



Sermon Discussion Questions
June 23, 2024

Antioch: A Church On Mission

THE FIRST MISSIONARY RECEIVING CHURCH

Acts 14:21-28

1. Opening Discussion Questions (in a group setting you may only want to choose one)

- a. Do you have a favorite place to vacation that you have gone to frequently? Or is there a state or country you've visited and are looking forward to returning to in the future? What was it that attracted you to that location? If you were given the choice between returning to a place you've already been or going someplace new, which would you choose?
- b. Almost everyone has had to give a report at some point in their life – even if it was just a book report when you were in school. Think of a time when you had to give a report. What was the experience like? How much preparation did you do? What was the response to your report?
- c. Have you ever heard a missionary report (their testimony) that made a significant impact on you or someone in your family? What was noteworthy about the message the missionary gave?

2. Sermon Outline/Key Points

- a. Paul and Barnabas Reversed Their Itinerary and Antioch Became the First Missionary Receiving Church
 - i. As the first intentional cross-cultural mission trip ends, Paul and Barnabas reverse their route.
 - ii. Paul and Barnabas demonstrate the value of repeat visits when doing short-term mission work.
 - iii. They returned to Antioch and were well received.
- b. Return Visits Are An Essential Element of Effective Missions
 - i. God uses both long-term and short-term missionaries to accomplish His work.
 - ii. Short Term Missions is work and generally works best with repeated visits.
- c. A Missions-Minded Church Must Receive and Care Well for Missionaries
 - i. Missionary receiving and care is an important part of supporting missions.
 - ii. We must learn to care well for returning missionaries.

3. Study/Discussion Points:

- a. ***Sunday Afternoon*** – As soon as possible after listening to the sermon set aside some time to ponder these questions prayerfully:
 - i. What one thing most stood out to you in this sermon?

- ii. What new truth did you learn or of what truth were you reminded?
- iii. After listening to the sermon, is there a Scripture passage you feel led to meditate on or commit to memory this week?
- iv. What is one specific thing you feel God is leading you to do after hearing this message?
- v. Did God convict you of a need to make any changes in your life and walk with Him?

b. **Monday** – *Paul and Barnabas Reversed Their Itinerary and Antioch Became the First Missionary Receiving Church*

- i. As this series of sermons in Acts draws to a close it would be appropriate to start the week by reviewing Paul’s first missionary journey. Today read Acts 13 and 14 in order to experience the event in its entirety.
 - 1. What do you find most striking about the journey?
 - 2. What questions would you have wanted to ask Paul and Barnabas if you had been in the congregation at Antioch when they gave their report?
- ii. How do Acts 13:2-3 and Acts 14:26 serve as appropriate bookends (called an *inclusio*) for the first missionary journey?

c. **Tuesday** – *Paul and Barnabas Reversed Their Itinerary*

- i. Start today’s study by reading the first part of the focal passage, Acts 14:21-26a.
 - 1. In this passage where did Paul start? What was his final destination?
 - 2. Examine a map showing Paul’s missionary journeys and note the route he took to get to Antioch. What does the route suggest about Paul’s objective for his return trip? Do you think his primary goal was to get home or did he have a more important objective?
- ii. The segment of Paul’s first missionary journey being considered this week starts in Derbe. Compared to some of the other places Paul visited not many details are provided about Derbe, but what are we told?
 - 1. In previous cities (Pisidian Antioch and Iconium) Paul started his ministry in the Jewish synagogue but there is no mention of one in Derbe. What might that suggest about the population of Derbe? How might it reflect that Paul had truly accepted the commission he was given by Christ in Acts 9:15?
 - 2. Paul went to Derbe again on his second missionary journey (read Acts 16:1) but no details are provided about the visit. What does it say to you that despite having “made many disciples” there we are told so little? Read Acts 20:4. What does that verse suggest about the success in Derbe? In what ways might Derbe serve as an important lesson to us in this age of famous mega-churches?

d. Wednesday – Paul and Barnabas Reversed Their Itinerary

- i. Read Acts 21-26a again.
 1. After finishing in Derbe Paul and Barnabas retraced their way back the same 300-mile route that they had followed to Derbe.
 - a. What, if anything, do you find amazing about their return journey?
 - b. How would you feel and respond if God asked you to leave a city where you had made many disciples and return to a city where you had been stoned and left for dead? What does it tell you about Paul that he seems to have obeyed without hesitation?
 2. What are the three objectives that Acts 14:22 tells us Paul accomplished on his return journey?
 - a. Do you find anything surprising about the three?
 - b. What would have given Paul especially outstanding credentials to make these three points?
 - c. Read Romans 8:14-17, Philippians 3:7-11 and Colossians 1:24-29. Based on these three passages what do you think Paul's messages to the churches he visited on his return may have been?
 - d. How would you rank these objectives in their order of importance/emphasis in modern American churches?

e. Thursday – Paul and Barnabas Reversed Their Itinerary

- i. Read and meditate on Acts 14:23.
 1. In addition to evangelism and discipleship (highlighted in verses 21-22) why would this have been a particularly important part of Paul's ministry to these new churches in Asia Minor?
 - a. What benefits did they not have, but we often take for granted, that made their leaders so important?
 - b. In what way has the rapid expansion of information available via the internet put us in a similar situation of dependence on our leaders?
 2. Read 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9 then discuss how these qualifications would have influenced Paul and Barnabas' appointment of elders in Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch. What must have been true about Paul and Barnabas' relationships with the new Christians?
- ii. As Paul and Barnabas completed their work in each city and moved on there must have been a great deal of uncertainty about the future. Would they ever see these brothers and sisters again? Would they be able to continue in the faith and grow in the face of the persecution they experience?

1. How did Paul and Barnabas deal with this uncertainty?
2. In what way does it mirror the commissioning they had received (Acts 13:2-3)?
3. What lessons can we learn and apply from their example in our walk with Christ?

f. Friday – Antioch Became the First Missionary Receiving Church

i. Read Acts 14:26-28.

1. Verse 26 ends with the statement that “the work they had now completed” (NIV) or “work they had fulfilled” (ESV). What does this imply to you? Although the journey was over in what sense is the work just beginning? How is it still in progress?
2. Why was it important that Paul and Barnabas report on their trip to the church at Antioch? Based on the last half of verse 27 what do you think the tone of the report would have been? How much emphasis do you think the stoning and other persecutions would have received?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 16:9, 2 Corinthians 2:12, and Colossians 4:3. When coupled with Acts 14:27b where can we confidently say Paul assigns all glory for the success of this mission trip?

- ii. The last verse tells us Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch for a long time. Why was this probably necessary?

g. Saturday – Return Visits Are An Essential Element of Effective Missions

- i. Read again the objectives Paul had for his return trip in Acts 14:22-23.
- ii. Discuss how short-term mission trips can help long-term missionaries accomplish these same objectives today. In your view, which is best accomplished by each type of missionary?

4. **Application:** Paul’s first missionary journey certainly lasted over a year and some estimate perhaps almost three years. During that time, they were dependent upon the prayer support of their sending church, Antioch. We know nothing about how often Paul and Barnabas were lifted up in prayer by the church, but one can guess that in view of their success it may have been very often. We must ask ourselves if we are doing as much for our missionaries today. Make or renew a commitment to pray for at least one missionary and one unreached people every day.

5. Prayer Points:

- a. Adoration – Psalms 8:1 and 29:1-2
- b. Confession – Proverbs 28:13 and 1 John 1:8-10
- c. Thanksgiving – Psalms 95:1-2 and 100:4-5
- d. Supplications – Matthew 21:22 and John 16:19