

Unpacking the Preach

Date: 6th June 2021
Sermon Title: The Habits of a Disciple: discerning God's will
Bible Passage: Acts 16: 6 - 10

Recapping the Preach

Acts 16 details the beginning of Paul's second missionary journey. If you can, find a map online which outlines his journey so you can track the route he travelled as you read the passage.

- What stood out to you from this passage?
- Why do you think Luke includes this story in the text?
- What examples can you think of in Scripture where God has guided His people? How did He do this?
- How have you experienced God guiding you or discerned God's will?
- How important is it to seek God's will about: moving home, choosing a career, choosing a church, getting married, serving in an area of church life?
- Are you seeking God for direction at the moment, take time to share (if appropriate)?

Stu began by outlining a clarification (discernment is part of growing as a disciple), three truths (discernment flows from relationship, God wants to speak to us and He is good) and a decision we need to make (we must be willing to do God's will before we know what it is).

- In what ways do you see God at work on your frontline (the place you spend most of your time with those who are not yet Christians)?
- Why do you think having a relationship with God is important as a basis of discernment?
- How willing are you to say 'yes' to God before we know what His will is?

Stu went on to unpack three ways in which we see God's guidance and discernment at work in the passage.

1. There was the work of the Spirit as He closed and open doors.
2. The common sense approach that Paul and his companions took.
3. The fact that they discerned together

With these things in mind, reflect on the following questions:

- Stu gave some examples of what , 'having been kept by the Holy Spirit' and 'but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them'. What do you think happened?
- Have you ever experienced God's leading through 'open and closed doors'? Share your experiences.
- Why do you think it is important to employ a bit of common sense in the discernment process?
- Stu mentioned the book 'Better decisions, fewer regrets' by Andy Stanley and the five questions it explores. Which of these questions stood out to you? (The **integrity** question: am I being honest with myself...really (what is the real reason I want to go in this direction). The **legacy** question - what story do I want to tell? Where will this leave me 2 years, 5 years or 10 years from now and will I want to tell this story. The **conscience** question - is there a tension that deserves my attention (is there something niggling at the back of my mind - cant put my finger on what but it is there). The **maturity** question: what is the wise thing to do? Some choices may not be sinful

but they may not be wise for us either. The **relational** question - which is perhaps the most important - what does love require of me?)

- The Proverbs nudge us in to discern together (A wise man listens to advise (12:15), plans fail for lack of counsel but with many advisers they succeed (15:22) and so we should make plans by seeking advice (20:18). Have you made this a habit in your life? Who do you approach to help you discern? Why them?
- As a Baptist Congregation we gather together to seek to discern the mind of Christ together and make decisions together. Do you think this is a good model of church government? What are the advantages or disadvantages? How can we get better at discerning together?

Response

- Is there anything from the preach and passage that you will be taking away to reflect on or work on?
- What steps can you take to develop a HABIT of growing in discernment?

Prayer pointers

- Pray that we would be men and women who nurture a deep relationship with God, and from that place discern His will.
- Pray that we would have a deeper sensitivity to the leading of the Spirit.
- Pray that together as a church we will grow in discerning His will for us - particularly with upcoming decisions we face together.

Additional resources:

If you need some additional resources the below websites are useful:

- <https://www.gotquestions.org>
- <https://enduringword.com>
- <https://www.biblica.com>
- <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/>