



22 | ACTS 13:1-12

A PATTERN FOR MISSIONS

God wants you to be personally involved in evangelism and discipleship for his kingdom.

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I will praise the name of God with a song; I will magnify him with thanksgiving. ³¹This will please the Lord more than sacrifice. ³²When the humble see it they will be glad; you who seek God, let your hearts revive. ³³For the Lord hears the needy... ³⁴Let heaven and earth praise him, the seas and everything that moves in them. —Psalm 69:31-34

Songs

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Blessed Be Your Name

Announcements

WELCOME: We are glad you are here! Be sure to grab a Welcome Packet if you are visiting with us.

GIVING: You can give over Zelle through your bank with no fees (use secretary@livinghopechurch.net). We also have a collection box on the Welcome Center. Malachi 3, “Test me in this” Proverbs: “**Give of your firstfruits.**” We believe blessing comes by putting God first.

Introduction

We continue our series in the book of Acts called “Life on Life Discipleship.” Our title this morning is: “A Pattern for Missions”.

I have learned to **love adventure** in my life. Sometimes that adventure has come through sad and unfortunate circumstances. I was nine years old when my family broke up and I moved with my mom and twin sister from Chicago to Louisiana. Many adventures were had, like jumping into the Tickfaw River out of the top of a sixty-foot cypress tree. Or eating strange but tantalizing food like crawfish, jambalaya, and gumbo. And then there was the greatest adventure. I had no idea that the Holy Spirit had plans for me. At age fifteen, the eyes of my heart were opened, I was born again at an Assemblies of God meeting and then discipled in a little Southern Baptist church. God had plans for me. I was in darkness, and suddenly I was part of God’s worldwide **adventure** for his church. He will indeed build his church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. God’s plans for me had been made before the foundation of the world.

What we find out in Acts 13 is that the Holy Spirit has **plans** for a whole lot of **unlikely people**. He loves to take those who are in darkness and bring them into the light of Christ. The Spirit was on the move then, and he is on the move today. We read about the pattern of **expansion** for the church in this text in Acts 13.

Key Thought: God wants you to be personally involved in evangelism and discipleship for the expansion of his kingdom.

It may not be your specific gifting to teach or evangelize, but every believer ought to be pointing people to Christ, inviting people to know Jesus and making disciples.

1. THE EXPANSION OF THE CHURCH (13:1-3)

What we are going to see is that a healthy church is a growing church, expanding in its influence.

Acts 13:1-3 | Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² 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.” ³ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

In these first three verses we see the DNA for any New Testament church that is healthy and growing.

THE LOCALE OF THE ANTIOCH CHURCH

Acts 13:1a | Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers.

It was local, “at Antioch.” Antioch was at a cultural crossroads for travelers and had a diverse population. Every congregation is somewhere in time and space. It is a church: because it was a congregation. The local church is the prized venue of God’s work.

What is a church? John Owen said, “The church is a society of people called by the word to the obedience of the faith of Christ, and joint performance of the worship of God in the same individual ordinances, according to the order by Christ prescribed.” Mark Dever describes a church as “united by God and committed to one another.” The apostle Paul says it’s a place of truth. It is the “pillar and ground of the truth.”

As geographically accessible and strategically located for world-wide evangelism as Antioch was in it is day almost any city in modern USA is far more so. We have no excuse. The burden of the **Great Commission** is just as much ours as it was theirs.

THE LEADERS OF THE ANTIOCH CHURCH

Acts 13:1 | Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

There were many leaders at Antioch: prophets and teachers, apostles, some of the seven deacons (Acts 6). This was a church filled with leaders!

They had a diversity on their leadership team (Acts 13:1). The leadership team and the church reflected the church triumphant in heaven! Consider their leadership team.

- **Barnabas:** a **Jew** and a native of Cyprus
- **Simeon:** was likely an **African**, and some think he may have been the one who carried the Lord’s cross.
- **Lucius of Cyrene** is also an **African** brother in Christ.
- **Manaen** is a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch: very likely an Idumean and Jewish mix. Many believe he was actually raised in the same household with Herod as a brother. He would have been considered a **Gentile** by the Jews.
- **Saul:** Rabbi Saul, a once very decorated Pharisee, also a **Jew**.

You had two Jews and three Gentiles on the leadership team. **They were very diverse in their ethnicity**, but they were of one heart in preaching the gospel and building up the church. They were a multi-cultural ministry. They were an ethnically integrated church.

THE LOVE OF THE ANTIOCH CHURCH

Acts 13:2a | While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said...

There was Christ-centered service. “They were **worshipping** the Lord.” There was consensual self-denial—they **fasted**. The Spirit spoke to them. They **prayed!** The utter dependence of the early church on prayer is unmistakable in Acts. As a result, there was a commission by setting-apart “they set apart Paul and Barnabas.” **A praying church is always going to be a sending church.** If you love God, you are going to love the nations.

Consider what the great men in the **movements of God** had in common. These were **not great men**. They were **small men with a great God**. These were men who spent hours each day in prayer. And many of them led congregations that knew what it was to pray! Consider Pentecost. They **prayed**. They **sought God**. They waited. They waited on God and **sought him until they were endued with power** from on high! That’s what we need!

During next week, we will have our bi-annual week of prayer, January 10-14, 2022 from 7 to 8:15pm each night. This is the time to show who we really are. Are we completely dependent on the means and energy and plans of men? Or will we be humbly dependent on the great plans and providence of God?

THE DIVINE LEADER OF THE ANTIOCH CHURCH

Acts 13:2 | 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.”

How the Holy Spirit communicated to the church is not revealed. **Presumably he spoke through one of the prophets.** However, the message was communicated, the church’s response was instant obedience. There was no grumbling or resentment; the Holy Spirit demanded the church’s best, and Antioch joyously provided Saul and Barnabas.¹

Who is the leader of the Antioch church and our church? It is the Holy Spirit. There is objective determination of God’s will. There is also subjective determination of God’s will. influence by the word of God, the personality of leaders, divine providence, the gifts of believers, and the location of church.

The **Spirit of God is the one who burdens the prayerful heart with direction.** It is the Spirit that has people he wants to save in China or Africa or Japan. A returned missionary might say, “Why don’t you come to Brazil?” or, “We could use you in Germany.” But the call must come from the Holy Spirit, not from a man, a mission board, or a church. No one has the right to deny the clear leading of the Holy Spirit in a person’s life just because that person is not the right age or not sufficiently educated.

George Müller became a missionary at the age of seventy. He had been turned down as a missionary five times in the first eight years of his new life in Christ! What a prospective missionary the shortsighted mission boards lost in George Müller—one of the greatest giants of faith of all time!² We need a church filled with people who are ready to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and say, “Here I am Lord, send me” (Isa 6:8).

¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Acts*, vol. 2, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 6.

² John Phillips, *Exploring Acts: An Expository Commentary*, The John Phillips Commentary Series (Kregel Publications; WORDsearch Corp., 2009), Ac 13:2b.

THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE ANTIOCH CHURCH

Acts 13:2-3 | While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”³ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

They were set apart by the Holy Spirit and sent off by the church. They didn’t have ten books on how to plant a church. They had the word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. Remember Jesus’ words.

Matthew 16:18 | I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

The Antioch church has a heart for the nations. Their location was suitable for Western expansion. Their attitude toward outsiders was warm and embracing. They sent their own leaders to do the work. We see some of this in our own church. We needed a pastor for our Hispanic ministry, and God allowed us to **raise up Pastor Jose Salgado from our midst**. That should not be a rare thing, but it sometimes is.

Antioch was a city of around 200,000 people during the time of the book of Acts. Within a ten-mile radius of Living Hope, there well over half a million people (635,000), and that is a conservative estimate.

As geographically accessible and strategically located for world-wide evangelism as Antioch was in its day almost any city in modern USA is far more so. We have no excuse. The burden of the Great Commission is just as much ours as it was theirs.

2. THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH (13:4-5)

The importance of the present narrative is that it describes the first piece of planned overseas mission carried out by representatives of a **particular church, rather than by solitary individuals**, and begun **by a deliberate church decision**, inspired by the Spirit, rather than somewhat more casually as a result of **persecution**.³ This is a crucial event in the life of the church of Jesus Christ. The mission is to proclaim the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit and see people turn to Christ.

Acts 13:4-5 | So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. ⁵ When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them.

THE POWER OF THE MISSION

Acts 13:4a | So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit.

These were sent out by the Holy Spirit. We can commission people, but we have no power. We can license, ordain, and send people on sacred tasks, but unless the Holy Spirit

³ E. Best, ‘Acts 13:1–3’, *The Journal of Biblical Studies* 11, 1960, 344–348.

anoints them, their labors will be in vain.⁴ Remember the promise of the Holy Spirit for every one of us.

Acts 1:8 | 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.

We have no power in ourselves, but we have infinite power in the Spirit. Zechariah told us as much.

Zechariah 4:6 | Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.

THE PLANNING OF THE MISSION

Acts 13:4b | They went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

Saul and Barnabas no doubt chose to **begin their missionary outreach on Cyprus** for **several reasons**. According to Acts 4:36, it was **Barnabas's home** and thus it would have been **familiar territory**. Also, it was close to Antioch, probably two days' journey at most. Further, Cyprus had a **large Jewish population**. All those reasons made it an ideal starting point for outreach to the Gentile world.⁵

In leaving their comfort zone in Antioch, there is a great act of faith that changes the world as we know it. We find the beginning of the most significant missionary movement in the entire history of the church, indeed of the world. It begins **with some geographical details**. They had been at Antioch on the Orontes River, and from there they went first to Seleucia, the harbor that served that part of Syria, and they boarded a ship. We are told, even by geographers today, that **on a clear day**, if you stand on the coast of Syria in what was once Seleucia and look out into the Mediterranean—**130 miles in the distance** on a clear day—you can still see the shape and outline of that **large island of Cyprus**. That was in the vision of Paul and Barnabas as they set sail.⁶

Paul and Barnabas are **sent out by the Spirit** (13:4a). It's not our plan. It's God's plan from the foundation of the world. Yet **being filled with the Spirit gives us big, broken hearts for the lost**. Christ died for lost souls, and he would have them saved. There is an urgency. The most **sobering reality** in the world today is that **people are dying and going to hell today**. We see a blueprint for Paul's first missionary journey. He evangelized the great population centers of his day, the centers of culture, commerce, and government. He sought to plant his pioneer churches in the cities; those churches could then evangelize the surrounding area.⁷ Ephesus, for example was planted by Paul, and then Ephesus evangelized Asia Minor, and hence we have the seven churches named in Revelation.

⁴ R. C. Sproul, *Acts*, St. Andrew's Expository Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 221–222.

⁵ MacArthur, *Acts*, 7.

⁶ Sproul, *Acts*, 222.

⁷ Phillips, *Acts*, Ac 13:4.

THE PROCLAMATION OF THE MISSION

Acts 13:5a | When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews.

Paul and Barnabas went first to the Jewish population to preach Jesus. These were those who were already familiar with the word of God. Later they would branch out to the Gentiles. **Paul would later explain his strategy.**

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

At the end of the day all the planning in the world will not get the job done. The power comes from the word of God itself. We must proclaim the message of the gospel. We dare not tame the gospel or edit it or dumb it down. The fact that we are dead in our sins, worthy of hell must be stated. It is not until we see how desperate our state is that we can truly see our need for Christ. Oh the wonder of Jesus' love! He, as God the Son took on a human body and lived a perfect life on our behalf. He was then crucified as a sacrifice for our sin. We give him our rags of sin, and he gives us his robe of righteousness. After Christ died on the cross, he was risen from the dead by the same Spirit that raises us from the dead when we believe. We can be filled and guided and directed now by the Spirit. Our hearts are Christ's throne. This is the good news! Proclaim it far and wide, that the whole world will know that Jesus Christ is Lord!

THE PERSONNEL OF THE MISSION

Acts 13:5b | And they had John to assist them.

This is John Mark, the cousin to Barnabas, and the author of the Gospel of Mark, which is really the work of the apostle Peter. John Mark and Barnabas would soon part ways from Paul, due to the harshness of the work as we read a few verses later in Acts 13:13, "Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem" (cf Acts 15:36-41). This caused no small controversy between Paul and Barnabas. Nonetheless, John Mark would later author the Gospel of Mark with most of the work coming from Peter.

Listen, God's got his people right where he wants them. John Mark might not have been as mature as Paul, but he was willing, and he was growing. He had a setback, but he kept going. The early church father John Chrysostom said that John Mark likely had a fit of homesickness. Whatever the reason he retreated. Paul would eventually forgive him, and he would become a strategic partner for both the apostles, Peter and Paul, in their time imprisonment in Rome. We all have to start somewhere. At least John Mark was willing to go with the great Paul and Barnabas! Also, John Mark teaches us that it's more important how you end than how you finish.

3. THE OPPOSITION OF THE CHURCH (13:6-8)

Whenever God opens the door of the gospel to someone, there will always be satanic attack. Expect it. Here we are introduced to a certain magician named **Elymas Bar-Jesus**. We find out that as Paul and Barnabas explain the faith to a high ranking official, the governor proconsul of Cyprus, named Sergius Paulus, this false teacher seeks to turn him away from the faith of Christ.

Acts 13:6-8 | When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they came upon a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus. ⁷He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. ⁸But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.

THE DEVIL'S WORK OF OPPOSITION

Acts 13:6, 8 | When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they came upon a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus. ⁸But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.

We find out in church history that **Barnabas is later martyred by Elymas Bar-Jesus**. We find out that as Paul and Barnabas explain the faith to a high ranking official, the governor proconsul of Cyprus, named **Sergius Paulus**, and he is **being drawn to the word of God** to believe. All the while, this wicked false teacher Elymas seeks to turn him away from the faith of Christ.

Be ready to face opposition when you live for Christ. Everyone who lives out the holiness of the Christian life will face persecution. So the question today is are you facing any enemies? If you have no enemies then you should wonder which side you are on. If you are not garnering persecution that should tell you something about the dimness of your life and light. **Are you shining the light of Christ**, or do you have your light **hidden** under a basket? Don't be afraid of the devil's work. Consider it an honor to be opposed. It says something about the power and influence of your testimony.

GOD'S WORK IN EVANGELISM

Acts 13:7 | He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God.

God is working through Paul and Barnabas. The Spirit has targeted a governor, proconsul named **Sergius Paulus**.

Think of it! In Cyprus, two hundred miles away from Antioch in Syria, **on an island in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea**, was a man whom God wanted in the kingdom of God. God was saying in effect, "I want this man! I am going to make a straight path between Sergius Paulus and the two men in the church in Antioch, Barnabas and Saul. I will bring them together, and I will ensure that as they walk in my ways in obedience to my calling and equipping, **a glorious conversion will take place**. No matter what Satan may try to do to oppose it, 'the gates of hell will not prevail.' **I will prevail**," says the Spirit.

We might be tempted to think that what had attracted the proconsul was the **scholarship and charismatic personalities** of the two ambassadors of Christ from Antioch, but while it may well be true that he had heard something of their reputation, it is not what Luke wants us to understand as the fundamental emphasis. It was first and foremost **a work of God**. The word of God was doing its work (13:7).

God is at work. It is as though he had been drawing a straight line from Antioch to Sergius Paulus (there is Paphos, Cyprus) saying, “I will build a highway from this city to that city.” It is a display of the sovereignty of God in missionary work and evangelism. When God is at work, nothing can stand in his way.⁸

Be always about the mission of pointing to Christ, and God will put you in situations to share God’s word and bring people to Christ. **No opposition can stop you since God is omnipotent.**

4. THE CONQUEST OF THE CHURCH (13:9-12)

Paul was not afraid but confronted the opposition and called him out for what he was, a “son of the devil.” So really we see two people being conquered by the word of God, one in a negative way and the other in a positive way. The false teacher-magician, Elymas is conquered in a very bad way. He is rendered blind. And then you have the proconsul-governor of Cyprus who is conquered by the word of God in a very positive way. He believes and is converted.

A DIABOLIC CONQUEST

Paul knew he wasn’t just up against some unknown magician named Elymas, but that Elymas was a pawn of the devil to try and oppose God. Paul told Elymas the gig was up.

Acts 13:9-10 | But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him ¹⁰and said, “You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord?”

We have to realize that when we evangelize, we are not wrestling against flesh and blood, but against demonic powers in the unseen realm (Eph 6:11-12). Paul merely reiterates this to Elymas’ face. Paul is not insulting Elymas but warning him. That’s what we are to do with the enemies of the Lord.

A DANGEROUS CONQUEST

Acts 13:11 | And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time.” Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand.

When we warn those who oppose the gospel, it is up to the Lord what do to with them. For Elymas, Paul was given a prophecy and a miracle. This isn’t the kind of miracle you

⁸ Derek W. H. Thomas, *Acts*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2011), 360–361.

want and pray for. Elymas would not relent or repent so God granted him temporary blindness to humble him. While it did keep him from harassing Sergius Paulus, it did not stop him for long. Church history records, as I mentioned already, that Elymas is the one who later on martyrs Barnabas.

Don't worry about the enemies of God. They will come and harass you, but like their father the devil, they have no power to bring you meaningful harm. They can roar but they cannot harm. **God will restrain the enemy anytime he needs to.**

Do you have a fear of evangelism because of the enemy? Don't be afraid of him. Satan is already a defeated foe.

1 John 4:4 | Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

Romans 8:37 | We are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

A DELIGHTFUL CONQUEST

Paul and Barnabas had no idea what was about to happen with Sergius Paulus, but they kept plowing forward no matter the difficulties that were launched by the enemy. The greatest and most delightful conquest took place: Sergius Paulus became a follower of Jesus Christ!

Acts 13:12a | Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred.

The great proconsul of Cyprus believed the gospel after he had seen the miracle blindness upon that wicked Elymas the sorcerer. The greater miracle was not the blindness of Elymas but the spiritual sight of Sergius Paulus. Don't be surprised what God can do in bringing someone to salvation. **We must not be bound up by fear and worry when it comes to the salvation of souls.** We are merely instruments in the Redeemer's hands. He does the work of opening the blind eyes. He raises the spiritually dead. Be careful of fear and worry because it can drive you to two extremes: one is to avoid evangelism all together. The other is to try and create false conversions through manipulation. We must wait on the Lord to do his work. Notice how God did the work in the heart of the great governor of Cyprus, Sergius Paulus.

A DYNAMIC CONQUEST

Acts 13:12b | For he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

The word of God did all the work. God's word is powerful. It is what transforms the soul. I love this. It wasn't the personalities or even the emotional or moving words of Paul and Barnabas. It was the teaching of the word of the Lord that astonished this powerful man and converted his heart.

Hebrews 4:12 | For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Remember in the book of Ezekiel (chapter 37) there was a valley of dry bones, a cemetery of sorts containing the bones of the army of Israel. What did Ezekiel do in order to bring the army of God's people to life? He prophesied and preached the word of God. He preached and the wind of God's Spirit made the cemetery of people alive.

Applications

God wants you to become personally involved in evangelism and discipleship. God is in the business of saving souls. How can you be a part of God's great work of building his church?

Be conformed to Christ personally.

Pray for lost souls.

Do personal evangelism

Encourage discipleship.

Be conformed to Christ personally. Paul and Barnabas were men who walked with Christ on a personal level. When they spoke the word of God, they did so from personal experience. The Spirit was moving them with the word every day. If you want to be personally involved in the expansion of the church, you've got to surround yourself with God's word, the Spirit's work through the word in your own heart, and with God's people. **Sin has to be confronted** in your life by the word, by the Spirit and by the church. Constant repentance and humility ought to be the experience of your life. Constant joy in Jesus and satisfaction in the word will keep you happy and holy.

Pray for lost souls. Begin in your family. You have to believe that God can save anyone. Perhaps that is hardest when it comes to your own family. You have a lost son or daughter. Pray and believe that God will save them! You have a lost parent. Pray and believe. Have you given up? Pray for opportunities. God will open doors. **There is a prayer meeting each day this week** where we can do this on a corporate level. Come a couple of days this week for corporate prayer.

Do personal evangelism. Be preaching Christ wherever you are. In a restaurant you can ask the server if you can pray for them. They'll often join with you. There is a world of people who are hurting and broken, and we are so afraid, we lose our boldness. Be loving, but be bold. People need you to be courageous to give them the gospel. **"How are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?"** (Rom 10:14). Who else is going to tell the world about Christ? If you are growing in Christ, you will evangelize.

Encourage discipleship. Are you doing your part in discipleship? Discipleship begins with faithful walking with God yourself. You have to be committed to the body of Christ. Be here when the doors are open. Be here for Sunday School. Join God's people for Sunday evening service the first Sunday of each month. Be texting the saints during the day. Get in the habit of sharing your burdens and carrying the burdens of those in this body. **Be sharing what you are learning with others in the body.**

Conclusion

When I was a child, we used to camp out on the weekends on my friend's land. There were plenty of pine trees down there in the outskirts of New Orleans. One of our favorite things was to make a gigantic bonfire. We would clear the land of branches and dead trees and just set it on fire. As big as it was, it would start to die down and someone would gather new firewood to keep it aflame. The key is to spread the flame to new material.

It's like that in evangelism. **Any fire that does not spread will eventually go out.** A church that is not on fire with the Holy Spirit and holiness will not evangelize. Don't be discouraged if you are struggling with evangelism. Start small. Share a Bible

verse with a co-worker or family member. It can be as simple as sharing Romans 6:23, “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” I know we have another twelve months until the next Christmas, but Jesus is a gift you can give all year round!