

RADICAL DISCIPLESHIP (LESSON 56)

REACHING THE WORLD. The conversion of Saul was a pivotal point in taking the Gospel to the world. Paul would revolutionize the concept of discipleship. Not only did he write at least thirteen epistles of the New Testament, he became the primary force in spreading the Gospel to the world. "...he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15). He was a radical of radicals. He set the watermark for everyone to follow, including disciples today. From Acts 13 to the end of the book, Paul is the key figure in world missions. Paul's ministry became the template for making disciples on a world-wide scale. The persecution of Stephen caused the disciples to scatter as far as Antioch in Syria. Antioch became the new center for world missions. It was the sending base for Paul's missionary journeys. The second part of Acts proceeded from Antioch. Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch. Barnabas sent for Saul from Tarsus. And that was the beginning of the world-wide influence of the Gospel. It was there that disciples were first called Christians (Acts 11:26). Barnabas and Paul were sent out by the Holy Spirit on the first of three mission missionary journeys. With few exceptions they began in Jewish synagogues and then went to the Gentiles. Paul, along with others would make two more missionary trips without Barnabas, adding companions to help in the work. Paul made disciples as he traveled. Paul continued to use a modified version of Jesus' discipleship methods, along with the cell-group format used in the Jerusalem church. His discipleship methods remained basically the same until he got to Ephesus. At Ephesus Paul evaluated his approach and decided to make a change. In Ephesus Paul introduced a new paradigm for training radical disciples to reach the world.