

Introduction

It was the fall of 1995 and I had just finished playing on the Nike Tour, and I was preparing for the PGA Tour School. Earlier that year, I won the Tallahassee Open, which gave me a two-year exemption. Karen and I, and our children, all loved playing professional golf. We thought that we would continue playing golf the rest of my career. We thought that we would eventually play on the Senior Tour, and then retire. Those were our plans. But, on this particular November day, I was spending time ministering to the Lord. Karen's birthday was coming up, and I was asking the Lord for a word to encourage and build her up. As I was worshipping and praying, the Holy Spirit gave me a personal word that forever changed the course of our lives. The Holy Spirit said, "This will be the last page of this chapter of your life." I knew what He meant. This next year, 1996, would be my last year playing professional golf. That left me with lots of other questions. What are you going to have me do after next year? What specific plans do you have for us? All throughout that next year, God continued to speak to me. He spoke directly to me with thoughts, impressions, visions, etc. He also spoke to me through prophets in various cities. We visited a church in San Antonio and they had seven specific prophecies for me. In the fall of that year, He spoke through a prophet from Oklahoma, named Laddie McDonough. The Lord told me to plant a church, and He gave me a very clear vision for planting the church. So, I was diligent to write down the vision and plans.

I do not know what the Lord had been speaking to Barnabas and Paul. But, they received a word that forever changed their life and ministry. They were pastoring the church in Antioch. It was a new work, and they had been there for a year teaching considerable numbers. Now, as they were ministering to the Lord, they received a word from the Holy Spirit that they were going to be sent out. Just as the course of my life was changed, the course of their life was changed.

But, before we get into our text today, let's do a quick review of what has been happening the past couple of chapters. In Acts 11, news reached the church in Jerusalem that Jews and Gentiles in Antioch had received the gospel, and that large numbers of people were being saved. The apostles sent Barnabas, and after arriving he witnessed the grace of the Lord. He rejoiced and encouraged the church to remain true to the Lord. That encouragement is needed in the church today. There are large numbers of Christians who have been hurt, wounded, or offended and who no longer attend a church. There are a number of Christians who have simply gone astray, and have become entangled in the world. We need to encourage people to remain true to the Lord. Then, he took off for Tarsus to find Paul. After he had brought him back, they taught considerable numbers.

(Acts 11:22-26) "The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. {23} Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord... {25} And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; {26} and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers..."

While Barnabas and Paul are planting the church at Antioch, James is put to death, and Peter is next in line. But the church prayed fervently for him, and God miraculously released him. I am reminded of two things. First, there is power in prayer. Peter's supernatural release was brought about through the prayers of the church in Antioch. Second, God can use us, even if we are not giants in the faith. It is humorous to see how the church had been praying for his release, but they had a hard time believing that their prayer was answered. When we lack faith, ask for faith, and pray anyways.

I have titled the message the Sending out of Barnabas and Paul. There are three parts to sending them out. First, we have the calling by the Holy Spirit. Second, we have the confirmation of the prophetic word. The Leadership Team fasted and prayed to confirm the word. Third, the Leadership Team confirmed Barnabas and Paul and sent them out. Even though there are just three points, I also want to give you some understanding of some implied things that may not be apparent. Let's read our text.

1. The Call
2. The Confirmation
3. The Sending

(Acts 13:1-4) "Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. {2} While they were ministering to 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, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. {4} So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus."

1. The Call

Before we look at the call, we have to look at the setting. First, we will look at who is on the Leadership Team. Second, we will look at what they were doing when the call came. Third, we will look at the call itself.

A. The Make-up of the Leadership Team.

We find that the leadership team has now expanded beyond Barnabas and Paul. Barnabas had expanded the leadership team to five men. It was a very diverse group. They had Gentiles, Jews, blacks, whites, Africans, Asians, and Europeans. In addition to being geographically and ethnically diverse, they had diverse giftings. There were prophets and teachers on the team. Notice that the leadership team is not called pastors. They had prophets and teachers on the leadership team. Elders or overseers are called to pastor the flock. They may not have the gifting of a pastor, but they are called to pastor or shepherd the flock. My primary gifting is teaching, not pastoring. Some people feel that the pastor-teacher is the same calling. There is merit to that view, based upon how the Greek text lists the five gift ministries in Ephesians 4:11. At Antioch, they had prophets and teachers.

(Ephesians 4:11) "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,"

Let's look at the individuals. Simeon was given the name Niger, which means black. Cyrene is a town on the northernmost point of Africa, on the Mediterranean Sea. There was a large Jewish population there. Simeon was probably a black man. The text says that Lucius was of Cyrene. It may have been that Simeon and Lucius were both from Cyrene. We do not know where Manaen was from, but we have some clues. He was brought up with Herod the tetrarch. Herod ruled as tetrarch of Galilee and Peraea from 4 BC until 39 AD. Historians tell us that he was half Idumean and half Samaritan. He was supposedly educated in Rome. Therefore, Manaen may have been brought up in Galilee or in Rome.

(Acts 13:1) "Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul."

The text is categorized by gifting, not location. There were prophets and teachers. Barnabas is a prophet. Paul is a teacher. Where the dividing line is in the text is not clear to me. I think that Manaen and Paul were the teachers, and that Barnabas and Simeon were prophets. I think that Lucius was probably a teacher. His name means enlighten or illuminate. That is what a teacher does. He gives understanding of a passage.

B. The Activity of the Leadership Team.

The Leadership Team was ministering to the Lord and fasting. Many leadership teams have administrative meetings, which are important. But, we find them ministering to the Lord and fasting. This team had intimacy with the Lord. They were serious and were purposely cleaving to the Lord. Leaders must continually be filling their tanks, so that they can minister out of the overflow of their hearts. Leaders must carve out time to minister together to hear from the Lord. That is exactly what you want your leadership team doing – ministering to the Lord.

I was ordained as a pastor thirty years ago at Discovery Church. I served on the leadership team there for many years. I really enjoyed the elder meetings. We met at 5:00 a.m. every Monday morning and our meeting lasted until 8:30 a.m. I used to run at 3:00 on Monday mornings, so that I could make it to the meeting at 5:00. We ministered to the Lord, to one another, shared insights from our personal study times, and also took care of church affairs. I looked forward to our weekly meetings.

At our Leadership Team meetings at EMVC, we take time to minister to the Lord with thanksgiving and praises. We spend time praying over the flock. We pray over the ministries. We pray over the decisions that need to be made. We just do not meet every week, and we certainly do not meet at 5:00 a.m. But, we meet regularly and take time to minister to the Lord.

The Antioch team was fasting. When I fast, I have a reason for the fast. I may need direction. I may need wisdom. I may need a break through in a situation. I may need a word. I may have a difficult situation that I want to hear from the Lord about. It could be any of these or other reasons, but I have a reason. I think that Barnabas and Paul were sensing a new direction. I think there was a stirring in their hearts. I think Paul knew that he was called to the Gentiles and he was not going to be a local pastor. I think Barnabas knew that he had a greater sphere than just the local church. There was a stirring in their hearts and they were seeking the Lord for clarification, or confirmation. I believe that the prophetic word they receive is a confirmation of what had been asking the Lord about.

This is not a new direction that they suddenly veer towards. This is confirmation of what they had already sensed. Prophetic ministry usually confirms direction. If you receive a word that leads in a completely new and different direction than you have been sensing, you need to treat that very cautiously. I would not immediately toss it out, but I would be extremely careful and cautious about it. God will usually speak to you about things, and put things in your heart, before He sends a word of confirmation.

C. The Call

There are different callings. There are five different ministry gifts to the body given in Ephesians 4. They are the apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher.

(Eph 4:11) “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,”

In our passage today, **Barnabas and Paul are being called to apostolic ministry.** Our text does not word it that way, but there are several reasons why we know that they are being called to apostolic ministry. We know that Barnabas was a prophet and that Paul was a teacher. Our text today even mentions that this is their gifting. However, from now on, Barnabas and Paul are also referred to as apostles.

(Acts 13:2) “While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”

(Acts 14:14) “But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out...”

In addition to the change in title that they are given in the Scriptures, we also know because of the definition. The word for apostle is apostolos. The root word is apostello, which means to send away. **An apostle is a sent one.** What was the work that God had called Barnabas and Paul to do? It was to go preach the gospel, plant churches, raise up and ordain leaders, and to equip the saints for the work of service. That is the work of the apostles. After praying, fasting, and laying hands on Barnabas and Paul, they sent them out. Apostles are sent ones, and that is what the church at Antioch did. They sent them out.

There are different qualifications for different callings. There were some specific requirements in selecting the replacement for Judas Iscariot. Those twelve apostles were apostles of the lamb. The requirement given in Acts 1 was that they had to be with Jesus from His baptism until His ascension. Barnabas and Paul were not under those specific requirements.

(Acts 1:21-22) “Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us— {22} beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.”

There are different qualifications for different callings. If someone is being called to be an elder, the qualifications in Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Timothy 3:1-7 apply. If someone is being called to be a deacon, the qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 apply.

I want to talk for a few minutes about the calling of a person. I believe there are five fingers that all point to the calling of a person. The prophetic word that the leadership team received told them to set apart Barnabas and Paul for the work that God had called them to do. This was a clear call from God. God had set apart these two men for a special work, and now He is communicating that call to the leaders at Antioch.

1. The Finger of God

First, there is the finger of God that points to a person being called. Barnabas and Paul had a clear call from God to do apostolic work. God has individual plans for all of our lives. He gives us certain giftings, abilities, education, experiences, personalities, and families to mold, prepare, and equip us for the work He has for us to do. Notice the word of the Lord to Jeremiah, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.” God had a plan for Jeremiah before He formed him in his mother’s womb. I believe He has a plan for each of our lives.

(Jer 1:4-5) “Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, {5} "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

Notice what God said about Paul in Acts 9. “He is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel.” Paul was busy killing and incarcerating Christians. He was not on board with God’s plan. In Acts 26, Paul shares more about the vision and calling. He tells us that God asked him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.” God had a plan for Paul, and he had been resisting it.

(Acts 9:15) “But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;”

(Acts 26:13-14) “at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me. {14} "And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’”

When Paul met with the Ephesian elders in Acts 20, he exhorted them to be on guard for themselves and for the flock, which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God. The Holy Spirit had made them overseers. God had raised up certain men to shepherd that flock. Being an elder is not a popularity contest or a vote. It is a calling. We need to see the finger of God pointing to a person.

(Acts 20:28) “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

2. The finger of the person (1 Timothy 3:1-7)

In Paul’s letter to Timothy, he wrote, “if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do.” The Greek word that is translated as aspires is orego (Strong’s G3713) (oregomahee), which means “to stretch oneself, i.e. reach out after (long for) :- covet after, desire.” Paul is saying that if a man wants to be a pastor, here are the qualifications for that office. He is setting the bar for people desiring to shepherd God’s flock. But, it begins with a desire, a reaching out after, a desire to pastor. That is the finger of the person pointing to the calling.

(1 Tim 3:1-2) “It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. {2} An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach...”

A title cannot make someone a pastor. A position in the church cannot make someone a pastor. There is a calling, and when there is a calling, there is a desire to do what God has called you to do. A pastor will pastor whether you give him a title or position or not. He is going to care for the sheep. He is going to study and feed God’s sheep. He will shepherd the flock because he wants to shepherd the flock. In Peter’s first letter, he gives three instructions to the elders. He tells them to shepherd the flock with the right mindset, the right motive, and the right methods. He begins by exhorting pastors to exercise oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God. Peter tells pastors that they should not pastor because they have to. There is a contrast of compulsion and voluntary. Compulsion means you have to do it. Compulsion means you do not have a choice. Voluntary means that no one is making you do it. You are doing it because you want to do it. It does not mean that the pastor does not get paid. The Greek word is hekousios, which means willingly. You have volunteered to do it. Peter is saying that shepherds need to shepherd the flock because they want to. They have a desire to pastor. It is the will of God for their life, and they know it.

(1 Peter 5:2-3) “shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; {3} nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.”

3. The finger of the apostle (Titus 1:5-8, Acts 14)

In Titus 1:5-8, we find the third finger that points to the calling of a pastor. Titus is an apostle serving under Paul. He left Titus on the island of Crete to set in order what remained. Apparently, there had been some false teachers come through that left the believers there in a mess, and Titus was to appoint or ordain elders in every city. Part of getting a church in order is to have the leadership in order. Paul gave Titus some instructions about how to appoint the pastors in the churches. The list of qualifications in Titus closely parallels the list that he gave Timothy. In 1 Timothy, he was setting the bar for those who had a desire to pastor. In Titus, he gives the qualifications that an apostle needs to look at before ordaining a pastor in a church. The qualifications do not change, but these are two very different fingers pointing to the calling of a pastor. One finger is his own finger, and the other finger is an apostle recognizing that calling in a person.

(Titus 1:5-6) “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, {6} namely, if any man is above reproach...”

Another example of this is in Acts 14, which we will get to in a few weeks. After Barnabas and Paul had finished their first apostolic trip, they went back to the various churches and ordained elders. These were new churches that they had planted. There was not an existing government in place, and it was the apostles that appointed or ordained the pastors in the churches.

(Acts 14:23) “When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”

4. The finger of the presbytery (Acts 13:1-3, 1 Tim 4, 2 Tim 1:6)

While I believe that apostles should be involved in setting in pastors, if there are elders in the church, it is not necessary to have the apostles ordain new pastors. The Greek word for elder is presbuteros. The plural of presbuteros is presbuterion, which means a body or board of elders. In our text today, the presbuterion laid hands on Barnabas and Paul and set them apart. It was not one of the twelve apostles in Jerusalem, it was the elders or pastors of the church.

In 1 Timothy 4, Paul exhorts Timothy not to neglect the spiritual gift in him that was bestowed on him through the prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. The pastors of the church had laid hands on him, and he had received a spiritual gift.

(1 Tim 4:14) “Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery.”

In Paul’s second letter to Timothy, we find out that even though the presbytery had laid hands on Timothy, the gift given to Timothy was actually given through the laying on of Paul’s hands. While you have the presbytery, you also have a leader of the presbytery. You have a Senior Pastor. I believe that there should be unity in the presbytery over decisions, especially major decisions. The Senior Pastor bears the most responsibility before God, and he/she also carries the final authority. No major decisions should be made in that church against the will of that authority. And, a wise senior leader will not make a major decision against the will of the presbytery.

(2 Tim 1:6) “For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.”

Any apostle that ministers in a local church, where there is a government in place, does not have the authority or right to make decisions in that church without the approval of the presbytery, which will have to give account for the souls in that church. It is the presbytery that has that responsibility and authority in that church, not the apostle.

5. The finger of the sheep

The last finger that points to the calling are the people, particularly in a pastor. If a person does not lead, he is not a leader. If people will not follow a person, he/she is not a leader. A leader leads, and has followers. A shepherd leads, and the sheep follow. A shepherd speaks, and the sheep hear his voice. In John 10, Jesus talks about shepherds. First, He said that real shepherds enter by the door. False shepherds climb in some other way. If someone is going to minister to the sheep in a church, he/she needs to have the approval of the leadership.

(John 10:1-2) “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. {2} "But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep.”

Next, Jesus said that those who come in through the door, the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. The sheep follow him because they know his voice, and he leads them out. A person cannot shepherd without relationship. The sheep

must know his voice. The sheep must trust the shepherd. The sheep must be willing to follow the lead of the shepherd. They will be follow the voice of strangers. Instead, the sheep will flee from a stranger. How do you know if a person is being called to be a shepherd. The finger of the sheep will point to the shepherd. They will hear and follow someone who is being called to shepherd them.

(John 10:3-5) "To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. {4} "When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. {5} "A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers."

When Bill Bice came and preached here, I contacted a number of you and asked you to give me some feedback. Why? I wanted to see if the sheep could hear his voice, and whether they would follow him. The feedback that I received was very positive. Everyone liked Bill's message, and they wanted to hear more from him. The finger of the sheep were pointing to Bill.

2. The Confirmation

When an apostle or a leadership team senses the call of a person, the next step is to confirm the call. At Antioch, the Leadership Team confirmed the word through prayer and fasting. They were already fasting, but the text tells us that after fasting, they laid hands on them and sent them away. This may have been the conclusion of their current fast, or it may be that they set aside more time to fast. When we bring in a minister, or we send out a minister, we should follow the precedent of this leadership team. We should fast about the matter.

(Acts 13:3) "Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."

When Jesus appointed the twelve apostles, he prayed all night. He knew all of His disciples. He knew their character. He knew their calling. And, even knowing those things, He prayed all night before confirming them. Luke records that Jesus went off to the mountain to pray and that He spent the whole night in prayer to God. When day came, He called His disciples to Him, chose twelve of them, and named them as apostles. There were more than twelve disciples, but He chose twelve of them to be apostles. He spent the whole night in prayer confirming the call of these twelve apostles.

(Luke 6:12-13) "And it was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. {13} And when day came, He called His disciples to Him; and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles:"

I believe that in the confirmation of a person, we must look at the five fingers. Has the Holy Spirit given a call to this person? Is this God's plan and purpose for this person? Does the person desire this office? Does the person meet the qualifications given for this office? Is this person currently doing the work of this office. If the person is not already doing the work, a title or position is not going to change what the person does. Are the sheep listening to the voice of this person? Are the sheep willing to follow this person? Does this person lead? Does this person study and have a passion to feed God's flock? These are all questions and things to pray through.

Paul told Timothy not to lay hands on a man too hastily and share responsibility for the sins of others. In other words, he wanted Timothy to pray and confirm the character and calling of an elder before laying hands on the person. Those are wise words for us to heed.

(1 Tim 5:22) "Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin."

They laid hands on Barnabas and Paul and sent them out. Hands signify a number of things in Scripture. The primary use is power, authority, and rule. Through the laying on of hands, God was releasing authority on Barnabas and Paul to function as apostles.

(Acts 13:3) "Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."

In Hebrews 6, we are given six foundational or elementary teachings. Many in the body of Christ are not well grounded in these six foundational teachings. The laying on of hands is one of those six teachings. Several years ago, I did a series on the back of our bulletins on these six foundational teachings. These leaders in Antioch were well versed on these teachings and understood what they were doing when they laid hands on Barnabas and Paul.

(Hebrews 6:1-2) "Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, {2} of instruction about washings, and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment."

There are three things that occur in laying on of hands. **The Laying on of Hands does three things: identification, confirmation, and impartation.** First, there is a confirmation that takes place when we lay hands on someone. In the Old Testament, people would lay hands on the guilty party before stoning them. They needed to confirm that this man was guilty. There is also a confirmation of leaders, as we see in Acts 13. We also see this in Acts 6:6 when the apostles laid hands on the first deacons. The congregation had selected them and the apostles laid hands on them and confirmed them.

(Acts 6:6) "And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them."

Second, there is an identification. In the Old Testament, the priest would lay his hands on the sacrifice. There was an identification of our sins and the sacrificial animal. There is also an identification of leaders in the New Testament. Paul tells Timothy not to lay hands on anyone too hastily and thus share responsibility for the sins of others. When we lay hands on someone, we are identifying ourselves with them.

(Leviticus 1:4) "And he shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, that it may be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf."

(1 Timothy 5:22) "Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thus share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin."

Finally, there is an impartation that occurs in the laying on of hands. Paul exhorts Timothy not to neglect the spiritual gift within him, which was bestowed upon him through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. There was an impartation given to Timothy through the laying on of hands.

(1 Timothy 4:14) "Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed upon you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery."

As I prayed and sought the Lord about Bill Bice, I asked God for specific confirmations. We looked at the various fingers that would point to Bill's calling to our church. We looked at the character. We looked at the gifting and calling to shepherd and to teach. We looked at the desire of Bill to pastor. God gave him a desire to preach at the age of thirteen, even before he was a believer. The Holy Spirit gave me several words of confirmation. I shared those words with Karen, our leadership team, and with Perry Floyd, the pastor at the Vineyard of North Albuquerque. I received specific words of confirmation from Bill and Nelfa. I also received words of confirmation from many of you. All the fingers pointed to the call. God confirmed this to us.

3. The Sending

First, they heard the Holy Spirit call Barnabas and Paul. Second, the presbytery fasted, prayed, and confirmed the word that they had heard. Once they had confirmed the word for themselves, they laid hands on them and confirmed the call by laying on hands. Finally, they sent them out. They set them apart and released them into the work that God had called them to do.

(Acts 13:3-4) "Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. {4} So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus."

A couple of months ago Karen spent a few days at the International House of Prayer or IHOP. She told me about all the interns that they had mentored over the years. There were over sixteen thousand men and women who had interned with them. I asked how many were still serving in the ministry, and she said only a thousand. I love it. They have sent out fifteen thousand. They are equipping people for the ministry and sending them out. That is what God wants us to do. He has given us the responsibility of equipping the saints for the work of ministry, and then releasing them into that ministry.

Not everyone is called to go out and do apostolic ministry. Not everyone is called to shepherd a flock. There are some that are called to teach men. There are some that are called to teach women. There are some that are called to teach children. There are some that are called to lead in worship. There are some that are called to serve as greeters or ushers. There are some that are called to serve on the media team. There are some that are called to lead life groups. There are some that are called to build or help maintain a facility. God has a unique call for every member of the body. **Good leaders equip the saints for the work of service, help them identify their calling, and then release them into that ministry.** The pastor should not be trying to do everything. He should not be leading worship, preaching, setting up chairs, cleaning the facility, leading the men's study, and handling all the administrative duties. The pastors need to equip, confirm, and send out. That is what the leaders at Antioch did, only they released Barnabas and Paul into apostolic ministry.

As we come to a close this morning, I want to mention a couple of other principles. Even though Barnabas and Paul were being sent out, they were not ending their relationships at Antioch. Barnabas and Paul kept Antioch as their home base. They maintained accountability and relationship with the leaders in Antioch. In Acts 14:23-28, Barnabas and Paul returned to Antioch, from which they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had accomplished, ... and reported all things that God had done with them. They were accountable to the church that sent them out.

(Acts 14:26-28) "and from there they sailed to Antioch, from which they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had accomplished. {27} And when they had arrived and gathered the church together, they began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. {28} And they spent a long time with the disciples."

The second principle relates to giving. Antioch gave its very best. Paul is known as the greatest apostle and missionary. Half of the New Testament was written by Paul. Most of the churches in the New Testament were started by Paul. And yet, Antioch sent out Barnabas and Paul. They sent out their very best. God expects us to give our best. He wants us to give our first fruits, and He wants us to honor Him with our best fruits. In Malachi, God rebukes Israel for bringing Him their lame, blind, and sick animals. They were not giving their best. (See Malachi 1:6-9.)

In Genesis, both Cain and Abel brought offerings to the Lord. However, Moses records that Abel brought the fat portion, meaning the very best. The Lord had regard for Abel and his offering. God wants us to give our very best. (See Genesis 4:3-5.)

The church at Antioch gave their best. When I approached Perry Floyd about asking Bill and Nelfa Bice, they prayed about it. He came back to me, saying that they prayed and had finally come to a place where they could send Bill and Nelfa out with their blessing. Their first response was to hold on to Bill and Nelfa. He said that Bill and Nelfa were their best. He had plans for Bill. But, he heard the Lord say to release them, so that is what they did. On March 28, they sent out Bill and Nelfa to join our church.

Conclusion

This morning, I would like to end by receiving Bill and Nelfa Bice into our fellowship and as pastors. I want to give a short charge to them as they join our leadership team. There are three words that are used to refer to the office of pastor. The first word is presbuteros, and is translated as elder. The second is episkopeo, which means overseer. The third is poimano, which means shepherd.

Bill, the first charge I give you is an elder. Peter wrote to the elders in 1 Peter 5 and told them to lead by example. I charge you with living a life that is above reproach, and is an example to our flock. The word for example is tupos, which has five meanings. It is a mold or cast that people can use to shape their own lives. It is a form letter that they can substitute their own names and use in their lives. It is a public statue or figure that people can see and look up to. It is pattern or blueprint that they can use to build their lives. Finally, a tupos is a scar or imprint. People can look at the scars in your life and find hope. You are a man that has been healed of things, and people find hope and encouragement and comfort in knowing that you have been through difficult things. I charge you today to be an example to our flock.

The second charge I give you is as an overseer. An overseer watches over the people. An overseer prays over the flock. An overseer sees to it that no one falls short of the grace of God, and that no root of bitterness springs up, causing many to be defiled. An overseer makes sure that the ministries are run with a spirit of excellence. An overseer manages the affairs of the church. I charge you to oversee what God is putting you over. You will give account for what He is charging you with today.

The third charge I give you is as a pastor or shepherd. I charge you to feed the flock. I charge you with studying, and handling accurately the word of God, proving to be a workman. I charge you to watch over the flock, guarding and protecting them from savage wolves. I charge you to lead the flock with wisdom. I charge you to be care for the flock with gentleness. I charge you this morning to shepherd the flock among you, knowing that “when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”

Introduction (Acts 11:22-26, 20:36-38, 13:1-4)

1. The Call

- A. The Make-up of the Leadership Team. (Acts 13:1, Eph 4:11)
- B. The Activity of Leadership Team
 - The Leadership Team was _____ to the Lord and fasting.
- C. The Call
 - There are _____ callings. (Eph 4:11)
 - Barnabas and Paul are being called to _____ ministry. (Acts 13:2, 14:14)
 - An apostle is a _____ one.
 - There are different _____ for different callings. (Acts 1:21-22, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Tim 3:1-7, 3:8-13)
 - The Finger of _____. (Jer 1:4-5, Acts 9:15, 26:13-14, 20:28)
 - The finger of the _____. (1 Tim 3:1-7, 1 Pet 5:2-3)
 - The finger of the _____. (Titus 1:5-8, Acts 14:23)
 - The finger of the _____. (Acts 13:1-3, 1 Tim 4:14, 2 Tim 1:6)
 - The finger of the _____. (John 10:1-5)

- 2. The Confirmation** (Acts 13:3, Luke 6:12-13, 1 Tim 5:22)
 - Hands signify power, rule, and _____. (Acts 13:3)
 - The Laying on of Hands does three things: identification, confirmation, and _____. (Lev 1:4, 1 Tim 5:22, Acts 6:6, 1 Tim 4:14, Acts 14:26-28)

- 3. The Sending** (Acts 13:3-4, Heb 6:1-2)
 - Good leaders equip the saints for the work of service, help them identify their calling, and then _____ them into that ministry.
 - Antioch gave its very _____. (Mal 1:6-9, Gen 4:3-5)

Conclusion

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