

# Mission Work 101

## by Jennie Warkentine

### FAITH STORY:

Acts: 14:8-20

### FAITH FOCUS:

In this missionary story of Paul and Barnabas, Paul heals a crippled man and the missionaries are mistaken for pagan gods. When the crowds try to worship them as gods, Paul and Barnabas become distraught and proclaim their mortality and their mission. They share that they have good news, but they relate to the Gentile crowd through everyday examples such as food and joy. This is how we too should share the faith. At the end of the passage, Paul is stoned, but he rises and reenters the city where he was stoned, showing his commitment to his mission work.

### MATERIALS AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- Bibles
- Tracts and evangelism literature (Focus Option #2)
- Invite someone to share their faith story—someone who came to faith through evangelism (Connect Option #2) **OR**
- Think about an experience of witnessing to share (Connect Option #2)
- Copy of the study note on Zeus and Hermes (From Explore the Bible)
- Copies of “I love to tell the story” from “Hymnal A Worship Book” page 398 (Respond Option #1)
- Blank paper, crayons, markers, colored pencils, scissors, glue, colored paper (Respond Option #2)

### SESSION OUTLINE

#### FOCUS:

**Option #1:** As students arrive, ask for volunteers for a role play. You will need two people—one to play the role of a Christian and one to be a non-believer. Give as much freedom as you know the youth can handle. If they need more structure, instruct the non-believer to give the Christian a hard time, or to just nod and smile. Tell the Christian to act as a friend talking to a long-time friend, or as a Christian trying to evangelize someone they just met in a mall. There are many

possibilities—don't be limited by these ideas, but give the youth as much or as little guidance as needed. The point is to portray interaction between a Christian and a non-believer, and the Christian is sharing the Gospel with the non-believer.

**Option #2:** Have a variety of tracts and other materials used for evangelism available for students to look at when they arrive. If your church uses these kinds of resources, those would be the best. Once everyone has gathered, ask the students what they think of the tracts. This is a good time to let the students freely discuss and share their feelings.

Ask:

- Are these tracts effective?
- How would you feel if someone handed you a tract or shared these resources with you?
- Have you ever handed out tracts?
- How do you think non-believers would react to the information inside?
- Would it make a difference if the non-believer has never heard the Gospel?
- What if the non-believer has been raised in the church but turned away from God?
- What would your peers think if someone handed them a tract?

Don't let these questions limit the discussion. Be flexible. Try to keep students thinking about sharing the Gospel and whether or not these tracts and resources would be an effective way for them to share the Gospel.

## CONNECT:

**Option #1:** Have the youth break into groups of 3-4 and ask them to reflect on their own experiences of sharing the gospel. Ask questions such as:

- Have you ever tried to share your faith with a non-believer?
- With a close friend?
- With someone you just met?
- How did you feel?
- How did they respond?
- Has anyone of another faith ever shared their testimony with you? Or tried to convert you?
- How did that make you feel?

- Should we witness?
- Do you feel prepared to share the Gospel?

Let the small groups discuss for several minutes, while you circulate and listen to the conversations. Listening to some of their experiences will help you better facilitate the discussion later in the lesson. After the discussion, bring the group back together and mention a couple of opinions and points you heard and thought were significant. End by asking how they think the Bible instructs us to relate to non-believers when we share the Good News with them.

**Option #2:** Invite a member of the congregation to share their faith story with the youth. This can be anyone who came to faith through the power of someone sharing the Gospel with them—through tracts, friendship, by telling the Gospel story, or another way. For this, it would be most effective for someone who was not raised in the church to tell their story. Have them share with the youth what was effective and how they came to believe. If a youth has had such an experience and is willing to share, that would be preferable.

Another option is for you to share a personal story about a time when you witnessed to a non-believer. Just talk about what happened, how you felt, what you did. Spend some time discussing the stories and examples.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Read Acts 14:8-20 as a group.

Ask the students to first focus on verses 8-13. What is happening in these verses? Why did the Gentiles respond to the healing like they did? Allow questions and discussion within the group. After a few minutes of brainstorming and discussion, have one of the youth read the following study note from The Life Application Study Bible (NIV) 1973.

“Zeus and Hermes (also known as Jupiter and Mercury) were two popular gods in the Roman world. People from Lystra claimed that these gods had once visited their city. According to legend, no one offered them hospitality except an old couple, so Zeus and Hermes killed the rest of the people and rewarded the old couple. When the citizens of Lystra saw the miracles of Paul and Barnabas, they assumed that the gods were revisiting them. Remembering the story of what had happened to the previous citizens, they immediately honored Paul and Barnabas and showered them with gifts”.

Ask the students to reflect on how this knowledge changes what they think of the passage or their understanding of the passage.

Now ask the students to focus on verses 14-18. Have a student read this passage aloud. Ask the students how Paul witnesses to his faith. What does he say to the Gentiles? What does he say about God and God’s actions? How does he relate his words to their everyday lives?

Through this discussion, some things to point out include:

Paul states they are there to bring the good news. He is not ashamed to proclaim this. He points out the goodness of God as seen in his provision for the unbeliever. He talks about simple everyday things like crops, food, and joy—things his audience can understand and identify with. Paul is saying, “Look around you and you will see evidence of God working in your lives.”

Lastly focus on verses 19-20. Have another student read these verses. Ask students what they think. Why was this important enough to be included in the Bible? What do these verses say about Paul’s commitment to sharing the Good News? Why did Paul go back into the city where he was stoned?

## **APPLY**

Share the following story:

Katie is a junior in high school and she makes a good friend in gym class and soon finds out that her new friend Andrea is a Mormon. Katie doesn’t know much about the Mormon Church, but knows enough to think it is a cult. Katie desperately wants to “help” Andrea convert so she starts bringing tracts to school and leaving them on Andrea’s desk. She tells Andrea that if she has any questions to feel free to ask. Katie frequently brings up different beliefs and whenever Andrea tries to share, Katie says they are wrong without even listening to what Andrea has to say. Eventually Andrea starts to avoid Katie and the friendship is broken. Katie doesn’t understand why Andrea is upset, Katie was working to save Andrea for eternity.

Discuss the passage and story with these questions:

- What does all this mean for us? How does this entire passage apply to us today?
- What did Katie do wrong?
- How should we relate to non-believers?
- How should we relate to those with differing beliefs?
- How should we share the Gospel?
- What are some different ways Katie could have handled the situation with Andrea?
- How could Katie have meet Andrea where she was?
- Would it have made a difference if Katie had taken the time to learn about Andrea’s beliefs?
- What kind of dedication does God require of us?
- Are we willing to place ourselves in danger to share with others?
- Paul and Barnabas took the time to know the people to whom they were witnessing and

the legend of Zeus' visit to the town. Do we take the time to get to know those we are witnessing to?

- How would we change the way we witness, if we followed Paul's example?

## RESPOND

**Option #1:** Have the students share how they feel God is telling them to share his good news with the non-believers ("Gentiles") they encounter every day. Ask the students if they can think of any people or situations where God may be calling them to share the good news. Close by singing "I love to tell the story" from "Hymnal A Worship Book", page 398.

**Option #2:** Provide the students with blank paper, crayons, colored pencils, markers, scissors, glue, and colored paper. Instruct the students to create tracts or another visuals that would help them relate to non-believers while sharing the gospel. If time permits, have the students share with the group how their creation meets non-believers where they are and shares the gospel on a level they can relate to.

## INSIGHTS FROM SCRIPTURE

Lystra is approximately eighteen miles south of Iconium in the southern part of the region of Galatia. It is a colony like Antioch. The healing of the crippled man is much like Peter's healing of a crippled man in Acts 3:1-8. Because of the miracle of healing, the citizens of Lystra thought Paul and Barnabas were Zeus and Hermes returning to their city. As the legend goes, because of the destruction following the first visit from the gods, the people of Lystra wanted to welcome the gods and serve them. In response, Paul shares the Good News that he came to tell. He reminded the people that everything, including rain and crops, are evidence of God's goodness. Paul started with the "here and now" and proceeded to the "there and then" to talk about the goodness of God. We are called, like Paul and Barnabas, to proclaim God's presence, goodness, and the Gospel. Another key point is that Paul does not condemn the people of Lystra who come from a different religious background.

The Jews who incite Paul's stoning may have been in Lystra for two reasons: they may have been deliberately following Paul and Barnabas to destroy their work, or they may have been merchants passing through. For whatever reason they were there, the people of Lystra stoned Paul and leave him for dead, yet Paul continued the ministry. He knew there was no higher calling and he was called to serve. Paul's return to the city where he was stoned speaks of his great courage, and the fact that it is God who is in control.