

2020 Global Ministries Conference  
*Fellow Workers for the Truth*  
“Briarwood’s Stewardship of World Missions”  
Acts 11, 13  
Dr. Harry L. Reeder III  
February 16, 2020 • Morning Sermon

This is the Word of God and God’s Word is true. Acts 11:19–30 says [19] *Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. [20] But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. [21] And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. [22] The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. [23] When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, [24] for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. [25] So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul (Paul), [26] and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.*

*[27] Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. [28] And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius). [29] So the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. [30] And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

For three Sundays over two weeks we have our mission’s conference and it’s a very special time. I get to start it off with a study from the theme our global ministries has chosen and this year we will have Dr. Pratt speaking for our conference with four new sermons. We work with him and his ministries training over a thousand leaders all over the world. We’ll have over 30 missionaries coming and speaking. This is special to me and this is one of the reasons God overcame all of my objections over 20 years ago of being called to Briarwood. I could not see why God was calling me here in light of what was happening where I was. I was in Charlotte because Briarwood had sent me there to plant a church there.

There were five things that God used to change my mind and lead me. I won’t go into all five but one of them had to do with missions at Briarwood. When I was growing up I basically grew up in two churches – Calvary Independent Church which was the home church of Dr. Billy Graham and his family in which they sent out hundreds of missionaries and the other was a Christian Missionary Alliance church where missions was everything in that church. I wasn’t even a believer yet but I would get excited about missions. I hadn’t loved Jesus yet savingly but I loved missions. As a pastor I had been in two churches, one in Miami and one in Charlotte and had a pretty aggressive mission’s ministry in which we pretty much copied what was at Briarwood.

One of the things I love to preach about in our conference is we get to be stewards of a mission’s legacy. There are a number of legacy ministries at Briarwood that God used to overcome my rational reasons why I didn’t think I was called to leave Charlotte to come to

Briarwood. One of them was Briarwood's commitment to personal evangelism, another was the commitment I had learned from Dr. Barker in small group discipleship and the third was the commitment to world missions. These ministries matched up with my heart, not necessarily with my abilities and so maybe God was calling me to embrace that stewardship, to honor it and build on it so perhaps that was the reason I needed to pray about it. That along with a few other things sealed the deal as my wife and I spent time in prayer.

World missions is so important. This is world evangelism and this is the world part of the Great Commission. Acts 1:8 says *[8] But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses (to make disciples) in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.* We have our Jerusalem which is Birmingham, Judea and Samaria is our state and nation but now this is world missions. This is Briarwood's 55<sup>th</sup> year to hold a mission's conference and the embracing of our faith promise where we begin to pray how we can send these missionaries on in a manner worthy of the Lord.

Lord, by faith what do I believe You will give to me that is beyond my tithe and regular giving and then I promise when You get it to me it will get through me and I'll give it for the cause of world evangelism. A hundred percent of what is given will be used for world missions here at Briarwood. Our vision statement at Briarwood is that every member is a missionary and a minister so secondly we pray 'God, how can I be a ministry in my culture. God, are You calling me cross culturally and if not how can I be a fellow worker and partner with them so that when they go I go with them as I work with them.' They don't work for me but we're working together. I'm working here as I help them go there with prayer, finances and personal encouragement so that we're working together.

I was talking with Dr. Barker about how we don't get invited to speak at mission's conferences very much, even our missionaries will agree with this. One of the reasons for this is that there are a whole lot less mission's conferences now. I'm all for taking up offerings to do something in the city but we can walk and chew gum at the same time, meaning we can minister locally and still send globally. Praise God that there is a lot of global that has come local but that shouldn't stop us where God is opening doors and even where God hasn't opened the doors but He still tells us to send it and He'll knock the doors down when we go. We won't be giving up world mission's conferences because this is about the biggest two weeks of the year for us.

I want to see the Gospel go to the whole world for two reasons. One is that Jesus said that He would not come back until the Gospel has gone to every nation so I want the Gospel to every nation because I want Jesus back. Secondly, He won't come back until all of His people have been brought to Christ therefore I want to get the Gospel to the whole world. So some day out there that last one will be saved and that trumpet is going to blow and we'll have a new heavens and a new earth. I'm all for missions for multiple reasons. I love to hear the stories of what God is doing throughout the world and the whole purpose of missions is to turn sinners into saved saints to the praise of God so they worship God and the praise of God covers the earth as the waters cover the sea.

I'm not living in the past. This is me learning from the past, living in the present so let's change the future with more mission's conferences for I think it's a great way to bring the vision to people in a church. I love to see people excited about world missions and I love you because I know you are for I see it every single year. I look forward to encouraging the missionaries and us being encouraged by them. So we are stewarding this legacy to build to change the future for the work of the Gospel.

I love the theme our mission's committee has chosen. The theme is we ought to send them in a manner worthy of the Lord and ought is an ethical term. One reason why is that when you do you become fellow workers with the Truth. In other words, they're doing out there what you're doing here. As we are engaged with them prayerfully, financially and encouragingly they are working with us here as well. It's a synergy of us working together. So as I was preparing for this study I decided to go to the book of Acts and pick out a case study of fellow working, of working together. This way we can see and experience what this looks like from God's Word.

The book of Acts contains three glorious Gospel movements of the Great Commission in the power of the Spirit that match the Great Commission. The Great Commission is to take the Gospel to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth. Acts, written by Luke as he was inspired by the Holy Spirit has recorded this book this way. Acts 1 through 8 is the Gospel at work in Jerusalem. Acts 9 through 12 is the Gospel at work in Judea and Samaria. Acts 13 through 28 is the Gospel at work throughout the world.

We also see that when the Gospel is working in Jerusalem a great church in Jerusalem is established and is pastored by a converted half-brother of Jesus, named James. Then as you look at Judea and Samaria there is another great church which is the church at Antioch. Then as the Gospel goes out to the world there is another great church, not the only church, and that is Ephesus. We get to see all that in the book of Acts but Luke has shown us something in this narrative that many don't see. I am not reading into it because it's there.

The narrative shows us that there would not have been Antioch if the church in Jerusalem hadn't sent and there wouldn't have been the Gospel going to the world if the church at Antioch hadn't sent. Antioch sends back to Jerusalem and then sends its best out to the world. Do you see how they are working with one another in the Truth and experiencing as a church that it is more blessed to give than to receive? Now I'd like to show you this.

I need to be selective for time but I want to give you a couple of things that show you how this is working. So in Acts before our text from Acts 11 we have believers who are scattered from Jerusalem out into the world in concert with the persecution. Persecution against the church is happening to the point that the first martyr church in Jerusalem, Stephen is killed and a man by the name of Saul is holding the coats and cheering them on. Then Saul becomes a religious terrorist killing Christians and destroying churches afterwards. So there is this glorious work of the Gospel happening and when persecution comes all it does is the church begins to grow. So we see believers who have left the church in Jerusalem in the context of persecution and become scattered.

I had a man call me one time and asked if he could visit my church and I told him 'sure.' He said 'can you tell me where your church is?' and my response was 'I don't have the slightest idea.' He said 'If you are the pastor can you not tell me where the church is?' I said 'Oh I'm sorry you are asking where the church I pastor meets on the Lord's Day. You are asking me where you can find the church when it gathers for worship, fellowship, encouragement and discipleship on the Lord's Day.' I didn't let my wit go to sarcasm but I was trying to get a theological point across. He asked me what I was talking about so I proceeded to tell him that I pastored a wonderful congregation and the church wasn't just on the Lord's Day but it was everywhere. There are some on airplanes, at the mall, at businesses, at the office, at schools, on athletic fields, in fraternities and sororities, etc. They are all over the place. They are scattered out there, but on the Lord's Day here is where we meet and what time.

So what happens when we scatter? In Jerusalem, they not only scattered to the streets but they scattered to Cyprus and Cyrene and people came to Christ. Then they picked some of them

up and went on to Antioch. Then something powerful happened, for no longer did they simply go to the Jew first and then the Gentile exclusively but now they went to the Hellenists and some of our forbearers with the Gospel and they believed and came to Christ. This glorious work of grace begins to happen.

It's interesting to note that Satan attacks the church at Jerusalem with persecution and that just multiplies believers and churches. Here is my illustration. I'm in the first grade and my dad plays baseball for the Carolina league. We were living in Raleigh, North Carolina in a rented duplex but yet we had to keep up the lawn. So I had to cut the grass and everything else that grew in that lawn, with a push mower. Those dandelions were the worst to cut but in the summer I would run through that lawn and kick them and it was like I was creating snow everywhere. My mother came out and would try to kick me saying 'What are you doing, we're trying to kill those things for every time you kick those things you're not killing them but you're spreading hundreds of them.' That's what happens when you persecute the church. The Gospel in Acts is spreading all over the place.

As the Gospel is spreading these people are doing out there what they did in Jerusalem. The word gets back to Jerusalem and now this church in Jerusalem takes one of its best leaders – Barnabas – and send him out. This man's name was Joseph but he gave so much of himself to others that they changed his name to Barnabas. Bar means son and when you add the rest it means son of encouragement. When Barnabas got up there he started pastoring the church and it kept growing even more. He needed help. The religious terrorist in the meantime got converted and years later Saul of Tarsus becomes the associate pastor of Antioch under Barnabas. They begin to evangelize and disciple for a whole year and then something amazing happens.

As people are being discipled and the Gospel is spreading the people give them a term of degradation for they call them 'Christians' – little Christs. This is used three times in the Bible. It is used once in this Acts text as a derogatory term. It is used another time in the book of Acts as a derogatory term when Paul is sharing the Gospel with Agrippa and says to Paul, 'almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian...' (Acts 26:28). Peter then uses it in his epistle in I Peter 4:16 which says *[16] Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.*

This church is growing in Jerusalem and they are not through. They not only send missionaries, including Barnabas but not they send itinerant preachers/prophets and because the Scriptures are not complete yet the gift of prophecy is still in play so they then prophesy a famine that is going over the known world. So these people that had received missionaries from Jerusalem now worked with them and sent help back to the church in Jerusalem when this famine hit. They are fellow workers with the Truth.

Not only do we see a sending church in Jerusalem and a receiving church in Antioch which becomes a sending church back to Jerusalem, there is something else we see in Acts 13. Now we'll find out about the pastors and leaders at this growing church in Antioch. Acts 13:1 says *[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* (later to become Paul).

Here is a church that is growing, going and blowing all over the place. They have five great leaders and none of them are from Antioch. They have all been sent in the providence of God. Barnabas came from Jerusalem. Simeon came from Niger. Lucius came from Cyrene. Manaen either came from Caesarea by the Sea or Jerusalem because of his friendship identified with Herod the tetrarch and Saul came from Tarsus. We see God's kindness in continuing to

send to this church. Their leaders were received from other places. Now let's see what they do as we continue in the text.

Acts 13:2–3 says [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.* Now this church that has received missionaries now send resources back to Jerusalem and they take their two best preacher/leaders and send them out into the world.

The result from their first missionary journey will be churches that are planted all over the Mediterranean and what we call today the country of Turkey. We don't have time to go to this text but when they came back and in Acts 15 Jerusalem sent encouragement to them with other preachers. Then Paul and Barnabas had a disagreement and Paul went on another missionary journey with Silas while Barnabas went on a missionary journey with John Mark. Then sent from Antioch Paul goes and plants churches in Asia Minor. He plants the church in Ephesus. Paul goes to plant churches in Europe, Neopolis, Berea and Thessalonica.

Then Paul goes to the intellectual capital of the world at that time and takes it head on at Mars Hill and Areopagus. Paul plants a church in Athens. Then he goes to the most immoral place on the spot of the globe for if you were an immoral person you would be known as a Corinthian. He does his ministry in Corinth and it's not long before he is able to write in his epistle naming off nine addicting sins of who he says will not enter the kingdom of God. We see this in I Corinthians 6.

Paul writes in I Corinthians 6:9–11, [9] *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, [10] nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. [11] **And such were some of you.** But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.* The transforming power of the Gospel had come to Corinth and then he goes back to Asia Minor.

Paul then goes on a third missionary journey and ends up in prison as he goes to the military, political, economic capital of the world, Rome. Then we see that some in the personal imperial guard of Caesar are being saved and some in Caesar's household are being saved as well. Why? The receiving church became a sending church. Antioch that received men like Barnabas, Saul and others, gladly sent not the leftover but the best. Look at the fellow working with the truth for the result is a pagan in Europe saying 'these people have turned the world upside down' (Acts 17:6). 'These people' are not only Paul and his team but it's also the church that sent them, Antioch and the church of Jerusalem who sent them to Antioch.

Who are these people that we are fellow workers with? It is people who go out in the name of Christ, who testify in the name of Christ, who accept nothing from the unbelieving world because they're going to love the unbelieving world and we send them in a manner worthy of the Lord. Therefore we are fellow workers with them in the Truth. The synergy and the tapestry are amazing as you see this working together. It is amazing what God does with this.

My takeaway for this study is simply our mission's theme for the year. We ought to support people like these that we may be fellow workers with the Truth. Some of us are not called to be cross cultural missionaries so we praise God when He calls someone and equips them but when they go we want to go with them. We want to be involved with their life personally, financially and prayerfully. This is the reason we have the faith card so that you can see how you can be involved.

How is God calling me in my prayer life to support them? How can I be engaged personally in their lives? How can I be engaged financially in a faith promise? By faith, what do I believe God is going to give me beyond my tithe that I promise I'll give to this world missions and these missionaries the global missions team has been praying about in sending them to key places around the world? How can I be a fellow worker with the Truth of what's going to take place?

In this study I tried to show you how Jerusalem sent to Antioch, Antioch sent back to Jerusalem and then out into the world and look what happens. We ought to be such people, like them, sending out in a manner worthy of the Lord, fellow workers with the Truth.

It was January 14, 1965. A 31 year old businessman in Birmingham had come to Christ not long before this and he had a dear wife. He noticed she was getting more sweeter. He couldn't believe what was happening in her life. Then he noticed she would get up before him, prop herself up in bed and read her Bible. She would read and pray. Then one morning she said to him 'If you were to die do you know where you would spend eternity?' He kind of fumbled around in his answer and went away thinking about this for days afterward realizing he didn't know where he would spend eternity. He had a pretty good idea his wife knew.

His wife then asked him if he would go to a Bible study that this church had on Friday nights. He had been to church on Sundays but hadn't heard of going to a Bible study in a home on Friday nights. He thought it might be some kind of cult. She said 'would you go with me?' So he agreed. He said what he heard that night changed his life forever. He began to study his Bible and came to church to hear God's Word preached. Then that Friday night group had some people come from Campus Crusade to teach them how to share the Gospel with others using something called the Four Spiritual Laws. He didn't think it was for him but his wife wanted him to go so he did and he learned.

Then this group decided to go out on Sunday afternoons to share with people the Four Spiritual Laws and he thought 'they may but I'm not.' His wife said 'if you're not then I'm not' and he said 'I'm not.' He went home and was miserable. He could tell his wife was miserable. A couple of weeks later they had more training and he was the first one at the door and the last one to leave. Then he went out that day and shared the Gospel with two people who ended up coming to Christ. They said 'my life was changed again.' He couldn't wait to share the Gospel with somebody else. I learned how to do that and I praise the Lord my life was changed forever.

A couple of months later he said to his wife that he thought they should pray about becoming missionaries. They then went to be missionaries with Campus Crusade. Then they became international missionaries in Asia. Then he became the vice president of Campus Crusade over international missions in Asia. Now let me back up.

I just received a phone call this week that the man I was just telling you about died. I will be doing his funeral in the next couple of days. He is coming back home, to Birmingham, to Briarwood. His wife's name is Elizabeth and his name was Bailey Marks. As far as I know from talking with Dr. Barker and our former mission's pastor he was our first missionary. On January 14, 1965, the year of Briarwood's first mission's conference, Bailey Marks went. This year we are doing our 55<sup>th</sup> mission's conference. Praise the Lord for how God used him. I could tell you so many stories about how God used him and I only have a few minutes to give you this next one.

So here he is in Asia and he said to the president of Campus Crusade, Bill Bright, that his goal was to take the Gospel personally and with the Jesus Film to every nation in Asia. He got to be friends with a missionary in Nepal and that missionary had never shared the Gospel with

anybody even though he had worked for the Bible Society because if you did in those years in Nepal you would be killed. So he didn't go and he didn't share so Bailey tried to encourage him. Bailey asked him to come to Manila and got this missionary into a Campus Crusade training session just like the one that happened back at Briarwood that Bailey had gone to.

After the missionary went through the training session Bailey asked him if he was excited to go back to Nepal and he said 'no.' His name was Adon Rongong. He didn't want to go back because he knew they would kill him if he shared the Gospel. As far as he knew there weren't but 500 Christians in Nepal in one church and they all were underground. But Adon went back and a couple of weeks later Bailey went to Nepal to encourage him. Bailey asked Adon how it was going. Adon said 'it wasn't going so good when I got back for I didn't talk about Jesus because I was afraid. They said they would kill me and I've already seen them kill Christians. I was eating lunch one day with my wife and said to her 'when we finish lunch I will go down the steps and the first person I see I am going to tell them about Jesus for I can't be quiet anymore and if I don't come back I love you.'"

The first person he met was a student who was a Hindu. By the time Adon finished sharing with the student they were on their knees and the student was giving his heart to Jesus. He didn't remember how many people he had talked to the rest of that day but every single one gave their heart to Jesus. Wasn't that kind of God to give him that kind of encouragement? The rest of his life is an incredible story but I don't have time to tell you. I will tell you that Bailey invested his life in a man named Yung Gong Kim from Korean who was a Korean Presbyterian minister and then to a man named Dr. Thomas Abraham. Then when he retired he gave it over to them and the ministry kept mushrooming through all of Asia.

Why did that happen? Dr. Thomas Abraham has a great ministry and you here at Briarwood are working with him. Dr. Kim has a great ministry and you're working with him. Adon had a great ministry in Nepal and you're working with him because we sent and supported Bailey Marks who was doing that. We are fellow workers with the Truth. I could go on and on telling you all about this tapestry.

Right now our missionary force has 200 members at Briarwood. In our 55 years we have sent more than 2,000 of our members so just keep repeating Bailey Marks. That's why I love missions. It's why I love to make a commitment to pray and to do faith promise.

I want to share a few sentences from a letter the Marks' sent in 1984;  
*Dear Tom Cheely (Mission's pastor at the time),*

*Thank you so much for your kind remembrance that you and the committee keep in touch with us and we want to be in touch with you more often. We are thrilled that the world's mission committee at Briarwood takes such a personal interest in us year after year after year.*

That's why we do what we do. We are fellow workers with the Truth. I praise God for that sunken living room at Dr. Buck's house where a number of people on Friday nights heard the Gospel, including Bailey and Elizabeth Marks. I thank the Lord for 1965 when we had our first missionary conference and out goes Bailey Marks and others and I look at the tapestry of receiving and sending – fellow workers with the Truth. So let's pray.

Prayer:

God, do something in this coming week. We have some more 'Bailey Marks' reading this so if You're calling them Lord make it clear. If You're calling them help us work together to rightly send them. For those whom we already sent may we encourage them personally as well as with our faith promise and thank You Father that we get to do all of this together – we not only do the

mission work here but we get to do missions out there because we're working with them who we have sent out in a manner worthy of the Lord. You may be reading this today thinking 'God sent you pastor Reeder to tell me about Jesus and I want to receive Him as my Lord and Savior.' You are where Bailey was and God is working in your heart, now go where Bailey went – to Jesus and give your life to Him. What a glorious thing to be forgiven and get on the journey together with God's people. If you want to make this decision please call us at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 and we'd be happy to pray with you and help you start your journey with Jesus. For those of us who know Him, let's now scatter as workers of the Truth and in the next couple of weeks let's refresh, renew and revive our commitment to be fellow workers with those whom we're sending out in a manner worthy of the Lord, personally, prayerfully and with the right resources that God gets to us and goes through us that the praise of our God would go from the rising to the setting of the sun. I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

#### Power Point

Three Movements

Three Churches

Sending – Receiving – Sending

#### Life Takeaway

...we ought to support people like these that we might be fellow-workers for the truth.