

WE ARE ALL "SET APART"

Summer 2022, Acts 13:1-5

June 19, 2021

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.
Acts 13:2-3

The Great Commission to Pentecost to breakout: What we've learned so far in Acts

⁷ He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Acts 1:8

³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

³⁸ Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

⁴⁰ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." ⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

Acts 2:37-41

¹⁹ Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. ²⁰ Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. ²¹ The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

Acts 11:19-21

1. Read Acts watching for what the Holy Spirit is doing
2. Read Acts with geography in mind – the story is getting closer and closer to us!
3. Read Acts watching how God works in the lives of the key personalities: Peter, Barnabas, Saul

The mission movement begins

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. ² 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.” ³ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

⁴ The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. ⁵ When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper.

Acts 13:1-5

1. Start where God has led you (remember Matthew 28:19-20 and Acts 11:19-21)
2. Worship, fasting and prayer (see Acts 2:42-47) are practices of a church ready for mission
3. Equipping churches have multiple “prophets and teachers” (and diversity helps!)
4. Effective churches reach out first to where and who you know

Three important thoughts for Anacortes

- 1) For mission, the church starts locally (and is supported universally)

²⁵ When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, they returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark.

Acts 12:25 (see Keller’s fifth “practice” of missional churches)

- 2) Listening corporately to God is so important

²⁸ It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us . . .

Acts 15:28

- 3) “Set apart” means God has a plan and we have a job (even when “letting them go” is hard)

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God . . .

Romans 1:1

5 Practices of a Missional Church

Tim Keller at <https://brave.is/5-practices-of-a-missional-church-tim-keller/>

In the West, for nearly a thousand years, the relationship of European Christian churches to the broader culture was a relationship known as Christendom. The institutions of society “Christianized” people and stigmatized non-Christian belief and behavior.

British missionary, Lesslie Newbigin, went to India [in 1936]. When he returned to England, some thirty years later, he discovered that the Western church now found itself in a non-Christian society, but it had not adapted to its new situation. While most traditional evangelical churches can win the temperamentally conventional and conservative to Christ, American author Michael Wolff notes that this market is shrinking. If evangelical churches settle the decline in numbers, with the remaining Christian body not becoming missional, they will decline and die. This has instituted an even greater need for “missional” churches, which adopt the following practices:

1. Speak in the vernacular

In Christendom, technical biblical terms are well known inside and outside of the church. In a missional church, however, these terms must be explained.

The missional church:

- avoids “tribal” language, stylized prayer language, and evangelical jargon that seeks to set a spiritual tone.
- avoids “we-they” language, disdainful jokes that mock people of different politics and beliefs
- avoids sentimental, pompous, “inspirational” talk
- avoids talking as if non-believers were not present

2. Enter and retell the culture’s stories with the Gospel

In Christendom, it is possible to simply exhort Christianized people to do what they know they should. There is little or no real engagement, listening, or persuasion. Often, along with exhortation, there is a heavy reliance on guilt to motivate behavior change.

In a missional church, preaching and communication always assume skeptics are present and consequently engages their stories. To enter the culture’s stories mean showing sympathy towards and deeply acquainting with literature, music, theatre, and other arts expressing the existing hopes, dreams, heroic narratives and fears. To *retell the culture’s stories* is to show how only in Christ can we have freedom without slavery and embrace-of-the-other without injustice.

3. Theologically train laypeople for public life and vocation

In a missional church, laypeople need theological education to “think Christianly” about everything and work with Christian distinctiveness. They need to know three things: (a) which cultural practices manifest common grace and are to be embraced, (b) which practices are antithetical to the Gospel and must be rejected, and (c) which practices can be adapted/revised.

Christians will have to use the Gospel to demonstrate true, biblical love and tolerance in the public square towards those with whom we deeply differ. This tolerance should equal or exceed that which groups with opposing views show towards Christians. The charge of intolerance is perhaps the main “defeater” of the Gospel in the non-Christian West.

4. Create Christian community that is countercultural and counterintuitive

In Christendom, “fellowship” is basically just a set of nurturing relationships, support, and accountability.

In a missional church, however, Christian community must go beyond that to embody a counterculture, showing the world how radically different a Christian society is with regard to sex, money, and power.

- *In sex.* We avoid both the secular society’s idolization of sex and traditional society’s fear of sex. We also exhibit love rather than hostility or fear toward those whose sexual life-patterns are different from ours.
- *In money.* We promote a radically generous commitment of time, money, relationships, and living space to social justice and the needs of the poor, the immigrant, and the economically and physically weak.
- *In power.* We are committed to power sharing and relationship building among races and classes that are alienated outside of the body of Christ. A missional church must be deeply and practically committed to deeds of compassion and social justice and deeply and practically committed to evangelism and conversion.

5. Practice Christian unity as much as possible on the local level

It is very important that we do not spend time bashing and criticizing other kinds of churches. That criticism simply plays into the common “defeater” that Christians are all intolerant. While we align ourselves in denominations that share many of our distinctives, at the local level we should cooperate with, reach out to, and support the other congregations and churches in our area. This will raise many thorny issues, of course, but our bias should be in the direction of cooperation.