

LIFE OF PAUL: Week 8
“Set Apart & Sent” Acts 13:1–12
August 23, 2026

God Has Been Preparing Paul: Paul's life has been radically changed since he surrendered his life to Christ. The man who once persecuted Christians has become one of the loudest and most passionate voices proclaiming the gospel. God has been preparing, molding, and shaping Paul for years for the assignment He is about to give him. In Antioch, Jews and Gentiles were coming to faith in Jesus. Barnabas went to Antioch, recognized what God was doing, and brought Paul from Tarsus to help. For a year they ministered together preaching the gospel, discipling believers, and encouraging them to keep God at the center of their lives. The believers in Antioch were living so differently from the surrounding culture that they became known as **Christians**. Jesus had already given His followers the mission: **Acts 1:8** — “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Now we see God begin to send Paul toward that assignment. **Think About It:** God may be preparing you for something long before He reveals exactly what He wants you to do. **What might God be preparing you for right now?**

1. God's call often comes while we are seeking him - Acts 13:1–2 The church at Antioch was made up of prophets and teachers from very different backgrounds. Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, and Saul came from different regions, cultures, social classes, and educational backgrounds. Yet they were united by one thing: **Jesus Christ and the Word of God**. The gospel crossed cultural and social boundaries and brought people together who might not naturally have been together. **The Church Is Supposed to Be Diverse and United** Our differences do not have to divide us. When Jesus is at the center, people with different backgrounds, experiences, opinions, preferences, and personalities can become one body. **The gospel is greater than our differences.**

2. Position yourself to hear from God - Acts 13:2 “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.’” Notice what they were doing **before** the Holy Spirit gave them direction: They were worshiping. They were fasting. They were praying. They were seeking God. They were positioning themselves to hear from Him. They did not stumble into God's direction by accident. They were intentionally seeking Him. **A Dangerous Place to Be:** It is possible to become so consumed with the routine of life that we lose both our purpose and our passion for God. We can become spectators rather than worshipers. Church is not simply an hour where we watch worship and listen to a sermon. **Our lives are worship.** God desires to speak and lead us, but we must intentionally create space to seek Him. **Personal Reflection: Am I positioning myself to hear from God, or am I too distracted by life to recognize His voice?** What currently consumes most of your attention?

3. Being set apart requires setting things aside: Acts 13:2 The Holy Spirit said: “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Before Paul and Barnabas could be **set apart for God's work**, they had to be willing to surrender themselves to God. Sometimes our “yes” to God requires a “no” to something else. There may be things, habits, priorities, relationships, distractions, or comforts that God is asking us to surrender. **A Question Worth Asking: What is it in my life that I need to set aside in order to be set apart for God?** Write down something God may be asking you to surrender:

4. God's call requires obedience: Acts 13:3–4 After fasting and praying, the church laid hands on Paul and Barnabas and sent them out.

This was a formal recognition and commissioning of God's call on their lives. The church agreed with what the Holy Spirit had spoken and released them to go. But there is an important distinction: **They Were Not Simply Sent by the Church. They were sent by the Holy Spirit.** We can make plans. We can organize. We can send people. We can create opportunities. But if God is not the One leading, our efforts can be in vain. The mission begins with God's direction. **Ask Yourself: Am I asking God to bless my plans, or am I seeking God for His plans?**

5. Our mission field starts at home: Acts 13:4–5 Paul and Barnabas traveled to Cyprus and began proclaiming the Word of God. Cyprus was significant because it was Barnabas' home. He knew the people. He knew the culture. He had relationships there. They started where God had already surrounded them with people who needed Jesus. **We Often Think Too Far Away:** When we hear “missions,” we may immediately think about another country or somewhere far away. But God has already placed a mission field around us. Our mission field includes: Our families. Our coworkers. Our neighbors. Our friends. Our community. The people we encounter every day. Paul and Barnabas were sent out from Antioch because they had first been faithful in Antioch. **Personal Application: Who has God already placed around me that needs to hear about Jesus? Name three people you can intentionally pray for: Am I faithfully sharing what Jesus has done in my life with the people God has already surrounded me with?**

6. Expect Opposition: Acts 13:6–8 As Paul and Barnabas traveled through Cyprus, they encountered a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, also known as Elymas. The proconsul, Sergius Paulus, wanted to hear the Word of God. But Elymas opposed Paul and Barnabas and tried to keep the proconsul from believing. Whenever the gospel advances, opposition will come. The question is not whether we will face opposition. **The question is how we will respond when we do.**

7. Stand up for the truth: Acts 13:9–11 Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, confronted Elymas. Paul was unwilling to allow someone to stand in the way of another person hearing the gospel. His response was bold because eternity was at stake. The pastor challenges us to consider whether we have become too passive, timid, or concerned about offending people to stand firmly for God's Word.

Boldness Is Not the Same as Anger: Paul confronted Elymas **filled with the Holy Spirit**. We are called to stand for truth, but we are not called to attack people. **Ephesians 4:15** — “Speaking the truth in love...” Our boldness must be controlled by the Holy Spirit and motivated by love. **Ask Yourself: Am I more concerned about someone's feelings being hurt or about their eternity?**

Where is God asking me to be more courageous about my faith?

8. People are not the enemy: Ephesians 6:12 “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” This is a spiritual battle.

The difficult coworker is not the enemy. The difficult neighbor is not the enemy. The family member who opposes your faith is not the enemy. The person who criticizes your faith is not the enemy. **People need Jesus.** Our responsibility is to love people while standing firmly for God's truth. **Remember: We** are not fighting **people**. We are fighting for **people**. There are souls at stake.

9. The word of God is what changes lives: Acts 13:12 The proconsul witnessed what happened to Elymas. But notice why Luke says he believed: He was “amazed at the teaching about the Lord.” The miracle pointed to the authority and power of God, but it was the **teaching of the Word** that impacted him. Paul did not save him. The miracle did not save him. Paul simply obeyed God and proclaimed the truth.

Our Responsibility: We are not responsible for making someone believe. We cannot change someone's heart. We cannot save anyone. Our responsibility is to: **Be obedient. Share our faith. Proclaim the Word of God. Stand for truth. Love people. God does the rest.**

10. Are you available? Paul and Barnabas were willing to be: Set apart. Sent. Obedient. Bold. Available. God had prepared Paul for years before launching him into this assignment. **The Question Is Not:** “Can God use me?” **The Question Is: “Am I available for God to use me?”** Are you willing to set aside things in your life in order to be set apart for God's purposes? Are you willing to obey when God leads? Are you willing to start with the people God has already placed around you? Are you willing to stand for truth while still loving people? Are you willing to allow God to use your life to reach someone else's eternity? **Your challenge for this week: Seek God Intentionally:** Make time to worship, pray, fast, and listen for God's direction. **Identify what needs to be set aside:** Ask God what is distracting you or keeping you from being fully available to Him. **Look at your mission field:** Identify people around you who need to know Jesus. **Be Bold:** Ask God for courage to speak about your faith when opportunities arise. **Speak truth with love:** Stand firmly for God's Word without treating people as the enemy.

6. Trust God with the results: Your job is obedience. God is responsible for what happens next.

Key Scriptures: Acts 1:8 — We are called to be witnesses to the ends of the earth. **Acts 13:2** — God calls people who are actively seeking Him. **Acts 13:4** — Paul and Barnabas were sent by the Holy Spirit. **Acts 13:12** — The proconsul believed because of the teaching about the Lord. **Ephesians 4:15** — We are to speak the truth in love. **Ephesians 6:12** — Our struggle is not against flesh and blood.

Personal Questions: God, what are You asking me to do? What do I need to set aside so I can be set apart? Who has God placed in my life that needs Jesus? Where do I need to be bolder in sharing my faith?

Final Thoughts: God is looking for people who are willing to be available. Paul was not simply sent somewhere.

He was **set apart for God's purpose, filled with the Holy Spirit, obedient to God's direction, and willing to go wherever God led him.**

The question for each of us is simple: **ARE YOU AVAILABLE?**



Sunday Worship Services 8am, 10:30 & 11am

ABOUT US

We exist to redefine the value of church by making Jesus unavoidable in our cities. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, practical biblical teaching, authentic relationships, and compassionate outreach, we want people to see that the gospel still changes lives today.

Love, Grow, Go!

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Men's Coffee-
every Thursday at 6am
in the Terrace



Baptism Sunday
8/30/26



Prayer and Praise Service
Monday 8/31/26

Going Beyond

VIRTUAL EVENT

PRISCILLA SHIRER

Worship with Anthony Evans



Scan the QR Code to Register

Saturday, September 19th
9am-3:30pm