

When the Going Gets Rough

Acts 13:4-13

TAG Team Lesson

Week of January 31, 2010

When one becomes a Christian, there sometimes is the idea that “hard times” are now going to be over. Our worries are now over and we can live life where everything will be clean, pure and happy. The truth of matter is that often life gets rougher after we trust Christ. There are new tensions that now begin to surface. We feel the difficulty of living in the kingdom of heaven and living in the world. There are new truths that we begin to learn about ourselves and the world and that can make things uncomfortable. Life becomes “real” and we have to now be prepared to handle the new difficulties.

In this week’s lesson Paul, Barnabas and young John Mark find out what happens when they encounter the “hard times” and jolts of Christian missionary life as they take their first journey together.

1. Read chapter 13 completely. Having read the entire chapter, how do you think the missionary team, as well as, the church at Antioch felt as they prepared this first every team on this particular journey?

2. Who was on their side, according to verse 4? Do you think they thought all would be “smooth sailing?” If so, why or why not?

3. The story continues from verse 4 through verse 5. Barnabas, being a native of Cyprus, would know the lay of the land and have the necessary information for a successful mission’s trip. John Mark maybe was looking forward to this exotic adventure. What could go wrong on this trip?

4. The spiritual darkness of Cyprus was opposing their efforts. For hundreds of years the island had been ruled by Egyptians, Phoenicians, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, and the Romans. Under these different hands, many pagan religious systems developed. Cyprus was a demon’s playground. What are the results of team’s efforts (vv. 6-8)? What was Satan’s desire regarding the message of “light” than had how entered the island?

5. In verses 9-11, Saul (who’s name would change to Paul, signifying the emphasis of his ministry to the Gentile world) did not back down. How did

he face the problems ahead? How did he see the situation at hand?

6. God blinded the magician because he refuses to see the truth. However, the proconsul longed to see the truth and his eyes were opened (v. 12). How might this first missionary team have felt as this juncture?

7. In verse 13, looking forward to smooth sailing ahead maybe, Paul, Barnabas and John Mark sailed on. With new encounters, one member decides to pack it up and go home. Maybe with the apparent leadership change (see word order and leadership change – Acts 12:25 and 13:2, 13) Paul is now in charge. John Mark, a relative of Barnabas heads home. What kinds of encounters must one be prepared for when on a “mission trip?”

8. Pamphylia was a treacherous region. The coastal area around Perga was rife with disease, including malaria. It is possibly here that Paul suffered an ailment he referred to in Galatians 4:13. Maybe this illness is what forced Paul inland, farther into Galatia. Maybe some of these stresses added to the reason that John Mark left the team. What might John Mark have done to prepare himself for the unknown and therefore been able to go on with the team? Later, Paul would call John Mark’s return to Jerusalem a desertion (Acts 15:38).

9. With this story, maybe parts of the team were idealists and others were realists. Sometimes plans break down. Contrast in general, how idealists and realists approach difficult circumstances.

10. How do you characterize your approach to life and your service to God? How do you cultivate the pains and frustrations of life?
