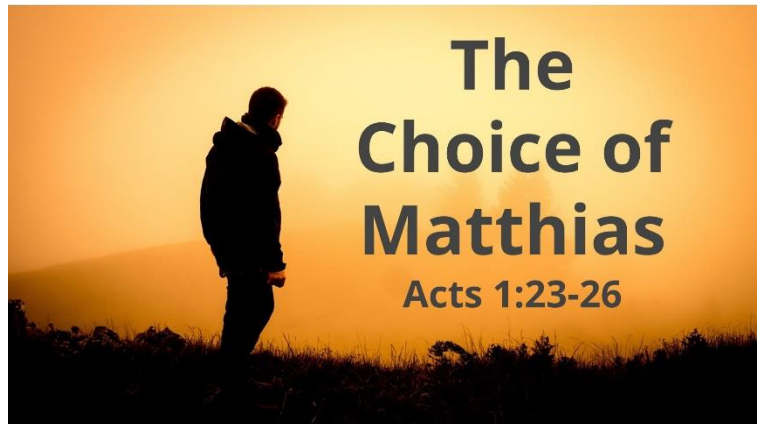


## Connections Newsletter with Pastor Mark Manning

**“So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. Then they prayed and said, ‘Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.’ And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was added to the eleven apostles.” - Acts 1:23-26**

**Holy gambling.** Last week in my on-line video devotion, talking about the National Day of Prayer, I reminded you that of Americans who pray, 21% of them pray to win the lottery. Sort of Holy Gambling? *“If I win, then I can give more to my church?”* In our reading from the Acts of the Apostles, they are looking for someone to take the place of Judas Iscariot who, depending on who you talked to, hung himself or fell and mortally wounded himself. The main qualification for the position was that he had to have been with the disciples from very near the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. They found two in the group that seemed most qualified: Joseph=Barsabbas=Justus, and Matthias.



Then it says “they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias.” Now exactly what this means is up for grabs: it seems like the Holy Spirit is not really running up to full speed like it will be later in the Book of Acts, so they had to fall back on more primitive means. One method would be to put their names on stones, put them in a vessel, and shake them until one fell out. Another would be for the other disciples to “vote” casting their named-stones into a vessel (anonymously) which were subsequently counted to determine who the responsibility “fell” to. In any event it seems like a strange way to determine who should assume the responsibility of being an apostle, especially in a gospel book that has so many miraculous instances of the Holy Spirit. But, Matthias “draws the lot.”

Depending on how you look at it, this story is either a shining example of people NOT wanting to take responsibility for decisions, or alternatively, a wonderful example of people giving up their urge to control circumstances and trusting God. **What do you think?**

**Prayer: Sovereign and Omniscient God, we believe you are in control of this chaotic world. Guide us through the times when we don’t know what questions to ask, much less know what the answers are, and teach to trust in you. Amen.**

[Click Here for a Short Video Message from Pastor Mark](#)

*Questions for Discussion/Reflection:*

- 1. The disciples chose two, THEN they prayed. That’s a curious order of events; why do you think they did it in that order? Shouldn’t it have been the other way around?*
- 2. Strangely, it sounds like they chose Justus and Matthias, and then they prayed for lots they were casting—if it’s gambling this sounds pretty weird, if it’s voting well then it makes sense. What is your opinion?*
- 3. After Judas turned away, why do you think they felt they had to replace him? And why just him, why not have 6 or 10 more apostles? How or why is “12” a magic number for the believers?*
- 4. In what ways are our methods for choosing our church leaders like or wildly unlike the apostles’ “holy gambling”?*