

What Disciples Do

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Acts 13

Acts 13:1–12

Barnabas and Saul Sent Off

[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. [2] While they were worshipping 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.

Barnabas and Saul on Cyprus

[4] So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. [5] When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them. [6] When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they came upon a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus. [7] He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. [8] But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. [9] But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him [10] and said, “You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? [11] And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time.” Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand. [12] Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord. (ESV)

While we live for His glory, as we seek first His kingdom - what is it that disciples do? How do we posture ourselves?

1. Disciples wait on the Lord
2. Disciples obey the Lord
3. Disciples know the power is in the Word

I. Disciples Wait on the Lord

- Notice what it is that the church was doing
 - They were worshipping the Lord

- They were fasting
- They were spending time waiting on the Lord
- They weren't running ahead of God nor lagging behind – they were enjoying Him, and waiting on Him
- If a church doesn't focus its desire to wait on the Lord, to experience the Lord, to listen to the Lord, then we're missing the point of our gathering
- Do we want more of our Lord in our lives? Do we want to focus more on Him? Focus our hearts on Him? Disciples wait on the Lord.
- And Luke is drawing our attention to the practice of waiting on the Lord
- The Holy Spirit communicated to those gathered and they sent Paul and Barnabas on their way!
- Again, the church may have easily missed this if they weren't taking time to wait on the Lord if they weren't fasting or praying or worshipping.
- Waiting doesn't come naturally to us
- We tend to want to rush ahead, to go go go
- We don't like waiting – it seems like inactivity
- But the Lord commands that we wait!

“It may seem an easy thing to wait, but it is one of the postures which a Christian soldier learns not without years of teaching. Marching and quick-marching are much easier to God's warriors than standing still. There are hours of perplexity when the most willing spirit, anxiously desirous to serve the Lord, knows not what part to take. Then what shall it do? Vex itself by despair? Fly back in cowardice, turn to the right hand in fear, or rush forward in presumption? No, but simply wait. Wait in prayer... it is sweet to be humble as a child, and wait with simplicity of soul upon the Lord. It is sure to be well with us”
– Charles Spurgeon

- Maybe for some of us its time to bring back the discipline of fasting--taking time to slow down and let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly – to. not be so quick to go go go, but just wait on the Lord.
- Listen to the Lord – don't just come with your requests – but engage in the discipline of listening.

II. Disciples Obey the Lord

- The Holy Spirit spoke, the church affirmed
- The Holy Spirit commissioned, the church sent
- They weren't acting independently
- The activity and direction of the Holy Spirit was heartily confirmed and affirmed by the church

- This was a healthy, functioning, gospel sending church, working in cooperation with the Holy Spirit
 - They were commissioned by the Spirit, sent by the church!
 - So often we find excuses not to obey the Lord, even when its perfectly clear what He wants us to do
 - Obedience requires faith – faith in God to provide!
 - They were being sent out, so they simply wanted to go– but their going required faith
 - Obedience trusts the Lord, trusts the Hand that guides and leads
- “We give glory to God when we trust Him to do what He has promised to do–especially when all human possibilities are exhausted. Faith glorifies God.” – John Piper
- “Trust and obey, for there’s no other way, to be happy in Jesus, than to trust and obey”

III. Disciples Know the Power is in the Word

“When they arrived at Salamis they proclaimed the Word of God.” – v.5

- Its so easy to think its all about our presentation or oratory skill or their friendliness, etc
- They knew the power of God unto salvation is in the Word
- We need to place our confidence in the Word itself!
- This is for all people, not just for preachers
- Our confidence is in the Word – lets not neglect to share it!

Questions for Discussion/Application:

- Re-read the text, Acts 13:1-12. What initial observations and insights do you have from reading this text?
- How important is it for us as believers to take time to just wait on the Lord, like the church in Antioch did in our passage?
- Describe a time in your life when you really waited on the Lord and He met you and encouraged you in some way.
- Sometimes we know the right thing to do – we know what God is calling us to – but we delay or don’t do it at all. Consider the Old Testament example of Jonah. How can we avoid the negative example of Jonah and follow the positive example of Paul and Barnabas and the church in Antioch who obeyed the Lord?
- In what ways do you currently find it difficult and a challenge to obey the Lord?
- If the power of God unto salvation is in the Word, why do you think we at times shrink back from sharing the gospel with others? What keeps you from sharing the gospel?
- Consider taking time to pray that the Lord would help us to be disciples who wait on the Lord, obey the Lord, and trust in the power of the Word of God to save.