

Your Direction

Small Group Lesson

“and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them. And passing by Mysia, they came to Troas. A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us’” (Acts 16:7–9, NASB1995).

Everyone needs direction: “Should I marry this person, should I move on this business deal, or should I go back to school?” etc.

Paul came to a point in his ministry where he did not know where to go, only that God had closed every other door. Direction comes from two things: the “closed door” and the “open door.”

1. The “closed door”

1. God can direct you by a “stop” as well as a “step.”
2. When God is directing you into something else, He gives you an inward “check.” You lose your inward peace about a relationship, a purchase, or a direction.
3. A “pause” is 50% of direction. “Barreling through a red light” is disastrous. You have to put on the brakes to turn.
4. Here are some ways God closes a door: Caution and concern from those in spiritual authority or parents. The end of an assignment or loss of purpose to continue in an assignment. Circumstances that are beyond removal.

Question: Why do we hate to “stop” even if God is resisting our direction?

2. The “open door”

1. Paul realized that the door had closed into the continent of Asia Minor because the Holy Spirit would not give him release to proceed into other regions of Asia. He came to Troas, the “dead end” of the road on the seashore. Troas is the place in your life where you have no idea what is next because all the other options are closed.
2. A “vision” appeared to Paul through the night. This would be a dream or scene in his sleep. He saw a man across the sea in Macedonia calling to him to come there and help them. This dream triggered Paul’s crossover from “Asia” to “Europe” and changed the entire history of Christianity from “eastward” to “westward.”
3. How does God reveal His will to us? In the Old Testament, Israel was led by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. They made no decisions, only obeyed when He moved. The cloud and fire were their protection from the heat and cold, so leaving that direction would be disastrous. In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is our “cloud.”

Question: Have you ever been, spiritually, at the place called “Troas,” where you were at a dead

end and God opened a new door?

3. **He leads us by:**

1. **Scripture** – God sometimes will give you a series of verses (usually not one!) that confirm a direction for you. At times, he uses the preaching of the Word in a service to bring confirmation to a direction.
2. **Dreams and visions** – As in the case of Paul, the Holy Spirit can give a specific, clear picture that reveals to you in picture form what is His will.
3. **Prophecy** – Agabus the prophet gave Paul a word about his imprisonment in Jerusalem (Acts 21:11). Any word of prophecy should be confirmed by others in spiritual authority!
4. **Audible or inward voice** – Peter heard the voice, “behold, the men who had been sent by Cornelius, having asked directions for Simon’s house, appeared at the gate” (Acts 10:17). It is possible for God to speak to you audibly, but more likely, you will hear something spoken in your heart or even a mental picture or impression from the Lord. “Then the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go up and join this chariot’” (Acts 8:29).
5. **An angel of the Lord** – Philip heard an angel say to him, “Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza” (Acts 8:26). This is also possible, unusual, but possible.
6. **Circumstances** – You are better led than you know. At times, circumstances beyond our control “change our course,” and behind it all is God’s plan and direction. Paul’s ship was blown off course (see Acts 28) but landed on the island of Malta, where a great revival took place.
Question: Describe a time in your life when God definitely spoke to your spirit or your mind about your direction.

Someone said, “The way to always find the will of God is to empty yourself of your preference in the matter.” What decision are you facing right now for which you need God’s direction?