

Back to the Future

discerning God's purpose for our life as His church

Every so often it's important to pause and take stock. How are we doing? What are we seeking to accomplish? Are we growing, making progress?

Such seasons of 'reflection' are as important in our communal life as a local church as they are in our individual lives.

This series of studies aims to provide a focus for such a season, a chance to let the Word of God inform our understanding of all that he calls us as His church to be and to be doing in these days of great turbulence and change.

You can find the background to this short series [here](#).

*

8. Equipping God's people

(Acts 12.25-13.5)

[w/b Sunday 1st March 2020]

".. John was with them as their helper .."

In this study we'll be looking at the fifth 'effect' which the teaching of the Word of God by Barnabas and Saul (11.26) had on the life of the church at Antioch. It highlights again the way in which the Word of God being taught generates *growth*: growth both in personnel (13.1) and in reach (13.3ff).

Within a short period of time the church at Antioch saw God raising up those who were able to minister His Word, and sending out missionaries into far-flung places. Perhaps we should expect and pray for the same more than we do!

[Although there are 7 questions as ever, all of them important, your Community Group may choose to concentrate on just some of them. Key questions in this study are probably 1, 4 and 7. As always try to leave good time for shared prayer!]

*

1. **Read Acts 12.25-13.5.** These verses provide a further window onto the life of the church at Antioch which had been shaped by the sustained teaching of Barnabas and Saul.

What facets of the life of this church at Antioch would make you think, 'Yes, I'd like to be part of this church!'?

In what respects do you think we, as a fellowship, have important lessons to learn from the church at Antioch?

2. Read Acts 12.1-17, 25. Barnabas and Saul had been sent to Jerusalem with the aid for the believers there (11.30): as they return they bring with them a young man, John, also called Mark.

What do you learn about John's background from what you read in Acts 12.1-17?

Have you had similar experiences of joining in prayer with others for a specific situation and seeing remarkable answers?

3. Read Acts 13.1. The teaching of the Word of God was itself marked by growth: it clearly issued in the raising up of a widespread and varied ministry of the Word of God at Antioch.

'Prophets and teachers' were alike involved in exercising a ministry of the Word of God: how would you describe the difference between them?

What lessons can be learned from the way Luke lists the individuals involved in exercising this ministry?

4. Read Eph.4.7-13. Evidently Paul underlined in his teaching of the Word of God that the ministry of the Word is given by the Lord Jesus to *“equip His people for works of service (ministry)”*.

What do you think Paul meant by ‘works of service’?

In what ways (if any!) have you found yourself being thus equipped through the ministry of the Word of God?

5. Read Acts 13.2. The believers’ worship must have been an interesting experience! The ministry of the Holy Spirit referred to here goes hand in hand with the ministry of His Word (v.1) .

How do you understand the reference to their ‘fasting’ here and why do you think they were engaging in this?

By what means do you think they heard the Holy Spirit speaking so specifically to them?

Should we expect anything like this today, and what might that look like in our life as Christ’s church here?

6. Read Acts 13.3. More fasting, a time of prayer, the laying on of hands and a commissioning: one short verse to narrate an epoch-making moment which would change the world!

What is the significance of each of the four actions in which they engaged according to this verse?

How do you think you would have felt as one of the believers at Antioch in sending out Barnabas and Saul?

7. Read Acts 13.4-5. The disciples learned from Jesus to go out in pairs (see Luke 10.1): Paul's practice was to take with the pair of more mature believers a younger Christian (see Acts 16.3).

Why do you think Barnabas and Saul took John with them?

In what ways might this pattern find expression in our life as a fellowship today?