

Waiting on God's Spirit to Move



Jim Cymbala August 1, 2020

After Saul's dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus (see Acts 9:1-8), he moved around a bit, making a short visit to Jerusalem with the apostles before returning to his hometown of Tarsus. Later Barnabas went there and persuaded Saul to join him in helping the church at Antioch where God's grace was so evident (Acts 11:9-26). The two of them joined other gifted prophets and teachers, and ministered there for many months, strengthening the believers' faith in Jesus.

As the leaders of the church in Antioch were purposely drawing near to God (worshiping and fasting), God drew near to them as promised (see James 4:8). Luke tells the story in a matter-of-fact manner, which gives us some insight into the spiritual practices of early Christian leaders.

"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.' So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off" (Acts 13:2-3).

The believers heard the Spirit instruct them to "set apart Barnabas and Saul" so they could be sent out to do some new, specific work for God. No one seemed particularly surprised by the Spirit's directive for Saul and Barnabas to give themselves to this rather vague calling.

What was so significant about that moment? That was the beginning of Saul's first missionary journey, and his travels changed the entire course of the Christian church. In fact, it was during his first trip that Saul's name was changed to Paul, and he stepped out to take the lead as God used him in even greater ways than his older compatriot, Barnabas.

When God's Spirit moves, a continual process of setting believers apart and sending them out to work for Christ is set in motion. And it is not reserved only for those in formal ministry. You may be asked to go down the street and encourage a hurting neighbor. Maybe he will call you to go on a short-term mission trip or give yourself to intercessory prayer. When the Holy Spirit is moving and you yield to his influences, life becomes both exciting and filled with challenges only God can meet.

Jim Cymbala began the Brooklyn Tabernacle with less than twenty members in a small, rundown building in a difficult part of the city. A native of Brooklyn, he is a longtime friend of both David and Gary Wilkerson.

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