



God Called Us to Reach the City?

The Church in Philippi Begins

Acts 16

Because Paul and his friends listened carefully to God's instruction, they ended up exactly where God wanted them. Following God's plan always leads to great adventure and growth of the kingdom!



Day #1: It's a No-Go

No one really likes to hear the word "No" (unless it's in the phrase, "No homework tonight") But when it's in regards to something we plan to do, "No" is an unwelcome command.

Paul had been called by God to go and tell the good news about Jesus to many nations (Acts 9: 15). Experts estimate that Paul traveled about 7,000 miles telling people that Jesus was the Savior. Paul couldn't hop in his car or board a plane to get where he was going. He traveled on foot, possibly rode a donkey, and by boat.

But regardless of *how* he traveled, he always let God decide *where* he traveled. Several times, Paul headed in a direction, only to hear the word, "No." God's Spirit stopped Paul from going to Asia in Acts 16:6. The Spirit also steered Paul and his companions clear of Bithynia in Mysia (Acts 16: 7).

The reason God said, "No" to those places was that God had a divine appointment for Paul and his friends to meet Lydia in Philippi. God knew Lydia's heart and that she needed to hear about Jesus. Paul had no way of knowing about Lydia, but God did. God knows immeasurable more than we know!

† *Great is our Lord. His power is mighty. There is no limit to His understanding. - Psalm 147: 5*

* What limits do you have? What limits does God have? Is it better to rely on what you know, or what God knows?

If you listen to God, He'll tell you where to go and when to go.

Day #2: Talk it Over

Luke traveled along with Paul and some followers of Jesus. They traveled in the direction God told them to go. One night, God had a special message for Paul.

† *During the night Paul had a vision. He saw a man from Macedonia standing and begging him. "Come over to Macedonia!" the man said. "Help us!" After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia. We decided that God had called us to preach the good news there. - Acts 16:9-10*

The two words "We decided" tell us a lot. Paul was the only one who saw the vision from God. But he did not keep it a secret! He told his traveling buddies. They talked it over and they decided that the vision was truly from God. Together, they determined that God's plan was for them to go to Macedonia.

When you feel you've heard a message from God, be sure to discuss it with another person who reads their Bible and follows Jesus. They can help you be sure that what you heard agrees with the Bible and is really from God.

Get all the advice and instruction you can, so you will be wise the rest of your life. - Proverbs 19:20

* Who can you talk to about Spiritual things? Be sure it's someone who knows what the Bible says. And be sure you are the kind of friend that others can get great Biblical advice from too!

Day #3: Share the Good News

What do you talk about most with your friends? Don't you love hearing a good story? And true stories are best of all!

Paul traveled all over the world telling people the true story about Jesus. What exactly was his message? One of his talks was recorded in Acts 13. After telling the people about some amazing things God had done, he said this:

† *My brothers, here is what I want you to know. I announce to you that your sins can be forgiven*

Day #3 continued:

because of what Jesus has done. Through Him everyone who believes is made right with God. - Acts 13:38-39a

That is the good news! We are all separated from the perfect God because we have all chosen to sin—to do what’s wrong. But on the cross, Jesus took away our sin (1 Peter 2:24). When we believe in Him, we are right with God; we are in His kingdom forever and ever!

At other times, Paul told his own personal story (Acts 22). He told about all the terrible things he had done before he believed in Jesus. But that on the cross Jesus took all of his sins away. Jesus gave Paul a new life. Paul said:

Here is a saying that you can trust. It should be accepted completely. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And I am the worst sinner of all. But for that very reason, God showed me mercy. - 1 Timothy 1:15-16a

 If a friend asked you why you follow Jesus, what would you say? Practice talking about Him and telling your story right now.

Day #4: A Place of Prayer

Paul stayed on the right track because he often heard from God. From the time he met Jesus, Paul listened intently for directions from God. Are you doing the same?

Of course, you can talk to God anywhere and any time! You can pray on the bus, on the playground, at soccer practice, and even during a test at school.

But there’s something wonderful about carving out a little time every day to sit alone with God on purpose. It should be in a place without any distractions—no noise, no one talking. It’s a place to read the Bible, tell God what you are thinking and feeling, and listen for God’s leading. Jesus told His disciples:

 *When you pray, go into your room. Close the door and pray to your Father, who can’t be seen. He will reward you. Your Father sees what is done secretly.*

When you pray, do not keep talking on and on the way ungodly people do. They think they will be heard because they talk a lot. Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need even before you ask Him. - Matthew 6:6-8

Day #4 continued:

The second part of this verse lets us know that prayer isn’t about us doing all the talking! It’s the time for us to listen!

 Where do you go to hear from God? Do you have a special place all set up where you can spend time without any distractions? If you don’t have a special place, take a few minutes to create one! Make sure there’s light for reading, cushions for comfort, and a pad of paper to write down what you learn.

Day #5: Specific Direction

Grab your Bible and flip through some pages.

The Bible is God’s word. It tells us everything God wants us to know about Him, ourselves, the world around us, and the spiritual things we can’t see (2 Timothy 3:16). No one can add anything to it. It is complete and never-changing. Period. But here’s the fun part: God’s Holy Spirit (who lives in ever believer) tells us exactly how God’s word applies to our life. For example, the Bible tells us we should tell people about Jesus. His Spirit will tell your heart exactly *who* he wants *you* to tell.

These are the kinds of things we ask God when we pray. When you read a Bible passage, then ask, “God, what do you want me to know about this?” He speaks in so many different ways. He might have an image pop into your mind, or He might make sure that a certain person crosses your path a bunch of times in the next day or so. He might remind you of other Bible verses. He might put a phrase into your mind.

But be certain: God’s Spirit will never, ever go against God’s written word, the Bible. He will never lead you to do something wrong. The Spirit will only nudge you to do the things the Bible says to do. The Spirit gives you that “ought to” feeling deep inside (Titus 2:11-12)

 Let’s practice. Read through the Bible passage below and ask God what He wants you to know about it. Tell your mom or dad the first impression you get. Don’t get discouraged if you don’t hear at first! It takes some practice to recognize the Spirit’s ways of communicating with you.

 *Love is patient. Love is kind. It does not want what belongs to others. It does not brag. It is not proud. It is not rude. It does not look out for its own interests. It does not easily become angry. It does not keep track of other people’s wrongs. - 1 Corinthians 13:4-5*