

“Journeys and Destinations – Going the Distance”  
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“And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days. And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us.” (Acts 16:6-15)

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Pastor Wally said that being busy for Jesus is not the same as doing much for Jesus. What are some distinctions to be drawn, if any, from these two points of view?

Speaking on the topic “No Global Mission Without God’s Mighty Spirit”, John Piper pointed out at the Cross Convention in 2016 regarding in part the passage of Scripture in Acts 6:6 that...this has everything to do with world evangelization. It means that there would be no goers — no missionaries without the work of the Holy Spirit, for there would be no Christians. And it means that, if there were goers, there would be no converts anywhere in the world, because nobody moves from the lordship of Satan to the lordship of Christ without the Holy Spirit...There would be no world evangelization, no world missions, if it were not for the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. If you count every branch of the Christian Church there are over 400,000 foreign missionaries in the world today. In ten years, hundreds of you will be a part of that great band of global emissaries for Christ. You will be somewhere. You will be serving some group. You will be performing some task. And how will you get there? You will be guided by the Holy Spirit.” Paul and his ministry team were definitely being guided by the Holy Spirit. How about me? How have I experienced His guidance in my life over the last week?

Rick Warren said in his “Daily Hope with Rick Warren” on April 14, 2019: “The primary way the Holy Spirit guides you is by reminding you what you’ve read in the Bible. That’s why we memorize Scripture. It stores his Word in our minds, and the Holy Spirit helps us remember.

The other way God guides you is by impressions. God gave you a brain, and he wants you to use it. God will not control you; he's given you free will. But he will give you an idea and when you respond to it, he then begins to fill in the details. When God gives you an idea, that's called inspiration. When the Devil gives you an idea, that's called temptation. When you need to know the difference, ask, "Teach me, Lord, what you want me to do, and lead me along a safe path" (Psalm 27:11 GNT(Good News Translation)). When I ask God for His guidance, are my prayers/requests more-often-than-not expressed in general terms or are they expressed in specific terms and why?

"Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." (1 Corinthians 1:20-25) When it comes to the "plans" that God, through the Holy Spirit, has for me, do my actions sometimes reflect an attitude that God needs to first consider my opinion on the matter...get my input before making His "final" decision regarding His plan for me? If so, how so? If not, why not?

Following his dream, Paul, Silas, Timothy, and now Luke set out immediately for Macedonia. Pastor Wally pointed out that the "call" that Paul received was tantamount to receiving an official court order – that it isn't "optional". Now, I don't believe that the Holy Spirit guides people on a "whim". When He speaks, it always has Kingdom consequences. A heart that is open today may be closed again tomorrow. When I receive a "Macedonian call" from the Holy Spirit to do something, do I truly realize what is at stake...that procrastination is dangerous, or do I first check to see if I'm available to go do whatever it is that He is calling me to do and "pencil Him in" on my appointment calendar? Explain.

Romans 11:29 points out "...the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." (Emphasis added.) Irrevocability is defined by Webster's 1828 dictionary to mean "Not to be recalled or revoked; that cannot be reversed, repealed or annulled." In other words, I'll never hear God say "Oops, my bad...never mind." If what God calls me to do is inconvenient or difficult or personally embarrassing, to what degree do I tend to think/hope that God did make a mistake in asking me to do whatever it is and hope that, given enough time, He'll recognize His mistake and will ask someone else to take on His mission? If so, why so? If not, why not?

The Lord opened her (Lydia's) heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul." (Acts 16:14b) "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules." (Ezekiel 36:25-27) Daniel Hyde with Ligonier Ministry has said, "This is why the Canons of Dort says so wonderfully, 'According to which decree He graciously softens the hearts of the elect, however obstinate, and inclines them to believe' (Canons of Dort 1.6). God, who requires faith as the necessary means of receiving the blessings of His Son, is the same God who gives that faith by graciously softening stone-hard hearts and inclining those hearts to believe in His Son. Isn't this a wonderful assurance to us who have believed? Isn't this a wonderful promise to us for the hard-hearted we know? Isn't this a wonderful encouragement to pray to the God who is able and willing to do such a thing?" In what way(s), if any, does this thought encourage me to continue praying and witnessing to my "Who's Your One" and why?

Pastor Wally said that Lydia was paying "attention to what was said by Paul". To what degree do I agree or disagree with Pastor Wally's statement that everyone can hear, but at times I listen? Explain.

When I pray...when I attend a Sunday service...when I attend Digging Deeper, do I want to "hear" from God, or do I want to "listen" to God, or is that a distinction without a difference and why?

Lydia opened her home to Paul and his team—Lydia showed hospitality to those who brought the Good News, and she wouldn't take "no" for an answer. Obviously, she not only felt compelled to make the offer for them to stay at her home, but also compelled to ensure that the invitation was accepted. How about me? Do I tend to just accept the first objection as an "Oh, well...I tried" moment, or do I normally feel the need to press? Explain.

Paul went from Antioch to Philippi to preach the Gospel message to Lydia and her family. Pastor Wally said that when I am doubting God's love for me, know that God moved others to go the distance for me. To what distance am I willing to go for others...really...and why?