

"GOD'S LEADING"

ACTS 12:25-13:5

8-23-2026

*** We must let God lead us to do His will!**

2 questions need to be answered before we know whether or not our next move is the will of God:

I. WHO DOES GOD LEAD TO DO HIS WILL?

A. God Leads Those Who Are Busy Serving Him (v. 2)
("As they ministered to the Lord")

1. Barnabas & Paul faithfully served (12:25)
(They were dependable; they finished the job)

2. Barnabas & Paul continually served (v. 2)
(They were consistent; they didn't quit the job)

B. God Leads Those Who Are Eagerly Seeking Him (v. 2)
("As they . . . fasted")

II. HOW DOES GOD LEAD YOU TO DO HIS WILL?

A. God Leads You In The Person Of The Holy Spirit
(v. 2, 4)

1. The Spirit's Leading is personal

2. The Spirit's leading is specific

B. God Leads You Into A New Ministry, Not Out Of The Ministry (v. 5)
(He leads us into service, not out of service!)

C. God Leads You Through The Authority Of A Local Church (v. 2)

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INTRODUCTION:

How do you know when God is leading you?

How do we differentiate between our doing our own selfish, independent will, and our doing God's will?

Sometimes what God wants and does not want is obvious. For example, God never leads a person contrary to His Word. God never leads us to do anything sinful.

Some have tried saying:

"God has led me to date this unsaved man . . ."
"God has led me to divorce my mate . . ."
"God has led me to quit coming to church . . ."
"God has led me to work at this night club . . ."

God's will never contradicts God's Word!

Some things are obvious about God's will. It's obvious that God wants us to love Him, give to Him, tell others about Him, serve Him.

What is not so obvious is - Where do I serve Him; How do I serve Him, etc.

In Acts 13:1-5, we will see some principles that will help us to determine whether or not it is indeed God who is leading us.

We make decisions everyday. Decisions to seek a good job; seek a place to settle down and live; seek a life's partner (mate).
In all the major decisions we make, how can we be assured that God is in it?

Acts 13 is a pivotal point in the book of Acts.

The emphasis moves from Peter's ministry to Paul's. From the church at Jerusalem to the church at Antioch. From the Gospel remaining in Palestine to the Gospel going to the uttermost parts of the earth in fulfillment of Acts 1:8.

V. 1

"Prophets & Teachers" - were men gifted by the Holy Spirit to provide leadership and direction for the early church (Eph. 4:11, 12).

A prophet - received direct revelation from God during this transitional time period when the N.T. was not yet complete (I Cor. 14:3).

A teacher - taught the O.T. Scriptures and showed Christ's fulfillment of them, and then taught how to live the Christian life from the teachers of Christ which were handed down from the Apostles.

NOTE: the variety of nationalities and backgrounds God uses in a local church: Barnabas, a Jewish Levite from Cyprus; Simeon, a black man (nick-named "Niger") from Africa; Lucius from Cyrene in North Africa; Manaen, a man who had aristocratic (upper class, royal) connections with the Roman government (Herod Antipas); and Saul (Paul), a trained Jewish rabbi from Tarsus in Cilicia.

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V. 2

The word "ministered" refers to service of a spiritual nature.

NOTE: Ministering to the saints (cp. 11:26) is ministering to the Lord!

Never forget that whatever you do for a fellow child of God in this local church you are doing for Christ. (SEE Mt. 26:34-46).

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it to me" (Mt. 26:40)

Mark 9:41 - "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lost his reward."

(SEE V. 5)

We all are to be involved in one form of service or another.

The ministers had a minister (John Mark). We are all ministers. I serve you, many of you serve me (in various ways), and together we are serving Christ!

1. Barnabas & Paul faithfully served (12:25)
(They were dependable; they finished the job)

12:25

Barnabas and Paul had faithfully carried out the menial task of bringing relief money to Jerusalem (Acts 11:30).

Those who are faithful in little things will be given greater responsibility.

Mt. 25:21 - "His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

SEE Luke 16:10, 11 (NOTE: Paul and Barnabas were faithful, so God knew He could trust them with true riches).

Paul looking back at this point of God's calling him, said: And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." (I Tim. 1:12)

2. Barnabas & Paul continually served (v. 2)
(They were consistent; they didn't quit the job)

If you are not already at work in the ministry God has given us to do here, what makes you think you will work when you move to another location? What would lead you to believe that when you become trained, then you will serve . . . or when you go to the foreign mission field then you will serve?

The work of missions must begin at home!

You can't suppose that you can live any way you want, and that someday God will knock you over the head and call you into some great work for Him.

God never moves parked cars! (He moves those who are in motion)

God's will (desired purpose) unfolds as we are busy serving Him right where we are!

B. GOD LEADS THOSE WHO ARE EAGERLY SEEKING HIM (v. 2)
("As they . . . fasted")

"Fasting" does not merely refer to going without food for self-denial's sake. It refers to going without food so that you can spend the time normally spent eating - praying! In the Bible, prayer is linked to fasting (cp. v. 3; Ezra 8:23; Neh. 1:4; Mk. 9:29; Acts 14:23; I Cor. 7:5).

NOTE: Nowhere is fasting commanded in the Bible for Christians; it was totally voluntary.

Fasting points to their dedication and intensity in spiritual matters.

The Spirit leads when He sees sincere devotion.

Prov. 3:5-6 - Trust in the Lord
Don't trust your own understanding
Keep acknowledging God
(in all your ways)

II. HOW DOES GOD LEAD YOU TO DO HIS WILL?

A. GOD LEADS YOU IN THE PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
(v. 2, 4)

1. The Spirit's Leading is personal

The Spirit is personal; and He leads us personally.

The Holy Spirit is personal (not a mere force)

--He speaks
--He refers to Himself with personal pronouns ("Me; I")
--He is God!

The Holy Spirit leads us personally.

Whenever you make a move for God, it is important to know that it is indeed the Holy Spirit leading you and not some other spirit, or your own independent decision.

The Holy Spirit evidently called out Barnabas and Paul with an objective, verbal, spoken voice. Not like the way He calls preachers today!

How does the Holy Spirit call today?

1) By the Sword of the Spirit (His written commands are His call) - Mt. 28:19-20. The call of the Great Commission is a matter of obedience, not some "experience." If you want a call, go home tonight and I will call you on the phone and quote Mt. 28:19-20 to you!

2) By the Conviction of the Spirit (the Holy Spirit's conviction is His call)

3) By the Internal Promptings of the Spirit (your sincere willingness and desire to serve is God's call put into you by His spirit) - Phil. 2:12-13; I Tim. 3:1.

4) By the objective opening and closing of doors of the Spirit (Acts 16:6-7)

What is a call?

God calls you when He puts into you:

1) an interest,

2) that becomes a concern,

3) that becomes a conviction,

4) that becomes a compulsion
(Bill Commons, ABWE)

2. The Spirit's leading is specific

The Holy Spirit "calls" and "sends" specific leaders for a specific labor to a specific location.

B. GOD LEADS YOU INTO A NEW MINISTRY, NOT OUT OF THE MINISTRY (v. 5) (He leads us into service, not out of service!)

V. 2

Paul and Barnabas were called unto ( )
a new work.

1. God never leads us to quit

   God never calls anyone out of a ministry in a local church to move them on to a time of rest, relaxation, and vacation from the work of God!

   God may call you from work to work; but never from work to retirement.

   There is no retirement in Christian service until death! (Rev. 14:13)

   Many times Christians are like broken vending machines: They are "out of service!"

   If God truly was the one who led you into a ministry to begin with, He won't turn around and lead you out of it unless He is moving you on to more effective service.

   He may lead us to change our ministry, but not quit it!

2. God never leads us to worldly pursuits.

   God never leads a Christian to change His status (to leave the "state" he is in) for merely secular reasons.

   If we are to do all "to the glory of God" (I Cor. 10:31), we had better not move, marry, or change our vocation unless we know it would be for His glory.

   Why do most people move? Worldly reasons. Make more money; live more comfortably. Without considering whether or not you can serve God more effectively by making the change.

3. God never leads us for selfish personal advantage.

   NOTE: When God leads you away from a particular local church, it is because He has a new ministry already lined up for you.

   He does not lead you out of a church so that you can go hunting for another church. (unless, of course, the church was unBiblical or preaching false

doctrine.)

Why do some Christians hop from church to church?

ANSWER: They are only interested in being served, not serving! They carnally think, "This church does not offering enough for me," rather than thinking, "I have something to offer to this church."

When God leads us it is: always for us to serve, not merely for us to be served.

People generally leave churches over a Satanically-instigated personality conflict, not over Biblical convictions. ("I don't think the pastor is flashy enough; the music isn't fast enough or loud enough, etc.)

NOTE: Paul & Barnabas were not seeking a new ministry.

They were faithfully and continually doing the ministry God gave them until the Holy Spirit called them to be foreign missionaries.

If God were to ever lead me out of FBC, three conditions would have to be met according to the pattern in Acts 13:1-3:

1) God would have to fill the leadership position before I left (NOTE v. 1 - three other leaders were left to oversee the work)

2) I would want the approval and blessing of the church in regard to the new ministry God would lead me to (v. 3)

3) God would have to have a new ministry waiting for me to immediately enter.

C. GOD LEADS YOU THROUGH THE AUTHORITY OF A LOCAL CHURCH (v. 2)

The Holy Spirit (in v. 2) told the church to dismiss Barnabas and Paul, which shows how they were under the local church's authority.

NOTE: The church dismissed Paul and Barnabas; they didn't merely walk out and leave (as is the practice so often today).

(cp. V. 1 - "in the church")

The Holy Spirit works through the local church to equip and enlist believers to go forth and serve.

The local church is God's only divinely established program today. Para-church organizations are only good to the degree that they help local churches.

Mission boards do not send out missionaries -- churches do!

These boards are servants to the churches as they help expedite the work (they aid the missionaries with custom procedures, dealing with various governments, sending their support money, etc.).

(NOTE: Paul & Barnabas later reported back to the church at Antioch (Acts 14:26,27)

V. 3

The laying on of hands is symbolic of identification. It expresses fellowship between the church and the two men. It shows a oneness of purpose and a unity.

It shows that the church recognized God's call on their lives and by putting their hands on them and praying, the church is, in a sense, saying: "We are standing behind you, brothers...We are backing you up...Our support goes with you...We are in this together."

A church must be sensitive to the Spirit's call in the lives of its members.

The words "sent them away" reveal how close Paul & Barnabas were to the church.

The words describe how the church "released" them. The church "let them go." Lit. - they "loosed them"; this implies that they hated to see them go.

Paul & Barnabas were, in a sense, in the hands of the church. They were held on to by the church until the church released its loving grasp of them and entrusted them to the Lord and His new work for them.

You can be assured that God is leading you when you fellow church members agree as to the decision you are making, and add their blessing to it (cp. Mt. 18).

CONCLUSION: