

The Strategy of a Leader

Rich Nathan

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Strength in Weakness: Leadership Lessons from the Life of Paul Series

Acts 16

Attention Leaders!

Be prepared for God to speak to your group. The Holy Spirit is with you as you prepare, as you open Scripture, and as you lead discussion. Prayerfully consider the needs of your group; who will be there; and what God has done recently in your group. Remember, aim for balancing discussion and teaching; more sharing than answering; and more listening than telling. Because this sermon asks us to consider church planting as an option of following God's call to leadership, pray that God would begin to plant that seed, or further speak to anyone in your group He might call to plant a church.

Sermon Summary (Time Suggestion: 5 mins)

The sermon this week was about strategizing as a leader. Paul's strategy has been implemented and embraced by the Church for 2,000 years, and that is and that is a strategy worth paying attention to.

Main Points:

- THE CHURCH IS LOVED BY CHRIST. Ephesians 5:25-32 (NIV) says:
25 Husbands love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her
31 “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” 32 This is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the church.
Imagine attempting to be intimate friends with someone who hated your spouse.
- CHURCH IS GOOD FOR US AND A GIFT TO US. America is suffering from a breakdown of community. It is becoming apparent in the failures of our school and in our mental health. Being a part of a church increases our health. (reference: *Bowling Alone* by Robert Putnam). In *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminds us “By Grace, nothing but grace, that we are allowed to live in community with Christian brethren.”
- CHURCH PLANTING RESULTS IN LASTING DISCIPLES, REACHES NEW GROUPS, AND RENEWS THE CHURCH. The Great Commission is mostly easily measured in an area by the start of new churches. Planting new churches keeps us from being stagnant and inwardly focused, as the birth of a new church forces members into “gathering” mode. Church planting can serve to awaken existing churches by causing them to rethink and improve their own methods.

- THOSE WHO PLANT CHURCHES. Throughout the book of Acts we see examples of God speaking to His followers and leading them to plant new churches. Things to pay attention to if you believe God might be calling you to plant a church: Long-time persistent sense confirmed and over through prayer and Bible Study, you are leading people to Christ where you currently are, you have a burden for the unchurched, your calling has been confirmed by a godly counsel, if applicable, your spouse is in agreement.

Link to the Sermon (5 mins)

Open with some rhetorical Questions – Knowing that not all of us are or will be called to plant churches, what role do we have to play in the lives of those who are called to plant a church? If you feel like God may be calling you in the direction of church planting, what support can your small group and church lend you? We will attempt to answer some of these thoughts by reading from Acts 13 and 1 Timothy 4.

Discussion starter:

Q. Do you know of anyone who feels called to or who has planted a church? Imagine yourself feeling led to plant a church, who of those around you would you talk to about that? What kind of support would you be relying on from those around you?

God uses us, His Church to support and encourage the leaps of faiths of others. What a blessing it is that we all have a role to play in the formation and sending of leaders.

This week's Bible study

Could someone please read – Acts 13:1-3

1 Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. 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 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

Look around ('landing' in the text and taking a first look) (5-10 mins)

What is taking place when the Holy Spirit speaks? **They were doing church together with others, specifically they were worshipping and fasting**

Q: What did the church do before sending Barnabas and Saul? **They laid hands on them**

Q: How many prophets/teachers are named in the church of Antioch? How many of those did God ask to "set apart"? **4 teachers. 2 set apart. That's 50%**

Connecting to us today (5 mins)

Q. We saw that God spoke to the church in Antioch while they were worshipping and fasting. How does our church and small group “leave room” to hear from the Holy Spirit like the church in Antioch? **This is why we do worship together, and why we have “ministry time”**

Q. The church laid hands on Saul and Barnabas before sending them, what is the significance of that? **It expresses support, connectedness, and care when we pray for and over others.**

Go deeper ('exploring' deeper into the text) (5 -10 min)

Q. In this text, what exactly did God ask the church to do with Saul and Barnabas? Noting that God gave no specific directions regarding their destination or the bizarre and dangerous encounters they would come across, what does that say about the faith of the Church of those being sent? How can we support others who are stepping out into the treacherous unknown? **God simply asked them to be “set apart … for the work which I have called them”. Affirming others to respond to God’s call (particularly when it has been consistently confirmed) and encouraging them to trust in God’s provision is a huge piece of supporting leaders. Pray for them as they respond to God’s call.**

Have someone read 1 Timothy 4: 8-14

⁸ For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. ⁹ This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance. ¹⁰ That is why we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe.

¹¹ Command and teach these things. ¹² Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. ¹³ Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. ¹⁴ Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you.

Q. What is Paul encouraging potential church planters and leaders to do here? **To strive to be godly. Set a godly example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. Read Scripture publicly, preach, teach, practice prophecy.**

Connecting to us today (5-10 mins)

Q. According to Paul in his letter to Timothy, how can we as a small group community move people in the direction of realizing God’s calling for leadership or church planting in their life? **Helping them to train in godliness by studying scripture with them, by coming along side them**

and lovingly holding them accountable in their actions. We can encourage them to live lives of integrity and give them opportunities to teach us and others and open ourselves up to hear prophetic words that God might be speaking through them.

Live it out (10 mins)

Q. Do you feel led to encourage anyone in your life who God is calling in a direction towards greater leadership? What encouragement could you give them today? What encouragement could you commit to giving them long term?

Q. Do you believe that God may be calling you into church planting? Do you think that God may be calling you into more leadership? How can we, your small group, pray for you and support you as you continue listening to what God is calling you into?

Ministry Time

Allow time at the end to welcome the Holy Spirit and wait on Him for direction. We really want people to experience the presence of God personally and small group is the perfect context for this to happen. Model for your group risk taking and a willingness to be dependent on God. Remember that God *often* comes in power when we are weak!