



**COLLEGE HEIGHTS
BAPTIST CHURCH**



Part I

July 5 - August 1

CHBC Daily Scripture Readings

WEEK 1: ELIJAH & ELISHA

Monday, July 5 - 1 Kings 19:1-18

What are Dynamic Duos? Dynamic Duos are two people working together to solve a problem or do work. Most of the time, this phrase is found in comic books or superhero movies. Batman and Robin are a classic dynamic duo. Through the months of July and August we will learn about a selection of dynamic duos from the Bible. Within their stories, we will learn ultimate truth from the Bible which we can apply to our lives.

Our first dynamic duo is Elijah and Elisha. Elijah's life was a roller coaster of highs and lows. Immediately preceding 1 Kings 19, Elijah has defeated the Prophets of Baal on the mountain and God ended the drought which had plagued Israel for many years. But then, because Elijah killed the Prophets of Baal, Jezebel was enraged and gave the order to find and kill Elijah. Elijah flees, is terrified, and lashes out at God. What does God do in response to Elijah? He leads Elijah to take a nap and eat a snack. Elijah then journeys on to meet God at Horeb/Sinai, the same mountain which is so important during the years of Israel's wandering in the wilderness.

It is there that God continues to bless Elijah. Elijah complained that he was the only prophet left. God is able to tell him that this is not the case (7000 are left), and Elisha has been set apart to be the prophet-apprentice. Elijah was disappointed, depressed, and suicidal; one of the ways in which God took care of him was by setting apart a relationship, giving Elijah a friend.

Dynamic Duos are important. They are a friend who will help you in difficult days, and a companion who can serve with you. When we try to work on our own, we burn out. When we work with others, we can accomplish great things and be healthier while doing it. As we jump into Elijah's and Elisha's story this week, who would you consider the other part of your dynamic duo? Who can you serve alongside and who do you trust to keep you accountable in your Christian life?

Praise God for Him putting that person in your life and also thank that person for allowing God to use him or her in a special way.

Tuesday, July 6 - 1 Kings 19:19-21

Yesterday, we read that God was setting Elisha apart. Today, we read the actual moment Elisha and Elijah join forces. The presence of the Lord was surely with Elisha because in a story reminiscent of Jesus calling his disciples, Elisha drops everything he is doing, says goodbye, and follows Elijah.

A popular song on Christian radio the past few years, called *Burn the Ships*, exemplifies the act which Elisha makes. In this song by the band *For King & Country*, they describe the importance of completely leaving behind your old way of life when you start to follow God. That's what Elisha is doing when he burns the oxen, uses the farm equipment for kindling, and gives away the food. There is no chance that when the days are difficult (and Elijah knows difficult days as we saw yesterday), Elisha will run back to who he used to be. Elisha is wholly committed to following Elijah and being the next prophet of God.

Symbolically, have you cut the ties and waved goodbye to human inclinations and desires? As a devoted Christian, have you separated yourself from your sinful environment? Here's an exercise you can do, if you feel led: write down all of the events or sins which hold you back from being fully devoted to Jesus. Take those pieces of paper and put them in a bowl of water. Remember your baptism, when you told the world you were dying to self and living for Jesus. Watch the paper become soaked beyond recognition. Watch the words disappear from the page. Whatever could be holding you back, has been buried with Christ and you have been raised to walk in a new life! Leave behind the old way of life and pursue the God who loves you.

Wednesday, July 7 - Exodus 23:1-13 (Ex. 20:22-23:19)

Our selection today serves as an example of the Covenantal Law given to the nation of Israel. You can read the longer selection if you choose. If you do, you will notice that these laws can be understood as case law which explain how the Ten Commandments are to be enacted within society. Do you remember the Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10? In that passage, Jesus shares the parable in order to answer a lawyer's question about who is his neighbor. That is an example of the lawyer looking for case law to go along with the more vague commandments of the Bible.

The Ten Commandments says do not bear false witness (Ex. 20:16). But how is that to be lived out? This is what Exodus 23:1-3 tries to answer. The Ten Commandments says to not covet (Ex. 20:17). But what if they are an enemy? Exodus 23:4-5 answers that. Do you see the pattern?

We will discuss these laws tonight. We will see their connection to the Ten Commandments and we will also connect the laws from these passages to our life today. Maybe you don't come across your enemy's ox very often. So how can we apply God's word, which is useful for teaching and reproof for all people, to our lives today?

Thursday, July 8 - Luke 4:16-30

The Dynamic Duo of Elijah and Elisha were part of the subject of Jesus' first recorded sermon in Luke. What we see from the ministries of Elijah and Elisha is that they did not perform miracles for the needy widows and lepers in Israel but two Gentiles (widow at Zarephath - 1 Kgs 16:8-24; Naaman - 2 Kgs 5:1-19). Jesus uses Elijah and Elisha as examples of what he will do during his ministry on earth. Jesus uses Elijah and Elisha to elaborate on how he will fulfill the message from Isaiah 61:1-2 which he read at the beginning of his sermon. Jesus came to bring good news to *all* the poor and to proclaim release for *all* the captives. He came to earth to

give sight to *all* who are blind. Jesus uses the ministries of Elijah and Elisha to show that God does not just care about Jews, but He cares about all people.

God has always cared about and loved all people. God will always care about and love all people. God's prophets did not only help the people of Israel but the Gentiles as well. It is our obligation as Christians to work together in order to help not just other Christians but non-Christians as well. Who could you partner up with today to help a neighbor in need? Who could you call to discuss ways to serve others? Pray about where God is leading you to serve. And when God answers that prayer, do not be concerned about who God is asking you to serve but only about following God's will in that moment.

Friday, July 9 - 2 Kings 2:1-12

We close the week discussing the ascension of Elijah and the continued work of the Lord through Elisha. It is in these first 12 verses which we see the devotion which Elisha had for his master. It feels as if these verses are to test Elisha; it is a test which he passes. Will you follow me to Bethel? Yes. Will you follow me to Jericho? Yes. Will you follow me to the Jordan? Yes. Elisha will not leave nor forsake the one God gave him. He will not leave Elijah until Elijah is taken into heaven.

Did you also hear the sense of mourning which was happening with Elisha? When the prophets in Bethel and Jericho tell him that Elijah is leaving, you can almost hear the quiver in his voice when he says "Yes, I know, be silent." He is almost saying "I know what is happening, but I don't want to talk about it." Elisha is trying to keep back the tears from flowing. It is only after Elijah is gone that Elisha mourns the loss of his mentor and friend.

When you lose half of your dynamic duo, great mourning will take place. Never let anyone tell you to not mourn and grieve the loss of a loved one. When you have lived together, served together, and helped one another for many many years, it can be difficult to imagine living without them. Elisha is experiencing this grief in 1

Kings 2:1-12. Elisha stayed with Elijah to the very end. His commitment to the dynamic duo is something which we can emulate in our lives as well. I hope you stay committed to the work and the people who are doing the work with you.

Saturday, July 10 - 2 Kings 2:13-18

There is a choice all of us must make when we lose our partner, our co-worker, our friend (this is not only applicable to marriage; after all, Elijah and Elisha certainly weren't married). The choice is whether we will continue to do the work or we will die along with our partner. I have seen both happen in ministry. A spouse dies and after an appropriate amount of time to grieve, the widow/widower returns to serving in the church and in the family. I have also seen a spouse die, and, for all intents and purposes, the one who remained on this earth died as well. They never did come back into fellowship with the church or with friends and family.

Elisha made a choice; "he picked up the mantle..." As Christians, we must pick up the mantle of the mentors who have gone before us. We must also prepare the next generation to carry the mantle when we are gone as well. There was never another Elijah. No other prophet was like him, not dying but only ascending to heaven. Enoch and Jesus are the only other two examples of ascension like this in Scripture. Elisha had to know he couldn't be Elijah; nevertheless, Elisha did the work of the Lord as the Lord led him. And while he wasn't Elijah, he performed very similar miracles as Elijah. Elisha picked up Elijah's mantle and did the work as Elijah had done. It is incumbent on us to pick up the mantle from the previous generation. It is incumbent upon us to train the next generation to pick up the mantle from us. Who are you training? Who are you discipling in the Lord? Would you make yourself available to discipling someone? Would you mentor someone to follow the ways of Jesus? Consider this work in your time of prayer and if God is leading you to do this work, let's find someone for you to lead so that they pick up the mantle of the Lord's work.

Sunday, July 11 - Psalm 98

Come and sing to the Lord in worship today!

WEEK 2: PRISCILLA & AQUILA

Monday, July 12 - Acts 18:18-28

More than likely, when we think of the most important dynamic duo which we have been part of, it is our marriage. Priscilla and Aquila are a wonderful example of a married couple doing great things for the Lord together. As co-workers for Christ, they are people to mimic in our marriages.

Earlier than our reading today in Acts 18, Paul meets Aquila because they were both tent-makers. Both men are new to Corinth as Aquila and his wife, Priscilla were expelled from their home in Rome because of Emperor Claudius' decree. From there, a relationship between the three began. It is not known if Paul told them about Christ or if they were already believers. Nevertheless, Priscilla and Aquila became very important to Paul and for the furthering of the early church.

Priscilla and Aquila traveled with Paul to Ephesus where they met Apollos. Apollos was eager to spread the message, but there was a problem...he didn't know the message very well! Priscilla and Aquila together mentor Apollos to become an effective evangelist for the Kingdom of God.

This is the type of work we can do with our spouses. Dare I say, it is the most important work we can do together. The need to mentor others is great and who better to share that opportunity with than the one you already spend your life with!

At the same time, I know many of you do not have your spouse on earth anymore. You lament not being able to do ministry with your spouse anymore. I grieve for you as well. At the end of our devotion this morning, thank God for the time you did have with your spouse. Thank God for the ministry you were able to do together. If you are currently married, thank God for your spouse who you can serve God with. If your spouse is currently not a Christian or not active in church, pray that

God would work in their life, so that you can serve God together. Whatever the case, strive to be like Priscilla and Aquila in your marriage: be co-workers in Christ.

Tuesday, July 13 - Acts 19:1-10

How helpful were Priscilla and Aquila for Paul? In the story we read yesterday, it is the only passage from Acts 13-28 where Paul is absent. Because of Priscilla and Aquila, Paul was able to leave Ephesus and continue on his missionary journey (see Acts 18:22-23).

How doubly important were Priscilla and Aquila for Paul? In Acts 19:1, we see that “while Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the interior regions...” Because of Priscilla’s and Aquila’s influence on Apollos, Paul was able to trust Apollos to lead the Corinthian church when he continued to plant churches and share Christ’s love with those who had not heard.

What type of impact are you having on the Kingdom of God? What can you do which would free up someone else to complete a different task for the Lord? Think about it in reference to work at the church. What could you do which would allow others to focus upon tasks which you do not have the skills to do? Who could you be contacting and visiting while Bible Study teachers prepare lessons for Sunday? What events and outreach could you be leading while the ministers prepare for sermons or devotions? How can you be Priscilla and Aquila while others do their work as Paul?

Wednesday, July 14 - Exodus 24

Do you take encountering the Lord seriously? The picture which describes God in Exodus 24 deserves sincerity when considering it. Do you get the sense that the narrator of the story is having a hard time putting into words just how awe-some this experience was? The appearance of God was like fire, it was like a cloud, under their feet was something like a sapphire (blue) pavement. Can you picture it?

Here's the irony: we read a passage like this and are in awe and maybe a little jealous of the experience these Israelites had. We think of how awe-some it would be to experience this. Yet, because we live in a world where the Holy Spirit has descended, we can experience this! We have God who is described like this in Exodus 24 living inside of us. We have encounters with God whenever we desire because He lives in you and I. And what do we do? We take it for granted. Do you take encountering the Lord seriously? Go before the King of Kings and Lord of Lords in awe and wonder and never take the presence of God for granted.

Thursday, July 15 - Colossians 3:18-19

How many married couples was Paul close to? Who would have come to mind when he wrote words such as these in Colossians 3:18-19? Priscilla and Aquila perhaps? In several of Paul's closings of letters, he mentions this dear couple (Rmns 16:3; 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19). Was he thinking of them when he discussed the ideal relationship between husbands and wives?

Colossians gives instructions for husbands and wives on how to treat one another. You can't have one instruction without the other. A wife should not be expected to submit in any way unless her husband loves her and takes care of her needs. A husband should not expect submission unless he is willing to take care of his wife as Christ took care of the church. Yes, I put the show on the foot of the husband both times. Reason for that is that the Colossians would have seen these words like that as well. In a patriarchal, male-dominated world, women had no choice but to submit to their husbands in the First Century. The husband, however, had no obligations to his wife in that world. To say that he had to love his wife and treat her with respect, would have been extremely progressive.

What does this have to do with Priscilla and Aquila? They were exactly the type of couple who would practice this mutual devotion to one another and support each other in a progressive way. In every passage we've read so far, Priscilla's name comes first. Why is that important? In this time period, name order was

significant. It detailed who the leader of the couple was. We will see this importance of order emerge later in this series when we look at Barnabus and Paul as well. Priscilla is the leader of this family. She is the one who takes the initiative to mentor Apollos. She is likely the main leader of the house church that meets in their home in Rome. Knowing the type of couple they were can influence how we perceive the words Paul writes in Colossians 3:18-19 and Ephesians 5:21-33. It shows us truly that the onus is on the husband to care for and nurture his wife. This is the action which would have most needed to change in the husband and wife relationship of the First Century.

Friday, July 16 - Acts 5:1-11

If there is an antithesis in the Bible of Priscilla and Aquila, it is Ananias and Sapphira. Priscilla and Aquila are wholly-devoted to the Lord; Ananias and Sapphira are wholly-devoted to themselves. The early church is working together, solving problems, and helping each other pay the bills. Ananias and Sapphira want to get in on the action and get credit for being great givers without actually giving everything. So they try to pull one over on Peter and the church, and then die. Ananias comes first, lies, then dies. Sapphira comes three hours later (not really sure why three hours is important), lies, then dies. The moral of the story is don't lie; you might die.

Rhyming aside, Ananias and Sapphira did not die because they did not give all of the proceeds of their sale; they died because they wanted people to think they gave everything. I do think this is an extreme case; thankfully, for you and I, God does not strike us down immediately if we lie. This happened in Acts 5 because Ananias and Sapphira have the unfortunate circumstance of being made an example of. As the church was getting its footing and growing, it needed to be unified and there was no place for those who were not willing to be honest with the community. People looking for their own glory instead of looking to the glory of God would hurt the cause of Christ. Priscilla and Aquila are a wonderful dynamic duo

who puts Christ ahead of themselves. Priscilla and Aquila are an example for all couples to follow. Ananias and Sapphira are decidedly not.

Saturday, July 17 - 1 Corinthians 16:19

We only read this particular passage because it is the only one where Aquila is mentioned first. As we said earlier this week, name order was important, so it's worth exploring why Aquila is mentioned first to the Corinthians when Priscilla is mentioned first elsewhere. There are a couple of points to recognize. First, Apollos was well known in Corinth. Remembering back to Acts 19, Apollos was in Corinth shortly after Priscilla and Aquila mentored him. Given that, along with Paul mentioning the couple at the end of 1 Corinthians, it seems they had a relationship with the church in Corinth. How did Apollos introduce Aquila and Priscilla? Which order was it? Who was a more important companion to Apollos when Apollos was in Corinth? This could dictate who was mentioned first to these people. Which of Aquila and Priscilla knew the Corinthians better?

Second, what do we know about the Corinthians treatment of women? Well...Paul is helping them work on this. First Corinthians 14:33-36 gives us the mindset of the Corinthians. Since these verses are out of the character of Paul, it seems 14:33b-35 is Paul quoting a previous letter the Corinthians sent him. Then verse 36 questions them saying "how is this part of the message I taught you? Or are you the originators of the word of God?" Anyway, Paul knows their trouble with treating women equally, so maybe that's the reason Aquila is mentioned first only here.

Whatever the reason, having both husband and wife mentioned first at different points of the New Testament shows a loving relationship with each member of the duo submitting to one another. That is what the dynamic duo of a husband and wife should be: mutual submission. You are no longer yours but your spouse's. Y'all are no longer yourselves, but God's. Aquila and Priscilla are a great example of

this humble submission to one another and to God. You would do well to let them serve as an example in your life.

Sunday, July 18 - Psalm 99

WEEK 3: JOSHUA & CALEB

Monday, July 19 - Numbers 14:1-9

In the 1950s, Solomon Asch developed a series of experiments which came later to be known as the Asch conformity experiments. These experiments are designed to study peer pressure. In these studies, there are seven actors and one test subject though the test subject does not know the others are actors. During the test, the group is asked a series of questions which have a 99% likelihood of being answered correctly. At a certain point of the test, the actors start to knowingly choose the wrong answer. The experiment is to see how often the test subject goes along with the group or defies the group and chooses the easily known right answer. The study showed that 37% of the time, a person would choose the wrong answer to go along with the group.

It takes a strong person to stand up for what is right even when the majority around you is choosing what is wrong. It is these types of people whom Christians are called to be. We can look to Joshua and Caleb as examples of people who stood up for what is right. How do we choose this path in the face of disagreement? We must have wholehearted trust in God. Joshua and Caleb were a dynamic duo who had this trust even though their ten compatriots said there was no way Israel could defeat the Canaanites living in the land. Joshua and Caleb knew that if God is for them, who can be against them? Joshua and Caleb knew that since God led them to this place, he would lead them to the destination he has set for them.

Do you have this wholehearted trust in God? Would you be able to withstand that peer pressure to disobey the will of God if “everyone else was doing it?” This week’s theme is having wholehearted trust in God no matter the circumstances.

Pray that you can be a person who stands for God even if no one else is standing. Let us be more like Joshua and Caleb than the other ten spies. Let us have trust in God.

Tuesday, July 20 - Numbers 14:26-38

The people have made a similar complaint several times. “Why did you bring us out of Egypt just to die in the wilderness?” The people’s disobedience and their desire *to go back to Egypt(!!!)* was the straw that broke the camel’s back for God. He finally said “fine. If you are so infatuated with the idea that you are going to die in the wilderness that is exactly what is going to happen because you will not listen to me.” God makes the decree that this generation will die in the wilderness, the people will have to wait forty years to go into the Promised Land, and the ten spies who gave the report die in a plague.

There is a reward for trusting in God. That reward is entering the Promised Land. No, that’s not a land on this earth, but it is the glory which awaits us in heaven. Yes, the wilderness of this life is hard because of the rampant sin on the earth and in the lives of people. Yes, we face the consequences of our actions and the actions of the people around us. But there will be one day, where the consequences of sin will be no more. Many in this world will die in the wilderness because of their lack of trust in God. We will not see them on the other side.

But those of us who are like Joshua and Caleb, staying faithful to God, having trust in God with our entire lives, believing that it is only He who can give salvation, we will remain alive, leaving the wilderness of this world to enter into the Promised Land of Heaven! Praise God for His wonderful gift of salvation.

Wednesday, July 21 - Exodus 29:43-46 (Exodus 25-30)

I have selected four verses today which exemplify much of the six chapters from Exodus 25-30. How do earthly beings (humans) use earthly items to worship a heavenly God? The use of the ordinary in service to the sacred is a hard practice to

wrap our minds around. The Lord's Supper is one example for Christians today. As Baptists, we believe nothing changes in the elements we use for Communion. Our Lutheran friends would disagree to a certain degree; our Catholic friends would disagree even moreso.

The place we meet for worship is another example. Some call it a sanctuary to convey its sanctified nature. Others call it the worship center to denote what action transpired there. Even others would call it, more generically, an auditorium. These examples show the difficulty we have using our ordinary language to speak about the nature and activity of God.

The purpose is to use the ordinary to meet with God. In Exodus, these are the purposes of the instructions in this section of the book. How can we use the ordinary to meet with God? How can we prepare the space accordingly? Let us talk about these practices tonight!

Thursday, July 22 - Joshua 14:6-15

Caleb receives his reward for trusting in the Lord. It was a promise forty-five years in the making. Caleb had to wait until he was eighty-five years old, but it is at this moment where he is rewarded with the city of Hebron. Why does Caleb receive this reward? The passage says it thrice in verse 8, 9, and 14: "...you have wholeheartedly trusted in the Lord."

We read of Caleb's trust when he spied out the land; we read of his wholehearted devotion in this moment when he is given Hebron, but what about the time between crossing the Jordan and this day we read about in Joshua 14? If we do the math, it has been five years since the time Israel crossed into the Promised Land. What was Caleb thinking as he is getting older and still has not been gifted "an inheritance." Did he start to have doubts or did he always trust in God during those five years?

I think Caleb always trusted in the Lord because he knew what it was like to not be in God's family. Did you notice that Caleb is described as the son of

Jephunneh the Kenizzite? The Kenizzites are a people that not much is known about. God promised their land to Abraham in Genesis 15:19. Caleb's father was not an Israelite. Caleb's mother might have been from the tribe of Judah, or Caleb was simply grafted into the tribe of Judah when he began to wholeheartedly follow the Lord. Whatever the case, Caleb made a choice to follow God because he trusted in who God is.

Sometimes there is a time and space where we are unsure of what God has in store for us. We are like Caleb, across the Jordan River, but not yet in the fullness of what God has promised. It is in these moments where we need to remain wholeheartedly committed to the Lord. Let us not be afraid or disheartened. Let us remember that the Lord is with us until the journey is complete.

Friday, July 23 - Joshua 2:8-14

Forty years ago, twelve spies were sent into the land of Canaan to see what God had promised. Ten came back with worry leading the Israelites to spend forty years in the wilderness. Now, Joshua sends two more spies into the land right before they cross the river. Did Israel learn its lesson from the previous episode with spies? Do you think Joshua warned them what to expect and prepared them to bring back a good report?

No matter how it happened, when the spies returned from Jericho, they were able to give a good report. They shared what Rahab had told them; the Canaanites knew that God was on the side of the Israelites. The Israelites heard this report and rejoiced at what God was doing; Israel passed the test where their ancestors had failed forty years prior. They had wholehearted trust in God.

Speaking of that type of trust, Rahab exhibits trust in God as well. She is the main actor in this story and is able to provide safety for her family because of her actions. She recognized the Lord was at work and chose to be part of that work. It is her actions which allow her to be part of the genealogy of Jesus and a name we continue to honor today.

How are you going to respond? When given the choice between fear and faith, what are you going to do? When there are giants in the land that God has promised, what are you going to do? When you realize where God is at work, but it is an unfamiliar place, what are you going to do? Rahab, Joshua, Caleb, and the two spies in Joshua 2 are examples for us to follow. No matter the circumstances, we are to have wholehearted trust in God. Can you say that about your life today? Take some time to pray asking God to strengthen you where you are weak. Ask God for forgiveness for not having wholehearted trust in Him. Pray that you can be like Joshua and Caleb, standing firm in faith even when others fall away. Don't let the giants get in the way of the milk and honey which God has prepared.

Saturday, July 24 - Luke 23:44-46

What does this have to do with Joshua, Caleb, and the Promised Land? First, can we agree that Jesus' death fundamentally changed the universe? We read of the earth's response to Jesus dying with darkness and earthquakes; it seems clear that Jesus was no ordinary man. Within those events, the curtain of the Temple was torn in two. This is significant. The presence of God was said to reside within the Holy of Holies. Jesus' death opened that presence of God to everyone in the world. No longer did the priest have to go and atone for your sin; you have direct access to God and Jesus atoned for your sin once and for all.

So again, what does this have to do with Joshua, Caleb, and the Promised Land? The land was a sign of the promise that God was with Israel. A physical geopolitical nation was given to the people. Joshua and Caleb got to be in that land because of their trust in the Lord when being sent in as spies. For generations and centuries, God's people lived in God's land. When Jesus dies, everything changes. The curtain is torn in two and all of a sudden, residency in Israel, being part of Judaism by birth or conversion is no longer required. The Kingdom of God has been ripped open to all people who want to be part. God's presence is available to all and the Promised Land is now a spiritual realm, not a physical realm. The Kingdom of

God is not on a map, but it is in the hearts of whoever accepts the sacrifice of God on the cross. It is in your heart if you have accepted God's gift of salvation. God is available to all who want to receive Him. Who can you share this wonderful message with today?

Sunday, July 25 - Psalm 100

WEEK 4: PAUL & BARNABUS

Monday, July 26 - Acts 9:23-31

NOTE: during the DSRs this week, some passages will have Paul named as Saul and others as Paul. For consistency, I will only refer to him as Paul.

Without Barnabus, there is no Paul. We all need that person who can vouch for us every now and then. When I submitted my application to return to school a few years ago, I needed several recommendation letters. The school needed to know that I was a serious student with a heart for ministry. I had seminary professors, mentors in ministry, and our church affirm who I was and send recommendation letters on my behalf. Without those letters and that support, I would not have been admitted into B.H. Carroll.

Barnabus was a natural at recommending people. We meet him earlier in Acts donating the proceeds of a sale of land. In that passage in Acts 4, we learn that Barnabus' real name is Joseph, but his nickname is Barnabus because he is an encourager. Without the encouragement and recommendation from Barnabus, Paul is not accepted into the church. If Paul is not accepted by the Apostles in Jerusalem at this juncture of time, how would the church have been affected? The church is what it is today, and dare I say, the Bible is what it is today, because of Barnabus' recommendation and work with Paul.

The relationship with Paul and Barnabus grows over time, but at the beginning, it is Barnabus who takes the initiative and mentors Paul, saying “I’ll look after this guy.” Who can you look after in the faith? Who can you put your arm around and say “I’ll take care of this one”? Without Barnabus, there is no Paul. Who is the next Paul who needs you to be Barnabus?

Tuesday, July 27 - 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

What does this passage have to do with the Dynamic Duo of Barnabus and Paul? I think it is possible that Paul is so concerned about the collection for the Jerusalem church *because* of what Barnabus has been teaching him over the years. Acts 11:28-30 tells us about this collection and that Barnabus and Paul were the collectors. This was one of their earliest opportunities in ministry together. They do not go on what is considered Paul’s First Missionary Journey until Acts 13. This collection begins in some of the earliest, formidable years of Paul’s Christian life. One of the few things we know about Barnabus is he gave all of what he earned from the sale of a field to the Apostles. He is highlighted in Acts 4 as a counterpoint to Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. Would you not expect Barnabus to be sharing his concerns about providing to those in need while he is mentoring Paul?

The point is you can hear the thoughts of Barnabus in this passage about giving generously. Barnabus gave his field willingly, and I’m sure Paul had this in mind when sending this letter to the Corinthians. Paul remembers the stories of Barnabus telling him how much God gave him in spirit when Barnabus gave in materials. Paul remembers Barnabus saying he gave not under compulsion but under the guidance of the Spirit. Who can you be teaching concerning how God has blessed you spiritually when you have given physically? What stories can you be sharing today that the next generation will be highlighting in 20 years? This is the mentoring that Barnabus was able to give Paul. Be a witness and be an encourager to others!

Wednesday, July 28 - Exodus 32 (Exodus 32-34)

This event in Israel's history foreshadows much of what will continue to happen: idolatry, worshipping statues. I can't wrap my head around this event. They created a golden calf and then worshipped it? That makes zero sense. How could you worship something you created with your hands? How could you worship that in the same way you would worship God who led you out of Egypt and has been blessing you with food and water in the desert for years? How could you trade in the real God for something you molded with your hands?

People are more spiritual than ever before and yet church attendance is down across every denomination (true, even before the Pandemic). Where are people going on Sundays? Weekend youth sports tournaments, the golf course, errand running, the lake, or nowhere at all. Are we worshipping our kids, golf clubs, boats, and beds or are we making time to worship God? Let's talk tonight about how we are different than Israel in this episode, but how we are also the same.

Thursday, July 29 - Acts 13:1-12

How did Barnabus and Paul decide to become missionaries? They didn't. The Holy Spirit decided they would do this work together. It is during the missionary journeys where Paul becomes the Paul we know and starts to take the lead (we will see this starting in Acts 13:13). Paul and Barnabus were part of a worship service when the people heard from God. The worshippers were in one mind and one Spirit in setting apart Barnabus and Paul. It can be a reassuring experience when fellow believers confirm to you what you have been understanding the Lord to say as well. This is what happens in Acts 13:1-3. From there, we start to see Barnabus and Paul move from town to town spreading the gospel of Jesus.

But how long was it before this event took place? How much time has elapsed between Acts 9 and Acts 13? Galatians starts to give us a clue. It seems Paul's initial trip to Jerusalem where he meets Barnabus is three years after his conversion (see Gal. 1:18; Acts 9:26-27). Then it seems it was fourteen years after that when

he comes back to Jerusalem in Acts 15 (see Gal. 2:1-3). Using these two time periods, it seems to indicate that Barnabus had been mentoring Paul for about ten years before they began on this Missionary Journey.

Why does this matter? In today's world, we want quick solutions. We live in a microwave culture but have an oven God. Mentoring takes time; developing a habit of having a relationship with God takes time; discerning how God can best use you takes time. God didn't blind Paul one day and then send him onto the mission field. Paul needed coaching, developing, and mentoring. It was only when he was ready that the Spirit called him and Barnabus. If God calls you to do the work, he knows you are ready. And if you haven't heard from God lately, keep practicing the habits of a disciple. God will call you when you're ready.

Friday, July 30 - Acts 13:13-52

This is a long passage but a perfect example of the preaching style of Paul. Paul is a master of preaching for the audience in front of him. In Pisidian Antioch, he is preaching in the synagogue so he connects the coming of Jesus with the history of the nation of Israel. When he finds himself in a very different context in Athens (see Acts 17:16-34), he leads to the story of Jesus in a different way. He never preaches a different gospel, but he contextualizes the gospel to the congregation.

This is such a crucial point for us to understand. The gospel stays the same whether it is 40 A.D. or 2040 A.D.; however, the delivery must be different. When you are speaking to different cultures, you share the language of the gospel in a different way. This is easily understood when it comes to the languages of the world, but let's remember that languages are different depending on age and region as well. If we think we can share the same track for the Baby Boomer in the South and the Millennial in the Pacific Northwest, we have no hope to help either. If we think the banker from New York is going to respond to the same delivery as a consultant in Silicon Valley or an electrician in Houston, we might as well not waste our time. Let us live out what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:1-2 and 1 Corinthians 9:19-22 (Go

ahead, read those passages and then come back, I'll wait). We must preach nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified while at the same time becoming all things to all people so that we may win some. This is how Paul lives his life and he is a perfect example for us to follow.

Saturday, July 31 - Acts 13:13-15; 15:36-41

Two major events occur in Acts 13:13-16 that one might miss if not paying attention. The first is that Paul is mentioned as the leader of this duo/group for the first time. Before now, it had been Barnabus' name first; now, Paul has taken the leadership role. The second event is that John Mark leaves the journey. Why did John leave? We don't know. Speculation has varied from being home sick to being frightened to getting mad. No matter what it was, he left. Fast forward to Acts 15:36-41, Paul and Barnabus are preparing for another missionary journey. Barnabus and Paul disagree on whether John Mark should accompany them. The disagreement is so heated that this dynamic duo breaks up. Barnabus takes John Mark to Cyprus and Paul takes Silas to Syria and Cilicia. It's a disappointing ending to a decades long duo.

Or is it disappointing? Paul will later write in Romans 8:28 "we know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose." How did God use this disagreement and divorce for good? Paul continues to do his missionary work. He immediately meets Timothy after this breakup, which begins a mentoring relationship. Paul is to Timothy what Barnabus was to Paul. Secondly, while Paul and Silas do the work Paul and Barnabus were prepping to do, Barnabus takes John Mark to Cyprus to spread the gospel there. The Kingdom of God is spread to more people because of the disagreement.

God can use our petty squabbles for his greater glory. God can take our messes and make majestic works of art. Are you watching to see what God is going to use in your life? I am!

Sunday, August 1 - Psalm 101