

## “I have set you as a light...” (Acts 13:47-51)

Teacher’s Page - Lesson Summary

**Grade Level:** 9th - 12th Grade

**Theme:** “I have set you as a light....” (Acts 13:47-51)

- Objectives:**
- **Introduce** the idea of “*being a light*” for the love of Christ.
  - **Establish** a connection between “*being a light*” to all people and the words of Acts 13:47-51.
  - **Understand** that when we open our hearts to be a light to those around us and support those who are working and sharing Christ’s love with those around the world, many will have the opportunity to come to know Christ and the fullness of the Orthodox Church.
  - **Challenge** the students to understand that it is part of our faith to “be a light” to all people and that in so doing we are obedient to His Will. Likewise, it is important to pray each day for our brothers and sisters around our world.
  - **Identify** the ways that the love of Christ has impacted the life of Fr. Mokios as well as those around him.
  - **Act** by collecting funds throughout Great Lent with the Mission Coin Boxes to support the work of the Mission Center so that many more are empowered to ‘be a light’.

- Overview:**
- Begin the lesson with the Missions Prayer.
  - Read the scripture verse Acts 13:47-51.
  - Read the story “Meet Fr. Mokios.”
  - Review the Student Work Sheet and discuss the Reflection Questions.
  - Assemble the Coin Boxes and send them home with students with the instructions that the donations that they return will support the work of the Mission Center which helps many “be a light” around the world.
  - Close with a prayer.

- Materials:**
- A copy of the Missions Prayer for each student
  - Handouts
  - Coin boxes

## *“I have set you as a light...” Acts 13:47*

*Teacher’s Page - Activities*

**Pray:** *Attached Mission Prayer*

**Verse:** *Acts 13: 47-51 For so the Lord has commanded us: ‘I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.’ Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region. But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabus, and expelled them from their region. But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium.*

Introduce the idea of “being a light” in this passage.

- **Emphasize** that:
  - we (all of us) are told to “be a light” and to proclaim the Good News all the time.
  - the good news of the “word of the Lord” is that we are offered salvation through Christ.
  - we are to declare to all the nations the wonderful things that God has done for us.
  - it is important to have faith in Jesus and ‘shake off the dust’ when people do not like that we talk about Jesus.

**Activity #1:**

- Read the short story about Fr. Mokios.
- Discuss the struggles he has had to face becoming an Orthodox Christian. (This is an opportunity to highlight the lesson objectives to **Understand**, **Challenge**, and **Identify** listed in the Objectives section of the previous page).

**Activity #2:**

- Pass out the Student Work Sheet. Review the maps and discuss where India is in relation to North America. Reflect on the story of Fr. Mokios by discussing some of the listed questions.

*The following are possible talking points for each question:*

Question #1 - Some responses may include being a good listener, patient, caring, compassionate, seeing all of those around us as a brother or sister in Christ! Approaching others like Christ would and keep those people in prayer. We should feel comfortable speaking about Christ as well. Whether they are a friend or not, whether they live near or far, they are brothers and sisters and we should pray for them each day.

Question #2 - In the story of Fr. Mokios, it was Fr. Ignatius.

Question #3 -The responses will be varied, but you could suggest that when Christ fills your heart, that all things are possible.

Question #4 - Ask the students to think about their interactions with their friends, teachers, parents and how they approach them, including people they do not like. Have them discuss what it would take for them to ‘be a light’ to someone they do not like, or someone that does not like them. Is this easier, or harder, than hanging out with a stranger from India and ‘being a light’ with them.

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Question #5 -Shaking off the dust can be hard, but we have a model for this in the scripture verse in verse 51. When at school have they had to “shake off the dust,” and what could the consequences be if they do not “shake off the dust.”

Question #6 - They can commit to pray each day for missionaries and the Church in mission countries. They can “be a light” to their neighbors here in North America. They can participate in the coin box program and encourage their community to become more involved in missions, maybe even sending a team from the parish to another country!

**Activity #3:** Have your class assemble the OCMC Coin Boxes and discuss how these funds will be used to support the ministries of the Mission Center to spread the Gospel around the world. Send the boxes home with the students and ask them to fill them and then return the boxes at the appropriate time. Extra Coin Boxes are available by emailing a request to [coinbox@ocmc.org](mailto:coinbox@ocmc.org) or calling 904-829-5132 or 1-877-GO-FORTH (463-6784).

**Follow-up:** Collect Coin Box money on the predetermined date. Remind class of their role in spreading the fullness of Orthodoxy and the Gospel of Christ around the world. Assign the students the task of finding ways that they can “be a light” throughout the week.

**A Note to Teachers:**

*The Orthodox Church is spreading around the world due to the dedicated commitment of Orthodox clergy and laity. These modern day evangelists are proclaiming our Orthodox faith to friends, family and total strangers. Because of their great commitment to spreading our Faith, they spend weeks at a time on the road, away from their families, so that others may hear of the love of Christ. Most do not own a vehicle. Bus fares are very expensive when compared to the average income. Many work long hours, traveling from community to community by bicycle, by bus or by foot. Seeing others transformed by the message that we ‘have been set as a light before the Gentiles’, we have an example for ourselves of how we are to spread our faith among all people.*

*The Church in India, through the love of 10 clergy and one monastic nun, are operating a girls orphanage housing 96 girls age 4-20, serving milk and biscuits to up to 250 street children each morning, dispensing food to 150 poor, elderly, and disabled adults each Monday morning, maintaining eight medical and dental clinics, operating five primary schools, and providing a housing renovation program. While human service outreach is outstanding, the Church continues to struggle and is in need of prayer. In most states of India, it is illegal to convert any person to Christianity, as it is seen as undermining the Indian culture. Those that do convert, face extreme oppression from society and their families, even in areas where they are free to become a Christian. All missionaries working in India face having their travel visa revoked and being deported if they are found engaging in direct religious activities as a foreigner.*

*“I have set you as a light...” Acts 13:47-51*



**Fr. Mokios**

*Meet Fr. Mokios - India*

Fr. Mokios lives near the village of Bakeswar, just outside of the city of Kolkata, India. He lives with his wife and two children. One of Fr. Mokios’ ministries is serving the Girls Orphanage in Bakeswar, operated by the Philanthropic Society of the Orthodox Church. He grew up in a small village on the opposite side of Kolkata, where most of his extended family still lives. Before becoming an Orthodox priest in 2004, Fr. Mokios was Hindu, a poly-theistic (multi-god) faith observed by 80% of the people in India.

Unfortunately, today Fr. Mokios is no longer welcome to visit his home village because not only was Fr. Mokios a Hindu before becoming Orthodox, but he was a Hindu priest. Fr. Mokios was a young Hindu priest when he met Fr. Ignatios Sennis, a priest monk from Greece who was serving as an Orthodox

missionary in Kolkata. He began to ask questions about Jesus Christ from Fr. Ignatios and learned of Christ’s life-saving message. Fr. Mokios was filled with hope and joy because of the “hope of life in the kingdom after death that is offered to all of those who have faith in Christ.” He compares this to Hindu where they believe in reincarnation - or where a soul has many lives before reuniting with the Divine source. In other words, after one dies, they return to Earth in another body many times so that the soul can be perfected during each life until they are reunited with the god who created them. As Fr. Mokios grew older as a Hindu, he lost faith and found no hope in this belief of reincarnation, and had a space in his heart that he was looking to fill. The Holy Spirit, through Fr. Ignatios’ teaching, filled this gap with the message of Jesus Christ with the hope of salvation in Him.

Becoming an Orthodox Christian, and then becoming an Orthodox priest, was not an easy road for Fr. Mokios. In his home village, the community became outraged when they learned that Fr. Mokios had become an Orthodox priest. Because of this, they felt that he had defiled the Hindu temple in the village where he had previously served. Fr. Mokios received many threats to both himself and his immediate family. To rectify this, the village insisted that his extended family, including Fr. Mokios’ parents, brothers, and cousins, destroy all of the furnishings of the existing Hindu temple and replace all of the items with their own money, since it was one of their family members who had defiled it. Today, Fr. Mokios’ brother is serving as a Hindu priest in this village and Fr. Mokios cannot return without fear of harm coming to him and/or his wife and children. However, Fr. Mokios holds no bad feelings, and prays that someday his family and friends at home will discover the hope and ‘light’ that he found in Christ Jesus.



**Fr. Mokios blessing the water at Theophany, January 2009 at the Orphanage**

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## *Student Work Sheet*



*A Sunday afternoon outside of a park in Kolkata, India*



The Church in India, through the love of 10 clergy and one monastic nun, are operating a girls orphanage housing 96 girls age 4-20, serving milk and biscuits to up to 250 street children each morning, dispensing food to 150 poor, elderly, and disabled adults each Monday morning, maintaining eight medical and dental clinics, operating five primary schools, and providing a housing renovation program. While human service outreach is outstanding, the Church continues to struggle and is in need of prayer. In most states of India, it is illegal to convert any person to Christianity, as it is seen as undermining the Indian culture. Those that do convert, face extreme oppression from society and their families, even in areas where they are free to become a Christian. All missionaries working in India face having their travel visa revoked and being deported if they are found engaging in direct religious activities as a foreigner.

India is in Asia and our brother, Fr. Mokios, (from the previous page), lives in Bakeswar, near the city of Kolkata. The people in Kolkata can usually speak 3 languages: Hindi (national language of India), Bengali (the local dialect of the Kolkata area), and English. Across India, the economy is very bad and many people are poor, with 64% of the population living on less than \$2 a day and depending on farming to make a living. Being a country that is 80% Hindu, most people do not yet know Jesus Christ.

***“I have set you as a light...” Acts 13:47-51***

Reflection Questions - jot down some of your thoughts and share them as a class.

1. What does it mean to be a ‘light’ for someone else?
2. After listening to the story of Fr. Mokios, who was a ‘light’ in his life and shared Christ with him?
3. Could you walk away from all of your family and friends for your faith?
4. How can you ‘be a light’ in your daily life at school?
5. In the scripture verse, Paul and Barnabus had to ‘shake off the dust.’ When have you ever had to do that and how did you approach that situation?
6. What can you do in your parish and your home to remember Fr. Mokios and your Orthodox brothers and sisters who live in India?

*A Prayer for Missions*

*God of truth and love, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
hear our prayer for those who do not know You,  
that they may come to a saving knowledge of the truth  
and that Your Name may be praised among all peoples of the world.*

*Sustain, inspire and enlighten Your servants  
who bring them the Gospel.  
Bring fresh vigor to wavering faith; sustain our faith  
when it is still fragile.*

*Continually renew missionary zeal in ourselves and in the Church;  
raise up new missionaries who will follow You  
to the ends of the world.*

*Make us witnesses to Your goodness,  
full of love, strength and faith  
for Your glory  
and the salvation of the entire world.*

*Through the prayers of St. Paul, St. Fotini,  
Sts. Cyril and Methodios, St. Kosmas, St. Innocent,  
St. Nicholas of Japan  
and all the missionary saints,  
have mercy on us and save us.  
Amen.*