

“What’s Your Plan?”

Acts 14:21-28

August 16, 2015

INTRO:

So... before I tell you my plans for the next 45 minutes to an hour...

Let me ask YOU about *your PLANS?*

- a. **WHO** do you plan to **focus** on?
- b. **WHAT** do you plan to **accomplish**?
- c. **WHERE** do you plan to **go & grow next**?
- d. **WHEN** do you plan to **surrender ALL**?
- e. **WHY** do you plan... **at all?**

T/S: Before you answer “why” you plan... Think for a minute about “how” you plan...

Have you ever noticed... “*types of plans*”

- 1. Plan NOT to plan...
- 2. Initial plan...
- 3. Strategic plan...
- 4. Pro-Active plan...
- 5. Offensive plan...
- 6. Re-Active plan...
- 7. Defensive plan...
- 8. Contingency plan...
- 9. Emergency plan...
- 10. Divine plan!

T/S: Whatever “other” types of plans/planners you are most inclined to use/be... My prayer is that you will come to embrace the grace of the gospel... the grace that mandates a missional plan for every Messianic missionary :-)

TIMELESS TRUTH: God has a plan! What's yours?

T/S: Let's recreate our context... (Galatian peoples)

Read Acts 13:1 – 14:18

Connect Acts 13-14 with letter to the Galatians

Connect “poison people” with Gal. 1:6; 3:1; & 5:1

Two Weeks Ago...

¹⁹ *But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.*

²⁰ *But while the disciples stood around him, he got up and entered the city. The next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe.*



Last Week...

²¹ After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch,

²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

- Where've you been?
- *Where you going?*
- Why you going?
- What are you doing?
- What are you saying?
- (BRIDGE-specific: "How'd we get here?")

PREVIEW: **God's plan has these 6 pillars...**

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| A. Passport | (a.k.a. going/"BE-ing sent!") |
| B. Proclamation | (a.k.a. "BE-ing proclaimers") |
| C. Perseverance | (a.k.a. "BE-ing ALL-in!") |
| D. Pastoring | (a.k.a. "BE-ing disciplers") |
| E. Praying | (a.k.a. "BE-ing Spirit-led") |
| F. People | (a.k.a. "BE-ing <u>UNIFIED</u> ") |



Today...

²³ *When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.*

- “*When*” = more evidence of PRIORITIES
- “*appointed elders*” = spiritual authority/relations
 - See who did the appointing...
 - Recognize who was appointed...
 - Christians oversee Christians
 - True help can only come from true helpers...
 - Lay-leaders become under-shepherds
 - Spirit led P&B identified Spirit led leaders... it's how God works!
 - NOTE: see KOINONIA!
 - See seminary paper on polity...
- “*in every...*” = NO sheep un-shepherded!
- “*in every ekklesia*” = set apart, sent out people!
 - Matthew 28:18-20
 - Acts 1:8
 - John 20:21
- “*having prayed & fasted*” = discernment design
 - Prayer = hearing & listening to the Lord
 - Demonstrates surrender
 - Relinquishes control

- Recognizes the Lordship of Christ
- Engages & Enables “following”
- Empowers boldness in the believer!
- Keeps the holy humble!
- Fasting = prayer-assist, attitude adjuster
 - Spiritual posture of our physical state
 - Heightens our awareness
 - Reminds us of our true sustenance
 - Helps to intensify our listening
 - Matures our faith & depth of peace

➤ ***“commended them to the Lord”*** =

They commended them, etc. They *committed* the infant church to the guardianship of the Lord. They were feeble, inexperienced, and exposed to dangers; but in his hands they were safe.

To the Lord, etc. The Lord Jesus. The connection shows that he is particularly referred to. In his hands, the redeemed are secure. When we part with Christian friends, we may, with confidence, leave them in his holy care and keeping.

(*) "ordained" "Appointed"

- Barnes' Notes on New Testament.

14:23 Part of the reason that Paul and Barnabas risked their lives to return to these cities was to organize the churches' leadership. They were not just following up on a loosely knit group; they were helping the believers get organized with spiritual leaders who could help them grow. Churches grow under Spirit-led leaders, both laypersons and pastors. Pray for your church leaders and support them; and if God puts his finger on you, humbly accept the responsibility of a leadership role in your church.

- Life Application Study Bible.

²⁴ They passed through Pisidia and came into Pamphylia.

- These are “regions” not cities...
- Similar to our:
 - Mid-Atlantic...
 - New England...
 - Midwest...

²⁵ When they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.

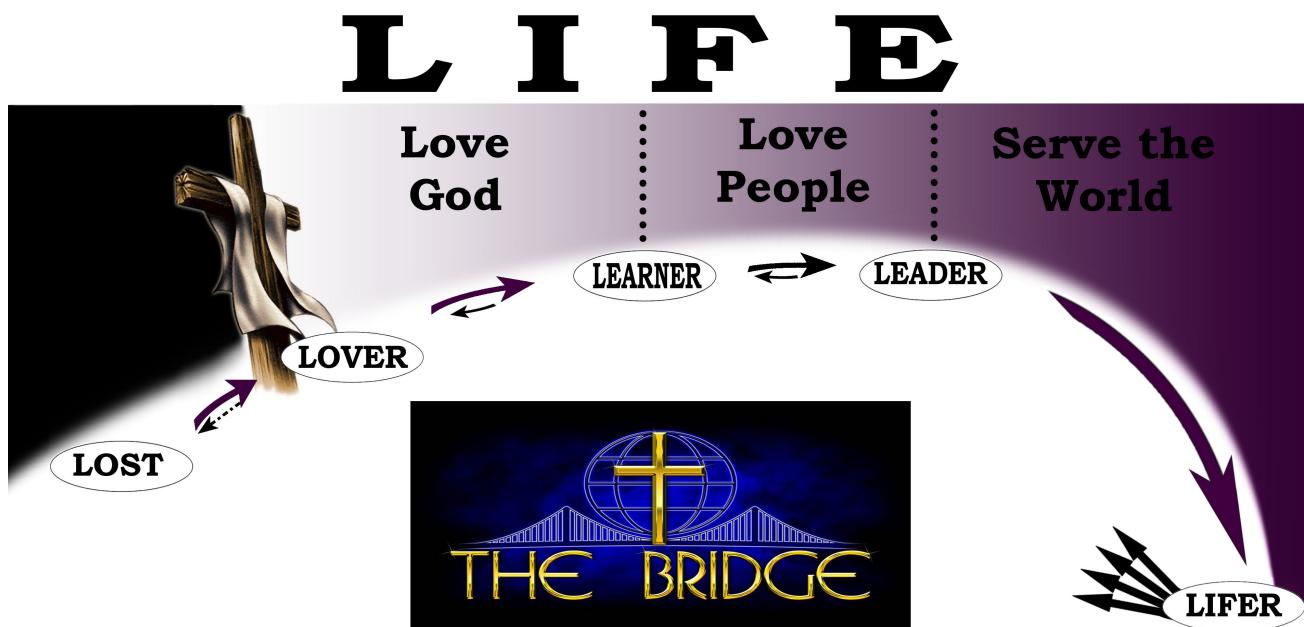
- By contrast, these ARE two specific cities...
- Similar to our: (neighboring coastal cities)
 - Boston & Providence...
 - Ocean City & Rehoboth...

NOTE:

- Proclamation of the Gospel in Perga...
- 24/7.... “Passing-through Proclaimers”
- “BE-ing means ‘bring-ing’ wherever you go.” - JDP

NOTE:

- There is no mention of “results” in Perga
- Not all proclamation leads to salvation...
- **See the BRIDGE “LIFE Cycle”**



Find the Lost, Grow the Found.

GOING

²⁶ From there they sailed (back) to Antioch, from which they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had (now) accomplished.

- See the “CIRCULAR” design of “Go-ing”
 - Christ left heaven, came, returned...
 - Paul left Antioch, went, returned...
 - WE left K.I., went to VT, now returned
- QUESTION: was there EVER “separation?”
- Answer: NO... they were & remained ONE!
 - True within the Trinity...
 - True with Paul, Barnabas, & Antioch
 - True with Aquinos, Pearsons, & BRIDGE

GATHERING

²⁷ When they had arrived and gathered the church together,

- See the relational connections...
- See the influential connections...
- Paul & Barnabas are still leaders in this church
- See the “family” affect...
 - Like when “dad” or “big brother” is home
 - Illustrated: Me/Griffin back with 2 boys
 - Happy we’re all back together...
 - Happy we’re “home” at heart :-)
- NOTE: purpose of gathering is worth attending
- See emphasis: (3 descriptive terms = UNIFIED!)
 - “*gathered*”
 - “*church*”
 - “*together*”

GLORIFYING

they began to report all things that God had done with them

- Proclaim both the miracles & the ministry of God
- NOTE: see the difference between “to” & “with”
 - God does “TO” you... = save/sanctify
 - God does “WITH” you... = save/sanctify

and

GOSPEL-ING

how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.

- See “door opening” context from Paul...
- “*He had opened*” =
ALL of Grace!
- “*door of faith*” =
only way of salvation!
- “*to the Gentiles*” = **You & me!**

See Paul’s broader CONTEXT for “open doors”

- 1. Prayer**
- 2. Priority**
- 3. Purpose**

▪ **Colossians 4:3-4**

³ And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.

⁴ Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.

- **Pray for God to open doors**
- Pray for open doors... for proclamation
- Pray for open doors... in the midst of persecution
- Pray for open doors... and passionate pragmatics

▪ **1 Corinthians 16:8-9**

*⁸ But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost,
⁹ because a great door for effective work has opened to me,
and there are many who oppose me.*

- **Discern** – be fluid & faithful around “doors”
- **Distinguish** - God opens “GREAT doors”
- **Disciple** (verb) = purpose of ALL open doors!
- **Defend** (see Jude) = open doors to P.O.W camps

The devil tries to defend some divinely open doors!

...put on full armor of God

...embrace the battle & live on offense!

▪ 2 Corinthians 2:12-17

¹² Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord,

¹³ I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went on to Macedonia.

(PURPOSE)

¹⁴ But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.

¹⁵ For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing;

¹⁶ to the one an aroma from death (leading) to death, to the other an aroma from life (leading) to life. And who is adequate for these things?

¹⁷ For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.

GROWING

²⁸ *And they spent a long time with the disciples.*

- Don't miss the discipleship dynamics...
 - The Antioch church's pastors are back
 - The Antioch church's elders are "one"
- BOTH Quality AND Quantity of time together...
- Life on Life...
- A living community of Christ-like contrast!
- "BE-ing" together *AS* disciples... *TO* disciple
 - **NOUN - ekklesia**
 - **VERB - koinonia** (active unifying)

SUMMARY:

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Let's Pray

Matthew Henry

The Visit Which Paul and Barnabas Made to the Churches Which They Had Planted

[14:21-23](#)

II. How they went on with their work, notwithstanding the opposition they met with. All the stones they threw at Paul could not beat him off from his work: They drew him out of the city ([v. 19](#)), but, as one that set them at defiance, he came into the city again, to show that he did not fear them; none even of these things move him. However, their being persecuted here is a known indication to them to seek for opportunities of usefulness elsewhere, and therefore for the present they quit Lystra.

1. They went to break up and sow fresh ground at Derbe. Thither the next day Paul and Barnabas departed, a city not far off; there they preached the gospel, there they taught many, [v. 21](#). And it should seem that Timothy was of that city, and was one of the disciples that now attended Paul, had met him at Antioch and accompanied him in all this circuit; for, with reference to this story, Paul tells him how fully he had known the afflictions he endured at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra, [2 Timothy 3:10](#), [11](#). Nothing is recorded that happened at Derbe.

2. They returned, and went over their work again, watering what they had sown; and, having staid as long as they thought fit at Derbe, they came back to Lystra, to Iconium, and Antioch, the cities where they had preached, [v. 21](#). Now, as we have had a very instructive account of the

methods they took in laying the foundation, and beginning the good work, so here we have the like of their building upon that foundation, and carrying on that good work. Let us see what they did,

(1.) They confirmed the souls of the disciples; that is, they inculcated that upon them which was proper to confirm them, [v. 22](#). Young converts are apt to waver, and a little thing shocks them. Their old acquaintances beg they will not leave them. Those that they look upon to be wiser than themselves set before them the absurdity, indecency, and danger, of a change. They were allured, by the prospect of preferment, to stick to the traditions of their fathers; they are frightened with the danger of swimming against the stream. All this tempts them to think of making a retreat in time; but the apostles come and tell them that this is the true grace of God wherein they stand, and therefore they must stand to it that there is no danger like that of losing their part in Christ, no advantage like that of keeping their hold of him; that, whatever their trials may be, they shall have strength from Christ to pass through them; and, whatever their losses may be, they shall be abundantly recompensed. And this confirms the souls of the disciples; it fortifies their pious resolutions, in the strength of Christ, to adhere to Christ whatever it may cost them. Note,

[1.] Those that are converted need to be confirmed; those that are planted need to be rooted. Ministers' work is to establish saints as well as to awaken sinners. Non minor est virtus quam quoerere parta tueri-**To retain is sometimes as difficult as to acquire.** **Those that were instructed in the truth must know**

the certainty of the things in which they have been instructed; and those that are resolved must be fixed in their resolutions.

[2.] **True confirmation is confirmation of the soul; it is not binding the body by severe penalties on apostates, but binding the soul. The best ministers can do this only by pressing those things which are proper to bind the soul; it is the grace of God, and nothing less, that can effectually confirm the souls of the disciples, and prevent their apostasy.**

(2.) They exhorted them to continue in the faith; or, as it may be read, they encouraged them. **They told them it was both their duty and interest to persevere; to abide in the belief of Christ's being the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world.** Note, Those that are in the faith are concerned to continue in the faith, notwithstanding all the temptations they may be under to desert it, from the smiles or frowns of this world. And it is requisite that they should often be exhorted to do so. **Those that are continually surrounded with temptations to apostasy have need to be continually attended with pressing exhortations to perseverance.**

(3.) **That which they insisted most upon was that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. Not only they must, but we must; it must be counted upon that all who will go to heaven must expect tribulation and persecution in their way thither.** But is this the way to confirm the souls of the disciples, and to engage them to continue in the faith? One would think it would rather shock them, and make them weary. No, as the matter is fairly stated and taken entire, it will

help to confirm them, and fix them for Christ. **It is true they will meet with tribulation, with much tribulation; that is the worst of it: but then,**

[1.] **It is so appointed.** They must undergo it, there is no remedy, the matter is already fixed, and cannot be altered. **He that has the sovereign disposal of us has determined it to be our lot that all that will live godly in Christ Jesus should suffer persecution; and he that has the sovereign command over us has determined this to be our duty, that all that will be Christ's disciples must take up their cross.** When we **gave up our names to Jesus Christ it was what we agreed to;** when we sat down and counted the cost, if we reckoned aright, it was what we counted upon; so that if tribulation and persecution arise because of the word it is but what we had notice of before, it must be so: he performeth the thing that is appointed for us. The matter is fixed unalterably; and shall the rock be for us removed out of its place?

[2.] **It is the lot of the leaders in Christ's army, as well as of the soldiers.** It is not only you, but we, that (if it be thought a hardship) are subject to it; therefore, as your own sufferings must not be a stumbling-block to you, so neither must ours; see [1 Thessalonians 3:3](#). Let none be moved by our afflictions, for you yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. As Christ did not put the apostles upon any harder service than what he underwent before them, so neither did the apostles put the ordinary Christians.

[3.] **It is true we must count upon much tribulation, but this is encouraging, that we shall get through it;**

we shall not be lost and perish in it. It is a Red Sea, but the Lord has opened a way through it, for the redeemed of the Lord to pass over. We must go down to trouble, but we shall come up again.

[4.] We shall not only get through it, but get through it into the kingdom of God; and the joy and glory of the end will make abundant amends for all the difficulties and hardships we may meet with in the way. It is true we must go by the cross, but it is as true that if we keep in the way, and do not turn aside nor turn back, we shall go to the crown, and the believing prospect of this will make the tribulation easy and pleasant.

(4.) They ordained them elders, or presbyters, in every church. Now at this second visit they settled them in some order, formed them into religious societies under the guidance of a settled ministry, and settled that distinction between those that are taught in the word and those that teach.

[1.] Every church had its governors or presidents, whose office it was to pray with the members of the church, and to preach to them in their solemn assemblies, to administer all gospel ordinances to them, and to take the oversight of them, to instruct the ignorant, warn the unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, and convince gainsayers. It is requisite that every particular church should have one or more such to preside in it.

[2.] Those governors were then elders, that had in their qualification the wisdom and gravity of seniors,

and had in their commission the authority and command of seniors: not to make new laws (this is the prerogative of the Prince, the great Lawgiver; the government of the church is an absolute monarchy, and the legislative power entirely in Christ), but to see to the observance and execution of the laws Christ has made; and so far they are to be obeyed and submitted to.

[3.] **These elders were ordained.** The qualifications of such as were proposed or proposed themselves (whether the apostles or the people put them up) were judged of by the apostles, as most fit to judge; and they, having devoted themselves, were solemnly set apart to the work of the ministry, and bound to it.

[4.] **These elders were ordained to them, to the disciples, to their service, for their good. Those that are in the faith have need to be built up in it, and have need of the elders' help therein-the pastors and teachers, who are to edify the body of Christ.**

(5.) **By prayer joined with fasting they commended them to the Lord, to the Lord Jesus**, on whom they believed. Note,

[1.] Even when persons are brought to believe, and that sincerely, yet ministers' care concerning them is not over; there is need of watching over them still, instructing and admonishing them still; there is still that lacking in their faith which needs to be perfected.

[2.] The ministers that take most care of those that believe must after all commend them to the Lord,

and put them under the protection and guidance of his grace: Lord, keep them through thine own name. To his custody they must commit themselves, and their ministers must commit them.

[3.] It is by prayer that they must be commended to the Lord. Christ, in his prayer (John 17), commended his disciples to his Father: Thine they were, and thou gavest them to me. Father, keep them.

[4.] It is a great encouragement to us, in commanding the disciples to the Lord, that we can say, "It is he in whom they believed; we commit to him those who have committed themselves to him, and who know they have believed in one who is able to keep what they and we have committed to him against that day," 2 Timothy 1:12.

[5.] It is good to join fasting with prayer, in token of our humiliation for sin, and in order to add vigour to our prayers.

[6.] When we are parting with our friends, the best farewell is to commend them to the Lord, and to leave them with him.

They Return to Antioch; the Good They Did by the Way, and the Report They Made to the Church

14:24-28

3. They went on preaching the gospel in other places where they had been, but, as it should seem had not made so

many converts as that now at their return they could form them into churches; therefore thither they came to pursue and carry on conversion-work. From Antioch they passed through Pisidia, the province in which that Antioch stood; thence they came into the province of Pamphylia, the head-city of which was Perga, where they had been before (ch. [13:13](#)), and came thither again to preach the word ([v. 25](#)), making a second offer, to see if they were now better disposed than they were before to receive the gospel. What success they had there we are not told, but that thence they went down to Attalia, a city of Pamphylia, on the sea-coast. They staid not long at a place, but wherever they came endeavoured to lay a foundation which might afterwards be built upon, and to sow the seeds which would in time produce a great increase. Now Christ's parables were explained, in which he compared the kingdom of heaven to a little leaven, which in time leavened the whole lump,-to a grain of mustard-seed, which, though very inconsiderable at first, grew to a great tree,-and to the seed which a man sowed in his ground, and it sprung up he knew not how.

III. How **they at length came back to Antioch in Syria**, whence they had been sent forth upon this expedition. From Attalia they came by sea to Antioch, [v. 26](#). And we are here told,

1. Why **they came thither: because thence they had been recommended to the grace of God**, and such a value did they put upon a solemn recommendation to the grace of God, though they had themselves a great interest in heaven, that they never thought they could show respect enough to those who had so recommended them. **The brethren**

having recommended them to the grace of God, for the work which they fulfilled, now that they had fulfilled it they thought they owed them an account of it, that they might help them by their praises, as they had been helped by their prayers.

2. What account they gave them of their negociation ([v. 27](#)): They gathered the church together. It is probable that there were more Christians at Antioch than ordinarily met, or could meet, in one place, but on this occasion they called together the leading men of them; as the heads of the tribes are often called the congregation of Israel, so the ministers and principal members of the church at Antioch are called the church. Or perhaps as many of the people as the place would hold came together on this occasion. Or some met at one time, or in one place, and others at another. But when **they had called them together**, they **gave them an account of two things:-**

(1.) Of the tokens they had had of the divine presence with them in their labours: **They rehearsed all that God had done with them. They did not tell what they had done (this would have savoured of vain-glory), but what God had done with them and by them.** Note, The praise of all the little good we do at any time must be ascribed to God; for it is he that not only worketh in us both to will and to do, but then worketh with us to make what we do successful. **God's grace can do any thing without ministers' preaching; but ministers' preaching, even Paul's, can do nothing without God's grace;** and the operations of that grace must be acknowledged in the efficacy of the word.

(2.) Of the fruit of their labours among the heathen.
They told how God had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles; had not only ordered them to be invited to the gospel feast, but had inclined the hearts of many of them to accept the invitation. Note,

[1.] There is no entering into the kingdom of Christ but by the door of faith; we must firmly believe in Christ, or we have no part in him.

[2.] It is God that opens the door of faith, that opens to us the truths we are to believe, opens our hearts to receive them, and makes this a wide door, and an effectual, into the church of Christ.

[3.] We have reason to be thankful that God has opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, has both sent them his gospel, which is made known to all nations for the obedience of faith ([Romans 16:26](#)), and has also given them hearts to entertain the gospel. **Thus the gospel was spread, and it shone more and more, and none was able to shut this door which God had opened;** not all the powers of hell and earth.

3. How they disposed of themselves for the present: **There they abode a long time with the disciples** ([v. 28](#)), longer than perhaps at first they intended, not because they feared their enemies, but **because they loved their friends**, and were loth to part from them.

- Matthew Henry's Commentary

