



**PMJ**

# BRINGING THE GOSPEL TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

**PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS**

## **SESSION ONE: PAUL IS NEW, BUT THE MISSION IS NOT ACTS 13:1–43**

### **CENTRAL FOCUS**

As the account of Paul's journeys begins in Acts, Paul is still fairly "new" to the Christian Church and to its missionary work. The mission of Christ to seek and save the lost was not new, however, and it does not get old for the church today.

### **OBJECTIVES**

That participants, led by the Holy Spirit working through God's Word, will

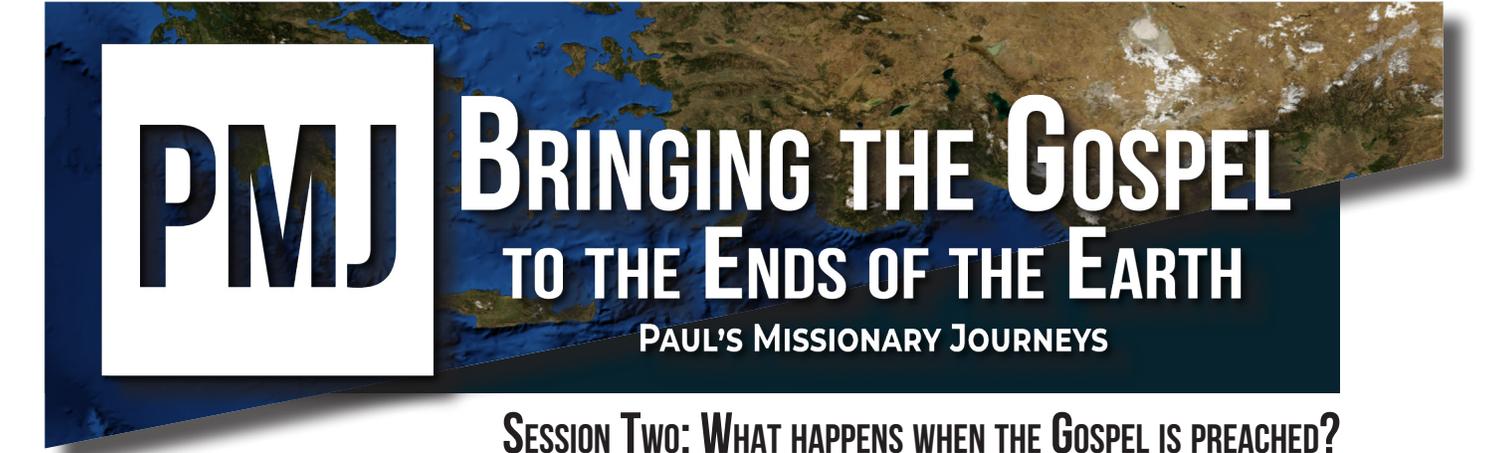
1. tell the first part of the story of Paul's first missionary journey;
2. explain why it is important that those who proclaim the Gospel say the same thing; and
3. want to learn more about Paul's missionary journeys.

### **OPENING PRAYER**

Lord God, who long ago sent Your Church and her pastors to tell the Good News of salvation in Christ, make us faithful here and now. Give us courage before the world, submission to Your Word, and salvation for our sin-sick selves so that, with one voice, we may declare Your excellencies for having called us out of darkness into Your marvelous light. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

### **QUESTIONS**

1. Why is it important for the church to be unselfish with her servants?
2. Why do you think Mark left? Is there anything similar in the church today?
3. Why should the church take pains to keep her Gospel proclamation biblical?
4. What was the heart of Paul's Gospel proclamation? (Compare 1 Corinthians 15:2–4.)
5. Paul was new, but the Gospel he preached was not. Why is it important that those speaking the Gospel say the same thing? (Hint: Remember the previous questions in this session and your answers.)



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## SESSION TWO: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE GOSPEL IS PREACHED? ACTS 13:44–15:41

### CENTRAL FOCUS

Through His Word, the Lord prepares His Church for various eventualities when the Gospel is preached.

### OBJECTIVES

That participants, led by the Holy Spirit working through God's Word, will

1. tell the rest of the story of Paul's first missionary journey and tell of the events in Acts 15;
2. recognize significant challenges that arise when God's Word is proclaimed today and identify lessons we can learn from the Early Church to help today's Christians meet those challenges; and
3. gain increased confidence from God's Word when such challenges arise.

### OPENING PRAYER

Father, hallowed be Your name. Cause Your Word to be taught among us in its truth and purity, and lead us to live holy lives according to it. Your kingdom come. Give us Your Holy Spirit, so that by Your grace we believe Your Holy Word and lead godly lives now and in eternity. Your will be done. Strengthen and keep us firm in Your Word and in faith until we die. We pray as Jesus taught us and because of Him. Amen.

### QUESTIONS

1. Do Christians today sometimes assume that people will not believe in Christ, even before the Good News is told? If so, what leads to this assumption?
2. What misconceptions did people at Lystra have when Paul and Barnabas came? What misconceptions do people bring with them when they hear the Gospel today?
3. Did Paul and Barnabas say anything at the Jerusalem Council? If so, what? Which speech at the council turned out to be decisive, and why? Can we learn something from this?
4. How did Paul and Barnabas handle their difference of opinion in a constructive way?
5. Think about a big challenge that you see when the Gospel is preached. Why do you regard it as such a great challenge? What help can you get from what you have learned in this session to address this challenge?

### CENTRAL FOCUS

The Lord remains with His Church to bless the proclamation of the Gospel when human plans and expectations are not realized.

### OBJECTIVES

That participants, led by the Holy Spirit working through God's Word, will

1. tell the first part of the story of Paul's second missionary journey, especially noting the things that did not go according to plan;
2. identify blessings that God gave and still gives His Church, even when the unexpected arises; and
3. trust the Lord to bless our work, even when things do not go according to our plans.

### OPENING PRAYER

Lord God, You have called Your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go but only that Your hand is leading us and Your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. (*LSB*, p. 311)

### SESSION THREE: EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED ACTS 16:1–17:15

### QUESTIONS

1. How can even Christians feel when their well-considered plans do not work out? How does the Lord encourage His Church in such situations? See Psalm 25:4–5 and Ephesians 1:22–23.
2. What did not go according to Paul's plan early in the second missionary journey?
3. What does the story of the young woman have to do with the jailer? What does it have to do with anyone else today?
4. What made the Jews in Berea "more noble" than those at Thessalonica?
5. What blessings did God give to Paul and his colleagues during this phase of their mission work? Which of these blessings does He give His Church today?

## SESSION FOUR: MEET PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE—BUT DON'T LEAVE THEM THERE!

**ACTS 17:16–18:17**

### CENTRAL FOCUS

“Meet people where they are” comes to us as an axiom of good communication. Yet, reaching out with the Gospel, the church does not leave people in sin and death but brings them Christ and life.

### OBJECTIVES

That participants, led by the Holy Spirit working through God's Word, will

1. tell the rest of the story of Paul's second missionary journey;
2. suggest ways in which the church in its Gospel outreach can meet people where they are, yet not leave them there; and
3. determine to do just that, in Jesus' name.

### OPENING PRAYER

Lord God, give Your Church Your Holy Spirit and the wisdom that comes from Him alone. Help us to meet others where they are, yet never leave them there. Guide us as we reach out. Cause us to point to the hatefulness of sin in the real lives of people, yet always convey the warmth of a loving touch. Lead us constantly to direct people to Your crucified and risen Son, Jesus, who is their Savior and ours. Amen.

### QUESTIONS

1. If Paul was not selling out, then what was he doing? Why is this speech so different from others in Acts?
2. Is it good for the church today to parallel what Paul did in Athens? Why or why not?
3. Can our difficulties in proclaiming the Gospel become ways in which the Lord meets us? How does this compare with the Lord's meeting Paul where he was?
4. How did the Lord take Paul on from where he was? Does He treat us likewise?
5. Considering what you have learned in this session, how can we meet people where they are, but not leave them there?

**SESSION FIVE: "BIG TARGET" STORIES  
ACTS 18:18–19:41**

**CENTRAL FOCUS**

As Paul aimed for the “big target” on the third missionary journey—Ephesus—the church today can aim at big targets in proclaiming the Gospel.

**OBJECTIVES**

That participants, led by the Holy Spirit working through God’s Word, will

1. tell the first part of the story of Paul’s third missionary journey;
2. analyze a “big target” for Gospel proclamation in light of these realities: the devil and idolatry; and
3. determine to go after “big targets” in spreading the Gospel.

**OPENING PRAYER**

Almighty God, You have called Your Church to witness that in Christ You have reconciled us to Yourself. Grant that by Your Holy Spirit we may proclaim the Good News of Your salvation, so that all who hear it may receive the gift of salvation; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (*LSB*, p. 305)

**QUESTIONS**

1. What made Ephesus a “big target” for Paul? Think of a “big target” for the Gospel near you. What makes it big?
2. What tools and traits does the church need to meet “big target” challenges? What can be learned from the Church at Ephesus?
3. Recalling the evil one, and all the things under his sway in this life, would you like to revise your answers to the earlier questions in this session? If so, how?
4. Recalling the nature and power of idolatry, how might you revise your answer to the earlier questions in this session?
5. Does idol-worship turn out to be the “big target” for the church’s proclamation? How so or how not?

## SESSION SIX: THROUGH MISSION, THE WORD OF THE LORD BUILDS THE CHURCH

**ACTS 20:1–21:19**

### CENTRAL FOCUS

Paul did not aim simply to speak of Christ on the fly with as many individuals as possible. Through missionary activity, like the bold work of Paul, the Word of the Lord builds the Church.

### OBJECTIVES

That participants, led by the Holy Spirit working through God's Word, will

1. tell the rest of the story of Paul's third missionary journey;
2. discuss specific ways in which the church was built as the mission was carried out through Paul;
3. apply lessons from this course to our life in the church today; and
4. take encouragement from the account of Paul's journeys as it is given in God's Word.

### OPENING PRAYER

Almighty and everlasting God, You would have all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. By Your almighty power and unsearchable wisdom break and hinder all the counsels of those who hate Your Word and who, by corrupt teaching, would destroy it. Enlighten them with the knowledge of Your glory that they may know the riches of Your heavenly grace and, in peace and righteousness, serve You, the only true God; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. (*LSB*, p. 305)

### QUESTIONS

1. In what ways did the instances of charitable works and consecrated worship result from mission? How might they lead to further mission?
2. What did Paul say in his farewell speech that can be of help to you as you pray for your pastor or for a missionary?
3. In what ways did Paul's courage come to the fore as the third journey was ending? How would his attitude have affected you if you were there?
4. Which of Paul's missionary journeys most encourages you, and why?
5. What do you think is the most important thing you have learned in this course about
  - Christ and His Gospel?
  - building the Church?
  - yourself?