

Small Groups @ TBC - Sermon Discussion Notes

Date of Sermon: 9 July 2017

Speaker: Mike Levy

Title: And so to Greece - Guidance

Read: Acts 16 verses 1-15

Introduction:

Just as Paul's journey through Asia and into Europe throws up new issues almost every day so does our own journey through Acts. In this case the issue of guidance. We believe that God guides us (Isaiah 58 and Psalm 119) but living in that belief on our frontline is another matter and raises questions like: How does God guide us? What is God saying to me? Which way now, Lord? Is this the right thing for me to do? Some of these questions may have been going through the minds of Timothy and Paul.

Timothy's call to service:

There were 4 factors that influenced Timothy's call to service:

Background

Timothy's Mother was a Jewess his Father a Gentile. In Lystra that was a social disadvantage, but as God was leading Paul and Timothy into areas that were both Jewish and Gentile someone who understood both sides was an advantage.

Age

Timothy was 17, typically young people are adventurous, willing to take risks, flexible as they find out their identity. God was doing a new thing and someone with these qualities was an asset to the team.

Gifts

1 Timothy and 2 Timothy refer to the Gifts that Timothy had and that were important in setting the direction of his Ministry.

Church

Paul and the Elders in Lystra helped Timothy work out his gifting and area of service. See 1 Corinthians 16.

Wandering around Asia and into Europe

In Acts 22, when telling the story of his conversion, Paul recounts that his first question of Jesus was "What shall I do Lord?". I wonder how many times he asked this question in Acts 16? Or how many times we ask the same question. The Question can be answered in two ways.

Character

God's will for our character is in 1 Thessalonians 4 verse 3 "Be holy". There is often clear guidance in the Bible for how to follow Jesus in terms of character, we should simply follow it not fight against it or nuance it.

Career/Ministry

God's will for Paul's ministry was revealed in stages across a range of means:

- Circumstances: Paul's abortive journeys imply that God is in circumstances but circumstance alone can be a bad guide. In Acts 14 Paul took persecution to be a sign to move on but in Acts 18 a sign to stick it out.
- The Fellowship: As we have seen with Timothy God speaks through the wisdom of others.
- Need: There was a clear need to be met, the Macedonian said, "Help us"
- Maturing Judgment: God was building up a bank of experiences in Paul's life from which he could draw without needing to seek instruction from God time after time.
- Assurance of the Spirit: Finally, the Holy Spirit living within gives assurance of God's guidance.

Outcome

The outcome of Timothy hearing God's call to service and Paul knowing God's leading was that, having travelled long distances themselves, they met a woman (Lydia) in Philippi. Lydia herself was 400 miles from home. God had brought a group of people together to start a church with one woman and her household, a church that would grow in numbers and generosity. A mustard seed had been planted.

Reflect and Respond:

1. How far has your background shaped what God is calling you to do?
2. We need to be careful of stereotyping, especially with Age, share examples of where age has been no barrier to serving God.
3. Do you know what your gifts are, whether you call them 'natural' or 'spiritual'? How do you know? How can you find out?
4. How much are you willing to seek the advice of others in Church when seeking God's Guidance? How willing are you to speak with people who will give you honest advice and not just tell you what you want to hear?
5. How can you "Be holy"
6. How sensitive are you to God's guidance? How has God guided you?
7. How do you know the assurance of the Spirit?
8. Share examples of how you have been in the right place at the right time to share God with others?
9. Share examples of Mustard Seeds you have been involved in planting.