

Lesson 17- Acts 13:44-14:7

A Light for the Gentiles

Has there ever been a time when you felt like you were excluded from a group? You were chosen last for the team, or weren't chosen at all. You were not invited to an event because you weren't considered cool enough. We all have experiences like these occasionally, and some people more than others. Usually we feel the pain and get over it. However, if you were a non-Jew (a Gentile) and lived in the first century, you would have felt the Jewish hatred for you. Perhaps you were even called a "dog" or "unclean."

In contrast, Paul showed a new and better way. Paul freely shared Christ's saving message to the Gentiles in his missionary travels. Christ's death opened the door for all who would believe in Him—Jews *and* Gentiles.

Going to Church

Throughout Acts, Paul focused on establishing local congregations in the cities where he preached. Whether in the local synagogue or an outdoor gathering, he often began his ministry by preaching to those who would listen.

This was true in the city of Pisidian Antioch where nearly the entire population gathered on the Sabbath to hear the *Word of God* (Acts 13:44).

When we go to church, we gather to listen to the promises of the Word of God so that we might hear and believe. [TM note: Rom 10:14-17] Isaiah 2:3 says that He will teach us His ways so that we may walk in them. We also go to church to fellowship and for encouragement. Psalm 84:2 uses strong verbs—longed and *yearned*— in describing our attitude when going to worship in God's house.

Jesus Himself made it His habit to go to God's house on the Sabbath (Luke 4:16). [TM note: 3rd Commandment – "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."]

Hebrews 10:25 warns us not to forsake the habit of meeting together with other believers, but to *encourage* each other.

Into the Word: Acts 13:44-14:7

Paul and Barnabas had preached to the people. They were anxious to hear more. So the next Sabbath, nearly the entire city of Pisidian Antioch gathered to hear God's Word.

There are three groups involved in this account. In each column, describe their actions or reactions according to the following verses:

JEWS	PAUL & BARNABAS	GENTILES
v.45 <i>anger, jealousy</i>	v.46 <i>told Jews God's Word First; Jews rejected it so they turned and shared it with the Gentiles</i>	vv.48 <i>believed, rejoiced and glorified God</i>
v.50 <i>Jews got city leaders to stir up persecution against Paul and Barnabas</i>	v.51 <i>shook the dust off their feet in protest and left for Iconium</i>	v.49 <i>the word of the Lord Spread</i>

God had commanded Paul and Barnabas to preach to the Gentiles in order to bring salvation to the end of the earth (v.47). Once in Iconium (14:1), they went directly to the synagogue to preach, and many Jews and Gentiles believed.

In this town too, the unbelieving Jews rose up to oppose their message. What things happened in Iconium to show

that Paul and Barnabas were from God? v.3

- *spoke boldly with reliance upon the Lord*
- *God gave them the ability to do signs and wonders*

The city was divided: some believed Paul, but others sided with the Jews. The unbelieving Jews and Gentiles planned to mistreat Paul and Barnabas and to stone them (vv.5–7). Once Paul and Barnabas heard of the plot, they fled to Lycaonia, Lystra, and Derbe and continued to preach the Gospel.

[TM note: Iconium, Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe - Refer back to Lesson 16 map of Paul's journeys every time new locations are mentioned, so that students can trace the route that Paul took.]

New Ideas:

Extreme Love for the Jews

In Acts 13:46–47, Paul had strong words for the Jews who were rejecting the message. Even though the Jews were the people of God, they were rejecting the Word of God that Paul was sharing. Paul sounds harsh and even angry when he speaks to them, but how did the Jews' rejection really affect Paul?

Paul himself was an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham and a member of the tribe of Benjamin. In Romans 10:2–3, Paul acknowledged that the Jews were full of zeal for God, but they:

- did not know about God's *righteousness*
- tried to replace that with their own means of salvation or their own *righteousness* by obeying God's commandments plus traditions they had developed on their own.

Ultimately, what did Paul want for all of the Jews? Romans 10:1 *His desire and prayer was for their salvation.*

Paul's love for his people was so strong that he experienced constant grief and sorrow because of their lack of faith. He said he even was willing to be *accursed*, separated from Christ if it would bring the Jewish people to faith in Christ (Romans 9:2–3). [TM: Note the contrast of Paul's love for the Jews versus the Jews' hatred of the Gentiles.]

Memory Verse

“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.”
John 15:13

Extra Memory Challenge

Acts 13:47

“For so the Lord has commanded us, ‘I have placed You as a light for the Gentiles, That You may bring salvation to the end of the earth.’”

Discussion Questions

Each teacher should encourage, as much as time permits, discussion and inquiry on the part of students. Not every aspect of the following questions is addressed here, and students may have thoughts related to but not mentioned in this guide. The obligation of the teacher, then, is to understand as deeply as possible the Scriptures that are being discussed, in order to answer as well as possible any questions a student might have.

1. Belonging to a local congregation is important for a believer. What would you miss by not going to church?
 - *hearing the Word*
 - *prayer*
 - *worship*
 - *fellowship*
 - *service*
2. The Apostle Paul's prayer for the congregation in Ephesus (Ephesians 3:17–18) was that they would be rooted and grounded in Christ's love. Then they would become like Him in His love as they comprehended the height,

depth, length, and breadth of Jesus' love. How does II Corinthians 11:23–28 show Christ's love through Paul? How can you show more of Christ's love to others?

- a. *Paul suffered greatly in order that he could proclaim the Gospel. He had great love for people and desired that all would be saved.*
- b. *Be concerned for other people that they know God's plan of salvation. Invite people to church and to hear God's Word. Be willing to endure ridicule and persecution for your Christian faith.*
- c. *Ask kids in the class: What are your gifts and abilities? How can God use those gifts and abilities to share God's love with others?*

Daily Devotions

Sunday: Matthew 10:16-25
Monday: Matthew 10:26-33
Tuesday: Matthew 10:34-39
Wednesday: I Thessalonians 2:1-8
Thursday: I Thessalonians 2:9-12
Friday: I Thessalonians 2:13-16
Saturday: I Thessalonians 2:17-3:5

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH: THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE AFLC

* Fundamental Principle 4

According to Fundamental Principle 4, the organized congregation not only includes true believers but also hypocrites. However, we do not always know who these people are. Therefore, it is the duty of the congregation to purify itself with the quickening (life-giving) preaching of God's Word.

1. According to Acts 2:42 and 12:5, 24–25, what are the marks of a living and free congregation?

The marks can be listed as four: 1. The believers continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine (teaching and preaching God's Word); 2. The believers continued in fellowship (communicating, encouraging, helping one another); 3. The believers continued in the breaking of bread (in partaking of the Holy Communion, gathering together as one around the Lord's Table); 4. The believers continued in prayer (the congregation was a house of prayer as Jesus wanted it to be).

2. Who is a hypocrite? How shall the congregation deal with hypocrites?

According to Luther's Small Catechism, Sverdrup's Explanation 245, a hypocrite is "one who makes an outward confession of Christ, but who inwardly and in their conduct deny Him." A congregation shall rightfully preach God's Word and faithfully work for the salvation of souls.