CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
FEBRUARY282026

Scripture Story: Acts 11:19-26; Acts 13; Acts 14:1-26.
Commentary: *The Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 16-18.

the epicenter for missions



Photo by Jacqui Janetzko

flashlight

"'When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.' They rejoiced exceedingly that Christ recognized them as the children of God, and with grateful hearts they listened to the word preached. Those who believed were zealous in communicating the gospel message to others, and thus 'the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region'" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 173, 174).

keytext

"Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses."

(Acts 13:38, 39, NIV)

what do you think?

Twenty-one centuries later the church still faces many of the challenges the first century faced when confronted with the Great Commission to take the gospel to the entire world.

Take some time to finish the sentences below as they relate to your reaction and personal attitudes and understanding about mission work:

1. When someone brings up the topic of missions, I . . . _____
   _____
2. The idea of witnessing to a non-Adventist/Christian makes me . . . _____
   _____
3. For me, missions is about . . . _____
   _____

did you know?

The most densely popu-lated areas of the world have the smallest Christian presence. It is called the 10/40 window. Do you know what countries and people groups are in this area?

There are more than 230 major languages and dialects in the world. The Adventist Church is spreading the good news in 75 languages (see www.awr.org). Check out www.adventistmission.org to learn more about our church's missions.

Jesus promised that the one sure sign of His return would be that the good news of salvation would be preached to each nation and then the end would come (Matthew 24:14).

INTO THE STORY

"Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

"News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

"Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch."

"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. 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.'. . .

"The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. . . . They traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos. . . .

"From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia. . . . From Perga they went on to Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down. 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.'. . .

"As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath. . . .

"On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. . . .

"When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored

the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.

"The word of the Lord spread through the whole region."

(Acts 11:19-26; selected texts from Acts 13, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Antioch, and not Jerusalem, was the epicenter for missionary outreach. Can you list some of the reasons this might have been the case?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Why do you think the church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch?

_____
_____
_____

How did the "followers of the Way" come to be called "Christians"? What does this say about their characteristics?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What pattern did you see from the Scripture lesson for how the church prepared for missionary work? List the strategies used for moving out of the "community of believers" and into the world.

_____
_____
_____
_____

What was the strategy of Barnabas and Paul as they entered each new region to spread the good news about Jesus?

_____
_____
_____
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_____

punch lines

"Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch" **(Acts 11:25, 26, NIV).**

"Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses" **(Acts 13:38, 39, NIV).**

"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'" **(Acts 13:15, NIV).**

"The word of the Lord spread through the whole region" **(Acts 13:49, NIV).**

further insight

"The ordained ministers alone are not equal to the task of warning the great cities. God is calling not only upon ministers, but . . . consecrated laymen of varied talent who have a knowledge of the word of God and who know the power of His grace, to consider the needs of the unwarned cities. Time is rapidly passing, and there is much to be done."

—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles,* pp. 158, 159

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Acts 13:38.

In the *What Do You Think?* section you shared your reactions to and attitudes about missions. Why did you answer the way you did? What can you do to fulfill your concept of mission?

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_____

Sunday

Read Acts 11:25, 26.

Look back through the *Into the Story* and Out of the Story sections. Notice that while Barnabas and Paul launch out on the "first missionary journey," they did not act alone. Both men were called. Yet we don't see Paul moving full steam ahead with that call until the Lord confirms and commissions him through the ministry of fellow believers and elders of the church. Even in the mission field, Paul and Barnabas counted on the blessing and prayers of the believers back at their home base in Antioch, and on the spiritual support and encouragement of the new converts in the towns where they took the gospel.

What does this teach us about the role of the church in helping us to define and act upon the call God gives us? What does it say about the personal role we each have regardless of whether we are full-time church workers or members of the body of Christ?

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_____

Monday

Read Acts 13:38, 39.

Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses" (NIV). These words that Paul preached to encourage the devout people in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch were the theme of his ministry and preaching. This is because no matter what cultural background we are from or what language or mind-set we have, one common thread all humans share is the need for hope!

Missionaries cannot enter many places today due to political, religious, and geographic barriers. We still have to work at how we can contextualize the message for people of other cultures and ethnicities.

Whether you live in a city where you share the same or similar cultural backgrounds, or whether you live in the midst of a melting pot of ethnicities and cultures, how can you share this hope with your neighbors?

_____

_____

Tuesday

Read Galatians 4:18.

In the *Flashlight* section we see an explosive impact—in a good way—of what happens when this message of hope and forgiveness is shared with individuals and within communities. While it is natural for us to cling together as brothers and sisters in the body of Christ—building each other up and growing in our faith—what is also clear from this reading by Ellen White is that we don't just keep to ourselves. Healthy Christians and Christian communities are thrilled about the new hope and joy they have received in Christ, and they are zealous in spreading that joy to others. Look up the word "zealous." Do you think of yourself or your church as being zealous in publishing the word throughout your community? What are some ways that you and/or your church express that zealousness for the Lord?

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Wednesday

Read Acts 13:15, 49.

Here we get a glimpse of how the early church worked—at first, it was comprised of Jewish believers in Jesus, many of whom were dispersed from Jerusalem after the stoning of Stephen, some of whom ended up in Antioch, a crossroads of the Roman Empire which turns out to be the launching point for missionary outreach. What Paul and Barnabas preached in another Antioch (Pisidian) was so dynamic that much of the whole town turned out the next Sabbath to hear them! So it has been throughout the history of the church, right down to today: What we say, and how we say it, can interest others in the message—and in the Savior!

Thursday

Read Isaiah 60:1.

What are some of the ways you can reach out to your world with the gospel? How can you share the good news with someone at school or at work? Is there a place in which God is calling you to go and labor? Could teaching English overseas, for example, be a way to enter a new culture, make friends, and share Jesus?

Friday

Read 1 Peter 2:9.

One of the key challenges in the Bible is that we are asked to do something with what we have learned and experienced in the Word: these are not mere stories for our entertainment, but rather they are examples for us to follow: "Go and do likewise," Jesus said (Luke 10:37, NIV). What are the things you've learned this week that can be picked up and used in your life?

_____

_____

this week's reading*

The Acts of the Apostles (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 16-18.

* Unlikely Leaders is a special adaptation of *The Acts of the Apostles* created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.