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Paul's First Missionary Journey

Scripture: Acts 13:1-14:28

Theme: God sends us to share the Gospel

Nursery (Ages 0-2)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

"God Loves You!" "God loves you so much, just like a big hug! He sends little messengers (like Paul!) to share His love. You can be a little helper too!" (Repeat: "God loves you! God loves you!") Optional reflection: children can draw a picture of Jesus helping their friends, then share one way they can help someone else this week. This extra activity supports the lesson's theme and gives teachers a simple, lowprep option for extending the discussion.

Bible Story

"God's Big Love for Us"

The Bible tells us about a man named Paul. Paul loved God so much, and God told him, "Go tell the good news!"

Paul and another man, Barnabas, left Jerusalem. They traveled far, "with joy in their hearts" because God was with them.

They met a man named Timothy who loved Jesus too. They prayed, "Lord, help me tell others about You!"

When they reached a city called Pisidian Antioch, they told the people. "Jesus loves you! He wants you to be kind and happy!"

Some people were very surprised but others believed. They thanked God for sending Paul and Barnabas.

Paul and Barnabas kept going, "preaching God's love" everywhere they went. "God's love is big, it goes to everyone!"

--- Why this matters: This story shows how God uses people like Paul to share His love. No matter where you go, God's love follows you, just like He did for Paul!

Key Verse

Acts 13:47 , 'For this is what the Lord has commanded us: 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'

God loves you! He makes you a little light, just like a tiny star, to help everyone find His love. "God's love shines bright!"

Activities

Activity 1:

Toddlers will hold and share love through balloons, learning God's love is for everyone, just like how Paul shared the good news with many people.

Activity 2:

Toddlers will build a boat (Paul's ship) and "share the good news" by painting God's love on a "word picture" (Acts 13:5, 9).

1. Gather & Share: Sit in a circle. Say, "God loves you so much! Just like Paul loved people, God loves YOU!" (Repeat: "God loves YOU!")
2. Fill Balloons: Give each child a balloon. Have them fill it with air and hold it up. Ask, "Who does God love?" (Let them shout "ALL PEOPLE!")
3. Glue & Decorate: On a plate, let them glue balloons to it (or write "God Loves You" on tags). Say, "Like these balloons, God gives love to everyone!"
4. Pass & Celebrate: Each child passes their plate to the next. End with: "God loves YOU, just like He loves me!" (Repeat 2x.)
2. "Paul's Big Boat (Paper Plate)" Craft
6. Make the Boat: Cut a plate in half (leave a circle). Fold in half again. Glue the bottom to make a boat shape. Say, "Paul's boat carried people to share God's love!"
7. Paint the Ocean: Let toddlers paint the plate blue or yellow. Say, "God's love is like the ocean, big and safe for everyone!"
8. Draw Waves: Use a toothpick to "draw waves" on the painted side. Say, "Just like waves in the ocean, God's love moves around the world!"
9. Decorate the Boat: Let them add crayons to draw Paul, Paul's team, or "people" (like in Acts 13). Say, "God sent Paul to share His love with everyone, just like YOU can tell a friend today!" (Repeat: "God loves YOU!")
10. Bonus Tip: End with a hug: "God loves YOU so much, just like He loves Paul's friends!"

Discussion Questions

- Here are four simple, open-ended questions about God's love from Paul's journey:
- When Paul and Barnabas went to a new place, what kind of people did they meet?
- (Think about how kind and friendly God is toward everyone, no matter where they are.)
- How did Paul and the people in Lystra feel when they heard God's message?
- (Was it scary, happy, or surprised? Why did God love them so much?)
- In the Bible story, God sent Paul and Barnabas to tell people about Him. What kind of person do you think God would love to send you to help?
- (How can you show others that God loves them too?)
- Paul and his friends kept trusting God no matter what happened. What happens when you trust God, just like Paul did?

- (How can God's love be your comfort in a new place or big feelings?)

Prayer Focus

"Dear God, we thank You for loving us so much, just like Jesus loved Paul and his friends. You always keep us safe and hold us close in Your arms. Help us to grow in love and trust You every day. Amen." (Short and sweet with repetition: "Thank You for loving us," "just like Jesus loved Paul," "hold us close in Your arms.")

>> Missions Spotlight

In Turkey (ancient Asia Minor), Paul's missionary routes are now tourist destinations. Yet the churches Paul planted have largely disappeared. Missionaries are returning to Turkey to replant the Gospel in the very places Paul first preached it.

-> To the Cross

Paul and Barnabas were sent out by the Holy Spirit to share the Gospel. They faced rejection, persecution, and danger, but they kept going. Why? Because the cross had changed them. They couldn't stop telling people what Jesus had done.