

## What's in a Name

When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, they returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark. Now in the church Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus.

Acts 12:25-13:4 NIV

Intro: What is in a name?

Act 2, Scene 2

**ROMEO**

She speaks!

O, speak again, bright angel, for thou art  
As glorious to this night, being o'er my head,  
As is a winged messenger of heaven  
Unto the white-upturned wond'ring eyes  
Of mortals that fall back to gaze on him,  
When he bestrides the lazy puffing clouds,  
And sails upon the bosom of the air.

**JULIET**

O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?  
Deny thy father and refuse thy name;  
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,  
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

**ROMEO**

Aside.

Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?

**JULIET**

'Tis but thy name that is my enemy;  
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.  
What's Montague? It is nor hand nor foot,  
Nor arm nor face, nor any other part  
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!  
What's in a name? That which we call a rose  
By any other word would smell as sweet;  
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,  
Retain that dear perfection which he owes  
Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,  
And for thy name, which is no part of thee,  
Take all myself.

**ROMEO**

I take thee at thy word.

Call me but love, and I'll be new baptiz'd;  
Henceforth I never will be Romeo.

**JULIET**

What man art thou that thus bescreen'd in night

So stumblest on my counsel?

**ROMEO**

By a name

I know not how to tell thee who I am.

My name, dear saint, is hateful to myself,

Because it is an enemy to thee;

Had I it written, I would tear the word.

-Romeo and Juliet and estranged, star-crossed lovers because their families, Montagues and Capulets are sworn enemies

-And so what they're saying is I wish I just had another name!

-Now Romeo just wanted a different family, a different name, to retain the parts of himself, but to be able to enter into love itself by virtue of having another name

-And remember, at the time this was written, your family name was the sum of who you were: given because of trade (Smith or Cohen), location (Greene), or something else.

-BRING BACK IN SHAKESPEARE HATERS

-a name represented who you are, where you are from, and what you do

-we feel hateful to ourselves for our name, we feel that who we are, at our core is an enemy to entering into love itself.

-how many of us just wish we could be someone else, doing something else, somewhere else- we feel paralyzed by not knowing who we are

-or we are so proud and full of ourselves and simultaneously empty and hollow

We're slowing down today in Acts 13, a passage filled with names of people in the church to look at how God, through his community and by his Holy Spirit calls us and gives us identity, calling, and purpose.

So we turn to chapter 13, and Barnabas and Saul have returned from Jerusalem and are in Antioch, a church in Syria, where there's a bit of a who's who of prophets and teachers.

-we have Barnabas and Saul who people would debate about who baptized them

-then there's Simeon called Niger (which means dark/black) likely the guy who carried Jesus' cross

-Lucius of Cyrene, according to church Fathers, Luke

Manaen, who was a childhood friend of Herod, and who we got the info on Herod IV from

Avoid the temptation: This isn't a passage about hearing "the call to the ministry" in a vocational sense. It's not less than that, but it is so much more. It's about prophets and teachers, but why were prophets and teachers given? To equip the body!

You can find out who you were made to be by God and THRIVE, it doesn't matter how you walked in here.

But in order to do so, we need to hear the Call of God (foundation), then we are on a journey to discover our calling, and if we hear the call and put into practice what God says, we can be called great in the Kingdom of God

**Called by God (foundation)**

If we're going to find our True selves, who God made us to be, our calling, the first thing we need to know is that we are Called to God himself.

We need to ingest the grand narrative of Scripture: that God made us and all things out love and he made us good and in his image. Our mother and father, Adam and Eve, rebelled against

him and sin fractured everything in the world. The image of God was marred, but not removed. And **astonishingly**, it was our rejection of him that drew forth the depths of his love.<sup>1</sup> We were called his children, but we rejected our Father, and so he sent his own Son, to renounce the name and power he'd had from before the foundation of the world, that we would be called unto Him, and that through his renouncement of his privileges and by taking upon himself the wrath of God for all of our sins on the cross and raising from the dead, all who now call upon him are called his son, daughter.

That is the truest thing about you! That you are God's beloved, adopted, son or daughter.

And so he still says today, what he said in the days of Isaiah:

But now, this is what the LORD says-- he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. Isaiah 43:1 NIV

There is no substitute. Jesus said to a man searching to find true life, you must be born again.

If you try to find your life, you'll lose it, but if you lose your life, you'll find it.

But that's where life begins, not ends. The gospel is for here and now, not just heaven! We never move past the gospel, only further up and further in, and now we are on a journey of discovering who we are in Christ.

You see, when God saved you, he didn't obliterate your personality, he started to recreate. Renewing your mind. He makes all things new.

Sinner/Savior aside<sup>2</sup>

So as we follow Jesus, we discover who we were truly made to be, we become truly human, we discover our calling in life.

### Discovering Our Calling

While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work 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

Now isn't this what we want? Isn't that what makes us so, "that's what I'm talking about!" A little praise goes up and the blessing comes down. The Holy Spirit says to us, "Do this, go here, this is what you were called to do!"

We long to hear from God about our calling in life.

But there's a massive problem and it's with our old self. We are still becoming who are in Christ, our true self, and indwelling sin remains in us and we must continually and by forming new habits put off the old self.

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<sup>1</sup> I get this phrase from Michael Reeve's excellent book, *Delighting in the Trinity*.

<sup>2</sup> This provocative thought was sparked for me in David G. Benner's, *The Gift of Being Yourself*, p.31

God's Will vs. Our Patterns	
In Community	We are radically individualistic (ponder the selfie)
As they worship God and fast from food	Worship ourselves (with our money and time) and gorge ourselves on what doesn't satisfy (Did your last 3 Netflix binges solve anything?)
Amidst worship, fasting, and prayer, the Spirit speaks	We talk to everyone but God
And they follow the call in obedience to the mission	And we often disobey or in pursuit of our own mission and our own Kingdom

And so we feel stuck, left not knowing who we are or what to do.

But there's hope: first, the truest thing about you is what God has done for you. Secondly, there are practices we can do, in reliance on the Holy Spirit, built upon and taking us deeper into the foundation of the Christ's work for us, that we can do to put off the old self, put on the new self, and discover our calling.

Now what's interesting is what the community in Acts 13 is doing is exactly what Jesus taught in The Sermon on the Mount. He taught us how to be in community that's not angry, manipulative, and judgmental. He showed us how to truly give and worship God and assumed we would fast and taught us how to rightly do it. He gave us the model for prayer, and he ended by telling us to put it into practice. He ended his earthly mission with the Great Commission

And it's in the midst of this lifestyle that Jesus lived and taught us that the church in Acts 13 heard from the Holy Spirit and that we will hear from the Holy Spirit.

Hearing from the Spirit	
What we don't know	What we do know
to whom? prophets and teachers or the whole church?	He does speak and in discernible ways!
audible? impression?	It was in the rhythm of doing the stuff Jesus taught us to do
What was the prayer like exactly? what worship song? how long was the fast?	It was tested by the community (Dad's story) Fit God's Kingdom (no contradiction w/ Scripture)

In sum, hearing God's call from the Holy Spirit is a lot like the call of Abram:

"The nature of the work to which he had Barnabas and Saul was not specified. It was not unlike the call of Abram. To him God had said, 'Go to the land I will show you.' To the Antiochene church God said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' In both case the call to go was clear, while the land and work were not. So in both cases the response to God's call required an adventurous step of faith."

-John Stott, *The Message of Acts*, 217

Now, we need to avoid these two errors: 1) Sacred work vs. profane work 2) Hyper-spiritualism

“But how exactly, is one to make one’s job a primary place of apprenticeship to Jesus? Not, we quickly say, by becoming the Christian nag-in-residence, the rigorous upholder of all propriety, and the dead-eye critic of everyone else’s behavior. I hope that this would be abundantly clear from our study of Jesus and of his teachings in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere.

A gentle, but firm noncooperation with things that everyone knows to be wrong, together with a sensitive, nonofficial, nonintrusive, nonobsequious service to others, should be our usual overt manner. This should be combined with inward attitudes of constant prayer for whatever kind of activity our workplace requires and genuine love for everyone involved.”

-Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 285-286

So we’re called unto Christ, we progressively throughout our lifetime find his calling on us, and if we do these two things, in which we find great joy, we can make our joy even more full and complete by being called great in the Kingdom of God.

### **Being Called Great in the Kingdom of Heaven**

As we’ve already said, the lifestyle laid out and on offer is found in Matthew 5-7. I want to encourage to begin reading through that as homework.

#### **4 Disciplines**

1. **Community**: you must be known and committed to the church. No such thing as lone wolf Christianity. Let’s speak out the things we see. (Mom: Westmont, UCLA, Reality)
2. **Generosity**: Consider how you use your money/time: be generous with those who have not?
3. **Fasting**: Instead of gorging on Netflix this week, what if you fasted from food for a meal, to engage with your body a deep desire for God.
4. **Private Prayer**: We do everything in public now and we are left feeling so disintegrated with our self. Unplug from “social” media for day perhaps, go off where no one knows and just be in God’s presence in prayer.

Start small, but start by the power of the Holy Spirit. Be in community, read Matthew 5-7, ask God what he’s calling you to, fast from one meal this week, slow down and get away with God.

When you think you are hearing your calling, get wisdom and then test it.

It’ll likely be where your giftings intersect with the need of the world

“The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”

-Frederick Buechner

And do it in community

So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit,

Acts 13:3-4a NIV

Saul and Barnabas had shown gifts and teaching and God gave them enough light to make the next step.

Dream about what could be: See the good in your work. Be it making food for the good of your neighbor or building housing so people can have safe shelter, or creating a home to be used for hospitality, or raising kids up in the fear and admonition of the Lord to be sent out like arrows to the nations. There's something holy about good craftsmanship.

Where our gifts and the way God has made us fit into the Great Commission to make disciples and tell others that the Kingdom of Heaven is here and our world begins to change because of it is where our hearts blaze aflame.

And we encourage one another. We lay hands on each other as a sign that we affirm what we see God doing in each other. Come up to the prayer team and get prayer for your seeing your work as God's place for you. Encourage and prophesy and speak life over one another.

Whatever God calls you to, there is great dignity and value in it. He made you to be you. No one else. And if you trust in him and follow him and put these things into practice, you'll start to hear the call you've been waiting for your entire life:

"Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Master."