



The Replacement

Scripture reading Acts 16:1-2

“Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.”

Arguably the best quarterback in the NFL is the young phenom, Patrick Mahomes. In the 2020 season’s unusual playoff run of the Kansas City Chiefs, he was injured during their playoff contest with the Cleveland Browns. Chief’s fans everywhere held their breath as their star athlete underwent mandatory concussion protocols, hoping for the best. With Mahomes sidelined, an unlikely agent took the helm of the offense and guided the Chiefs to victory. His name is Chad Henne. Henne enjoyed a long career, mostly as a backup for a few NFL teams, but on this day, he was front and center for the game of his life and secured the win for his team. During the game, the hashtag #HenneThingsPossible began trending on social media as the replacement stole attention from the star.

Earlier in Acts, Bible readers learn about the life of a young man named John Mark. His desire for ministry faded when he faced tumultuous circumstances. He abandoned the missionary team of Paul and Barnabas for the ease of his mother’s home. His immaturity violated the trust of Paul. John-Mark reconciled his error, but Paul refused to include him in the next missionary endeavor. His uncle, Barnabas, broke with Paul and decided to minister with John Mark. Paul’s decision to leave John Mark was justified. Barnabas’s heart for his nephew is understood.

In our reading today, God reveals Barnabas’ replacement, Timothy. Even though John Mark was no longer part of the mission’s team, his actions did not disqualify an entire generation. Paul’s calling necessitated investing in Barnabas’ replacement. A jaded perspective on young people or the need for an intern could not reside in Paul. Like Paul, all believers are summoned to recruit, train, and commend their replacement. Who are you investing in today? Believers should model Paul’s approach by refusing to “Go it alone.” The gospel must go forward. The Kingdom must advance. God calls each member of his family to find their replacement, and when they doubt their ability to mentor, remember #HenneThingsPossible.



The Silent Partner

Scripture reading Acts 16:2 & 29

“And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,”

If it weren't for the two verses of Scripture mentioned above, Silas would barely be considered in this chapter. Silas was a noted preacher. He was a Jewish believer from Jerusalem. The Jerusalem counsel trusted him so greatly that they tasked him and another disciple with dispensing their edict concerning gentile converts. Silas accepted the responsibility and faithfully carried the insights of the apostles and elders to the Antioch church as Acts 15 records.

When Paul and Barnabas split due to their fallout over John Mark, Silas stepped up to the task of spreading the gospel throughout Europe and Turkey. The Scriptures record his act of praying and his ability to preach, but none of his words are quoted in Scripture. The Bible also uses the name Silvanus in reference to the same evangelist. But, each instance neglects to record a single word of his as 2 Corinthians 1:19, 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 2 Thessalonians 1:1, and 1 Peter 5:12 demonstrate.

Silas preached with power and earned great respect among his peers and the lost world. Silas suffered persecution and imprisonment for his valiant testimony, but the Bible never records his words. He rode shotgun to some of the greatest events in human history and knew the most famous personalities of all time. He embraced the role of silent partner. He promoted a ministry of presence. His support and presence allowed Peter to pen his epistle. He occupied a cell with Paul. He gave a ministry of presence. What a valuable gift! Trauma training speaks to the importance of this ministry. Words often fail to ease the difficulty of strenuous situations. Presence is a shoulder to cry on, it is healing, and it emboldens. A ministry of presence provides an open environment for communication rather than a hostile setting. Silent partners are still needed. They're needed in soul winning. They're needed in Bible studies. They're needed in ministries around the local church. God uses everyone. Silas was a silent partner, but his presence changed the world.



The Lie of Waco

Scripture reading Acts 16:6

“Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia,”

April 19, 1993 saw one of the most bizarre events in the modern history of the United States of America. The federal government raided a compound outside of Waco, Texas. The compound was under siege for several weeks. Reports surfaced of sexual abuse, illegal weapons, and polygamy in the Branch Davidian compound. The leader, David Koresh, asserted a divine authority over his followers. The cult he led demanded absolute allegiance by its followers and an abandoning of common sense. Under the guise of a new biblical understanding, this cult leader manipulated and coerced over 100 followers to leave their lifestyles and follow him. Their influence was small but gained widespread attention after the long months’ standoff concluded. Netflix recently began streaming a fictitious miniseries based on the circumstances of the whole ordeal. The compound mentality and abandonment of all normalcy seen there baffles anyone who considers the thinking of the cult leader’s followers.

Unlike this cult, Christians are to be in the world. Salvation comes with a commission. Believers refuse the pull to disengage their culture, instead integrating themselves with society for the purpose of bringing lost people to Christ. Christians are not lighthouses, they are lifeboats. The easy path for Christians would be to find some like-minded brothers and sisters, a remote piece of property, and live in isolation until Jesus returns. The great commission compels believers to do otherwise. Macedonia is the central portion of modern day Greece. Paul never planned to share Christ in the uncharted land, but God gave him direct counsel to go. In Turkey there was opportunity. Saul knew this region of the world, but God called him to a new continent with a new people. He obeyed, and God saved Europeans. Christians must avoid the tendency to settle for the comfortable. God stretches the willing. The ministry of Paul and the gospel takes off after this incident, but Paul had to leave the compound. What uncomfortable conversation does God desire for you to have this week? What strain and jostling is God prodding you to engage? Accept the uncomfortable. Share the truth even where it’s not convenient.



Attention to Tension

Scripture reading Acts 16:9

“And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.”

Act now! Limited time offer! If you call in the next 60 seconds! These emergency words and phrases scream of urgency. The listener reaches for his wallet, contemplates the credit card numbers, or imagines the strain on their bank accounts while determining the urgency of the moment.

In today’s passage, Paul was forbidden of the Holy Ghost to continue to speak in Asia. It is an oddity that God would refuse for his missionaries to travel to a region to share the good news of His gospel, but He did. One of the greatest metropolises of the day was to the north of Paul and Silas, but God, through His Holy Spirit, forbade the preachers from ministry there. Rather than a quiet calm of peace from the Spirit of God, Paul felt the discomfort of his urging and the tension got the attention of Paul. Jesus said, *“my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”* (Matthew 11:30). Paul’s yoke was uncomfortable. He felt a tension.

The lesson could not be clearer for modern day believers. When something does not feel right, let it wrestle with you. Do not dismiss a present tension. It may be the direction of the Holy Spirit. Tension could help avoid debt, toxic relationships, dangerous liaisons, or worse. When the tension rises in a situation and a decision needs to be made, follow the pattern of Paul.

- Pause - give a moment, a day, a season before acting.
- Get Counsel - Repeatedly the Scriptures affirm the wisdom of seeking other’s insight.
- Seek God - What would advance His name the best.
- Pray - Ask God for clarity.
- Sleep on it - This is pretty self-explanatory.
- Make a decision in confidence.

Andy Stanley said it best, “Give attention to the tension.”



Learn to Share

Scripture reading Acts 16:11-13

“Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days. And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.”

Captain D. Michael Abrashoff, the former commander of the USS *Benfold*, said in his book *It's Your Ship*, “The priority of every subordinate is to learn the mind of his leader and act upon that knowledge.” He continued by sharing that certain times, places, and opportunities are ideal to move a leader towards a perspective or concept, while others are the complete opposite.

The missionary team sent by God’s will to Europe found themselves in a new culture with a new way of life. Though their calling remained undaunted, the environment changed. They were in Europe. Verse 12 pops out to the conscientious Bible student. The attention grabber is not the content, but rather what is omitted. The missionaries arrived in the capital city and learned there was no street preaching as Jonah did in Ninevah, and, they “*abode there certain days*” before ever starting to share their faith in Christ. Verse 13 highlights three specific actions leading to their presentation of the Gospel. The message of Christ was delivered to people who were religious in nature. They were not fighting atheists. Their message went to the religious people who prayed and valued the Sabbath day. Secondly, the missionaries found the place where people made discussions and where banter was not uncommon. The river appeared to be a gathering place for discourse. Finally, it was a spiritual moment. God’s Word is powerful, but certain opportunities arise that give greater opportunity for deep discussion than others. When a believer finds closed doors or a lack of reception, it may be wise to consider when the conversations are happening, where the conversations are happening, and the mood of the person concerned. This process is useful not only in presenting the Gospel, but also in asking for a raise at work, communicating with a spouse, or engaging a child. The missionaries reaped a harvest with a convert, but not until they learned the when, where, and what about their audience.



Scripture reading Acts 16:14-15

“And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.”

As a barber in Milford, Ohio, Merle Robbins loved engaging his friends and family in a little friendly competition. He had no idea his card game would become an international sensation after he sold the rights to Robert Tezak, the owner of a funeral parlor, for \$50,000 plus royalties of 10 cents per game. Fifty years later, Mr. Robbins’ invention became part of the American vocabulary when 151 million decks of his card game were distributed by the giant toy manufacturer, Mattel. Tonight, in homes around the world, someone will call out, “UNO!” as they place the second to last card from their hand hoping to win on their next turn. If this game teaches believers anything it is this: Play your hand. There is no value in hoping for a wild or a skip card, throw down what you have. Players must play their hands.

Paul’s escapade into Europe echoes that sentiment. He never wanted to be in Greece, yet here he was. He used a riverbank for a cathedral and a clothing distributor for a congregation. Lydia, a sincerely lost soul, accepted the gospel. She testified of her conversion through baptism, and the door to European evangelism broke open wide. The missionaries saw their first convert. The new convert was a lady of means and connections. She implored the missionaries to use her house as a base for the dissemination of the message.

When Paul left Antioch, he had no intention of going to Macedonia or living in a Gucci store, but God had other plans. These were the cards God dealt Paul. Believers have a tendency to focus on missed opportunities, other’s privileges, and broken plans. Challenge yourself to take a look at your hand and play the cards God dealt you. The continent of Europe became the focus of God’s work for the next 17 centuries after this encounter, and it started with “UNO!”.