


**A Five-Day Devotional Journey**
**June 22 - 28, 2008**

Acts 13:1-13

# Launch

## 1 As they were worshiping the Lord

**Read.** Acts 13:1-3 NLT

Among the prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch of Syria were Barnabas, Simeon (called “the black man”), Lucius (from Cyrene), Manaen (the childhood companion of King Herod Antipas), and Saul. One day as these men were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Dedicate Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them.” So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way.

**Read.** Hebrews 13:15-16 Message

Let's take our place outside with Jesus, no longer pouring out the sacrificial blood of animals but pouring out sacrificial praises from our lips to God in Jesus' name. Make sure you don't take things for granted and go slack in working for the common good; share what you have with others. God takes particular pleasure in acts of worship—a different kind of “sacrifice”—that take place in kitchen and workplace and on the streets.

**Think.**

- It's been at least ten years since Saul of Tarsus was first called. How do you think he felt to finally be sent out to actually do what he had been called to do all along? Was he nervous? Relieved? Chomping at the bit? Or what?
- How well do you handle waiting? When have you sensed or received a clear call from God like this? How did the call come to you? What did you do?
- What connection do you see in this passage between worship, fasting, and hearing God's call and direction?
- What connection does the Hebrews passage make between worship and “doing the stuff” in “kitchen and workplace and on the streets”? How readily and frequently do you find yourself in the attitude and action of worship?

**Pray.**

Holy Spirit, teach me how to wait on you, how to worship, how to do without food and entertainment and noise...and to enter into the tender and untamed rhythms of your voice.

**Live.**

Set aside time for fasting and worship and prayer this week — just cuz.

It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out your door. You step onto the road and if you don't keep your feet, there's no knowing where you might be swept off to.

*Fellowship of the Ring*

**“You are my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings — and to the people of Israel.”**

**That's what the Lord had said.**

**And he had waited.**

**After being chased out of Damascus and then hurried off to Jerusalem, Saul had returned home to Tarsus.**

**And he had waited.**

**Ten years or so had passed. You can be sure he knew the exact count down to the day. Tarsus was within a day's journey of the Cilician Gates — the gateway to the heart of Asia minor and ultimately to the West. How often he must have stared off toward the gates or out to sea, wondering, waiting.**

**And then Barnabas came and Saul was swept into the melting pot of a church in Syrian Antioch. His exile at home finally over. For a year he had taught the Scriptures to a people completely ignorant of them and desperately hungry.**

**But still he waited. True, he hadn't been chased out of town. No baskets lowering him over city walls. Maybe he had learned something of grace; maybe the climate was just different in Antioch. But this wasn't why he was called. Instrument. Message. Mission. Suffering.**

**And then it happened.**

**Everyone sensed a new barrier needed to be broken. The fasting was intense and the worship sweet. And then there it was. A prophetic voice in the night: “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” More fasting, more prayer. And with direction set and help arranged, they launched. The first of many journeys, many trips, many shores, many faces. Seas to cross, roads to travel, dangers to brave — along with a pagan sorcerer or two — and a message to deliver and to live out on the road. Saul echoes the thought to us: It's a dangerous business, going out your door...**

## 2) Sent out by the Holy Spirit

**Read.** Acts 13:4-5 NLT

So Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the Holy Spirit. They went down to the seaport of Seleucia and then sailed for the island of Cyprus. There, in the town of Salamis, they went to the Jewish synagogues and preached the word of God. John Mark went with them as their assistant.

**Read.** Isaiah 6:6-8 Message

"Doom! It's Doomsday! I'm as good as dead!

Every word I've ever spoken is tainted—  
blasphemous even!"...

"Look. This coal has touched your lips.

Gone your guilt,  
your sins wiped out."

And then I heard the voice of the Master:

"Whom shall I send?

Who will go for us?"

I spoke up, "I'll go. Send me!"

**Think.**

- Cyprus was familiar turf for Barnabas, but probably not for Saul or for John Mark. How do you handle being sent out into unknown, unfamiliar paths?
- How important is it to know at such times that it's the Holy Spirit that is sending you out? How can we be assured of this?
- With what do you identify most closely right now: Isaiah's overwhelming sense of his own sin and inadequacy, or his eagerness to embrace God's call? Why?

**Pray.**

Holy Spirit, touch my unclean lips and steady my all too often quivering heart and faltering hands. Give me courage to step out the door.

**Live.** Risk the unfamiliar in responding to God's call today.

## 4) He looked the sorcerer in the eye

**Read.** Acts 13:9-12 NLT

Saul, also known as Paul, was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he looked the sorcerer in the eye. Then he said, "You son of the devil, full of every sort of deceit and fraud, and enemy of all that is good! Will you never stop perverting the true ways of the Lord? Watch now, for the Lord has laid his hand of punishment upon you, and you will be struck blind. You will not see the sunlight for some time." Instantly mist and darkness came over the man's eyes, and he began groping around begging for someone to take his hand and lead him. When the governor saw what had happened, he became a believer, for he was astonished at the teaching about the Lord.

**Think.**

- How did Paul respond to the sorcerer? What did he say? What happened to Bar-Jesus?
- Why wasn't Paul more tolerant? Why the harsh words and actions? How might you have responded in this situation?
- How did this whole incident impact the Roman governor?
- How well do you handle conflict and confrontation? Are there some situations where it's easier to handle than others? Why?
- How do you know when to speak up and when to keep quiet? When to reason with someone and when to simply "call a spade a spade"?

**Pray.**

Holy Spirit, deliver me from being "nice." Lead me in the art of holy rebuke and righteous correction that is thoroughly bathed in your unflinching love.

**Live.**

Don't shy away from needed confrontation today. Let the thing be pressed...

## 3) A false prophet named Bar-Jesus

**Read.** Acts 13:6-8 NLT

Afterward they traveled from town to town across the entire island until finally they reached Paphos, where they met a Jewish sorcerer, a false prophet named Bar-Jesus. He had attached himself to the governor, Sergius Paulus, who was an intelligent man. The governor invited Barnabas and Saul to visit him, for he wanted to hear the word of God. But Elymas, the sorcerer (as his name means in Greek), interfered and urged the governor to pay no attention to what Barnabas and Saul said. He was trying to keep the governor from believing.

**Read.** 2 Timothy 3:8-9 Message

These men are like those old Egyptian frauds Jannes and Jambres, who challenged Moses. They were rejects from the faith, twisted in their thinking, defying truth itself. But nothing will come of these latest impostors. Everyone will see through them, just as people saw through that Egyptian hoax.

**Think.**

- How does Luke describe the Roman governor of Cyprus, Sergius Paulus? What kind of man was he? How did he respond to Barnabas and Saul? What did he want?
- Who was Bar-Jesus/Elymas? How was he trying to influence the governor? What do you think his motives were in doing this? How does he compare to the magicians Moses faced in Egypt?
- What obstacles have you faced most recently in your efforts to follow God's call? How did you respond? What happened?

**Pray.**

Spirit of God, help me not be intimidated by enemy smokescreens and diversions. Give me the courage to press through them to the people who most need your touch.

**Live.** In your walk today, look for the best, prepare for the worst — and trust God with all outcomes.

## 5) There John Mark left them

**Read.** Acts 13:13 NLT

Paul and his companions then left Paphos by ship for Pamphylia, landing at the port town of Perga.

There John Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem.

**Read.** Luke 9:57-62 Message

As they were walking along, someone said to Jesus, "I will follow you wherever you go." But Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens to live in, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place even to lay his head."

He said to another person, "Come, follow me." The man agreed, but he said, "Lord, first let me return home and bury my father." But Jesus told him, "Let the spiritually dead bury their own dead! Your duty is to go and preach about the Kingdom of God." Another said, "Yes, Lord, I will follow you, but first let me say good-bye to my family." But Jesus told him, "Anyone who puts a hand to the plow and then looks back is not fit for the Kingdom of God."

**Think.**

- What are some possible explanations for John Mark's departure? (remembering the fact shared later that Paul did not approve)
- When have you felt "left in the lurch" by someone at a crucial moment? When have you been the one "bugging out"?
- To what extent can you identify with either of the three disciple wannabes in Luke 9? What's the best excuse you've used to avoid following through on God's call? What happened?

**Pray.**

Holy Spirit, thank you for your grace in bearing with my weaknesses, my glances back, my faltering obedience. Set my face forward.

**Live.**

Follow through this week on a promise made.