]

34 God raised him from the dead so that he will never be subject to decay. As God has said,

"'I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.'[d]

35 So it is also stated elsewhere:

"'You will not let your holy one see decay.'[e]

36 "Now when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his ancestors and his body decayed. 37 But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay.

38 "Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. 39 Through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses. 40 Take care that what the prophets have said does not happen to you:

41 "'Look, you scoffers,
wonder and perish,
for I am going to do something in your days
that you would never believe,
even if someone told you.'[f]"

42 As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath. 43 When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.

44 On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. 45 When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him.

46 Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. 47 For this is what the Lord has commanded us:

"I have made you[g] a light for the Gentiles,
that you[h] may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'[i]"

48 When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.

49 The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. 50 But the Jewish leaders incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. 51 So they shook the dust off their feet as a warning to them and went to Iconium. 52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

In Iconium

14 At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Greeks believed. 2 But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the other Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. 3 So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders. 4 The people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles. 5 There was a plot afoot among both Gentiles and Jews, together with their leaders, to mistreat them and stone them. 6 But they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding country, 7 where they continued to preach the gospel.

In Lystra and Derbe

8 In Lystra there sat a man who was lame. He had been that way from birth and had never walked. 9 He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed 10 and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk.

11 When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" 12 Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker. 13 The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them.

14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: 15 "Friends, why are you doing this? We too are only human, like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them. 16 In the past, he let all nations go their own way. 17 Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy." 18 Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them.

19 Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead. 20 But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.

The Return to Antioch in Syria

21 They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, 22 strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said. 23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders[j] for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust. 24 After going through Pisidia, they came into Pamphylia, 25 and when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.

26 From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. 27 On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. 28 And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

Main Teaching Passage: Acts 12:25-14:28 (MSG)

12:25 Barnabas and Saul, once they had delivered the relief offering to the church in Jerusalem, went back to Antioch. This time they took John with them, the one they called Mark.

Barnabas, Saul, and Doctor Know-It-All

13 1-2 The congregation in Antioch was blessed with a number of prophet-preachers and teachers:

Barnabas,
Simon, nicknamed Niger,
Lucius the Cyrenian,
Manaen, an advisor to the ruler Herod,
Saul.

One day as they were worshiping God—they were also fasting as they waited for guidance—the Holy Spirit spoke: "Take Barnabas and Saul and commission them for the work I have called them to do."

3 So they commissioned them. In that circle of intensity and obedience, of fasting and praying, they laid hands on their heads and sent them off.

4-5 Sent off on their new assignment by the Holy Spirit, Barnabas and Saul went down to Seleucia and caught a ship for Cyprus. The first thing they did when they put in at Salamis was preach God's Word in the Jewish meeting places. They had John along to help out as needed.

6-7 They traveled the length of the island, and at Paphos came upon a Jewish wizard who had worked himself into the confidence of the governor, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man not easily taken in by charlatans. The wizard's name was Bar-Jesus. He was as crooked as a corkscrew.

7-11 The governor invited Barnabas and Saul in, wanting to hear God's Word firsthand from them. But Dr. Know-It-All (that's the wizard's name in plain English) stirred up a ruckus, trying to

divert the governor from becoming a believer. But Saul (or Paul), full of the Holy Spirit and looking him straight in the eye, said, "You bag of wind, you parody of a devil—why, you stay up nights inventing schemes to cheat people out of God. But now you've come up against God himself, and your game is up. You're about to go blind—no sunlight for you for a good long stretch." He was plunged immediately into a shadowy mist and stumbled around, begging people to take his hand and show him the way.

12 When the governor saw what happened, he became a believer, full of enthusiasm over what they were saying about the Master.

Don't Take This Lightly

13-14 From Paphos, Paul and company put out to sea, sailing on to Perga in Pamphylia. That's where John called it quits and went back to Jerusalem. From Perga the rest of them traveled on to Antioch in Pisidia.

14-15 On the Sabbath they went to the meeting place and took their places. After the reading of the Scriptures—God's Law and the Prophets—the president of the meeting asked them, "Friends, do you have anything you want to say? A word of encouragement, perhaps?"

16-20 Paul stood up, paused and took a deep breath, then said, "Fellow Israelites and friends of God, listen. God took a special interest in our ancestors, pulled our people who were beaten down in Egyptian exile to their feet, and led them out of there in grand style. He took good care of them for nearly forty years in that godforsaken wilderness and then, having wiped out seven enemies who stood in the way, gave them the land of Canaan for their very own—a span in all of about 450 years.

20-22 "Up to the time of Samuel the prophet, God provided judges to lead them. But then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul, son of Kish, out of the tribe of Benjamin. After Saul had ruled forty years, God removed him from office and put King David in his place, with this commendation: 'I've searched the land and found this David, son of Jesse. He's a man whose heart beats to my heart, a man who will do what I tell him.'

23-25 "From out of David's descendants God produced a Savior for Israel, Jesus, exactly as he promised—but only after John had thoroughly alerted the people to his arrival by preparing them for a total life-change. As John was finishing up his work, he said, 'Did you think I was the One? No, I'm not the One. But the One you've been waiting for all these years is just around the corner, about to appear. And I'm about to disappear.'

26-29 "Dear brothers and sisters, children of Abraham, and friends of God, this message of salvation has been precisely targeted to you. The citizens and rulers in Jerusalem didn't recognize who he was and condemned him to death. They couldn't find a good reason, but demanded that Pilate execute him anyway. They did just what the prophets said they would do, but had no idea they were following to the letter the script of the prophets, even though those same prophets are read every Sabbath in their meeting places.

29-31 "After they had done everything the prophets said they would do, they took him down from the cross and buried him. And then God raised him from death. There is no disputing that—he appeared over and over again many times and places to those who had known him well in the Galilean years, and these same people continue to give witness that he is alive.

32-35 “And we’re here today bringing you good news: the Message that what God promised the fathers has come true for the children—for us! He raised Jesus, exactly as described in the second Psalm:

My Son! My very own Son!
Today I celebrate you!

“When he raised him from the dead, he did it for good—no going back to that rot and decay for him. That’s why Isaiah said, ‘I’ll give to all of you David’s guaranteed blessings.’ So also the psalmist’s prayer: ‘You’ll never let your Holy One see death’s rot and decay.’

36-39 “David, of course, having completed the work God set out for him, has been in the grave, dust and ashes, a long time now. But the One God raised up—no dust and ashes for him! I want you to know, my very dear friends, that it is on account of this resurrected Jesus that the forgiveness of your sins can be promised. He accomplishes, in those who believe, everything that the Law of Moses could never make good on. But everyone who believes in this raised-up Jesus is declared good and right and whole before God.

40-41 “Don’t take this lightly. You don’t want the prophet’s sermon to describe you:

Watch out, cynics;
Look hard—watch your world fall to pieces.
I’m doing something right before your eyes
That you won’t believe, though it’s staring you in the face.”

42-43 When the service was over, Paul and Barnabas were invited back to preach again the next Sabbath. As the meeting broke up, a good many Jews and converts to Judaism went along with Paul and Barnabas, who urged them in long conversations to stick with what they’d started, this living in and by God’s grace.

44-45 When the next Sabbath came around, practically the whole city showed up to hear the Word of God. Some of the Jews, seeing the crowds, went wild with jealousy and tore into Paul, contradicting everything he was saying, making an ugly scene.

46-47 But Paul and Barnabas didn’t back down. Standing their ground they said, “It was required that God’s Word be spoken first of all to you, the Jews. But seeing that you want no part of it—you’ve made it quite clear that you have no taste or inclination for eternal life—the door is open to all the outsiders. And we’re on our way through it, following orders, doing what God commanded when he said,

I’ve set you up
as light to all nations.
You’ll proclaim salvation
to the four winds and seven seas!”

48-49 When the non-Jewish outsiders heard this, they could hardly believe their good fortune. All who were marked out for real life put their trust in God—they honored God’s Word by receiving that life. And this Message of salvation spread like wildfire all through the region.

50-52 Some of the Jews convinced the most respected women and leading men of the town that their precious way of life was about to be destroyed. Alarmed, they turned on Paul and Barnabas and forced them to leave. Paul and Barnabas shrugged their shoulders and went on to the next town, Iconium, brimming with joy and the Holy Spirit, two happy disciples.

14 1-3 When they got to Iconium they went, as they always did, to the meeting place of the Jews and gave their message. The Message convinced both Jews and non-Jews—and not just a few, either. But the unbelieving Jews worked up a whispering campaign against Paul and Barnabas, sowing mistrust and suspicion in the minds of the people in the street. The two apostles were there a long time, speaking freely, openly, and confidently as they presented the clear evidence of God's gifts, God corroborating their work with miracles and wonders.

4-7 But then there was a split in public opinion, some siding with the Jews, some with the apostles. One day, learning that both the Jews and non-Jews had been organized by their leaders to beat them up, they escaped as best they could to the next towns—Lyconia, Lystra, Derbe, and that neighborhood—but then were right back at it again, getting out the Message.

Gods or Men?

8-10 There was a man in Lystra who couldn't walk. He sat there, crippled since the day of his birth. He heard Paul talking, and Paul, looking him in the eye, saw that he was ripe for God's work, ready to believe. So he said, loud enough for everyone to hear, "Up on your feet!" The man was up in a flash—jumped up and walked around as if he'd been walking all his life.

11-13 When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they went wild, calling out in their Lyconian dialect, "The gods have come down! These men are gods!" They called Barnabas "Zeus" and Paul "Hermes" (since Paul did most of the speaking). The priest of the local Zeus shrine got up a parade—bulls and banners and people lined right up to the gates, ready for the ritual of sacrifice.

14-15 When Barnabas and Paul finally realized what was going on, they stopped them. Waving their arms, they interrupted the parade, calling out, "What do you think you're doing! We're not gods! We are men just like you, and we're here to bring you the Message, to persuade you to abandon these silly god-superstitions and embrace God himself, the living God. We don't make God; he makes us, and all of this—sky, earth, sea, and everything in them.

16-18 "In the generations before us, God let all the different nations go their own way. But even then he didn't leave them without a clue, for he made a good creation, poured down rain and gave bumper crops. When your bellies were full and your hearts happy, there was evidence of good beyond your doing." Talking fast and hard like this, they prevented them from carrying out the sacrifice that would have honored them as gods—but just barely.

19-20 Then some Jews from Antioch and Iconium caught up with them and turned the fickle crowd against them. They beat Paul unconscious, dragged him outside the town and left him for dead. But as the disciples gathered around him, he came to and got up. He went back into town and the next day left with Barnabas for Derbe.

Plenty of Hard Times

21-22 After proclaiming the Message in Derbe and establishing a strong core of disciples, they retraced their steps to Lystra, then Iconium, and then Antioch, putting muscle and sinew in the lives of the disciples, urging them to stick with what they had begun to believe and not quit,

making it clear to them that it wouldn't be easy: "Anyone signing up for the kingdom of God has to go through plenty of hard times."

23-26 Paul and Barnabas handpicked leaders in each church. After praying—their prayers intensified by fasting—they presented these new leaders to the Master to whom they had entrusted their lives. Working their way back through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia and preached in Perga. Finally, they made it to Attalia and caught a ship back to Antioch, where it had all started—launched by God's grace and now safely home by God's grace. A good piece of work.

27-28 On arrival, they got the church together and reported on their trip, telling in detail how God had used them to throw the door of faith wide open so people of all nations could come streaming in. Then they settled down for a long, leisurely visit with the disciples.

Background Passage: Acts 9:19-31; 11:19-26 (NIRV)

(What happened after Saul became a Christian before he left the area.)

9:19 Saul spent several days with the believers in Damascus. 20 Right away he began to preach in the synagogues. He taught that Jesus is the Son of God. 21 All who heard him were amazed. They asked, "Isn't he the man who caused great trouble in Jerusalem? Didn't he make trouble for those who worship Jesus? Hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?" 22 But Saul grew more and more powerful. The Jews living in Damascus couldn't believe what was happening. Saul proved to them that Jesus is the Messiah.

23 After many days, the Jews had a meeting. They planned to kill Saul. 24 But he learned about their plan. Day and night they watched the city gates closely in order to kill him. 25 But his followers helped him escape by night. They lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall.

26 When Saul came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the believers. But they were all afraid of him. They didn't believe he was really one of Jesus' followers. 27 But Barnabas took him to the apostles. He told them about Saul's journey. He said that Saul had seen the Lord. He told how the Lord had spoken to Saul. Barnabas also said that Saul had preached without fear in Jesus' name in Damascus. 28 So Saul stayed with the believers. He moved about freely in Jerusalem. He spoke boldly in the Lord's name. 29 He talked and argued with the Greek Jews. But they tried to kill him. 30 The other believers heard about this. They took Saul down to Caesarea. From there they sent him off to Tarsus.

31 Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. The church was strengthened and grew larger. That's because they worshiped the Lord and the Holy Spirit helped them.

11:19 Some believers had been scattered by the suffering that unbelievers had caused them. They were scattered after Stephen was killed. Those believers traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch. But they spread the word only among Jews. 20 Some believers from Cyprus and Cyrene went to Antioch. There they began to speak to Greeks also. They told them the good news about the Lord Jesus. 21 The Lord's power was with them. Large numbers of people believed and turned to the Lord.

22 The church in Jerusalem heard about this. So they sent Barnabas to Antioch. 23 When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad. He told them all to remain true to

the Lord with all their hearts. 24 Barnabas was a good man. He was full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. Large numbers of people came to know the Lord.

25 Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul. 26 He found him there. Then he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church. They taught large numbers of people. At Antioch the believers were called Christians for the first time.