

Life Group Discussion Guide

Against All Odds: How the Name of Jesus Spreads
Week 5: A Sending Church • Acts 12:25–13:3

The Book of Acts is full of adventures. Throughout our series, we've watched as trailblazers have set sail to new lands, crossed through enemy territory, and spread the News. This week, our text presents us with a new perspective: a glimpse of the church who sent these pioneers, and the Holy Spirit behind it all.

As we dive into our Scripture passage, we uncover three identifiers of a sending church:

1. Sending Churches Embrace Diversity

Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch) and Saul. (13:1)

When we come across verses like this one, we might be tempted to skip over the names we don't recognize and keep moving. But here, in this short verse, lies something we don't want to miss: diversity. One commentator put it this way:

"There in that little band there is exemplified the unifying influence of Christianity. Men from many lands and many backgrounds had discovered the secret of 'togetherness' because they had discovered the secret of Christ." – William Barclay

Pastor Adam added, "A local church should look in all ways like the community it surrounds – because that means it's reaching the community it surrounds!"

- What value does cultural/ethnic diversity bring to the local church?
- In what ways does Scripture reveal God's heart for diversity – for a "togetherness" that supersedes and appreciates differences?

This same verse demonstrates diversity not only in culture, but in skills and gifts. As Pastor Adam explained it:

"In our text, we see two different gifts mentioned—prophets and teachers. Not everyone had the same gifting—and that's true even today in local churches, including ours."

- What value does a diversity of skills and gifts bring to the local church?
- What skills and gifts do you see in the other members of your Life Group?
- What God-given abilities do you have to offer our church family? What is one step you can take to better utilize those gifts at Oak Pointe?

2. Sending Churches Embrace Surrender

Twice in these four verses we read mention of fasting, which is followed closely by worshiping and praying. What do these all have in common? Surrender!

“To worship and pray is to do more than show up on a Sunday morning and lift your voice – although it includes that. To worship and pray is to wake up every day committed to following the voice of your King – committed to laying down your will, your agenda, and your dreams to pick up God’s will, God’s agenda, and God’s dreams for your life.” – Pastor Adam

- What is the connection between fasting/worship/prayer and surrender?
- Pastor Adam defined fasting as, “a means of emptying ourselves to be more filled with Jesus, and to become more like Him.” What would it look like for you to embrace the spiritual discipline of fasting?
- What do you think will change when you do?

3. Sending Churches Embrace Temporary Loss

As our passage continues, we see the result of all this fasting, worship, and prayer: *“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.’ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.” (13:2-3)*

As Pastor Adam pointed out, *“Verse 1 lists five leaders of the church in Antioch—and two verses later they are sending two. That’s 40% of their staff being sent!”*

It must have been a significant loss to send two core leaders to continue work elsewhere – a reality that hits close to home for Oak Pointe, doesn’t it? Pastor Adam put it this way:

“It was a temporary loss to plant 3 churches in 3 years. Resources. Staff. People. Relationships. Everything changes when people are sent. And yet, the loss is short—because the family of God expands, stories of life-change come in, and relationships with those sent are deepened to new levels.”

- How have you experienced the temporary loss that comes with being a sending church?
- How have you witnessed or personally experienced the gain that comes in the long run?

In closing, Pastor Adam challenged us with a question:

“Who has been the main character in our text today, and others in this series? It’s not Peter. It’s not Paul. It’s not Barnabas. It’s the Holy Spirit.”

This brings us to our **Big Idea: Sending churches listen to and obey the Holy Spirit.**

Before His death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus told His followers it would be for their own good that He “go away,” so they might receive the Holy Spirit. This message was true not only for the Apostles but for us as believers today. Pastor Adam said it this way:

“So was the church in Antioch some super church that can’t be duplicated? Not a chance. They were followers of Jesus committed to surrendering their own agenda so they could align themselves with the will of God. They were diverse. They were surrendered. They were okay with loss. And, most importantly, they were committed to listening and obeying when the Holy Spirit said, ‘Go.’ May the same be said of us.”

- How have you experienced the leading of the Holy Spirit in your own life?
- What act of obedience is the Holy Spirit currently prompting you to? What would it look like for you to obey?
- Pray together now for greater surrender to the working of the Holy Spirit in and through each member of your Life Group, as well as throughout our Oak Pointe family.