
CBC WEEKLY RESOURCES



- I. [Sermon Recap](#)
- II. [Study Guide](#)
- III. [Devotional](#)
- IV. [Small Group Resources](#)

“Acts 13: Separate”

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COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH
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SERMON RECAP

In Acts 13, the young church is growing in the middle of pressure, persecution, and uncertainty. Yet the church at Antioch does not begin with strategy, fear, or frantic activity. Pastor Gary reminded us that our first calling is not to manage life, solve every problem, or even bear fruit in our own strength. Our first calling is to worship God, bless Him, and place Him above every concern.

The central word of the message was separate. Barnabas and Saul were separated by the Holy Spirit for the work God had called them to do. Pastor Gary challenged us to recover the spiritual discipline of separation, stepping away from the noise. We cannot live wisely if we are always reacting. Separation creates space for discernment.

The message also pressed us to take seriously the spiritual danger of standing between someone and Christ. Elymas the sorcerer tried to keep Sergius Paulus from the faith, and Paul confronted him with Spirit-filled authority. Yet Pastor Gary pointed out that Paul likely saw something of his former self in Elymas, a persecutor who once opposed the gospel. The pastoral call was clear: battle for souls, speak truth in love, use the authority God has given, and remain deeply self-aware. We are redeemed and beloved, but we are also still capable of sin if we stop depending on Christ.

 STUDY GUIDE

Key Points

- Minister to the Lord first. Worship is not an accessory to the Christian life; it is our first purpose and the foundation for fruitful living.
- Separate to hear clearly. In a noisy and reactive world, believers need intentional space for prayer, fasting, reflection, and Spirit-led discernment.
- Do not stand between people and Christ. The church must take seriously any influence, that blocks someone from hearing and receiving the gospel.
- Grow in holy self-awareness. We are new creations in Christ, yet we must remain humble enough to recognize our capacity for sin and our need for grace.

Key Scripture

Primary Sermon Text:

- Acts 13:1-12 — The church at Antioch worships, fasts, prays, sends Barnabas and Saul, and Paul confronts Elymas.

Other verses mentioned, quoted, or clearly alluded to by Pastor Gary:

- Acts 13:42, 44, 46 — The Gentiles beg to hear the Word again; the city gathers; Paul and Barnabas grow bold.
- Acts 1:8 — The church receives power to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.
- Acts 2:42-47 — Fellowship, generosity, devotion, and shared life after Pentecost.
- Acts 7:54-60 — Stephen's martyrdom.
- Acts 9:1-19 — Paul's conversion and temporary blindness on the road to Damascus.
- Acts 12:2 — James, the brother of John, is killed by Herod.
- Acts 26:11 — Paul describes trying to force Christians to blaspheme.
- Matthew 18:6 — Warning against causing "little ones" who believe in Christ to stumble.

- Psalm 119:18 – “Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law.”
- 1 Corinthians 7:5 – Temporary separation in marriage for prayer.
- Romans 8:1 – No condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.
- John 14:12 – Believers doing greater works through Christ.
- John 15:16 – Bearing fruit that remains.
- 2 Corinthians 5:17 – Anyone in Christ is a new creation.
- Deuteronomy 28:13 – “The head and not the tail.”
- 1 Peter 2:9 – Believers as a royal priesthood.
- Revelation 1:6 – Believers made priests to God.
- 1 Corinthians 2:2 – Preaching Christ and Him crucified.
- Revelation 12:11 – Victory by the blood of the Lamb and word of testimony.

Other Relevant Verses

- Romans 12:1-2 – This reinforces the sermon’s theme of separating from the world’s patterns and being transformed by the renewing of the mind.
- Mark 1:35 – This general thematic tie shows Jesus Himself withdrawing early to pray, modeling separation before ministry.
- Galatians 6:1 – This verse expounds on the sermon’s call to self-awareness: restore others gently while watching yourself.



DEVOTIONAL MATERIAL

Day 1 – Minister to the Lord First

Reflection Question

Before I ask God to bless my plans, do I first take time to bless, worship, and honor Him?

Reading

- Acts 13:2
- Psalm 119:18

Thought

Acts 13 opens in Antioch, one of the most important cities in the Roman Empire and one of the most strategic churches in early Christianity. Antioch was diverse, influential, and full of gospel momentum. But the church did not begin its missionary strategy with a committee, a budget, or a marketing plan. They were “ministering to the Lord and fasting.”

That phrase is deeply important. Ministry is not first something we do for people; it begins with devotion to God. The church’s sending mission flowed out of worship. Their activity was born from intimacy.

Pastor Gary reminded us that our daily order matters. If we begin with our worries, desires, calendar, and requests, we may be putting things out of order. But when the Lord becomes bigger in our sight, our problems are put in their proper place.

Psalm 119:18 gives us the posture we need: “Open my eyes.” We do not naturally see rightly. We need God to open our eyes to His Word, His beauty, His priorities, and His presence.

Challenge

Before checking your phone or starting your tasks tomorrow, spend a few minutes simply ministering to the Lord. Praise Him for who He is before asking Him for anything.

Day 2 — The Gift of Separation

Reflection Question

Where do I need to step back from noise, pressure, or reactivity so I can hear the Holy Spirit more clearly?

Reading

- Acts 13:2-3
- Romans 12:2

Thought

The Holy Spirit said, “Separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” In the biblical sense, separation is not isolation from people or withdrawal from mission. It is consecration. It means being set apart for God’s purpose.

Pastor Gary connected this to our modern world of constant influence. We live in an age where algorithms, advertisements, media, and cultural pressures are personalized to shape what we think, desire, and pursue. The world does not merely offer information; it disciples us.

Romans 12:2 says, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” That renewal requires space. If we are always reacting, scrolling, consuming, and responding emotionally, we rarely discern deeply.

Separation is one of God’s gifts to us. It allows us to process, pray, repent, refocus, and return with Spirit-led clarity.

Challenge

Choose one intentional “separation practice” this week: a phone-free hour, a quiet walk, a skipped meal for prayer, or a morning in Scripture before screens.

Day 3 – Fasting and Prayer Reorder the Soul

Reflection Question

What appetite, comfort, or routine might God be inviting me to surrender temporarily so I can seek Him more fully?

Reading

- Acts 13:3
- Mark 1:35

Thought

After the Holy Spirit set apart Barnabas and Saul, the church fasted, prayed, laid hands on them, and sent them. Fasting was not a religious performance. It was a way of humbling the body and focusing the soul.

In the ancient world, fasting was often connected to repentance, mourning, discernment, or urgent dependence on God. The church at Antioch fasted because the mission was too important to handle casually. They needed God's direction, God's power, and God's blessing.

Jesus also modeled separation and prayer. Mark 1:35 tells us He rose early, went to a solitary place, and prayed. If the Son of God withdrew to commune with the Father, how much more do we need that rhythm?

Pastor Gary said that if he could wish one thing for the congregation, it would be a living, interactive relationship with Christ strengthened by fasting and prayer. Fasting exposes our false self-sufficiency and reminds us that God is our true source of life.

Challenge

Prayerfully consider fasting from one meal, one comfort, or one form of media this week. Use that time to pray for your family, CBC, and people who need Christ.

Day 4 — Do Not Block the Way to Christ

Reflection Question

Am I helping others move toward Jesus, or could my words, habits, fears, or influence be making it harder for them to come to Him?

Reading

- Acts 13:8
- Matthew 18:6

Thought

Elymas the sorcerer opposed Paul and Barnabas and tried to turn Sergius Paulus away from the faith. This was not mere disagreement. He was actively standing between a seeking man and the gospel.

In the Roman world, powerful leaders often surrounded themselves with advisors, philosophers, magicians, and spiritual consultants. Elymas had attached himself to influence. But when Sergius Paulus wanted to hear the Word of God, Elymas resisted.

Pastor Gary gave a sobering warning: God does not look lightly on anyone who keeps another person from Christ. Matthew 18:6 shows how seriously Jesus treats the spiritual protection of “little ones” who believe in Him.

This applies beyond obvious opposition. Parents, friends, spouses, leaders, and believers can either clear the path to Jesus or clutter it. We must battle for souls in prayer and, when necessary, speak truth with courage.

Challenge

Identify one person in your sphere of influence who needs encouragement toward Christ. Pray for them daily this week, and ask God if there is a loving step you should take.

Day 5 — Seeing Yourself Clearly

Reflection Question

Can I look at someone who opposes the gospel or lives differently than I do and humbly remember what I would be apart from grace?

Reading

- Acts 13:11-12
- Acts 26:11

Thought

Paul confronts Elymas with strong words and announces that he will be blind for a time. At first glance, this can seem purely punitive. But Pastor Gary helped us see a deeper possibility: Paul knew what it was like to be spiritually blind and then physically blinded by God's mercy.

In Acts 26:11, Paul admits that before his conversion he tried to force believers to blaspheme Jesus. He had once opposed the gospel with intensity. So when Paul looked at Elymas, he may have seen his former self.

That kind of self-awareness is essential for spiritual maturity. We are redeemed, forgiven, and made new in Christ. Romans 8:1 says there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. And yet we must never forget our ongoing need for humility, repentance, and dependence.

The goal is not self-hatred. The goal is sober grace. We are deeply loved by God and still capable of deep sin if we stop walking in the Spirit.

Challenge

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you one area where pride, judgment, or self-sufficiency has crept in. Confess it honestly and receive God's grace.

IV.

SMALL GROUP RESOURCES

Opening

Welcome everyone and invite the group to settle in. This week's discussion centers on Acts 13 and the call to minister to the Lord, separate from the noise, fast and pray, and live with Spirit-led courage.

Begin with prayer by inviting the group to focus on these themes:

- Gratitude for God's Word
- Openness to the Holy Spirit
- Humility to see ourselves clearly
- Courage to obey what God reveals

Prayer Protocol Reminder: Do not feel pressure to pray polished prayers. Invite simple, Spirit-led prayer around the themes above.

Thematic Recap

In Acts 13, the church at Antioch worshiped, fasted, prayed, and listened before moving forward in mission. The Holy Spirit separated Barnabas and Saul for a work they could not accomplish in their own strength. As they went, Paul confronted opposition to the gospel with Spirit-filled authority and deep personal awareness of God's mercy.

Core Message Highlights

- Worship comes before strategy.
- Separation creates space for discernment.
- Fasting and prayer deepen dependence on God.
- The church must protect the path between people and Jesus.

- Spiritual authority should be used with humility and love.
- Self-awareness keeps us dependent on grace.

Icebreaker

Question:

Think of a time when stepping away from noise, busyness, or pressure helped you make a better decision. What changed when you created space?

Scripture Exploration

Passage 1: Acts 13:1-3

Theme: Worship, fasting, and being set apart

1. What stands out to you about the church ministering to the Lord before being sent into mission?
2. Why do you think fasting and prayer were connected to the church's discernment?
3. What does it mean that Barnabas and Saul were "separated" by the Holy Spirit rather than simply volunteering for a task?
4. Where might God be inviting you to create space so you can hear Him more clearly?

Passage 2: Acts 13:4-12

Theme: Opposition, authority, and the gospel

1. Why was Elymas's opposition so spiritually serious?
2. How does Paul's confrontation challenge our assumptions about love, truth, and spiritual authority?
3. Pastor Gary suggested Paul may have seen his former self in Elymas. How does that shape the way we confront others?

4. Sergius Paulus was astonished at the teaching of the Lord. What role should the Word of God play in our witness?

Passage 3: Romans 12:1-2

Theme: Separation from the world and renewal of the mind

1. What are some ways the world tries to “conform” our thinking today?
2. How does worshiping God with our whole lives help renew our minds?
3. What is the difference between isolation from the world and holy separation from the world’s patterns?
4. What practical habits help you discern God’s will?

Grand Synthesis Prompt

How do these passages together show the relationship between worship, separation, discernment, and mission?

Application: Growing in Personal and Communal Prayer

As a group, discuss practical ways to strengthen your prayer lives this week.

Personal Practices

- Begin the day by ministering to the Lord before making requests.
- Set aside a specific time for silence, Scripture, and listening.
- Fast from one meal, one comfort, or one digital habit.
- Pray Psalm 119:18 as a personal theme: “Open my eyes.”
- Ask God to reveal where you are reacting instead of discerning.

Communal Practices

- Pair up and pray for one another during the week.
- Choose one person far from Christ and pray for them as a group.
- Spend part of group time praying Scripture, not just sharing requests.
- Encourage one another to obey what the Spirit reveals.
- Practice speaking truth in love when someone is drifting or discouraged.

Closing

Prayer Needs

Leave space for group members to share:

- Personal prayer needs
- Family concerns
- People they are praying will come to Christ
- Areas where they need clarity or courage
- Places where they need to separate, fast, or listen

Closing Prayer Prompt

Invite the group to pray around these themes:

- Worship and surrender to the Lord
- Fresh hunger for Scripture
- Courage to fast and pray
- Protection for those being drawn to Christ
- Humility and self-awareness
- Boldness to walk in Spirit-led authority

Leader Notes

- Create safety. This message may stir conviction around family, spiritual influence, pride, or prayerlessness. Encourage honesty without shame.
- Avoid political rabbit trails. Pastor Gary referenced cultural pressures, but the goal is spiritual discernment, not debate.
- Keep the focus on application. Ask, “What is God inviting us to do?” not merely, “What do we think?”
- Encourage humility. When discussing Elymas, help the group avoid an “us versus them” posture. Paul’s story reminds us that grace is the only reason any of us see clearly.
- Make room for silence. Because the sermon emphasized separation, consider giving the group one quiet minute to listen before discussion or prayer.
- Honor different fasting experiences. Some may be new to fasting or unable to fast from food for medical reasons. Encourage fasting from media, comfort, spending, or other habits as appropriate.
- End with hope. The goal is not guilt but renewed dependence on Christ and deeper availability to the Holy Spirit.