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Paul's First Missionary Journey

Scripture: Acts 13:1-14:28

Theme: God sends us to share the Gospel

PreK-K (Ages 3-5)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

Lesson Overview: "God's Little Missionary Heroes!" Welcome & Wonder Start with a big question: "Who do you think God might send to share His love with others?" Hold up a picture of Paul or point to a kindergartener's hand and say, "Today, we're going to explore how God sends us, just like Paul, to tell others about Jesus!" Let them cheer and repeat, "God sends us!" (Repeat often!) Storytime with Repetition Read Acts 13 (simplified for kids): "Paul and Barnabas heard God's voice, 'Go tell the good news!' They packed bags, shared food, and even had a big party in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:46, 49)." Pause for giggles: "Can you imagine riding a boat to share God's love? Ooh, adventures!" Repeat: "God sends us to share His love, even when it's hard!" Action & Prayer Give them a "mission badge" (paper star) to wear as they sit. Say, "Today, we're all missionaries! When someone asks, 'Who's your hero?' you can say, 'Jesus!'" End with a prayer: "Dear God, help us share Your love like Paul. Amen!" Snuggle up for a moment of wonder: "God's love is big, like the ocean, and we're His tiny boats to share it!" Encouragement for Volunteers Keep it short, playful, and full of praise. Use visuals (maps, hand puppets of Paul), and let them run between activities. End with a hug: "You're doing a wonderful job helping kids see God's heart for the world!" 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

Paul's Big Adventure

Long ago, God had a plan for His followers. The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit, like a gentle breeze, gave special instructions to some kind people named Paul and Barnabas. "Go!" the Spirit whispered. They were excited because God wanted them to share His love with others far away.

Paul and Barnabas packed their bags, just like a big, brave journey! They traveled by ship and land, stopping in places like Paphos where a man named Bar-Jesus tried to stop them. But Paul told him, "God made you, so don't hold back!" The man fell down, and the people believed in Jesus! What a wonderful miracle!

As they traveled, God gave them more opportunities to share the Good News. In Iconium, people listened and believed. Then in Lystra, a man became lame, he couldn't walk! Paul looked at him and said, "Stand up, for God made you strong!" The man jumped up and walked! The crowd cheered, "The gods have come to us!" But Paul reminded them: "No, it's Jesus who heals!"

God's love kept growing as they told others about Jesus. They even met Paul's wife, Timothy, who became a friend who helped them later. God's big plan was working, one step at a time!

Why This Story Matters This story shows us that God sends people to share His love, just like He did with Paul and Barnabas. No matter where we go, we can follow their example, telling others about Jesus and trusting that He has a plan for us too! With wonder, we can ask: "What will God ask me to do today?"

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's Light for Everyone! God is like a big, shining star that helps everyone find their way! He made us to be his special light, just like a little flashlight that shows the way in the dark. That's why we are here: to share kindness and happiness, just like the warm sunshine! God loves all the people in the world, far and near! Whether they live in big cities or small villages, he wants them to feel happy and safe. Just like a little tree that grows tall and strong to give shade and beauty, we can be like that too! When we share our love, we help others feel welcome and happy. That's what God wants us to do, like a big, happy hug for everyone! What a wonderful job we have to make the world a brighter, kinder place! God's light is like a super-duper hug, it reaches everywhere! Can you imagine how fun it is to help others just like He wants? Let's shine our hearts and show God's love today!

Activities

Activity 1:

1. Draw the big map together , Ask kids to help place Jerusalem at the top (like the starting point). Trace Paul's route from there to Antioch, Cyprus, and Lystra with a marker.
2. Give each child a sticker , Let them pick where to place it (e.g., "I think Paul went to Cyprus first!"). Glue it on the paper if using paper squares.
3. Wonder together! , Ask: "What do you think people in those places looked like? How would Paul talk to them?" Let them draw or scribble ideas.
4. Finish with praise , Say, "God led Paul on a big adventure, just like He leads us every day!" Sing a simple song about following God's path.

Activity 2:

1. Pick a word from the story , Read Acts 13 aloud and pick 3-4 key words (e.g., "God spoke," "Paul preached," "miracle").
2. Paint the rocks together , Give each child a rock. They can paint one word on it and add a simple drawing (e.g., a cross for "Jesus"). Use a palette or paper plate as a guide.
3. Play "Story Stone Showdown" , Pair kids up. One picks a rock, and they act out what the word means ("Act like Paul preaching!"). Switch roles!
4. Close with wonder , Ask: "Did you know God can use anyone to tell His story? What word would YOU paint on your rock?" Praise them for sharing their rock with others!

5. Bonus Tip: End each activity by saying, "God calls us all to be little missionaries, just like Paul!" Let them wave their painted rocks or maps as a sign of their adventure!

Discussion Questions

- Here are four open-ended discussion questions to spark wonder and imagination for young children (ages 3, 5) about Paul's First Missionary Journey:
- What kind of amazing things can happen when friends work together?
- Paul and Barnabas traveled far to share God's love with new friends. How do you think it felt to meet people who didn't know Jesus before? What kinds of things would make someone say, "Wow, this story is so exciting!"? What can we learn from Paul and Barnabas about being kind and sharing God's love, just like they did?
- How can a tiny seed grow into a big tree?
- Paul and his friends traveled on a boat, and sometimes the winds blew hard! What are some ways God helps us when we feel scared or lost, like when Paul and Barnabas were on the water? If you had to explain to a friend how God can guide us, what would you say? What are some "winds" in your life that you think God might help you brave?
- What sounds would make a new friend laugh?
- The people in Lystra heard Paul and Barnabas talking, and they were so excited they thought they'd met gods! What kinds of sounds or stories would make you say, "That's wonderful!" to a friend? How can we share God's good news in ways that make others smile? What is one thing you think God might say to you today, like He did to Paul?
- How can a little group of friends change the whole world?
- Paul and Barnabas started small with just a few people, but their love for God grew, and soon many more joined! What's something small you can do today to help others feel loved, like Paul and his friends did? If you could invite one person to meet Jesus, who would that be, and how would you invite them? How does it feel to know that even a tiny group can make a big difference in the world?
- These questions encourage exploration, wonder, and connection to their own lives while keeping the focus on Paul's mission and God's love! Let me know if you'd like any tweaks.

Prayer Focus

"Prayer for Paul's Big Journey" Dear God, We thank You for Paul and the early believers, like them, we trust in You, just like Jesus taught them! When they traveled far, we wonder: "How did they know You were with them?" Help us to listen for Your whisper, just like they listened to the Holy Spirit! Dear God, We pray for brave hearts like Paul and Barnabas, they shared Your love even when it was hard! Help us to share kindness too, like they told stories of Your goodness! When we feel small, remind us: "You are with us!" Dear God, Thank You for all the amazing people who trusted You long ago! We wonder: "Where are they today?" Help us to grow like them, trusting You, loving You, and sharing Your light! Dear God, Thank You for our journey too! Help us to wonder, to believe, and to follow You every day. Amen!

>> 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.