

## **Getting on Board with God and His Plan**

### **Acts 13:1-5**

#### **Introduction:**

1. The apostle Paul's first ministry was to help Barnabas in the church at Antioch (Acts 11:25-26). After one year, Barnabas and Paul were asked to carry a love offering to the poor saints at Jerusalem. 11:29-30
2. In Acts 12:25 we see them returning to the church at Antioch. They probably returned thinking that they would continue where they left off, but God had other plans. God called these two men into the field of missions.
3. Paul and Barnabas would be leaving the church at Antioch, going to other areas of the world, and preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is a significant event in church history.
4. This event marks the first time in God's Word when men have been both specifically called by God, and formally sent out by a church, to carry the gospel of Christ to distant, foreign lands. This is God's plan at work.
5. But we must get on board with God's plan. So many churches today are doing their own thing with little regard for God's will and God's plan.
6. In order to get on board with God's plan, there are four truths in this text that must be embedded in our hearts. We must accept them and truly believe them.

#### **First truth: God cares about others.**

1. The idea of leaving the church at Antioch did not originate with Paul, Barnabas, or anybody else in the church. It wasn't their idea or suggestion.
2. God Himself (through the Holy Spirit) made it clear that He was calling Paul and Barnabas to the special task of carrying the gospel of Christ to other regions of the world. vs. 2
3. God cared so much about others that He uprooted two of Antioch's leaders and said, "I have a work for them to do. Separate them!"
  - This word "*separate*" means "to set off by boundary," and it is also translated in other places as "divide; sever."
4. God wasn't about trying to keep everybody at Antioch and having the biggest church in the world right there in Antioch of Syria.
  - Pastors and church leaders may get caught up in attendance numbers and budgets, but God is concerned with the souls of men and women.
5. I'm sure that the church at Antioch was a bit shocked when this happened. How would you like to have the apostle Paul on your church staff and then have him leave to do another ministry? Barnabas was a faithful, godly leader, but he was going to leave too.
6. But there was a divine work for them to do and precious souls to reach for Christ. God's Spirit said, "Sever. Divide. They must go." This church was on board with God's plan. They didn't argue with God or fuss over it.
7. There were other men who could rise to the occasion and lead. vs. 1

## **Second truth: God uses people to reach others.**

1. When the time was right for the gospel of Christ to go to Gentile regions, what did God do? He didn't take out a service announcement on the radio or TV. He called two men, and then those men put together a ministry team that would go and do God's work.
2. This has always been God's plan. God uses people to impact people. God does not have a Plan B. God is totally committed to working through human instrumentality.
  - **Examples:** Ezekiel 22:30; Psalm 106:23
3. Do you know who God uses for special ministry tasks? God uses those who are already faithfully ministering where they are. Notice verse 2: "*As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted...*"
  - The word "*ministered*" means they were actively serving the Lord, and "*fasted*" means they were spiritually seeking God in prayer and through His Word.
4. God's special call came because they were serious about the Lord. God uses faithful people to reach others. Had they not been faithful, they would have missed one of the most exciting opportunities of their lives.

## **Third truth: God works through the local church to reach others.**

- After God's call was made clear, notice how the local church responded in verse 3:
  1. First, they responded by fasting and praying for Paul and Barnabas.
    - Wow! This is what is needed today. Today, the church would have a big celebration, a going-away party, and everybody in the church would pig out on finger foods and desserts.
  2. Second, they laid hands on Paul and Barnabas.
    - This signified identification. The leaders in the church were simply identifying themselves publicly with Paul and Barnabas in the ministry that they were going to undertake.
    - This signified that they recognized their divine call into this ministry and that they would stand behind them in it.
  3. Third, they sent them away.
    - The biblical mode is for missionaries to be sent out from a local church.
    - Missionaries desperately need the support, prayers, and accountability of a local church.
    - Paul and Barnabas were involved in a local church, and sent forth from that local church to go out and start other local churches in other regions of the world. This is missions!

**Fourth truth: God is consumed with seeking the lost, not our personal comfort.**

1. Paul was enjoying his first ministry. He was part of a dynamic church and surrounded by godly people. It would have been easy for Paul to remain in Antioch, yet it was not God's will.
  - God's plan did not involve how he could make life comfortable and easy for Paul and Barnabas. It involved getting His gospel out to those who were lost and needy. 1 Timothy 1:15
2. In verse 3 it says that the church "*sent them away.*"
  - This word "*sent*" carries the idea of letting go; releasing them.
  - The word "*sent*" suggests that the church would have gladly retained Paul and Barnabas.
3. This had to be somewhat scary for Paul and Barnabas. They were leaving a secure setting and launching into unknown and uncharted territory. They were the first missionaries as we know them today. They were pioneering new ground.
4. Sometimes when we do God's will, it is not the easy or comfortable path. God will push us out of our comfort zone to allow us to reach new heights in our Christian walk and to allow us to reach people for His sake.
5. Even though everyone was probably sad to see them go, there came a day when Paul and Barnabas had to depart. vs. 4
6. Paul and Barnabas were starting a new journey unlike anything that they had ever done before. vs. 5
7. Members of CrossRoads, our mission is God's mission: to seek the lost and see them turn to Christ and be saved. We are to work in conjunction with God's plan and God's mission.
8. Our primary concern cannot be, "How can we be more comfortable?" Our concern must be, "How can we reach more people with the gospel of Christ?"
9. Maybe God is dealing with your heart today about leaving the comfort zone you are in to do ministry work for Him. Surrender today and allow Christ to work through you.