



## Dgroup Discussion Guide for February 2, 2020

### Listen to God's Voice: Fast and Pray

Scripture: Acts 13:1-3

***Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. <sup>2</sup>While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."<sup>3</sup> Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.***

We are distracted by many things in this world – social media, Netflix, computer games and the like. One must be extra careful to not be spiritually distracted as this prevents us to hear God's voice clearly. How do we clear away distractions to be able to focus on listening to what God is saying to us?

In Acts 13 the Antioch Church had in its eldership a broad choice of people. There were no racial or social barriers. This is also where the word "Christian" was first used to mean followers of Christ (Acts 11:26). The people in that church were a mixture of godly men who were filled by the Spirit who took the time to pray and fast to listen to what God wanted them to do.

In praying, we cannot twist God's arm to make Him do what we desire. Instead, prayer allows us to align to His will. God wants us to know Him and He has called us to be His saints. As saints, we want to hear God's voice and Romans 12:1-3 prescribes how we can know His perfect will for us, "*Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*"

As Christians, God has not only called us into a relationship with Him, He also calls us to take active part in building His kingdom. This could be in the form of volunteering, taking part in the work of the church. It wasn't only the apostles who prayed and fasted, the whole church had an attitude of praying and fasting. In response to God's instruction that the elders received as they prayed and fasted, Paul and Barnabas were commissioned by the Holy Spirit through the church to do a special work which is to take the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 13:2). There are times when we become so engrossed in our idea of kingdom-building that we make God's calling individualistic. The whole church must take part in God's work, we cannot fulfill what He wants us to do apart from the community of believers.

God has called us, and there are times we are called to do missions in faraway lands. But there might be times our mission field is right in front of us, to minister to the unreached in our field of influence. God wants you to know His will more than you know. He will make it clear. But like Paul, there will be times when we will encounter opposition. So, we need to pray for one another as the Opposition will make crooked the Truth. Just like in the case of a magician named Bar – Jesus who went and opposed Paul and Barnabas. This enemy of the truth tried to change the mind of the proconsul who became a believer in Christ through Paul and Barnabas. Paul, who was formerly known as Saul, rebuked the magician and issues Bar-Jesus the consequence for his opposition to God's work, Bar-Jesus, or Elymas went blind and because of this, the proconsul

believed even more. You know that you are doing God's will when you face opposition. As you face opposition, see God's will, and when you hear from Him, do not be afraid to do the difficult things. It is God who enables us to obey His will for us.

After this incident, Paul goes into the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch and continues preaching the gospel. He showcases the Lord might work, and points it all back to Him (Acts 12:16-43). Paul then talks about Jesus in a seamless transition between the history of the Jewish nation and the gospel. History is God's story, and Jesus fulfilled all the prophecies about Him written in the Jewish scriptures (The Old Testament). Jesus' life, death and resurrection are now part of history, and when Jesus died on the cross, he paid our sins in full and God's forgiveness has been made available to us. That this message has reached us today is due to the obedience of the Antioch church who sent Paul and Barnabas to non-Jewish peoples as they obeyed God's will revealed to them as they focused on Him and fasted before Him. (Acts 13:1-3)

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Self-check: What has God saved you from? How has your life changed since?
2. Setting it right. In what areas of your walk have you failed Jesus? What is God telling you to repent of or change in the way you live as His saint?
3. Living It Out. What are some of the decisions or situations you face right now that you need to fast for so you will know what God wants you to do. When will you fast for these?