

# MARK JENKINS MINISTRIES

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P.O. BOX 701138 • TULSA, OK 74170

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Dear Friend,

Patterns in the scriptures are helpful for us to recognize in order to learn God's 'Modus Operandi' or M.O, in other words, how God operates. For example, let's say when God chose to communicate with the Apostle Paul during his missionary journeys He **always** did so through a burning bush or he parted the skies and spoke from heaven or He communicated through an angel or a prophet, then **every time** Paul needed instructions he would go looking for a bush or up to the sky or for an angel or a prophet to give him God's plan. Clearly, then, that would be a pattern that we could expect in our own lives. There **does not** appear to be any set pattern such as burning bushes or skies parting or any other external means in which God chose to communicate with Paul. We do know that Paul's introduction to Jesus was by a blinding light, (Acts 9:3), so was that a pattern we should expect? Did God always speak to Paul out of a blinding light? No. But, what if Paul only knew it was God speaking when a bright light blinded him? In that case, he would have never done anything for God because that was the one and only time God approached him in such a way. So, for everyone to expect to have an encounter with God speaking out of a blinding light would not be correct. It is "religious" minded people who want to put God in a box and say that this is how God operates every single time and that just simply is not the case. It is about communing with your Father and becoming "one" with Him instead of trying to put Him in a box and trying to dictate to Him how He can communicate with you. Jesus said it this way, (John 17:23),

**"I in them, and thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved Me."**

Instead of God always having to utilize other people to tell Paul what to do, through Paul's fellowship with Jesus, there emerged a leadership of the Spirit that we should expect in our own lives. It is a leadership that goes beyond words. It is a knowing that flows out of that "oneness" we can have with Him. A good comparison of this would be the "knowing" that develops between a husband and a wife. No one on this earth knows Debbie the way I know Debbie. After 20 years of marriage I have come to the place where I can anticipate what she is going to want based on the history we have together. I believe this is a good picture of the "oneness" we are to have with our Father. My communion with Debbie today is at a much deeper, more intimate level than it was years ago, when I did not know her as well. Over time, I have gone from needing her to tell every thing she wanted me to do to knowing her and what to expect from her. Let's take that example and apply it to the way God dealt with Paul.

God initially separated Paul for his missionary journey in this manner, (Acts 13:2)

**“...the Holy Ghost said, ‘Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.’ ”**

Right in front of everyone the Holy Ghost called Paul and Barnabas out to do the work of the ministry. This time, God made it crystal clear in public exactly who was to go and what they were to do. Thank God for clarity! Amen. So, was this always the way God sent Paul out to do the work of the ministry? No, In fact, I see nothing mentioned about any specific Word from God telling Paul about any second missionary journey. Here is what I do see, (Acts 15:36)

**“And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, [and see] how they do.”**

Before I make this next statement, please keep in mind that by this time in Paul’s life and ministry, he is not a novice regarding the things of God. In other words, Paul has grown and matured in his relationship with Jesus and in this “oneness”. That being said, the leadership Paul is now following, as is portrayed by the initiative seen here by his own words, **is not** flowing through other people or sources to Paul, but seems to be flowing out from the inside of Paul. There is nothing that I find where Paul states that he heard God say anything to him or that God showed him a vision of him and Barnabas traveling together. All we see is this statement. What follows is a disagreement between Paul and Barnabas about whether or not to take John Mark with them. (Acts 15:39 and 40)

**“And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.”**

Consider this, if God had in fact told Paul that he and Barnabas were to go on this next missionary journey together, then one or both of these men were out of God’s will because what Paul said did not come to pass.

What if God’s plan all the time was for Paul and Silas to take this next trip together and for Barnabas to stay with John Mark and help restore him? Isn’t that exactly what happened? Yes it is. A best case scenario for explaining what happened here is that Paul had part of the plan, knowing he was to go on the next journey, but possibly tried to impose his will on Barnabas. Whatever the case, it is impossible for us to know exactly what was in God’s mind for this situation because human emotion affected the outcome. Emotions happen, and when they do it becomes very difficult to know God’s mind. But, it’s what takes place afterward that can really teach us, because it’s after this kind of conflict that many ministries are “sidelined” forever.

A split occurred, a division among the brethren. Don't you know that is exactly the kind of opportunity the enemy looks for to try and destroy ministries? How does he do it? The enemy does it by sowing seeds of doubt in the midst of the division. Picture yourself in Silas' place and now you are heading off with the Apostle Paul on this journey to who knows where or for how long and this man, Paul, has already said that he believed he was to make this trip with Barnabas, not you. Do you think you might have some doubt in your mind from the start as to whether or not this man is on the right track? Certainly you would. So, as they were walking along, do you think that maybe Silas ever asked Paul any questions like, "Did God tell you to make this trip?" "Did He tell you where to go?" "Paul, can you give me any details?" Keep in mind, Paul and Silas didn't jump into a car and head off with a GPS and a gas card and hotel reservations. Most likely they saddled either a donkey or maybe a camel and headed off. Their provisions for the trip were whatever they could pack and carry. Also, being ambushed by robbers was a serious possibility. So here you are with the Apostle Paul living the dream. Eating whatever you managed to stuff in a bag. Sleeping on the ground. Watching out for bandits. Yes, just living the dream. (Acts 16:1)

**"Then came he (*Paul, Silas was with him but isn't mentioned here*) to Derbe and Lystra: and behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek."**

It is so important that we grasp what transpired and really appreciate the miles they traveled to get here. We can look at a map of this area and get some idea of how far these men traveled to get to Derbe and Lystra after passing through Syria and Cilicia. It is approximately 100 miles, some of which appears to be mountainous terrain. The area they were traveling was what is now the country of Turkey. Turkey is about the same size as Texas. Paul and Silas aren't just walking down to the corner to preach. They are risking their lives for the Gospel. After a few days of traveling with Paul, I have to imagine Silas began to pick up on some of Paul's habits. Assuming they had camels and a camel can travel about 20 miles a day, they spent at least one week together just to get to Derbe and Lystra. Oh, by the way, it was at Lystra where Paul had been stoned on his first missionary journey, (Acts 14:19) I wonder if he ever happened to mention that to Silas? One thing I'm sure Silas did take note of during those long days of traveling with Paul was every time he would look over at Paul and see his lips moving. I'm sure the question had to come up at some point. "Paul, what are you doing?" "I'm praying in tongues, talking to God." This is the man who wrote to the Corinthian church and said, (I Corinthians 14:18)

**"I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than you all."**

Certainly, Paul must have used those hours of traveling to continue to pray out God's will, plan and purpose for his life. One long day after the next either baking in the hot sun or struggling to stay warm. One mile after the next. Up one side of a mountain and down the other. No rest areas where a person could stop and be refreshed, clean the dirt off and use the facilities. Do you think the questions would ever arise about whether

this was really God? Of course the questions would come. What could Paul say? Could he honestly say, "God said to do this!"? If God did speak to Paul specifically about this trip, there is nothing ever mentioned about it. So, should we just assume Paul is operating on a specific Word from God, especially considering how the journey began? If that is the case, and Paul isn't making this trip as a result of a specific Word from God, then what is he doing out there risking his life and the life of Silas, and now Timothy?

All of Paul's praying in tongues has resulted in a communion with God that has brought him to the place that he trusts the leadership he receives from the Holy Ghost through his reborn human spirit. The level of confidence Paul is walking in at this point enables him to return to a city, Derbe, where previously he was stoned. Paul has matured to the place that he trusts if he makes a wrong turn that the Holy Ghost is more than able to move him back on course. It's one thing to follow the leadership of the Holy Ghost when He is directing you to get into your air conditioned car, full of gas, and go to the next city to preach. There are plenty of good restaurants along the way and a nice hotel to sleep in after you preach. It is a whole different story to jump on the back of a camel and head out with no idea what lies ahead of you and all you can say to your traveling companion is, "I believe this is the direction we are supposed to go." "Well, who told you Paul?" Maybe he answered, "This is what I keep hearing on the inside of me."

So, everything seemed fine when Paul and Silas and Timothy left Derbe and Lystra. I could see Timothy having some apprehension about going with Paul since Paul did insist on circumcising him. (Acts 16:3)

**"Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek."**

Now, they traveled through the cities and delivered to the churches the decree from the elders in Jerusalem. They traveled through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, (Acts 16:6) which I would estimate to be an additional 200 - 300 miles, on top of the 100 miles they traveled getting to Derbe and Lystra. Then, after having traveled all this way, what does the Holy Ghost say to them? (Acts 16:6)

**"Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia."**

It doesn't say which of the men received this instruction from the Holy Ghost, but let's just say it was Paul. So, here's Silas and Timothy tired from the long journey and probably ready to stop and relax a little bit and do some preaching. The last thing they ever expected to hear was, "Don't preach." One more perfect opportunity for Paul to let doubts rise up as to whether or not he was really following God. How many people just quit and turn back when faced with this kind of situation? What kind of person could look at these two men after coming this far and confidently say, "I believe we are supposed to continue on."? Wouldn't your next question be, "Did God say to go on?"

Can you imagine Paul looking back and saying, “All I know is that I believe we are supposed to go on.”? So, they press on. What a miracle all three of these men continued on this journey.

Imagine if they had traveled say 30 or 40 more miles and a huge revival had broken out, then any doubts about misdirection would have melted like a snow ball on a hot summer day. What happened? They change direction and begin to head west to the Aegean Sea. They traveled for at least 100 miles and once again the Holy Ghost said to them, (Acts 16:7)

**“After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.”**

For the second time, the Holy Ghost stopped them from preaching. After all this traveling, what do you think the temptation would be? Preach anyway! What verse would you use to justify your decision to preach, “Go into all the World and preach the Gospel to every creature.” Sometimes the hardest thing to do is to **not** try and justify yourself and your decision using the scriptures. Would you blame Timothy and Silas for having some questions? Of course not. This is the moment of truth. Turn back or press on. You see, we have the advantage of knowing what is just ahead of them. They, on the other hand, don’t. They have just traveled hundreds of miles, slept on the hard ground, ate whatever they could find, days of being dirty and smelling those stinky camels, to come all this way and be told not to preach. That had to be a difficult pill to swallow.

And the obvious question, “Where to now, Paul?” What must he have said? “I believe we are supposed to go straight.” In other words, “Based on everything I have learned about following His leadership I believe continuing to head west is correct.” Was there any specific Word from the Lord? The only mention of specific instructions I see were those instructions telling them not to preach. What is Paul following? The leadership of the Holy Ghost bearing witness in his reborn human spirit.

They continued on for possibly 300 more miles, either across or around mountains, until finally they came to Troas. It was there in Troas that Paul received a vision by night of a man from Macedonia beckoning to Paul to come and share the Gospel with him. Can you imagine the relief Paul felt knowing that all that traveling was not in vain? Yes he was following the leadership of the Holy Ghost!

What you may be wondering is whether or not this was in fact exactly the path Paul was supposed to take? You see, a much shorter path could have been traveled directly from Phrygia to Troas. So, were all those miles, all that dust, all that sleeping on the ground and eating whatever could be found really necessary? That’s not for me to answer, other than to say this, sometimes we may go a bit out of the way, but as long as we don’t stop praying He is able to direct us right where He wants us. It is also possible that the Holy Ghost was leading them around life threatening situations, who knows?

The lesson to be learned here is intimacy; intimacy that grows out of our ever maturing fellowship with Him. In the early stages of our development, maybe we felt insecure in our ability to hear Him. Consequently, we nervously clung to every word we even remotely thought was God. In that process we discovered that we could in fact hear God speak through the ear of our spirit. Just maybe God would like to lead us in a more subtle, intimate way because the two of us are becoming one, like a husband and wife. Keep in mind, this may or may not describe every person reading this letter, but this gives each of us an idea of what's ahead. God doesn't want anyone feeling they have to rush into anything. I believe that if anyone asks the Holy Ghost to show them where they are in the "growing up" process, He will. God is for us. He wants us to excel spiritually because we are His hope in the earth. It is only through us that He is able to accomplish anything in the earth. He needs us. He needs us to grow up and become spiritual adults who are able to make decisions while remaining confident in His ability to keep us on course.

~Grace be with you

*Mark Jenkins*