

Junior 1 Year 1 Book 4 Lesson 7  
**Paul's First Missionary Journey**  
 Passages: Acts 13–14

*Memory Verse*

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” (Romans 1:16)

Knowledge of God's Will [God's Word]	Knowledge of God [God's Divine Nature]	Good Work [Behavior]
The Holy Spirit sent the apostles Paul and Barnabas on a missionary journey to preach to people, Jews and Gentiles alike, in distant regions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. God established the plan of salvation so that men can be saved through belief in the gospel.</li> <li>2. God desires for all men to be saved.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Understand the commission that the Lord Jesus has commanded us.</li> <li>2. Equip ourselves with general and spiritual knowledge.</li> <li>3. Share the gospel wherever we go.</li> </ol>

*Overview*

**Events and Spiritual Teachings**

- A. In the Footsteps of Paul
- B. The Challenges and Obstacles of Preaching
- C. Why Do We Encounter Obstacles?

**Life Application**

1. The Reasons We Preach
2. Preparing to Preach

**Memory Verse**

**Conclusion:** Take the name of Jesus with you wherever you go.

## Spiritual Teachings

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### Introduction

Jerusalem was the center of the church for the Jews. After the martyrdom of Stephen, the believers spread to other lands, bringing the gospel with them. Antioch of Syria was one of the places they went to (Acts 11:19). In the first century, Antioch was the third largest city of the Roman Empire and capital city of the proconsular province of Syria.

At the time, Antioch was populated by diverse groups of people, including Macedonians, Greeks, native Syrians, and Jews. It was an important trade junction with routes leading to Damascus, Palestine, Egypt and the Aegean, and was also a center of great architecture and learning. When the Gentiles received the gospel, Antioch eventually became the center for Gentile Christians. In fact, it was also in Antioch that the term "Christian" was first used (Acts 11:25–26). It was at this strategic city that Paul began his missionary journeys and returned at the end of each trip to give a report to the church there.

Before the Lord Jesus ascended into heaven, He gave the disciples the great commission: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Paul's first missionary journey was his first step to carrying out this important commission.

### A. In the Footsteps of Paul

Let's examine what happened to Paul and his companions on his first missionary journey. (*Teachers: See Figure 1.*)

Stop #1	Antioch in Syria	Acts 13:1–3	The apostles prayed and fasted. The Holy Spirit commissioned the journey.
Stop #2	Seleucia	Acts 13:4	They boarded a boat.
Stop #3	Salamis in Cyprus	Acts 13:5	They preached in synagogues and John Mark assisted.
Stop #4	Paphos in Cyprus	Acts 13:6–12	Elymas became blind and the proconsul accepted the gospel.
Stop #5	Perga in Pamphylia	Acts 13:13	John Mark left and returned to Jerusalem.
Stop #6	Antioch in Pisidia	Acts 13:14–50	Paul and Barnabas were driven out after preaching in the synagogue.
Stop #7	Iconium	Acts 14:1–5	They preached in the synagogue, but unbelieving Jews poisoned the minds of the Gentiles. An attempt was made to stone Paul and Barnabas.
Stop #8	Lystra/Derbe	Acts 14:6–20	Paul healed a crippled man and the people wanted to sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas as if they were gods; Paul was later stoned and thrown out of the city.
Stop #9	Derbe	Acts 14:20–21	Many believed in this city.

Stop #10	Lystra, Iconium and Antioch (Pisidia)	Acts 14:21–23	They strengthened the faith of the believers and appointed elders in the churches.
Stop #11	Pamphylia, Perga to Attalia	Acts 14:24–25	They journeyed from Attalia back to Antioch in Syria, after preaching in Perga.
Stop #12	Antioch in Syria	Acts 14:26–28	Reported all that God had done and how He opened the door for the Gentiles to accept the faith.

**B. The Challenges and Obstacles of Preaching**

Sharing the gospel is one of the most meaningful and valuable experiences that we can have in our lifetime. The Bible tells us that a soul is more valuable than all the wealth of this world (Mt 16:26). The gospel opens the inner eyes of men so that they are no longer in darkness but walk as children of light (Eph 5:8). They are no longer slaves to sin, but to righteousness, and through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ their inheritance is no longer death, but life. And yet, preaching the gospel is not easy. Satan will not surrender a soul without a fight, and he seeks to prevent people from receiving and accepting the truth.

Due to Satan’s guile, Paul and his companions faced obstacles, persecution, and danger while preaching the gospel. Let us study the following passages to find out the devices Satan used to hinder the truth during Paul’s first missionary journey.

**1. Acts 13:8–11**

Elymas, a false prophet and sorcerer, tried to prevent Paul and Barnabas from preaching the word of God to the proconsul. Paul overcame this obstacle by rebuking Elymas through the power of the Holy Spirit. As an enemy of righteousness, the devil seeks to turn those who thirst for the truth away from the faith. He uses false teachings, philosophies, and incorrect values to confuse and lead people away from the truth. To fight against this, we must rely on the power of God instead of allowing our anger or frustration to lead us.

**2. Acts 13:45**

Satan used the Jews to oppose Paul by filling them with envy and jealousy when they saw the multitude that turned up to hear the apostles preach.

**3. Acts 13:50**

In an attempt to prevent the apostles from preaching, the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief leaders to persecute Paul and Barnabas and expel them from the city.

**4. Acts 14:2**

The unbelieving Jews did not want the Gentiles to believe, so they poisoned the Gentiles’ minds against the apostles. Satan uses unbelievers who are callous in their hearts to oppose our work and persecute us.

**5. Acts 14:11–13**

After the apostles healed the lame man, Satan tried to corrupt the apostles by making the people worship them as gods. If the apostles had not been filled with the Holy Spirit, they may have accepted the people’s worship, robbing God of His glory.

## 6. Acts 14:19–20

Paul and Barnabas did not succumb to the false worship, so Satan tried a more concrete tactic. In Lystra, the Jews from Antioch and Iconium stirred up the crowd, instigating them to stone Paul and drag him out of the city when they thought he was dead.

### C. Why Do We Encounter Obstacles?

#### 1. We belong to different realms

John 15:19 clearly tells us that those who believe in the Lord Jesus belong to God and are no longer under Satan's domain. Because we no longer belong to the world and Satan, the people of the world hate us and will persecute us. If they persecuted the Lord Jesus when He was on earth, they will also persecute His disciples.

#### 2. The people of the world do not want their wrong deeds exposed

John 3:19–20 says that those who are in darkness practice evil and hate the light, because the light exposes their sin and shame. Satan blinds their hearts and minds, and they refuse to allow the light of the gospel to shine upon them. 1 Peter 4:3–4 also says that they find it strange that God's children do not follow in their evil lifestyles. As a result, they speak evil of us and persecute us.

#### 3. Different faiths

Before Jesus came to the world, the Jewish nation followed the Law of Moses. When the Lord came down, preaching the gospel of the good news of the heavenly kingdom, the Jews considered Him a blasphemer, a lawbreaker, and a threat to their traditional faith. Consequently, they persecuted the Lord Jesus and His followers. They believed they were acting in faith and doing God's work when they carried out such deeds as isolating Christians, banning them from the synagogues, persecuting them, and even killing them (Jn 16:1–2).

#### 4. If we desire to live a godly life, we will suffer persecution

In Acts 14:22, Paul exhorted the believers in the different churches by saying that "we must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God." As citizens of God's kingdom, trials and difficulties are a part of the spiritual warfare we wage, as well as a means of strengthening our faith (2 Tim 3:12). Therefore, we should not be disheartened, as we are not alone. We can be victorious through the power and strength of the Lord.

### *Check for Understanding*

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- 1. Why is it so important that we share the gospel?** The Bible tells us that a soul is more valuable than all the wealth of this world (Mt 16:26). The gospel opens the inner eyes of men so that they are no longer in darkness but walk as children of light (Eph 5:8).
- 2. How did Satan use Elymas to try and prevent the gospel from spreading?** Elymas, a false prophet and sorcerer, tried to prevent Paul and Barnabas from preaching the word of God to the proconsul.
- 3. Why do we encounter obstacles when preaching? Briefly explain each.**
  - a. We belong to different realms:** Because we no longer belong to the world, people of the world will hate and persecute us, just as they persecuted the Lord Jesus to whom we belong.
  - b. The people of the world do not want their wrong deeds exposed:** Those who are in darkness hate the light because the light exposes their sin and shame.

- c. **Different faiths:** The Jews believed the Lord Jesus was a threat to their faith, and thus persecuted His followers.
- d. **If we desire to live a godly life, we will suffer persecution:** As citizens of God’s kingdom, trials and difficulties are a part of the spiritual warfare we wage, as well as a means of strengthening our faith.

### *Life Application*

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#### **1. The Reasons We Preach**

Paul was a key worker in bringing the gospel to the Gentiles in distant regions. The Bible records that he made three missionary journeys, none of which were easy. The missionaries faced many difficulties and dangers. In addition, Paul continued to support and build up the faith of churches established on his journeys. Despite the many hardships, Paul willingly persisted in the work. What compelled him to shoulder the work?

a. **He understood the sacrifice of love the Lord Jesus made for us all.**

"The life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal 2:20). In reaching this realization, Paul had come to understand that while he was a sinner, the Lord Jesus endured an agonizing death on the cross for his sake, all so that he could be saved. It was because of this understanding that Paul chose to live his life for God. God loved us and died for us while we were sinners. Has this knowledge spurred us to give to others what we have freely received?

b. **He was convinced of God’s calling.**

Paul once wrote, "It pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles" (Gal 1:15). Like Paul, we are His chosen special people, and as such, God has blessed us with His provision in everything in our lives. Our education, experiences that have helped us to grow, and our different skills and talents are all from Him. More importantly, we have been given God’s law for His purpose. God has fully equipped us to be His ambassadors in delivering the gospel to the world. Are you ready to answer His calling?

c. **Understand the gospel’s power**

In the eyes of the law, Saul was an upright and admirable Jew with high social and religious status. But in the eyes of God, he was a sinner in need of deliverance. Paul recognized this and understood that the power of the gospel is such that those who believe in the Lord Jesus can be delivered.

#### **2. Preparing to Preach**

In order to preach, we must entrust the work into God’s hands through prayer and understand to whom we are preaching so that we can be effective when preaching. However, effective preaching does not only require an understanding of your audience, but also a strong understanding of general and spiritual knowledge.

a. **General Knowledge**

i. Learn different languages (Act 21:37–40)

Language is vital to communication, and Paul was fluent in more than one. Growing up as a Jew, he learned their native languages—Hebrew and Aramaic. He was also fluent in Greek,

which was commonly used throughout the empire and Asia Minor. His public messages and his letters to the different churches were given and written in Greek. His fluency in multiple languages enabled Paul to preach to his fellow countrymen, as well as to the Greek Gentiles he met during his journeys.

ii. Understand the world around us (Acts 17:16–31)

Paul was educated in Hebrew letters and learning and studied under the great teacher Gamaliel. He was also exposed to Greek literature, culture, and practices, which helped him in situations, such as when he addressed the philosophers who met on the Areopagus in Athens (Acts 17:28).

Write down and share at least three ways we can increase our general knowledge and apply that knowledge to our lives. (*Possible answers: Be conscientious in our schoolwork, learn a foreign language, be observant and attentive to people and things around us, be friends with people of different races and ethnicities, learn about the world, etc.*)

b. **Spiritual Knowledge**

i. Know the Bible (Acts 17:1–4; 8:26–35; 2 Cor 10:4)

To preach effectively, we need to have a thorough understanding of the Bible and our church doctrines. The workers in the apostolic times understood that it is not man's education or eloquence that brings people to God, but the gospel of Christ and the power of God.

ii. Develop excellent spiritual character (1 Tim 4:12; 1 Pet 2:12)

Our every action can influence others. Someone may accept or reject the truth based on how we live our lives as Christians. Therefore, it is important to develop excellent spiritual character so that others not only hear the message of the gospel but also see Jesus through us. We can be a testimony for Christ without uttering a single word.

iii. Experience God (Acts 26:12–18)

A true and personal experience of God in our lives can motivate us to go out to preach to our friends and family, as our testimony will be alive, powerful, and passionate. The apostle Paul had personally touched Christ, and that experience completely transformed him and those who heard his message.

Write down and share at least three ways we can increase our spiritual knowledge. (*Possible answers: Read the Bible daily, attend services, take notes during sermons/lessons, fellowship with brothers and sisters, talk with God in prayer, etc.*)

**Discussion**

- Have you considered embarking on a missionary journey when you are older?
  - What are some difficulties you may face?
  - How do you think you can prepare yourself for this wonderful work?
- How can your studies prepare you to be a vessel useful for God's purpose?
- What spiritual qualities do you have that you can start cultivating in yourself right now in preparation?
- What blessings can you receive from bringing the gospel to others (both physical and spiritual)?

- If you do not think you will embark on a missionary journey, how else can you contribute to the work of global evangelism?

### Overview

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“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” (Romans 1:16)

### Meaning

The word *gospel* is the translation of the Greek noun *euangelion*, meaning, "good news." Salvation means being delivered from the penalty of judgment and eternal death due to our sin. Therefore, the gospel is the good news that Jesus Christ gives us: repentance through the forgiveness of sins, and salvation given to us by the power of God. When we place our belief in Christ as our Savior and accept Him into our hearts, we put our faith in Him. There is nothing to be ashamed of. As long as we truly believe that the power of God leads to salvation, we will be saved.

### Conclusion

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When life is comfortable, it is easy to forget that God has called us to be His chosen. As a result, we fall into a spiritual slumber. We become so busy with our studies and personal activities that we forget to think of the many people who have yet to be saved, whether nearby or far away. Paul’s journey reminds us that there is still a lot more evangelism that must be done. In all that we do, we must always remember the commandment of the Lord Jesus: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Mt 28:19–20).

## Lesson 7 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. According to the memory verse, what kind of power does the gospel hold?  
*The gospel holds the power of repentance through the forgiveness of sins, and of salvation given us by the power of God.*
2. What made Antioch of Syria a significant city?  
*It was the third largest city of the Roman Empire and the capital city of the proconsular province of Syria. It was also populated by diverse groups of people, was an important junction of trade, and a center of great architecture and learning.*
3. Name three obstacles that Paul and his companions faced during their missionary journey.
  - a. *False teachings (Acts 13:8–11)*
  - b. *Envy and jealousy (Acts 13:45)*
  - c. *Persecution and being expelled from the city (Acts 13:50)*
  - d. *Calloused hearts and minds poisoned against the apostles (Acts 14:2)*
  - e. *False glory (Acts 14:11–13)*
  - f. *Physical pain and abuse (Acts 14:19–20)*
4. What are two reasons we encounter obstacles?
  - a. *We belong to different realms*
  - b. *The people of the world do not want their wrong deeds exposed*
  - c. *Different faiths*
  - d. *If we desire to live a godly life, we will suffer persecution*
5. Name at least three different tools that we should have in order to preach.  
*General knowledge: Learn different languages; understand the world around us*  
*Spiritual knowledge: Know the Bible; develop excellent spiritual character; experience God*
6. How can you personally prepare yourself to answer God's calling and contribute to His missionary work?  
*Personal answers.*

Figure 1: Paul's First Missionary Journey

