

Going Deeper

Your weekly guide to understanding God with others

Life of Paul - Part 2 Set apart, not set aside

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Introduction

Every person in the room is important to our Heavenly Father. He has gifted each of us with the unique ability to be an effective part of the Kingdom of God, day by day, in our particular place and time. We may not see it clearly at this moment, but our vision becomes clearer as we make God's work central to our lives.

Right now, each of our lives intersect with different people in different places. We may be the one person who can make a difference for Christ in that place, or in that person's life. Each of us should aim to be 'set apart' in our everyday living, and not just 'set aside' for special occasions.

Read Acts 13:1-52

Discuss

1. Read 2 Timothy 2:20-21 (include a reading from the Amplified version if available) and Ephesians 2:10. What does it mean to be 'set apart'? Are there levels of being 'set apart' for God?
2. What does it mean to you for God's work to be central to your life, in the same way that Barnabas and Paul were 'set apart' (Acts 13:2)?
3. How does being 'set apart' for God change the way we view and interact with the people we see and the places we visit each week? How can we encourage each other to overcome the challenges?
4. Barnabas and Paul were sent to Cyprus, the place where Barnabas grew up, but this time they were sent by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:4). What difference do you think the Holy Spirit made to the way Barnabas viewed his home neighbourhood? Have you ever asked the Holy Spirit to help you see familiar places through His eyes? If you have, share your experience with the group.

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5. What do you think about the idea of following 'relational pathways' and discerning where God might already be at work? What are some practical steps you can take to do that?
6. In missionary work, we are encouraged to search for a 'person of peace' (that is, a person who likes you, listens to you and is willingly helpful). Have you asked the Lord to help you identify a person of peace in your familiar places? Share examples where this has resulted in an opportunity to share Jesus.
7. In Acts 13:8-12 we see that Paul and Barnabas had opposition, but the Holy Spirit used it to cause their person of peace, Sergius Paulus, to believe. The ability to rely on God's power in such moments can be proportional to time we have spent in the presence of God. The Apostle Paul encouraged Timothy to be ready in season and out of season (2 Timothy 4:2). What did he mean by that? Discuss what it means to rely on the Holy Spirit in times of opposition.

Respond

Paul and Barnabas did not give up. They never stopped believing they were sent by the Holy Spirit. When their person of peace became a believer, one thing led to another, and the word of the Lord spread through the whole region. We never know the potential impact when we engage with even one person. God may already be at work. Take a moment now to ask yourself, who has God set you apart to minister to? What is one action you can take this week to identify that person, or take steps to strengthen the connection? God bless you as you take the next step.