

The People Begged Them to Speak

Do you get to spend time with new Christians? I love the privilege. New believers are hungry. They love to hear Gospel preaching. They enjoy the company of loving disciple-makers and their new Christian friends. Their newfound faith and the new fellowships they gather draw people like a magnet to the living Word of God.

In Acts 13, the Apostle Paul and his companions were on a mission trip. They were traveling through new towns and colonies of the Roman Empire. According to recent sources, the empire included about five million people in 50 A.D., growing to almost 50 million in the next century. It was a growing nation, sprawling in every direction, centered around Rome and spreading eastward toward Paul's home region. "Go east, young man," might have defined the call to the young families around Italy. But Paul and his friends were headed north and west from Israel.

"Dedicate Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them," the Holy Spirit told the new churches in Acts 13:2. The young leaders traveled west through Cyprus, then up off the island into what we know as Turkey—they called it Asia Minor. Paul and Barnabas walked north up to Antioch of Pisidia. Paul preached that the new hearers should "repent of their sins and turn to God and be baptized" (v.24). "Brothers, listen!" Paul preached, "We are here to proclaim that through this man Jesus there is forgiveness for your sins" (v.38).

As followers of Jesus, we preach the same message. We go on mission trips. We start new congregations. We see new believers coming to God. Some around us are calloused and hard. But not all. Some are hungry. Some will respond like the new friends who heard Paul's Gospel message and "begged them to speak about these things again the next week" (v.42). And like Paul and Barnabas, we can urge them "to continue in the grace of God" (v.43).

For those who follow in the footsteps of Paul and Barnabas: that's still our calling. Don't stop now. Christ is alive and well. His message is powerful. The population is moving into the cities, our growing empire, and it's an empire that needs Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Press on, friends. Our new Christian friends are hungry, and will help us with the mission.

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AFLC Promotion for May is Home Missions