



Summary

This powerful exploration of Acts 13:1-3 takes us to a pivotal moment in church history when the body of Christ transitioned from merely building local congregations to becoming a sending movement. We discover that the church at Antioch wasn't focused on becoming the biggest or most influential church in their region, but rather on obediently responding to the Holy Spirit's call to send out their best leaders. The passage reveals critical characteristics of those called to ministry and missions: they are worshipers who openly praise God without reservation, they demonstrate self-control through practices like fasting, and most importantly, they are already living as missionaries before they are ever sent. The beautiful truth emerges that God doesn't call us to manufacture qualifications, but rather to recognize what the Holy Spirit has already been developing in faithful believers. We see that true ministry flows from complete dependence on God rather than human effort, strategic planning, or self-promotion. The principle of 'not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit' becomes the foundation for all kingdom work. This passage challenges us to examine whether we are building our own kingdoms or allowing God to build His church through us, reminding us that whatever exists in God's church exists solely by His grace and for His glory.





Points

Title: Called, Sent, and Sustained: The Biblical Model for Missionaries and Church Planters

Sermon Summary:

- This sermon explores Acts 13:1-3 as a foundational text for understanding God's model for sending missionaries and planting churches. The pastor emphasizes that the church at Antioch became a "sending church" that prioritized missions over merely building a large local congregation. True missionaries are characterized by open worship, self-control through fasting, and spiritual maturity that is visible to church leadership before being sent. The sermon stresses that church planting success depends entirely on the Holy Spirit's work rather than human effort, programs, or self-promotion. The pastor shares personal testimony from 24 years of ministry, emphasizing total dependence on God's provision and the importance of following wise counsel from spiritually mature leaders. The message challenges believers to support God's work through prayer and discernment while warning against worldly methods of church growth that rely on human might rather than God's Spirit.

Key Points:

- - The church at Antioch shifted from only building locally to becoming a sending church that planted churches throughout the known world
- - Missionaries must be men who openly worship the Lord without reservation before being sent
- - Fasting demonstrates self-control and should be done to overcome the flesh, not to manipulate God into answering prayers
- - Church leaders must affirm what the Holy Spirit is already doing in a person's life before sending them out
- - Those who reject wise counsel from church leadership and insist on going their own way demonstrate spiritual immaturity
- - Seven practical guidelines for church planting: go alone where no Calvary Chapel exists, begin with home fellowship, simply teach God's Word, let the Holy Spirit draw people, leave to become totally dependent on God, be patient for five years, and remember it is not about you
- - Church planting statistics show only one in five church plants survive five years, and only one in five of those survive ten years
- - Success in ministry comes not by might or power but by God's Spirit alone
- - Acts 2:42 provides the biblical model: steadfast continuation in apostles' doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers
- - Calvary Chapel Gulf Coast supports only missionaries they know personally and have seen God's work in their lives
- - The church should be defined by nothing other than the grace of God

Scripture References:

- - Acts 13:1-3 (primary text)
- - Acts 2:42 (church model)
- - Acts 9:15-16 (Paul's calling)
- - Acts 11:19-26 (founding of Antioch church)



- - Daniel 11:3-4 (historical prophecy)
- - Isaiah 58:1-11 (true fasting)
- - Hebrews 13:15 (sacrifice of praise)
- - Titus 1:5-9 (qualifications for elders)
- - Zechariah 4:6 (not by might or power)
- - Philippians 3:12-21 (pressing toward the goal)
- - John 7 (rivers of living water)

Stories:

- - Historical account of Alexander the Great's kingdom being divided into four parts after his death, with Syria ruled by Seleucus I who founded Antioch
- - The pastor's personal testimony of being sent out by Calvary Chapel Austin in August 2001 and beginning ministry the day after September 11, 2001
- - The pastor's experience of starting with a small home fellowship and waiting six months before moving to a building until key people were established
- - Account of a Sanibel Island pastor whose church was destroyed by Hurricane Ian who simply continued by opening a home fellowship Bible study
- - The pastor's 24-year journey with Calvary Chapel Gulf Coast, emphasizing total dependence on God's provision without self-promotion or recruiting
- - Reference to missionary work the pastor has personally witnessed in Haiti (Dave and Darla Bird), Ukraine (John and Steffi Markey), Hungary (Yanchi), and India (Sal and Alina Massa)
- - Observation that rebellious people often attend small church plants after leaving established churches, creating challenges for new pastors



Scripture

Directly Cited or Read:

1. Acts 13:1-3 - The main text about prophets and teachers at Antioch, and the sending of Barnabas and Saul
2. Daniel 11:3-4 - Prophecy about Alexander the Great and the division of his kingdom
3. Acts 9:15 - Jesus tells Ananias that Saul is a chosen vessel to bear His name before Gentiles
4. Acts 4:36 - Introduction of Barnabas (Joses), son of encouragement
5. Acts 11:19-21 - Men from Cyprus and Cyrene preaching at Antioch
6. Acts 2:42 - The church continuing steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers
7. Titus 1:5-9 - Qualifications for elders/bishops
8. Isaiah 58:1-12 - The kind of fasting that pleases God
9. Hebrews 13:15 - The sacrifice of praise
10. Acts 9:16 - Jesus tells Ananias that Saul will suffer for His name's sake
11. Acts 11:22-26 - Barnabas sent to Antioch, then brings Saul; disciples first called Christians
12. Zechariah 4:6 - "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord"
13. Acts 2:46-47 - The Lord added daily to the church those who were being saved
14. Philippians 3:12-21 - Paul pressing toward the goal, citizenship in heaven
15. John 7 (referenced contextually) - Jesus speaking about rivers of living water and the Holy Spirit

Alluded to or Referenced:

16. Psalm 22:3 (alluded to) - God inhabits the praises of His people
17. 1 Timothy 3 (parallel passage to Titus 1) - Qualifications for church leadership
18. Matthew 27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26 - Simon of Cyrene carrying Jesus' cross
19. Matthew 14:1-12; Mark 6:14-29 - Herod Antipas beheading John the Baptist

Relevant Verses for Main Themes:

On Worship:

- Psalm 95:6
- John 4:23-24

On Missionary Calling:

- Matthew 28:18-20 (Great Commission)
- Romans 10:14-15

On Church Planting:

- 1 Corinthians 3:6-7
- 2 Timothy 2:2



On Being Born Again:

- John 3:3-7
- 2 Corinthians 5:17

On Spiritual Thirst:

- John 7:37-39
- Revelation 22:17



Quotes

If you don't worship enough, if you don't worship Jesus enough to share Jesus here, where it is relatively easy, how will you worship Jesus there where it may cost you your life?

God calls men who are successful in their business life, God calls men who are successful in their career and in their occupation. How can their slackness translate into being highly self-motivated as all missionaries and church planters must be?

Until you've been out there all by yourself, totally dependent upon God, how can you teach people about what it means to be totally dependent upon God without any visible means of support?

Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts. It is only by God's power.

I'm not here today to serve you. I'm here to serve the Lord Jesus Christ and to allow the Lord Jesus Christ to serve you.

My vision for the church is I'm gonna be here Wednesday night and I'm gonna open the Bible and I'm gonna start teaching from Joshua chapter 20. That's my vision.

If this church can be defined in its continuing existence as anything other than by the grace of God, we have failed miserably.

Being a Christian is a supernatural thing. It's not in any way, shape or form about what church you belong to or what you do or any of that sort of thing. It's supernatural.





Discussion Questions

How does the church at Antioch's model of worshiping and fasting before sending out missionaries challenge our modern approach to discerning God's calling for ministry and missions?

What does it mean practically for a church to be a 'sending church' rather than only focused on building and maintaining itself, and how can we cultivate that DNA in our own congregations?

Why is open, unreserved worship of God considered such a critical character trait for missionaries and church planters, and what does this reveal about the connection between worship and witness?

How does the practice of fasting as described in Isaiah 58 differ from manipulative or self-serving fasting, and what does genuine biblical fasting teach us about self-control and compassion?

What is the significance of church leadership affirming a person's calling rather than the individual simply claiming to hear from God alone, and how does this protect both the individual and the mission?

The sermon emphasizes that missionaries must already be missionaries before being sent. How can we recognize and cultivate missionary character traits in ourselves and others within our local church context?

What are the dangers of church planting or ministry driven by convenience, comfort, or worldly success metrics rather than complete dependence on the Holy Spirit?

How does the principle 'not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit' from Zechariah 4:6 challenge contemporary church growth strategies and our personal ministry ambitions?

Why is it critical that church planters and missionaries demonstrate faithfulness and spiritual maturity in their home church before being sent out, and what happens when this step is skipped?

The sermon states that being a Christian is supernatural, not about church membership or activities. How does this understanding of being born again and indwelt by the Holy Spirit transform our approach to both personal faith and church ministry?





Small Group Study Guide

Acts 13:1-3 - "Called and Sent: The Model for Missions"

Opening Prayer

Begin your time together by asking God to illuminate His Word and speak to each person about His calling on their lives, whether to stay or to go.

Ice Breaker (5-10 minutes)

Share about a time when you felt God clearly directing you toward something specific. How did you know it was God's leading?

Key Scripture

Acts 13:1-3 *"Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away."*

Key Takeaways

1. **The Character of Those Called:** Missionaries and church planters are already demonstrating missionary character before they are sent—through worship, self-control, and spiritual maturity.
 2. **The Role of the Sending Church:** The church affirms what the Holy Spirit has already done in a person's heart rather than creating something new.
 3. **God Does the Work:** Church planting and missions succeed only by God's Spirit, not by human might, power, or programs (Zechariah 4:6).
 4. **The Foundation of Ministry:** Acts 2:42 provides the blueprint—steadfast devotion to apostolic teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer.
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Discussion Questions

Understanding the Text (15 minutes)

1. **What stands out to you most from Acts 13:1-3?** Why do you think Luke includes the names and backgrounds of the church leaders?
2. **The sermon emphasized that Barnabas and Saul were "ministering to the Lord" when they received their call.** What does it mean to minister TO the Lord rather than FOR the Lord?
3. **Why do you think fasting is mentioned twice in these three verses?** What role does self-control play in spiritual leadership?

Personal Reflection (20 minutes)

4. **The pastor said, "If you don't worship enough to share Jesus here, where it is relatively easy, how will you worship Jesus there where it may cost you your life?"** How does this challenge your current level of worship and witness?
5. **Review the qualifications from Titus 1:5-9.** Which of these character qualities do you sense God developing in your life right now? Which ones need more attention?
6. **The sermon described "sents" versus "wents"—those who submit to godly authority versus those who reject wise counsel.** How do you respond when church leadership provides counsel you didn't expect or want to hear?
7. **Reflect on Isaiah 58:3-11 (the true fast).** How does God's definition of fasting challenge our typical understanding? What would it look like to practice this kind of fasting in your daily life?

Application and Action (20 minutes)

8. **The pastor gave seven principles for church planting:**
 - Go alone where no Calvary Chapel exists
 - Begin with home fellowship
 - Simply teach God's Word
 - Allow the Holy Spirit to draw people
 - Leave and be totally dependent on God
 - Be patient and remain faithful
 - Remember it isn't about you or because of you
9. **Even if you're not called to plant a church, which of these principles could apply to your current ministry or workplace witness?**
10. **Acts 2:47 says "the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."** How does this truth change the way we approach evangelism and church growth? What pressure does it remove? What



responsibility does it place on us?

11. **The sermon emphasized that "whatever you are here is only going to be more difficult to be when you get there."** What character qualities or spiritual disciplines do you need to develop now, right where you are?

For Those Sensing a Call (10 minutes)

11. **If you sense God may be calling you to missions or church planting,** what would it look like to seek confirmation from spiritually mature leaders in your church? Who could you approach for counsel?
12. **The pastor mentioned that church planters should be "successful in their business life" and "highly self-motivated."** How does this standard challenge popular notions about missions being a "fallback plan"?

For the Whole Church (10 minutes)

13. **The sermon stated: "You get to evaluate...and choose your definition of what this church is about."** Based on Acts 13:1-3 and Acts 2:42, what should characterize a sending church? How can we as a small group contribute to that culture?
14. **The pastor shared: "We don't micromanage our ministry leaders. We seek people who are led of the Holy Spirit and we set them loose."** How does this approach differ from typical church organizational structures? What are the benefits and challenges of this model?

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose ONE of the following to practice this week:

Option 1: Worship Audit

- Evaluate your worship life honestly. Are you an active participant or a passive observer?
- This week, come to worship prepared to engage fully—arrive early, pray beforehand, and participate without reservation.

Option 2: Fasting with Purpose

- Choose one day this week to fast from a meal (or if medical conditions prevent food fasting, fast from social media or entertainment).



- Use Isaiah 58:6-11 as your guide—look for practical ways to "loose the bonds of wickedness" and "share your bread with the hungry."

Option 3: Missionary Engagement

- Research one of the missionaries your church supports (the sermon mentioned Dave and Darla Bird in Haiti, John and Steffi Markey in Ukraine, Yanchi in Hungary, or Sal and Alina Massa with ministry to India).
- Pray for them daily this week and write them an encouraging note or email.

Option 4: Character Development

- Choose one character quality from Titus 1:6-9 that you need to develop.
- Ask a trusted friend or small group member to hold you accountable in that area for the next month.

Option 5: Dependence Exercise

- Identify one area where you've been relying on your own strength rather than God's Spirit.
- Each day this week, consciously surrender that area to God before taking any action, praying: "Not by might, nor by power, but by Your Spirit, Lord."

Memory Verse

Zechariah 4:6 "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD of hosts."

Closing Reflection

Read together Philippians 3:12-14: "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

Discussion: How does Paul's attitude here reflect the heart of a missionary? How can we apply this "pressing forward" mindset whether God calls us to stay or to go?

Prayer Time (15 minutes)

- **Pray for missionaries** your church supports by name
- **Pray for those sensing a call** to ministry, missions, or church planting
- **Pray for your church** to remain a sending church dependent on the Holy Spirit
- **Pray for each group member** regarding their specific application commitment this week



- ***Pray for the character qualities*** from Titus 1 to be developed in each person's life
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For Next Week

Come prepared to share how God worked through your practical application and what you learned about dependence on the Holy Spirit.

*"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." -
Philippians 3:20*



Daily Devotional

5-Day Devotional: Called, Sent, and Faithful

Day 1: The Worshiping Heart

Reading: Acts 13:1-3; Psalm 22:3

Devotional: God inhabits the praises of His people. Before Barnabas and Saul were sent out as missionaries, they were found worshiping and fasting—ministering to the Lord, not to people. True ministry begins in the presence of God. When we worship without reservation, we demonstrate that we believe what we say we believe. Our worship becomes a witness to unbelievers and positions us to hear God's voice clearly. If you cannot worship Jesus openly where it's relatively easy, how will you serve Him where it may cost everything? Today, examine your worship life. Is it a sacrifice of praise offered freely, or something you do out of obligation? Let your worship define who you're becoming—more like the One you adore.

Day 2: The Discipline of Fasting

Reading: Isaiah 58:1-12; Matthew 6:16-18

Devotional: Fasting is not manipulation; it's self-control demonstrated before God. The leaders at Antioch fasted without demanding anything from the Lord—they simply made themselves available to hear His voice. True fasting loosens the bonds of wickedness in our own lives, teaching us what real hunger feels like and making us compassionate toward others. It's about breaking the power of the flesh so the Spirit can speak clearly. God doesn't respond to religious performance but to humble hearts that seek Him above all else. When we fast, we're saying, "Lord, I need You more than my next meal." This discipline prepares us for greater dependency on God's faithfulness. Consider incorporating regular fasting into your spiritual rhythm, not to earn God's favor, but to cultivate deeper hunger for His presence.

Day 3: Sent by the Spirit

Reading: Acts 9:10-16; Romans 10:13-15

Devotional: The Holy Spirit calls people by name to specific work. He called Barnabas and Saul while they were already serving faithfully where they were planted. God doesn't send the unprepared or the unwilling. Before being sent, these men displayed character traits essential for missionary life—worship, self-control, faithfulness, and submission to spiritual authority. Being "sent" means the church agrees with what the Holy Spirit has already done in your heart. If God is truly calling you, He will confirm it through spiritually mature leaders who know you. Never despise the wisdom of godly counsel; it protects you from premature departure and certain failure. Whether you're called across the ocean or across the street, wait for clear confirmation. God is a great communicator—if He's told you to go, He'll tell others too.



Day 4: Not by Might, But by My Spirit

Reading: Zechariah 4:1-10; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Devotional: The work of God advances not by human effort, programs, or promotion, but by the Spirit of the Lord. When we look at overwhelming circumstances—the rubble of broken lives, resistant hearts, limited resources—we must remember that God accomplishes His purposes through His power, not ours. Church planting, ministry, and Christian living succeed only when we depend completely on the Holy Spirit to draw people, provide resources, and change hearts. The moment we rely on marketing strategies, manipulation, or self-promotion, we've stepped out of God's way of working. One out of five church plants survive five years because many operate by human might rather than divine power. Your calling isn't about your abilities; it's about God's faithfulness. Release control today. Let the Holy Spirit go before you in every endeavor.

Day 5: Pressing Toward the Goal

Reading: Philippians 3:12-21; Hebrews 12:1-3

Devotional: Paul wrote from prison, yet his focus remained fixed on Christ and the upward call of God. Ministry isn't about having arrived or being perfected—it's about pressing forward faithfully, forgetting what lies behind. Whether you're planting churches, raising children, or serving in your workplace, the same principle applies: keep going no matter what. Hurricanes may flatten buildings, people may disappoint, resources may dry up—but if God has called you, remain faithful. It's never about you; it's always about Him. Our citizenship is in heaven, which means earthly setbacks are temporary. The prize isn't a successful ministry by worldly standards; it's hearing "Well done, good and faithful servant." Today, whatever discouragement you face, choose to press on. Your faithfulness in small things qualifies you for greater things in God's kingdom.