

Main Idea: A church on mission gives attention to four values which the church at Antioch exhibited in Acts 13:1-5. If we want to be such a church, we too must possess these values.

- I. A church that knows its mission gives attention to God’s Word (1).
 - A. We need to hear it.
 - B. We need to understand it.
 - C. We need a plurality of teachers.
 1. There was a team approach in Antioch.
 2. They were able to work through differences in Antioch.
 3. They were spiritually minded in Antioch.
 - II. A church that knows its mission gives attention to God’s will (2).
 - A. We must deny ourselves.
 - B. We must submit to the Holy Spirit.
 1. The Spirit calls all of us to serve.
 2. The Spirit commissions some of us to serve in special ways.
 - III. A church that knows its mission gives attention to prayer (3a).
 - A. There’s a connection between prayer and fasting.
 - B. There’s a connection between prayer and decision-making.
 - C. There’s a connection between prayer and power.
 - IV. A church that knows its mission gives attention to missions (3b-5).
 - A. Missions is the responsibility of the local church (3b).
 - B. Missions takes people (3b).
 - C. Missions involves giving (3b).
 - D. Missions involves going (4).
 1. God determines our field of service.
 2. That’s what keeps us going when the going gets rough.
 - E. Missions involves proclamation (5a).
 - F. Missions involves assistance (5b).
- Inventory Time: Let’s make it personal...
1. Are you committed to Christ?
 2. Are you committed to the local church?

We’re beginning a new series this morning in the book of Acts. Actually, we’re returning to a series in Acts that we put on hold after finishing Acts 12 in 2018. This a timely portion of God’s Word for us, as we’ll see.

Scripture Reading: Acts 13:1-5

An organization is in trouble when it’s confused about its mission. This makes this a very critical time for churches, for there’s a lot of confusion about why we are here and what we’re supposed to be doing.

I’m convinced we need the series we’re launching today in the book of Acts. Acts shows us the church’s mission in living color. Actually, it shows us Jesus’ mission, which is the church’s mission, for they are one and the same.

Notice how Luke begins the book of Acts in 1:1, “In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach,² until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.”

What was Luke’s first book? His gospel in which he introduces us to Jesus. Read the gospel of Luke and you’ll see what Jesus did and taught. For Luke, that’s Book One. But notice that word “began,” as in “what Jesus *began* to do and teach”. So Jesus isn’t done with His doing and teaching ministry? No, He isn’t, says Luke.

^{**}Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ For a previous look at this passage, see the Acts series at WBC in 2002.

In Luke's Book Two, which is the book of Acts, he tells the rest of the story. Jesus is still doing and teaching. Where and how? In and through His church.

Luke gives us his organizing theme verse in Acts 1:8, recording these words of Jesus, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Jesus told His followers they would receive something, and then do something. They would receive power when the Holy Spirit came, and then they would be His witnesses. Where? Starting where they were, going to the ends of the earth.

And that's what happened. Read Acts 1-7 and you see Jesus' followers taking the message of Jesus to Jerusalem, then in chapters 8-9 to Judea, and then in the rest of the book to the ends of the earth.

This is Jesus' mission. It's what He's doing right now, bringing to Himself sinners for whom He died on the cross. And He is accomplishing this through us, His church. This is our mission. In a very real sense, we are Book Three.

Book One shows us what Jesus did while on earth. Book Two shows what He did in the early church. He's writing Book Three right now. It's the story of what He's doing to build His church in the world today.

But in the year 2020 there's a conflict raging. It has to do with what we're supposed to be doing as churches. You need to do *this*. No, you need to do *that*. All kinds of opinions and required agendas. It's pretty confusing.

There are many things a church *could* do that it *ought* not do because it distracts from what it *must* do.

A very popular mentality goes like this. "The church's job is to grow. To do that, we need to find out what people around us want in a church. Then let's become that kind of church and the people will come, the church will grow, and we will be *successful!*"

So if people want a political action group, that's what the church will be. If people want a concert hall, we'll be that. If the surveys show that people's attention spans can't handle a 45 minute sermon, we'll axe the sermon and offer easy-to-digest 20 minute sermonettes. "Give the people what they want," is the philosophy.

There are many problems with this approach. One is how it measures success in light of immediate outcomes rather than eternal significance.

The following story illustrates the short-sightedness exhibited by far too many church goers in our day. A pig ate his fill of acorns under an oak tree and then started to root around the tree. A crow remarked, "You should not do this. If you lay bare the roots, the tree will wither and die." "Let it die," said the pig. "Who cares as long as there are acorns?"² But of course, when a church merely offers people what they *want*, it soon ceases to be a true church.

We learn that from the book of Acts. To determine how we should "do church," we need to look back to the Scriptures to discover how the early church functioned in the world. I'm not suggesting that the church today should look like the early church when it comes to *externals*. They met in homes. They didn't have air conditioners. They didn't use hymnbooks and certainly didn't possess pianos and video projectors.

Externals will change. I have in mind the internals of the early church, namely, what it *valued*. What should our values be as a church? What you value determines what you do. Should we value growth at all costs? If so, we'll do whatever it takes to attract bodies. Some value an impressive looking building. Others value relevance—"we want

² *Bits & Pieces*, February, 1990, p. 24.

society to accept us as *relevant!*” Still others value social change—that’s what they want the church to be, a political force. Others value the traditions of the past—“that’s not the way we used to do it!” is their battle cry.

I’m not interested in being a status quo church. I want to be a part of a church that is on the move. But I want to make sure we’re moving the direction God wants at the pace God wants. And to do what we must settle the issue of *values*.

What values should we hold as a church that will determine how we function? We need not speculate. God tells us in His Word. In fact, He did something even better. He *shows* us in His Word what values that please Him look like in living color. In Acts 13 we see a wonderful picture of a church on the move. It’s the church at Antioch.

The Antioch church is a significant church in Acts. It began, according to 11:19-26 when some people from Cyprus traveled there and preached Jesus and the Lord brought many to Himself. When the Jerusalem church heard about the conversions, they sent Barnabas to Antioch to do follow-up work. Apparently, Barnabas sensed the work was too big for one man (or ideally suited for a man he knew with special gifts and a special calling), so he recruited Saul of Tarsus to join him. Together they taught the disciples for a whole year.

One of the things Barnabas and Saul taught the believers in Antioch was to look beyond itself. The first evidence of this was a benevolent offering the church took to help famine-stricken brothers and sisters in Jerusalem, an offering they sent by the hands of Barnabas and Saul (11:29). The second evidence came to light when Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch. As we’ll see this morning this church was not only willing to give its money, but also its *people*. The reason it gave had to do with what it valued.

We can learn much from the example of the church at Antioch. God’s kind of church gives attention to four values which the church at Antioch exhibited in Acts 13:1-5. If we want to be a church on mission, we too must possess these values.

I. A church that knows its mission gives attention to God’s Word (1).

Verse 1—“In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch)³ and Saul.”

According to Book Two, a good church is a Word-centered church. Like the Antioch church we need to do three things with God’s Word.

A. We need to hear it. There were *prophets* in the church at Antioch. Like their forerunners in the Old Testament, New Testament prophets were proclaimers. They were spokesmen for God. At times they uttered God-given predictions (such as Agabus in Acts 11:28, the prophet who revealed a severe famine was coming). More often they delivered God-given proclamations. “Thus saith the Lord!” they declared.

With the completion of the New Testament, the need for the prophetic office ceased as such. In my estimation the position of prophet as foreteller was a temporary gift to the church prior to the completion of God’s self-revelation in the Scriptures. Our task now is to proclaim what God has already revealed.

We need to hear God’s Word. That’s why He gave the early church prophets. But hearing alone isn’t enough.

B. We need to understand it. Which is why God also gave the Antioch church *teachers*. “This is what God says,” was the emphasis of the prophets. “This is what

³ In the ESV, “Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch.”

God's Word means," was the emphasis of the teachers. The prophet received a message from God. The teachers explained God's message. The prophets were preachers. The teachers were the ones who gave careful instruction concerning belief and practice.

Here's something that a church on mission knows. We need to hear God's Word...and understand its implications for life. As bread is necessary for physical growth and health, so God's Word is necessary for spiritual growth and health. Sadly, in church after church today there's a famine for God's Word. People want experience, not education. "I don't want a church that teaches me something. I want a church that makes me *feel* something!"

But that's like trying to live on cotton candy. We need to hear God's Word—that's the meat and potatoes of spiritual nourishment. And we need to understand God's Word.

We learn something else from the example of the Antioch church.

C. We need a plurality of teachers. There were "prophets and teachers." The words are plural. Luke lists five names. Where did all these teachers come from? We know Barnabas recruited Saul. Perhaps he enlisted the others as well.

As you examine the churches in the New Testament, you'll find something that might surprise you. The early churches all had multiple leaders who ministered the Word to them. When Paul went somewhere, he took someone with him. When he or one of his coworkers left a church, he always made sure the churches had multiple shepherds to feed and care for them. He told Titus in Titus 1:5, "The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you."

Sadly, the model used in so many churches today is the one minister model. James Boice comments, "The people think, Well, he's the minister. It's his job to do Christian work. Let him do it. Such churches are weaker as a result."⁴

But no one person has all the gifts. When it comes to teaching, we need a plurality of input. Allow me to make three observations.

1. *There was a team approach in Antioch.* The church "staff" at Antioch was quite a diverse group of men. The diversity reflected the city, and beyond that, the Roman world of the day.

The city of Antioch, located 300 miles north of Jerusalem, was the capital city of Syria. It was the third largest city in the Roman Empire (behind Rome and Alexandria), with a population of 500,000. The city possessed a busy port and was a center for luxury, culture, and sadly, immorality. It's been well said that Antioch, with its cosmopolitan flavor, was to the Roman world what New York City is to ours.

Look at the teachers' names. There was **Barnabas**. He was a Jewish Levite from the island of Cyprus. Though Jewish, since he wasn't from Jerusalem, he understood Greek culture and how to minister in it.

Simeon appears next. Luke says he was called "Niger," a Latin term which means black. Many feel that indicates Simeon had black skin.

Lucius was from Cyrene, on the same island Barnabas was from. You may recall that the people who evangelized Antioch were from Cyprus and Cyrene (11:20). It's possible, then, that Lucius was one of the men who led people to Christ in Antioch. His name is Latin which would suggest he was raised in a Roman culture.

Luke mentions **Manaen** next. Manaen is a Greek form of a Hebrew name, so he probably was a Hellenistic Jew. The identifying characteristic about him, according to

⁴ Boice, p. 228.

Luke, was that he was raised with Herod the Tetrarch. There were several Herods. This was Herod Antipas. If Manaen were brought up in the household of Herod the Great with Herod Antipas (and the term “brought up with” could even be translated “foster-brother”), he was a man of great standing and privilege. He had political connections. But here we see him associating with “nobodies” in Antioch. Wiersbe comments, “Not many people of nobility are called, but thank God, some do find Christ!”

It’s quite significant when you compare Herod and Manaen. They had the same upbringing. But Herod Antipas went down in history as the man who killed John the Baptist and later became involved in Jesus’ trial. Manaen became a Christian, indeed, a leader in the church. How amazing! Two men brought up the same way with such different outcomes.

Saul is mentioned last. Saul, later to become known as Paul, was a rabbi by training, a Pharisee. But of course, God saved him—and you know the rest of the story. Yes, they took a team approach in Antioch.

2. *They were able to work through differences in Antioch.* Talk about differences! If the backgrounds of these men reflect the backgrounds of the rest of the church at Antioch, there were plenty of differences to work through. We see Greek culture, Roman culture, and Hebrew culture. We see one man with a political background and another with rabbinic training. We see black skin and brown skin and lighter skin.

Did they have differences? Yes. But look at them. They’re serving and working together in a local church. Isn’t this the crying need of the hour? People from all kinds of cultural backgrounds sitting together at the same table, serving together with equal voices, loving one another. How’d that happen?

I can just see a CNN news crew (or Fox, it makes no difference) showing up for an interview saying, “We know all about inequality in the world, but you guys are different. You’re not just talking about change. You’ve done it. How? What are you doing to bring people together?”

And Barnabas steps forward and says, “Though we’re different, we’ve come to know and submit ourselves to the same Savior, Jesus the Christ, and we’re doing what He told us to do, teaching the Word of God and insisting that our people put it into practice.”

Some say that the Bible is an outdated book, but there’s no more relevant book. Just look what the Bible can do. This Book literally transforms lives and relationships and communities.

3. *They were spiritually minded in Antioch.* These men were controlled by the Holy Spirit, not personal agendas, as we’ll see in verse 2.

A comment by John MacArthur explains, “Unlike many in the ministry today who are busy with shallow activities and programs, the leaders at Antioch understood their spiritual mandate clearly. They patterned themselves after the apostles, who, according to Acts 6:4, devoted themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word. Those are ever the priorities for the man of God.”⁵

To be God’s kind of church, it starts right here with value #1. God’s kind of church gives attention to God’s Word.

II. A church that knows its mission gives attention to God’s will (2).

⁵ John MacArthur, p. 5.

“While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’”

We must value God’s Word. We must also value God’s will. We learn two important responsibilities pertaining to God’s will here.

A. We must deny ourselves. If we are going to discover what pleases God, we must learn to *deny ourselves*. Luke says they were “worshiping [KJV ‘ministered to’] the Lord and fasting.” Fasting is mentioned twice in this paragraph. We don’t hear much about fasting these days. We’re more interested in feasting. Jesus taught about it. The Old Testament writers did, too. Granted, it can be misused, but it can also be used in a God-honoring way. The Bible doesn’t command fasting, but it certainly encourages it.

When we fast, we deny ourselves. We temporarily don’t eat in order to devote ourselves fully to spiritual concerns. If we want to know God’s will, we must start with a denial of self.

B. We must submit to the Holy Spirit. Luke says that “while” they were fasting, the Spirit gave them instructions. The instructions had to do with a new opportunity for service.

Kent Hughes offers this important insight, “Worship and service go together and should never be separated. If we try to work for the Lord without worshiping him, we will settle for legalistic, self-centered service. And if we worship and never work, we will end up with a form of godliness but no power.”⁶

The Spirit’s instruction was clear. He wanted the church to “set apart” Barnabas and Saul for a new work. Please notice that God determines both our gifts and our work. He puts us where He wants us so we can accomplish His plan. The verb “set apart” is used of three separations in Saul’s life—at his birth he was separated to God (Gal. 1:15); at his conversion he was set apart for the gospel (Rom. 1:1); and in Antioch he was separated for a specific service (Acts 13:2).⁷

Please notice also that ministry is *work*. The Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul *for the work* to which I have called them.” Ministry is hard. It’s taxing. It takes effort. Thankfully, it’s rewarding, too.

And notice that ministry is related to *calling*. “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which *I have called them.*” Allow me to clarify something.

1. *The Spirit calls all of us to serve.* In a sense we are all ministers. However...
2. *The Spirit commissions some of us to serve in special ways.* God commissions certain people to give full attention to Christian service, supported by the local church. As we understand it today, they become “vocational” ministers (pastors, missionaries, camp workers, Bible College teachers, etc).

The word “missionary” comes to us from Latin just as “apostle” comes from Greek. They both mean essentially the same thing, “one who has been sent out, sent on a mission.”⁸

It’s quite significant that when the Spirit called for missionaries, He took the *best*, the most-gifted teachers from the Antioch church and sent them to the needy regions of the world. The Spirit chose Barnabas—he was so top-notch the Jerusalem church chose him

⁶ Kent Hughes, p. 175.

⁷ Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985.

⁸ LaSor, *Acts*, p. 192.

to go to Antioch in the first place. And Saul—who can question his giftedness as a teacher, the man who wrote half the New Testament books.

Maybe we'd see more Spirit-led sending if we were engaged in self-denying fasting. No, we can't twist God's arm. But we must settle the issue of what is most important to us. What do we *value*?

A church that knows its mission values God's Word and God's will. Thirdly...

III. A church that knows its mission gives attention to prayer (3a).

Notice how verse 3 begins, "*So after they had fasted and prayed*, they placed their hands on them and sent them off." Prayer is vital. We learn three things about prayer from the Antioch church here.

A. There's a connection between prayer and fasting. As we deny the flesh, we create a greater sensitivity to the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

B. There's a connection between prayer and decision-making. Notice that even after the Holy Spirit spoke in verse 2, they prayed and fasted some more in verse 3. When it comes to God's will, guessing won't do. We must be sure. Fasting and prayer helped them to be sure. Fasting helped them to be willing to let go of their choice leaders. Prayer facilitated it.

Henry Martyn, former missionary to India and Persia, said, "The Spirit of Christ is the spirit of missions, and the nearer we get to Him the more intensely missionary we become."

C. There's a connection between prayer and power. May I remind you that the Antioch church wasn't very old. There were, no doubt, a lot of young believers involved in this season of prayer.

"But I don't feel comfortable praying in public. My prayers don't sound very well," people often say. Wait a minute. Who are we talking to? Prayer isn't about impressing people. Prayer is a God-commanded opportunity to advance His work!

Listen to the following, true story about an African church that discovered the power of prayer:

God sent a young African man named Peter to serve a small church near the lake where only 15 people gathered each week. He was filled with enthusiasm and he had a plan. He organized a door-to-door visitation program and saw many 'results.' People came to church once or twice, but they did not stay. Peter brought in preachers who drew large crowds. Forty people professed faith in Christ. They came back once or twice, but two weeks later, the congregation was back to just 15 again.

Peter was discouraged. Something was missing. He decided to stop the big programs and start praying. People began meeting every Friday for an all-night prayer meeting. The tiny 24' by 12' church began to fill, then overflow. A witch doctor nearby offered to sell his land to the church. God's work was gaining ground, literally, in the area of the gods. The more people prayed, the more they saw God work.

One night, not the witch doctors but the police came to a meeting where youth had gathered to pray. They young believers were beaten and told to stop praying.

The following night was the usual Friday night prayer meeting. Would anyone dare to come? Forty people arrived. This time, police officers and soldiers came. "Stop praying," they commanded. Peter stood his ground; he was ordered to report to the authorities the next morning.

After a night of prayer instead of sleep, Peter arrived before the local officials. “Who told you to pray at night?” they asked roughly.

“There is no law which refuses to allow me to pray,” Peter answered calmly.

When Peter and the church would not agree to stop praying, he was ordered to go into the capital city to obtain a letter of permission to hold prayer meetings at night.

Peter went to the right place and asked the right people, but they could not give him a letter, they said, because there was no law against it.

Peter returned and explained this to the local authorities.

“Are you sure?” they asked. Peter was sure.

The local authorities were disappointed. “Okay, if you insist on praying, could you pray quietly?”

The little church on the shores of the lake, once a church of 15, is now a church of 500—700. Not because of programs; because of prayer. The policeman who led the persecution against them is now a believer. He preaches the faith he once tried to destroy.”⁹

Do you believe that God’s kind of church gives attention to prayer? Do you believe that prayer and power go hand in hand? Listen. There’s only one valid test that reveals whether we really value corporate prayer. It’s not what we *say*. It’s what we *do*.

Some here have never been to a prayer meeting (which now meets virtually). Others haven’t been to one in years. I’m not interested in laying guilt trips. I simply want us to think about the facts. Fact #1, we can’t live without prayer as a church. Fact #2, we can’t move ahead in a God-honoring way without prayer. And fact #3, we need everyone to become participants in the ministry of prayer (and fasting too).

These three values prepare the way for the fourth. A church that knows its mission gives attention to God’s Word, God’s will, prayer, and finally...

IV. A church that knows its mission gives attention to missions (3b-5).

Notice the end of verse 3, “So after they had fasted and prayed, *they placed their hands on them and sent them off.*” So the final phase of Acts 1:8 kicked into high gear. It’s time to reach the nations.

We learn six truths about missions from the example of the Antioch church.

A. Missions is the responsibility of the local church (3b). “So after they had fasted and prayed, *they placed their hands on them and sent them off.*” Who did the sending? *They* placed their hands on them. *They* sent them. Not the mission agency. Not the Bible college. The church did. It’s our job to identify and send missionaries.

B. Missions takes people (3b). “So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on *them* and sent them off.” It takes people to reach people. Willing people. And willing churches.

C. Missions involves giving (3b). “So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and *sent them off.*” The Greek verb is *apoluo*. It means “to set free” or “release.” It’s a strong word. It is used elsewhere of divorce, where a man “dismissed” a wife from his house. It’s also used to describe a captive being “loosed” from his bonds.

The sending indicates the church recognized God’s call on the missionaries. In indicates they let them go from their current ministry to begin a new one. It shows they gave their blessing, their prayer support, and if needed, their financial support.

⁹ *Message*, Summer 2002, p. 10.

Know this. We cannot give to others what we ourselves don't have. A dead church will not produce living churches.

Look again at the Antioch church. What do we see? We see a church where teaching God's Word was a priority, and where worship was a natural part of its life. We see a group of people who were sensitive to the Spirit's leading. We see a huge dose of generosity, for they were not only willing to give their money but also their best leaders and teachers to help others.

Sadly, many churches are near-sighted. They can't see, or refuse to see, beyond themselves. Allow me to state that in a more personal way. Many Christians who make up the near-sighted churches are themselves near-sighted, for they can't see (or they refuse to see) beyond themselves.

We all struggle with this powerful temptation. We so easily begin to think that God blesses us so we can be *comfortable*. Not so. God blesses us so we can serve Him in greater ways. We are managers of the blessings, not owners; not permanent residents of this world, but sojourners passing through.

The believers at Antioch believed that. They really believed that! They were not near-sighted. Do you think they enjoyed sitting under the teaching ministry of Paul? I'm sure they did, but they were willing to send their choice teachers elsewhere so that others might come to know the truth they had learned to cherish.

D. Missions involves going (4). "The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus."

The complexion of the early church will begin to change rapidly from here on out. For the first ten years of existence, the church was primarily quiet and rural, and was situated in Israel. Once the gospel reached Antioch and missionaries went forth, the church became quite urban. At least forty cities are mentioned in Acts. Historian Wayne Meeks writes that "within a decade of the crucifixion of Jesus, the village culture of Palestine had been left behind, and the Greco-Roman city became the dominant environment of the Christian movement."¹⁰

Barnabas and Saul went to Seleucia, a port city sixteen miles from Antioch. Then they sailed to Cyprus, an island sixty miles off the coast of Syria. Why Cyprus? That's where the missionaries came from that evangelized Antioch. It was also the homeland of Barnabas. It just made sense. But it was more than "horse-sense." They were sent "by the Holy Spirit." Please realize that...

1. *God determines our field of service.* We serve where we serve because God put us there. Is that important to know? It sure is!

2. *That's what keeps us going when the going gets rough.* And it will get rough!

E. Missions involves proclamation (5a). "When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper." Paul later put it this way in Romans 10:17, "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ."

The goal of missions is proclamation. It's important to do benevolence, medical work, and literacy development. But it's vital to do proclamation. If we fail to tell people the truth about Jesus, we may improve their quality of life on this planet but they are still heading for eternal judgment in hell.

¹⁰ Quoted in Wiersbe, p. 456.

We have a message to share. Jesus Christ died for sinners! He rose again. Whoever repents of sin and believes in Him receives the gift of eternal life! Missions is all about proclaiming that hope-giving message!

F. Missions involves assistance (5b). Verse 5 concludes, “John was with them as their helper.” John Mark was Barnabas’s cousin. He joined the team as their “helper,” a term *huperetes* which means “under-rower.” Missionary teams need all kinds of people, some who speak, others who row the boat to get them there!

A word about their destination. The ancient world viewed Cyprus somewhat like we view Hawaii or the Bahamas. Barclay says it was called Makaria or “Happy Isle” because its climate was so perfect and its resources so abundant.¹¹

Why might that be significant? If you know the rest of the story you’ll recall that John Mark later defected from the missionary venture, leaving his teammates at Paphos in Asia Minor. Maybe there’s a connection. It’s one thing to serve God on “Happy Isle” where the sun shines and you feel good. It’s another thing to serve Him when the glamour is gone.

Inventory Time: Let’s make it personal...

The need of the hour is to know why we’re here. A church that knows its mission gives attention to four values—God’s Word, God’s will, prayer, and missions. Do we value these things? Are these our priorities?

I found a story about Milt Rood, a man who worked for years and years in Spokane as a car salesman. He was also very active with the Union Gospel Mission work with juvenile delinquents. Week by week he’d patiently teach the Word and pray with young boys in trouble. One week Milt went into the Hospital for exploratory surgery. The doctors found he was full of cancer. They sewed him up again and sent him home. He died within a week. After the funeral, someone remarked, "It's interesting that at the funeral no one ever asked how many cars he had sold!"

What do you value in life? As we take inventory, I want to talk about two bottom-line commitments. We cannot please God and lack either. The Antioch believers modeled both.

1. *Are you committed to Christ?* It’s all about Christ. Do you know Him and love Him and want to please Him more than anything?

2. *Are you committed to the local church?* The Lord Jesus loves His church. He does His work through His church, through local churches like the one in Antioch. And in Wheelersburg. Are you committed to your church? I urge you to love what He loves.

Closing song: Savior Like a Shepherd Lead Us, #462, verses 1, 2, 3

¹¹ As referenced in Kent Hughes, p. 176.