

Sunday, July 14-15, 2007

When God Has More in Mind

“The Ministry Is Teamwork”

Acts 11:19-30

Introductory comments

Teamwork is the concept of people working together cooperatively, as in a sports team (what winning coaches say).

Teamwork has also become an important concept in organizations.

A national survey revealed that Americans think that 'being a team player' was the most important factor in getting ahead in the workplace. This was ranked higher than several factors, including 'merit and performance', 'leadership skills', 'intelligence', 'making money for the organization' and 'long hours'.

The ministry of the church is a team activity. It takes all of us doing what we have been called and equipped to do in order to effectively accomplish the huge mission we have been given.

1. **Teamwork will at times RESULT in personal obscurity.**

(Acts 11:19-21) Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with **Stephen** traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. 20 Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to **Antioch** and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. 21 **The Lord's hand was with them**, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

In 1st Chapter of Acts Jesus directed His followers to go tell others about Him beginning in Jerusalem, then Judea and Samaria and finally to the entire world at that time.

The events we are looking at in this passage find these followers about 13 years into this mission. Let's review the progress made:

We were told these early believers were turning Jerusalem upside down; Philip the evangelist had gone to Samaria; Peter had just finished his westward journey to Joppa & Lydda then north to

Caesarea and back to Jerusalem. People were turning to the Lord in large numbers; primarily Jews but some Gentiles as well.

The verses we just read give us an update on the activity of those who had fled Jerusalem (Acts 8:1) because of increased persecution following Stephen's death; they sure didn't run away and hide.

[SHOW MAP]

They went to the Gentile areas of Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch telling the good news of Jesus to Jews (remember that is the way it was done when they left Jerusalem and they didn't have the latest news of Peter's ministry and that change in strategy that the leaders in Jerusalem had accepted)

But some men (Hellenistic believers) from Cyprus (Greek island not far from Antioch) & Cyrene (city in N. Africa, now Tripoli, N. Libya, in attendance at Pentecost); went to Antioch (300 mi. from Jerusalem, third largest city in the Roman Empire, 500M, capital of Syria, beautiful commercial center, home of a large Jewish community, city filled with gross immorality and prostitution)

They began telling the Gentiles, non Jews, this message about Jesus, the result: “a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord”.

Look at how the text identifies these men; those, them ... a group of no names. Not only no names but definitely not the apostles or any leadership from Jerusalem ... how could this be!

It was the regular, non-professionals doing the work of the ministry with powerful and surprising effects. (Eph. 4:11-13)

God always uses people, regardless of their names, pedigree, degrees, titles, wealth to do his work.

In fact when a person embraces obscurity rather than name recognition they become more usable.

Why?

- **Ministry is not about NAME RECOGNITION! It's about Jesus.**

Marvin Jacobo – seek obscurity!

Jesus knows your name and your service for Him.

- **It protects you from personal PRIDE!**

You want to fall and fail – make yourself the centerpiece

Self-promotion and self-importance are sure to bring us down

2. Teamwork REQUIRES help from the rest of the team.

*(Acts 11:22-26) News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent **Barnabas** to Antioch. 23 When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. 24 He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. 25 Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for **Saul**, 26 and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called **Christians** first at Antioch.*

News of this mission activity reaches Jerusalem and they decide to take action and check this out (why?, verify, bring instructions, validate, update them on recent developments and decisions made)

So who should we send ... administrator, healer, apostle, Peter ... nope, a team of anonymous people led by a guy named Barnabas

Barnabas: Acts 4 – Levite from Cyprus, generous, name = son of encouragement, befriends Paul Acts 9:26-27, v. 24 - good man, full of Holy Spirit & faith

And what does Barnabas do when he gets there: witnesses the grace of God (Gentiles turned to the Lord, he is thrilled, encourages them to remain true to the Lord (resolute, stay on purpose, focus) with all their hearts (wholehearted ... why so important then and now?)

Result of his time there is more and more came to the Lord. So much so that he decides its time for more help from the greater team and goes to look for Saul in Tarsus (S.E. coast of Med. in Asia Minor, from there and returns there Acts 9:30, 100 mi. north, Paul, why him?)

Paul – strong defender of the faith, gift of exhortation; Barnabas – come along side and bring encouragement

Barnabas & Saul met with the believers and taught them for a year.

Why?

- **No one can do EVERYTHING; no one has every gift**

- **It teaches us INTERDEPENDENCE**

Disciples called “Christians – belonging to the party of Christ” by those who observed them from the outside; the Way. Used only 2x in NT, wasn't used widely until the second century AD.

The believers in Jesus were moving away from simply being a part of or a subset of Judaism. From this point forward differences & distinctives between Judaism and Christianity grow and intensify.

3. Teamwork RALLIES to meet the needs of team members.

*(Acts 11:27-30) During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) 29 The disciples, each according to his ability, **decided to provide help** for the brothers living in Judea. 30 This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.*

Prophets come from Jerusalem; Agabus by the Spirit of God foretells of a future famine that would impact the entire Roman Empire (several famines occurred from this prophecy and AD 54).

The disciples (Antioch team) take action to help out the team that is in Judea.

Why?

- We are FAMILY; when one is needy we are all needy
- Keeps us from CONGREGATIONAL self-centeredness

FBC helps local ministries; Pregnancy Center, Youth for Christ

FBC helps in other countries: Slovenia, India, France, Africa

FBC helps to send missionaries: Hunnicutts, Vikki, Kims

Prayer (10:45 service only)

Closing comments/Closing song