

PAUL

A MAN OF GRACE AND GRIT

STUDY TEN

The Jagged Edge of Authentic Ministry

Selections from Acts 13–14

Welcome to the ministry. One moment they're worshipping you, the next moment they're stoning you. Imagine being stoned. Imagine being that hated. People literally picking up rocks and striking you with them until you're unconscious and left for dead. I love it that Paul didn't accept the worship, and I love it that he didn't give up when they stoned him.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

GRAND events draw the whole world's attention. Think about a few of them—like the Kentucky Derby and the Monaco Grand Prix, the U.S. Open and the Academy Awards. What comes to your mind? Celebrities sauntering the venue? Elites showcasing their excellence? Flashy attire? Journalists clamoring for interviews? Photographers snapping the perfect shot? It's hard to capture it all in a single word, but if one could, it might just be *grandeur*.

Now contrast that image with Christian ministry . . . your leaders, your venues, your missionary friend in a faraway land. What image do you see? Celebrity? Fashion? Opulence? Acclaim? Perhaps a bit, but most of the time, you won't find much. Authentic ministry isn't so slick. More often, it's jagged in nature. Its costs can be great while many of its benefits and rewards won't come until heaven.

The apostle Paul, during his first missionary journey, navigated this reality head-on. In some areas, people received him as an angel, and in others, people vilified him as a demon. This *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study travels with Paul and Barnabas on their first gospel tour of duty to learn the secrets of authenticity and consistency during the ups and downs of ministry.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Glory comes later, not now, and the glory to come far outweighs our troubles today. Prepare to engage God’s Word by meditating on 2 Corinthians 4:16–18. Then pray for Christ’s blessing and guidance for your time with Him.

That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. For our present troubles are small and won’t last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So we don’t look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Of the 27 books in the New Testament, Paul penned 13. But have you ever thought about the fact that he wasn’t first and foremost a writer? He was a pioneer missionary. Three of his journeys (which occurred AD 47–57) are recorded in Acts. After the events of Acts, Paul probably went on a fourth journey to Spain, which concluded in AD 63 (see Romans 15:24, 28). His letters served his greater, gospel-centered purpose: planting and strengthening churches.



God spent many years preparing Paul for all he would endure on his missionary journeys. As we’ve seen, that preparation included solitude and obscurity in the Arabian desert learning deeply from the Lord, fierce spiritual opposition and persecution, mistrust among the early believers, and several flights for his safety.

Then, finally, Paul locked arms with Barnabas, arriving in Antioch to carry out a fruitful year of ministry with Simeon, Lucius, and Manean. They formed a church leadership “dream team,” or as close to a dream ministry as you can get. When the church reached enough strength and stability, the Holy Spirit said it’s time to expand, “So Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the Holy Spirit” (Acts 13:4).

Use your observation and interpretation skills in the charts below.¹ For interpretation, use your Bible-study resources like *Constable’s Notes* (netbible.org), *IVP New Testament Commentary on Acts* (biblegateway.com), *Bible maps* (insight.org/maps), and the *Holman Bible Dictionary* (studylight.org). Also, in case you don’t have a copy in your library, be sure to grab Pastor Chuck’s commentary *Insights on Acts* at insight.org/store.

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The First Stop: Challenge on Cyprus <i>Acts 13:4–12</i>	
 Observation	 Interpretation
<p>Read <i>Acts 13:4–12</i>. List where they stopped and locate these places on a map.</p> <p>Who are the key people in this passage?</p> <p>What is the key event in this passage and the outcome of the event?</p>	<p>Consult your resources to learn more about Paphos, Bar-Jesus, and Sergius Paulus. Record any insights that stand out to you.</p> <p>What is the significance of the first challenge they faced? What positive traits do you find in Paul and Barnabas in navigating this challenge?</p> <p>Read Acts 13:12. How do you think Paul and Barnabas reacted and felt when they witnessed this outcome?</p>

As soon as you commit to serving Christ, you open the gates of hell against you. The adversary despises everything you love and works against every Spirit-led thing you attempt to achieve. Serving Christ is a calling, however, and is wonderfully rewarding and fulfilling as anything I could imagine.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Selections from Acts 13–14

The Second Stop: Challenges in Perga and Pisidian Antioch <i>Acts 13:13–52</i>	
 Observation	 Interpretation
Carefully read <i>Acts 13:13–52</i> . Note your top five observations in this passage.	In Acts 13:13, while in Perga, what challenge did Paul and Barnabas face? How do you think they felt about it?
Summarize Paul’s message in 13:17–41.	According to 13:42–52, how did Paul and Barnabas respond to the Jews’ jealousy and hostility?
Describe the various responses to Paul’s and Barnabas’ preaching.	What positive traits for ministry do you see in Paul and Barnabas in this passage? How did God use their tough challenges for a greater good?
How many challenges do you find in this passage? List them below.	

You don’t go to where it’s comfortable, and you don’t go where you prefer to go. You go where you’re called when you’re in ministry. And so, the Lord led them to go up to Perga at Pamphylia. Then John deserted them. They lost their helper. John left them when they really needed him and at a time of perhaps great physical stress. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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The Third Step: Challenges in Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe <i>Acts 14:1–28</i>	
 Observation	 Interpretation
<p>Observe <i>Acts 14:1–28</i>. Who are the key people, and what are the key places in this chapter?</p> <p>What are the key events in this passage? Also, list the challenges Paul and Barnabas faced.</p>	<p>According to Acts 14:1–6, how did Paul and Barnabas respond to the challenge they faced, and how did God use it for good?</p> <p>According to 14:6–20, what unusual and contrasting events unfolded which posed a deadly challenge for Paul and Barnabas? How did they respond?</p> <p>What traits do you see in Paul and Barnabas that enabled them to uphold an authentic ministry—true to God and loving to others?</p>

A ministry that lasts is a ministry that will go right through times of enormous persecution. It is not fickle, it does not need the applause of people, and it rejects being enshrined and turned into a god. It is a ministry that delivers faithfully the truth of God. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Correlation: Undaunted . . . Proclaiming the Gospel

Throughout his first missionary journey, Paul remained laser-focused and undaunted through his difficulties because he understood a critical principle about the gospel. That principle is found in [Romans 10:17](#). Take a moment to read the verse.

Unsurprisingly, Scripture is crystal clear about the jagged edge facing those who profess and proclaim the name of Christ. Consider Jesus' words in [John 16:33](#). While fellowshiping with His disciples in an upper room not long before His crucifixion, Jesus made them two promises. What were His promises?

While on their third stop in the region of Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, the apostle Paul reminded his disciples of the reality of hardships. Review [Acts 14:22](#). Note that Paul's words came in the context of “strengthening” and “encouraging” the believers.

Toward the very end of his life, as he was about to meet his Savior face-to-face, Paul recorded a powerful command to Timothy, his young protégé. Read [2 Timothy 3:10–12](#). What directives and truths did Paul teach that urge us to remain authentic through the ups and downs of ministry?

There's a jagged edge of authentic ministry. Most folks never think there are that many pressures or that many responsibilities connected with handling the Word of God. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Ministering Authentically

Paul modeled three ministry principles in his first missionary journey:

1. *Paul's ministry was saturated with the Word of God.*
2. *Paul's message emphasized the gospel to the lost and grace to the saved.*
3. *Though the public's reaction was mixed, Paul's response was mature.*

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Which one of these principles most resonates with you, and why? Has anything changed in your thinking about ministry and upholding an authentic ministry despite the difficulties?

Have you experienced persecution for living out your faith? At whose hands have you suffered, and what was the context and outcome? Did God bring about good in your life or another's from that experience?

When their ship weighed anchor for Cyprus, Paul, Barnabas, and Mark had big dreams of ministry, but they could not imagine the troubles that awaited them. Dream big, but remember that authentic ministry has a jagged edge. Let Paul's example light your way through the rugged parts of the journey. Press on and keep your eyes fixed on the glory to come. "For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever" (1 Corinthians 4:18).



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for the pleasure of authentic ministry, for the joy of worship that turns attention away from people and focuses attention on the Savior and the Word that He has left in His legacy. Thank You for the gospel that delivers us from the horrors of a life lost in sin and for grace that frees us to fly above the demands and pressures of others. Bring to our attention the importance of time spent with You, and may this be the beginning of a whole new way of life. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"

For the 2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Marshall F. Davis in collaboration with Aaron Massey, senior vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, and Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2001, 2025 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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