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The Doldrums, Monthly House Church Thoughts, August 2012

2012-08-22, John Fenn, www.supernaturalhousechurch.org

Hi everyone,

The summer doldrums seem to be upon us, and that means house church is affected too.

By definition

The doldrums are an area just above the equator where there is no wind - it is an area between weather systems so the air is still, stagnates, and often even the sea is a flat calm. In the old days sailing ships would drift aimlessly until they drifted out of the area.

Those were the times when mutinies happened, when the crew became disgruntled with leadership, when fights started, people got sick, some died, others became enemies, all because of the doldrums. They were going in no particular direction and each day was the same, day in, and day out. Boredom was the enemy.

Still talking house church here, not sailing ships - sound familiar?

Summer is the time of travel, of transition, of changing seasons from one part of life to another. This is normal in house church. People get tired due to heat and long daylight hours and high activity level. All the annoyances of the year bubble to the surface and cause them to ask what they are doing in house church, or in life, or in marriage, and so on.

The traditional church has the same issues but it is masked because of size and the activities of programs which give the appearance of a smooth ship sailing along normally. August is always is the month with the lowest offerings, lowest attendance, lowest interest in 'church things' in the traditional church. In the traditional church mid-summer conventions are held in part to bring in fresh money and visitors to help the budget, because regular members spend their tithes and offerings on Disney World and trips to mom and dad.

In house church these things aren't masked. When people go on vacation, they are missed. When a relative dies and people have to travel or grieve, it is noted and prayed for. For us, there is always a dip in regular giving as part of a normal cycle as well. Income drops but requests for needs rise. That's normal.

Doldrums in Acts

In Acts 11:19 we are told that some of those who were forced out of Jerusalem by Saul's persecution of Steven moved further than just Judea and Samaria as Acts 8:1 tells us. It says some went north to Antioch, and started sharing Jesus with Greeks - a new thing entirely!

Barnabus was sent by the apostles to check out the idea that Greeks could get saved, and he found exactly that! Knowing that the fairly recently saved Saul of Tarsus was called to the Gentiles, he went to Tarsus to get him, and brought him to Antioch.

For a whole year they taught the disciples, and it was there we first became known as Christians. There was even a visit by a prophet named Agabus who prophesied of a famine that would hit Judea, so they collected money to send to those saints so they could prepare.

What excitement! Something new with every meeting!

What do we do now?

Acts 12 is inserted after the busy-ness of Acts 11 as a window to view what else was going on at that time in Jerusalem - James, the brother of John was executed by Herod by sword, and Peter was imprisoned and destined for the same fate Herod thought.

But Jesus had previously told Peter in John 21:18 he would be crucified when he was older, not stabbed while young, so Peter was sound asleep when the angel jabbed him on the side to wake him up. Acts 12 also tells us that Herod was executed by an angel for receiving worship, which he knew better than to do.

All that was happening while things in Antioch settled down to a normal routine. And that's where Acts 13 opens up, with 5 men of various races and nationalities sitting around worshipping, praying, asking, 'OK, so what do we do now?' They were in the doldrums.

There was Barnabus from the island nation of Cyprus, Simeon from Niger in central Africa, Lucius from our modern

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Libya, Manaen from Jerusalem, and Saul from Tarsus in the south central coast of modern day Turkey.

They were seeking God for what was new, what did He want of them, what was next? They were in the doldrums needing direction.

It is normal

What I'm saying is that seasons in house church come and go, just as seasons of life come and go. Antioch started with great fanfare and the move of the Lord. They were taught for over a year by Paul and Barnabus and received regular visitors from Jerusalem, so there was always something new going on.

That is like our school year - there is always something on the calendar, some event, some meeting, some holiday, and people are geared towards the next thing on the calendar.

But then it changes - school stops, transition start with graduations, vacations/holiday time, and by mid-summer with the heat and long daylight hours people are tired, a bit grumpy, a bit listless and wandering like an old sailing ship that has lost all direction and wind in the sails.

This is normal. Go with it. That house church that had over 20 attending during the year, now seems empty with the 6 that show up - so and so is traveling, so and so had a relative die, so and so is camping, so and so is just doing something else today - normal!

Solution?

People will settle into the autumn routine - everyone who has moved during the summer, will have moved and settled in. All vacations and other holiday time off from work and church and life, will come to an end.

I think this is what Paul and Barnabus and this group of men were doing - praying, seeking, worshipping - what is next? After a year like they had, how can you top it?!

Perhaps they were looking for excitement, maybe discussing if a big name was coming up from Jerusalem, but one thing we do know is this - they had no answers.

That's right, they had no answers. Life was changing, and they approached it this way: "As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said..."

So that is where I encourage you today. You don't have the answers because seasons change without our help. School starts, holiday time ends, weather cools, people regain energy, and you wonder how to get moving again. Don't.

"Minister to the Lord". Consider a time of worship, a time of telling Him how He is loved - no other agenda, but like these 5 men, just worship, consecrate yourself anew to Him from a heart of love. Then wait and see what He speaks to all the hearts present. Allow time for Him to speak, to lay something on someone's heart.

As these 5 men in Antioch came out of their doldrums, out of their routine, it was a new season for Saul of Tarsus, forever after these verses known as the apostle Paul.

Who knows what new venture He has for you!

Blessings,
John Fenn

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