

Aim of lesson

To use the example of the church at Antioch to show how all the members of the church can work together in different ways to do God's will.

Bible background

Acts 11:19-30; 12:25; 13:1-5.

Outline of lesson

You may like to begin the lesson by asking the class if they can imagine someone who so liked to be the centre of attention that he tried to play all the positions in a game of football at one and the same time. It would be a chaotic game. To play well, each member of a team must think about the others, give them the ball and consider which part they can play.

At Antioch

Tell the class to look out for that same sort of good team work on the part of the members of the church as you read Acts 11:19-30 together. Bring out how the church at Jerusalem sent Barnabas to help the growing church at Antioch.

Barnabas went to ask Saul to help, and later this new expanding church at Antioch sent money to the church at Jerusalem to help in a famine. The chain of help had come in a full circle.

Turn to the worksheet and ask the class to write what they think Barnabas would have told Saul about the church at Antioch. Complete the thoughts of both men. Encourage the class to remember the Lord's words about Saul going to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15) and Barnabas being the one who trusted and befriended him (Acts 9:26-27).

A letter from John Mark

Read Acts 12:25 and let the class write the letter from John Mark in the workbook. The 'photographs' should be illustrations of the church at work, and should be given titles, e.g. 'This is Saul and Barnabas preaching in the centre of Antioch' or 'This is a baptism of some new Gentile members'. You may like to refer to Colossians 4:10 to show John Mark's relationship to Barnabas, and to Acts 4:36 to show that Barnabas came from Cyprus.

Acts 13:1-5 could be read here, and the information included in the letter as John Mark would anticipate visiting his relatives in Cyprus as he accompanied his uncle and Saul on their journey. The class could plan the letter individually or in pairs.

Team work

Ask the class to look again at Acts 13:1-3 to see the team work involved. The members of the church pray and fast and place their hands on Saul and Barnabas as a blessing, and to associate themselves with the work. They do not grumble or ask why they are not chosen. The fact that the Holy Spirit tells them what to do shows the involvement of God and his Son Jesus in this work. The message probably came to one of the prophets. The expression 'the Holy Spirit' is probably used to remind us that it was the power and presence of the Lord Jesus, power he had received from his Father, which was with the disciples to direct and empower them.

Have the class discuss what they think the church would pray for Saul and Barnabas, and then write their conclusions in the space provided.

Digging deeper

The Roman world

A study of the Roman world from the prophecies of Daniel to AD 70.

Relevance to our lives

You may like to have the class make a list of different tasks within the church today. They could ask members of your meeting for suggestions and report back next week.

Prayer

Encourage the class to think what they could pray for someone who is absent – perhaps someone who no longer comes to Sunday School – in the same way as the church prayed for the absent Saul and Barnabas. Alternatively they could undertake to pray for a different member of the class each day during the coming week.

Other suggestions for activities

- The class could mark the spread of the gospel to Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch on their individual maps, and the large wall map. It will be useful to mark the journeys of Saul with three different colours, using either felt pens or wool.
- The class could write a script of a dialogue between Saul and Barnabas as they are about to set out on their journey. John Mark could be included if you wish. The dialogue could be recorded as a radio play.