

DAY 26

Prominence-Pushers: Legendary Leader 4

As they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” ... But Saul — also called Paul — filled with the Holy Spirit, stared straight at Elymas and said, “You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery, you son of the devil and enemy of all that is right. Won’t you ever stop perverting the straight paths of the Lord?”

Acts 13:2, 9–10

Leadership Affirmation

I find joy when those I have mentored for leadership outshine me in their service for Christ.

Legend-making leaders are prominence-pushers. They long for others to succeed, even if it means they are obscured by the brilliant light of those they trained in ministry. They are not interested in their own glory.

Barnabas could have been a big deal in Antioch. The church was growing. Converts were everywhere. Because of his ministry, the church was healthy. The believers there were known as imitators of Jesus. He could have settled down in a position of prominence as pastor of the largest church in the area.

The fourth time we see Barnabas in the book of Acts, the Holy Spirit sets him and Paul aside for a missionary journey (Acts 13). Up until this point, Barnabas is the leader, always named first. When they arrived on Barnabas’s home island of Cyprus, the proconsul of Paphos invited Barnabas and Saul to speak the word of God. As they spoke, Elymas the magician tried to turn the proconsul from the faith.

Without hesitation, Paul stepped to the forefront, boldly declaring *You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery, you son of the devil and enemy of all that is right* (Acts 13:10). Calling someone a son of the devil, the enemy of righteousness, full of deceit and villainy doesn’t seem in keeping with Barnabas’s nature. But it very much is in Paul’s nature. The powerful force of Paul’s personality catapulted him to prominence.

This is the moment that Paul became the leader. Barnabas begins fading into the background. For the rest of their time together, Barnabas’s strategy was consistent: he kept pushing this dynamic young preacher out front at the expense of his own glory and his own brand. As a prominence-pushing, legend-making leader, Barnabas’s shadow on history is almost obliterated by the blinding light of Paul’s star.

Prayer for Protection

Lord, deliver me from resentment when my Timothys find greater prominence in Kingdom work than I’ve achieved.