

Point of View



A LEADERSHIP COMMENTARY ON LIFE TODAY BY BOB SHANK

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Dear Marketplace Friend,

Paul owed Barnabas a lot. When Paul was freshly-converted, he walked into the church in Jerusalem... and no one trusted him. He had led the official Jewish effort to eliminate the followers of Jesus, and the question of his sincerity was uppermost in everyone's mind. Barnabas – the “Son of Encouragement” – took Paul under his arm and believed in him.

Years later, Barnabas brought Paul the untested to Antioch and made him his protégé, as they led the first church established outside Israel. Then, God supernaturally called them out of that established setting to begin their faith expansion into the Gentile communities of the Roman Empire. That first missionary journey ended well... and their partnership continued as they participated in the Council at Jerusalem (*Acts 15*) that would establish the protocols by which non-Jews would be welcomed into the faith community formed around Jesus Christ, the Messiah of Israel.

Then... the partnership was severed when Paul and Barnabas disagreed about giving young John Mark a second chance as a junior team member for their upcoming mission. Paul recruited Silas to be his new partner; Paul and

Barnabas split. Paul's first stop: Lystra (*middle of modern Turkey*), where Paul picks up a new apprentice – Timothy, son of a Greek dad and a Jewish mom – who joins the team.

Their strategic agenda is to revisit the churches established by Paul and Barnabas in Trip #1. Paul – the pioneer entrepreneur whose specialty was new territories – was calendared to cover familiar ground and revisit established churches, with no territory expansion planned...

“Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called

us to preach the gospel to them.” (Acts 16:6-10)

Thank God for that “man of Macedonia.” His appeal to Paul was a “pull strategy” that brought the expansion of the faith across the cultural bridge to Europe, and became the genesis for the western expansion of the Church of Jesus Christ.

I was at a conference in Monterey, California, two weeks ago today when an entrepreneur from California – who now lives in London – asked me a simple question: “*Do you have any plans to take **The Master’s Program** to London?*” My answer was immediate: “No.” But, make no mistake: *the spirit of the Man of Macedonia is the marketing director for **TMP**.*

I explained to my new friend in Monterey that our plans only include our already-established sites for **TMP**, but our expansion is by invitation, not by plan. *What might God have in mind?*

He didn’t know that Cheri and I were scheduled to leave nine days later for London to meet a **TMP** couple – a member of our Board - who had asked us to join them for a week-long break.

Four hours after our arrival at Heathrow, I was in a meeting with two senior leaders from my new friend’s London Church (*Holy Trinity Brompton, the most vibrant evangelical church in England and home of the internationally-active Alpha Program*), introducing **The Master’s Program** to them and offering our assistance to bring **TMP** to England. *The conversation is in process...*

In **TMP** lingo, we call that a “*providential opportunity*.” That’s when God interrupts our stability with an out-of-the-blue idea that was not sourced in human creativity.

For you, for me, the big question today is just this: *within our plans for our life and leadership, is there room for God to disrupt the plan with an invitation to consider a Big Hairy Audacious Goal (BHAG) from Him?*

Bob Shank

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