

Crossway Life Group, Week of August 11

See sermon notes on [CMC's webpage](#) for background information

Community

Take time to share and pray for each other's concerns and joys.

Scripture: Acts 16:6-15 "Guided (sometimes unexpectedly) by God"

Reading & Discussing Scripture

- **Pray:** We often think of praying as TALKING TO God. Something that often puzzles us is what it means to LISTEN TO God, and how He directs us, guides us, and speaks to us. Take a moment to pray, asking for Him to speak in this time, as well as at other times in our lives.
- **Background:** The book of Acts was written by Luke...a doctor, historian, and author. His goal was to transform people and churches by a strategic, inspired, and reliable telling of the stories of God's work and people's work in the early church. In Acts 16 Luke describes how Paul and his companions were guided by the Spirit of Jesus in expected and unexpected ways as they worked to spread the gospel and plant churches. The episode provides insight on how we can discern God's guidance in our lives today.
- **Read Acts 16:5-16.**
- What specific instructions and direction did Paul and his companions receive from the Holy Spirit?
- How did the Holy Spirit honor and work through their obedience throughout the passage?
- What principles of guidance do you see in the experience of Paul and his companions? Have you experienced guidance that was something like what Paul and Silas experienced? What was it like?
- What does the passage teach about the importance, and also the limitations, of human initiative in the growth of the Church?
- Consider aspects of God's guidance: negative and positive, circumstantial and rational, individual and corporate. How do see these evident in the experiences of Paul and his companions? What aspects seem easier for you to recognize? Which are you prone to overlook?

The Big Idea

The Spirit of Jesus guides the growth of his church through people who listen and obey his voice

God's Guidance:

Not negative only....but also positive

Not circumstantial only...but also rational

Not personal only...but also corporate (though community)

Application & Reflection Questions

- Consider these ways that the Spirit works, as well as our daily practices that might be a tool that God would use for us to hear the Spirit:

Holy Spirit's work		Our daily listening practices
Assures us of God's love	➔	Thanksgiving
Convicts us of sin	➔	Confession
Confirms the truth of God in our hearts	➔	Meditation on Scripture
Guides in times of choices	➔	Pray through our daily choices and activities

How might our listening practices (the right side) be a means for us to experience the Holy Spirit's work (the left side)? For example, how might assurance of God's love come through giving thanks?

How might pursuing the first three rows be an important step before pursuing the fourth row?

- What practices do you use, or might you use, to help you do what is in the right column?
- Where in your life do you sense the need to have God’s wisdom and direction? How might you use the practices in the right column in a way that is focused on this need?
- In these things, do you sense the voice of Jesus? If so, what do you think Jesus is saying to you at this point in your life, in the context of the challenges and opportunities you are facing?
- What indicators give you some measure of confidence that it is indeed Jesus speaking to you rather than someone or something else?
- What are your greatest fears about being guided by God? What helps you move to a place of confident trust in God?

Growing in Cultural Understanding

Different cultures and Christian traditions approach listening to God in various ways. Given your religious and cultural background, what were you taught about how to listen to God?

Our church strives to be for, of, and by peoples of many nations. How do you think our identity and mission should affect the way we are guided by the Spirit of Jesus? What would be signs we are doing this well as individuals? ... and as a church as a whole?

Serving beyond ourselves

What are ways that your group can be for the benefit of people beyond yourselves?

Acts 16:6-15 - New International Version (NIV)

Paul’s Vision of the Man of Macedonia

⁶ Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. ⁷ When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. ⁸ So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. ⁹ During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” ¹⁰ After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Lydia’s Conversion in Philippi

¹¹ From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day we went on to Neapolis. ¹² From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district^[a] of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.

¹³ On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. ¹⁴ One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message. ¹⁵ When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. “If you consider me a believer in the Lord,” she said, “come and stay at my house.” And she persuaded us.