



JOURNEY WITH PAUL: CALLED TO GO

Study Guide

October 9, 2022

Opening Prayer

Holy God, help us to continue to discern your call that we might be responsive as we listen to your voice.

Prepare us for the work you have in store for your church that the world may know your deep love found in Jesus. In our time of reflection and introspection, make clear your vision for us.

And finally, encourage us, that we give us courage to go live out a vibrant, outwardly focused faith. Amen.

Video Teaching

Read Acts 13:1-5, 13-15, 38-43

What do you think made these synagogue worshippers (Jewish and Gentile) open to accept Paul's message of Jesus? What are some reasons so many people are unwilling to accept Jesus? John (full name John Mark) "deserted them" early in their journey. Have you ever "bitten off more than you can chew," and had to back away from a task or responsibility? What does it take to renew confidence and remain useful after that happens?

Read Acts 14:8-20, 25-28

Why did Paul and Barnabas focus their report on God's work in saving Gentiles and not the problems they faced? Were they being naïve optimists? What helped them see the bright side of their trip? Are you a "glass half empty" or a "glass half full" person? Do you admire positive people? How can we develop a more optimistic, hopeful attitude no matter what life throws at us? Do we tend to "deify" the best of our Christian leaders? Instead, how should we think of them?

Read Galatians 2:11-16

As more and more Gentiles followed Christ (chiefly in the Galatian churches Paul planted), the question arose: did they need to adopt all the religious rites Jewish Christians followed? In Antioch, Paul wrote, even Peter and Barnabas were intimidated and stopped eating with Gentile Christians. Paul found that outrageous and destructive. Faith in Jesus, he said, not identical ritual behaviors, was the reality that united all Christians.

- For Paul, this issue struck at the core of the life mission he believed Jesus had called him to carry out. If "pure" Christians should avoid contact with second-class Gentile Christians, then in effect Gentiles weren't really welcome at all in God's family. But that was nonsense, Paul insisted, because "no one will be made righteous by the works of the Law." Which "works of the Law" are you or other Christians you know tempted to trust in? What helps you to avoid rank ordering other Christians from "excellent" to "not so good"?
- Paul wrote that Peter "began to back out and separate himself, because he was afraid of the people who promoted circumcision." Apparently, Peter was willing to hurt Gentile believers in order to avoid incurring censure himself from some of the critical believers from Jerusalem. When have you faced disapproval from some Christians because of your desire to include other Christians in your circle of fellowship and support? Who are the second-class citizens that need you to stand up for them?



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Read Acts 15:1-2, 5-20

The debate reflected in Galatians grew so heated that the church at Antioch sent a group to Jerusalem to settle the issue. The apostles and others met to decide: could Gentiles be Christians without keeping Jewish laws? One side argued that the Law of Moses must be a fixed point. Peter, Barnabas and Paul simply testified to seeing God at work in the lives of Gentiles who didn't follow that law. In the end, James quoted Amos 9:11-12, and said it showed that God wanted Gentiles welcomed without lots of extra rules.

Key points after Paul's conversion

- Paul goes to the Arabian desert for 3 years
- Paul visits the apostle in Jerusalem for 15 days
- Paul flees Jerusalem and returns to Tarsus for 10 years.
- Barnabas is sent to Syrian Antioch
- Barnabas recruits Paul from Tarsus and brings him to Syrian Antioch

- The Jerusalem Council led to broad agreement more than “binding legislation.” Scholar N. T. Wright wrote of the decision: “This looks strongly like a way of saying something to the Gentile Christians out in the wider world while really saying something to the Pharisees back home: ‘Look, it’s all right. Admitting these Gentiles who have believed won’t mean a total collapse into idolatry and immorality. It needn’t result in chaos or church/synagogue disputes.’ It wouldn’t be the last time an agreed statement from a church body was designed more to send out signals than to become part of a code of law.” (Paul, in 1 Corinthians 10:25-27, later modified some of the guidelines about avoiding food offered to idols.) How could the spirit of the Jerusalem Council guide us today when we face issues on which Christians honestly differ?

Paul's Journey



Closing Prayer