

# Points to Ponder

All Who Call on His Name: *Acts & the Early Church*

July 20, 2025

Acts 13:2-12

1. Read Acts 13:2-12 together. Take time to notice the details of the story. Does anything stand out? What surprises you? What encourages you? What challenges you?
2. Barnabas and Saul's first stop on their missionary journey was the Island of Cyprus. Cyprus is located in the crossroads of Europe, Africa, and Asia, and is a territory that has been fought over and conquered by many different Empires throughout history. In what ways does the geography and history of this island make it a significant location for the start of this missionary journey?
3. The opening of the chapter describes how the church at Antioch commissioned Barnabas and Paul for the work that God called them to. But, Verse 4 says that Barnabas and Saul were sent on their way by the Holy Spirit. Why is this important? What evidence do you see that they were empowered by God's Spirit? (note: Where else is the Spirit mentioned in the passage?)
4. Acts does not offer a comprehensive history of the early church. Instead, the text is highly selective in the stories that are included. Why do you think this story was chosen as the first account of the missionary work of Barnabas and Saul?

Reflect together on the unexpected characters found in this story:

5. Bar-Jesus the Sorcerer (also known as Elymas the Sorcerer)
  - Why is a Jewish Sorcerer an oxymoron? (two things that don't belong together)
  - Why do you think Bar-Jesus opposed Barnabas and Saul (also known as Paul)
  - Do you think the blinding of Bar-Jesus was an act of judgement or an act of grace? (consider the parallels to Saul/Paul's conversion in Acts 9)
6. Sergius Paulus (the proconsul)
  - Given what we know about the culture of the Roman Empire, why is it surprising that Sergius Paulus sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God?
  - Why is it significant that Sergius Paulus came to believe? Does this offer hope for us today?
7. Saul/Paul
  - What makes Paul an unexpected character in the story? (consider Acts 9:1)
  - This passage is the first time that the author of Acts calls Saul by his Roman name, Paul, rather than by his Hebrew name, Saul. Why is the timing of this significant? What do you think it means?

Reflect together on the landscape of the mission field of the Roman Empire

8. In what ways is the context of the Roman Empire different from our context today?
9. What similarities do you see between the ministry landscape revealed in the text, and the ministry landscape we find ourselves in today?
10. As you think about the challenges and opportunities we are faced with as we try to living on mission for Jesus in our world today...
  - What do you find discouraging?

- What do you find hopeful?

Pray for each other out of the items discussed. Pray that the Lord would open your eyes to any areas of your life that need to be brought into the light, and pray for the strength and courage to carry on the mission to proclaim Jesus to the world in word and deed. Pray that the Lord would help you to be an unexpected character in the story of God and world, allowing Him to redeem and renew you, and use you in unexpected ways to bring light to our darkened world.