

What Is an Open Closed Door?

by Shane Idleman

Shane Idleman explores the significance of open and closed doors in the Christian faith, emphasizing the importance of being led by the Holy Spirit in decision-making.

Duration: 50:47

Scripture: Proverbs 16:3, Isaiah 30:21, John 14:6, Acts 16:6-10, Acts 16:16-34, Romans 1:28

Topics: "Gods Will", "Spiritual Guidance"

Description

This sermon delves into the concept of open and closed doors in our lives, emphasizing the importance of discerning God's will. It explores the idea that closed doors may lead to better opportunities, and encourages seeking God's guidance through prayer and humility. The narrative from Acts 16 about Paul and Silas in prison highlights the power of praise, confronting darkness, and leading others to salvation.

Transcript

The title of the message is What is an Open Door? Actually, the title was, and I switched it this week, is What is a Closed Door? And then as I was studying, I realized that we need to see what an open door is as well. What is an open door, a closed door? Do you ever hear that terminology in Christian circles? Oh, God just opened a door. God just closed a door.

And we need to be really in tune with what is an open door, what is a closed door. A few weeks ago, we talked about, we talked, or I talked from Acts 15. There's division over John Mark.

And the title of that message was I've been hurt, now what? I've been hurt, now what? And we're hearing from people on that one too that they're being changed and challenged and transformed because we can hold hurt inside of us. And the church hurts all of us. I think we've all been hurt by the church, deeply sometimes, and sometimes for no reason, sometimes for reasons that are justified.

But I wanna encourage you to listen to that message, I've been hurt, now what? And then we took two weeks for fasting and now we're in Acts 16. Acts 16, the first part is Timothy joins Paul and Silas. So Timothy, you've heard of, he joins Paul and Silas.

And then there's something in your Bible, many Bibles, they call it the Macedonian Call. The Macedonian Call. I believe it's around verse seven, eight in there.

What it says, the Bible says this, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. Now that's a pretty strong word. They were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.

Now on the surface, you might think, wait a minute, I'm going to preach the word in Asia, they need to hear the word and I'm being, the Holy Spirit is forbidding me to go in that area. And often, I've noticed that anytime God stops a good thing there's often a God thing. There's something that we realize, well this is good.

What's wrong, this is good, but often there's a God thing that's even better and God wants to focus us in that direction. They were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. Now it's important to look at this word forbidden.

Forbidden, it just simply means, in the Greek language here that they were using, not conforming to usual selection principles. So the Holy Spirit, how He normally directs people, open doors, mainly, especially in these times, if there wasn't a boat ready to sail, if there wasn't a way to get there, if there wasn't funds, they were closed the door. Now we're really good at, especially in America, pushing the door open, it's called visa.

It's called I'll take a different airline, I'll take a different whatever, and we can push the doors open, but somehow they were not, what was ever happening was not conforming to the usual selection principles. In other words, something was stopping them. Now commentators are divided, nobody knows.

We just know that they knew that they were forbidden to go to Asia. Personally, I just believe God closed the doors there somehow, so a closed door. God will stop you if you're humble and teachable, because we often pray, God, if this is not you, close this door, right? If it, close this door, and if a person is genuine and humble and teachable, I truly believe that God will close that door.

Sometimes we think peekaboo games, we play with our kids, that God's playing peekaboo up in heaven, or hide and seek, and oh, nope, you missed it, and oh, you can't find me, and oh, let's watch you fall, and it's not, it's a God that says if you're humble and teachable, I will guide you, I will close doors that no man can open, and I will open doors that no man can shut. So I've noticed, and biblically speaking, if you trust God and you're sincere, He will close the door. The problem is, though, sometimes we pray, God, close this door, but I'm gonna work on the side here to try to get this door open.

So I did my part in praying for it, but I'm still gonna get what I want. And another good reminder is, God might give you what you want. If we push something open, in Romans 1, He gave them over to the base and corrupted mind.

That's talking about unbelievers, obviously, but I believe if a person is just hell-bent, a spirit of rebellion, and they're gonna do it their way, God is, okay, you want to see the ramifications of that. You wanna see what happens when you take over. So be careful, because I think a lot of people say, well, if God would close the door if it was not His will.

And I saw this a lot of times when I was in real estate, a lot of times, and it drove me crazy, because I wanted to tell the people, not necessarily, here's what they would do. They'd say, well, let's put our house up for sale. And if it sells, then obviously, God is opening a door.

And I would say, no, if you price your house at the fair market value and inventory is low, it just might sell. That's not necessarily God. So we have to be careful in this area.

Closed doors. Now, what's an obvious closed door? If something is illegal, and you have to break the law to open the door, He's closing that door. A closed door, if something lacks wisdom, if it's just not wise to do it, and you're still going to do it, then that lacking wisdom, to me, is a closed door.

Wrong reasons and wrong motives. If we have wrong reasons for doing something, wrong motives, or if we are running from things, and not addressing them head on, that could be another reason for a closed door. And as I said before, the caution is you can force it open with the spirit of rebellion on these closed doors.

So what is an open door then? Well, verse nine, and a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, come over to Macedonia and help us. Now after he had seen the vision, immediately, we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the Gospel to them.

So the Lord closed the door to Asia, and He opened the door to this other area. So it's almost like He closed this missions trip, He closed the door to this missions trip, and opened the door to a better missions trip, or where He really wanted them to go, because I also believe in the sovereignty of God, as many of you do. Which means that God has sovereign plans, it's not just heads or tails.

Well, let's see what happens. Let's just roll the dice, right, and see what happens. He has sovereign plans.

And if things aren't working, and I can just picture, this missions trip to Asia, there's no, we missed the boat. It's not for six more months, or if they're traveling, I didn't look at a map quite, but I don't know if you go up and over to get to Asia, they could have, all of their transportation had stopped, their connections were gone. Something prohibited them from going.

And then God gives Paul a dream, a vision, to go to this area. They wake up, they're going to this area, they go to look at the travel arrangements, possibly the door's wide open. We're going to Macedonia tomorrow morning.

Are you ready? And it's half price. I mean, you see that God is, if you're sensitive to it, God is working in certain areas, when there is an open door. Proverbs 16.3, commit to the Lord whatever you do, and He will establish your plans.

He will bring them to fruition if you let Him guide you. Now here's the mistake that many people make. Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and He will make your plan successful.

So they think that means, okay, Lord, here's what I'm doing, come and bless it. That's not really what this is talking about. It's like, Lord, I think this is your handwriting all over it, I think this is your will, here's what I'm committing this whole endeavor to you, it's legal, it's right, it's justified, it's using wisdom, all these things, would you show me, I'm committing these plans to you, and He will see those to fruition.

And often, He takes a little bit different direction. We get a sensing of what God calls us to do. Here's my sensing, God, I think you're calling me to do this.

Because I knew He was calling me to ministry, right? I thought it was traveling, speaking, like Billy Graham does, and then He goes, nope, this is where you're going. Plant a church. Oh, okay, well, it's kind of close, right? And then, or for example, we are looking for a building, right? We're praying for a building.

Lancaster, it looks like Lancaster. Nope, here we go, Leona Valley. Oh, okay, well, we're close.

Right, you see, so you try to, you know, often you're just submitting, you're that vessel, and God is taking you in the direction if you're humble and teachable. Sorry, I had a lot of congestion this morning. But here's the key, key to hearing God.

Spirit-filled, you want to hear from God this morning on decisions, on what to do, how to do it? Lord, we need, we're confused. Here's the key to hearing God. Spirit-filled is spirit-ruled.

When you're spirit-filled, you're spirit-ruled. That means you listen to the promptings of the Spirit. You obey the voice of God.

You obey His word. You live with integrity. You treat people right.

You use wisdom, and you're ruled by the Spirit. See, when I'm ruled by the Spirit, now, I'm not perfect in this area, right? You can all relate. But when you're ruled by the Spirit, you're surrendered to the Spirit, you're like this vessel.

Like, Lord, where do you want me to go? I'm led by the Spirit because I'm surrendered to His work. But if the Lord is saying, here's what I want you to do, and you're saying, nope, I'm going this way. I'm not Spirit-led.

I'm Shane-led. And those two things can't coexist. And the hard part is, we can pray it.

Lord, help me go in that direction. But doing it, that's the challenge, right? Because I've made plans before. The Lord blesses plans, and I know it's not quite what He wants me to do, but it's comfortable, it's convenient, it's easy.

And the course of least resistance, right? That's how canyons are made. A river takes the course of least resistance, when a river is starting. And we can do that sometimes in our own lives.

So Spirit-filled. Anytime we talk about, I'm a Spirit-filled believer, are you Spirit-ruled? Are you ruled and governed by what God is challenging you to do? See, we want New Testament power and direction, but we don't want New Testament holiness. If I could just get that direction like they got, but we don't want to do what they did.

It was a life complete. That's why when I read the book of Acts and look at sometimes the church today, I'm like, boy, there sure is a difference. These people, they were totally surrendered to God.

They were praying, they were fasting. Lord, whatever you would have me to do. Now, there was problems, there was issues.

Same types of challenges, but you see a Christian that is truly Spirit-led. Think about this, too. Who are we fooling? If we are living in the flesh, too busy for prayer, too hectic for study, too tired for meditation, we won't discern the right voice.

You won't hear the right voice if you're too busy not being Spirit-led. So, I'm sure some of you are asking the question, how do I know to leave a door shut or to pray that it opens? Right? Because God has shut a door, then you can say, okay, well, that door's shut. I'm moving on.

Sometimes, but how do you know to pray and contend for it? Well, a couple things. Pray. Pray this type of prayer.

God, search my heart and motives. This appears to be a shut door, but will you show me if I should keep contending for it? God has shut doors for the church in many areas. Shut door, okay, but we keep contending.

And we see things come to fruition. Or in your own life, God shuts a door. You know there's a job or something He's called you to do.

Well, He shuts the door. But often, that delay, the old saying is, a delay is not a deny all the time with God. So, pray that.

Lord, search my heart and motives. This appears to be a shut door, but will you show me if I should keep contending for it? And then also, there's integrity. Don't manipulate things or try to make things happen.

Did you hear that? Don't manipulate or try to make things happen as if God doesn't see. Don't skew information to those who are offering godly counsel. Because here's what we do.

We go to people and say, okay, here's what God's, and I've been guilty of this, I'll just tell you up front. And we skew the information. We just, you know, not quite all the truth, but some of it, and then we want to hear what they say to give me confirmation on my direction.

We might not add things or say certain things about our financial state, or about our mental state, or physical. We might paint this picture so they give us counsel that we want. And then we go off that counsel knowing that we manipulated the counselor.

And so, and here's another question. Are you seeking godly counsel? Before, I just talked to my wife yesterday about this. Looking back, I think any major decision we've ever made, or I've ever made, hopefully you have too, you seek godly counsel.

You go to those who know you best, who know, and say, here's what I'm thinking. What are you thinking? What do you think? And I met with at least three or four different pastors when we were considering moving out here to this area. I met with them, had lunch, talked, what are you thinking? What's going on? Well, tell me about the church.

Tell me about, and as you begin to just shoot them straight, right, not like tweaking, well, it's way out. You know, and you give them the right information, the godly counsel lines up. And even other people, mature believers, I'd say, well, here's what we're considering.

And they would all think, what's the financial state of this location? You know, if you're coming into \$3 million in debt, and things aren't godly, see, that's why you look for godly counsel. Won't be the person who says, here's what I'm going to do, and I don't care what people think. Be careful.

You could force that wrong door open. Here's another point that's very important. If God wants to open a door, He will open it.

You can just rest in that, because so many people are worried. I've got to make this happen. God's in heaven worried, and He needs my help.

If God wants to open a door, He'll just, He'll bring a dream to the judge on your case. He'll open, He'll fight for you in custody battles, or lawsuits, or different things. He will close a door if it's meant to be closed.

He will open a door if it's meant to be open. He doesn't need our help and our promptings. It's actually, to me, what I've noticed, is I'll try certain things, and this, but when I just totally forget about it, and God will open up amazing doors.

He'll just, how did that happen? God. He'll put the right person in contact with this person while you're over at this store running to this person, and makes the contact. God opens the door, and then when He does, you feel so much more at peace with that.

Now here's, is there, well, you know I should say something about this Macedonia dream, but I will in a minute, but is there peace about the closed door? Is there peace about the closed door? So when they closed the door on Paul, not to go to Asia, was there peace there? In other words, okay, it's closed, I'm done, or is there a continual stirring for it to open as you seek God? What I mean by that is God has closed a door on certain things, and I'll be happy to share these things with you at some point, to see what He does with these. But He's closed a door, and then He seems, and then I forget about it, but there's not peace, there's a stirring to go back and contend for that to take place, contend for that to open. There's a continual stirring about it.

I don't have peace about this closed door. God, are you stirring something in me and wanting me to take this to prayer? And I believe if we're seeking God, that continual stirring is of God. But if you're seeking the things of the flesh, you might have the wrong thing stirring within you.

For example, just to tell you the truth, any time I sit down and watch Fixer Upper, I'm ready to spend about \$150,000 I don't have, take out a loan from a bank that I'll be paying 30 years on, and have all the barn doors, and all the this, and I just, see, I'm in the, oh, look at that, Fixer Upper. Now we want to go to Texas to visit this place, right? And go, look, it's so those, see, but those, see, that's God, He wants me to spend all this money on my house, get like, no, that's the flesh. Now there's nothing wrong with these shows, right? If you can balance your, and they don't remodel a whole kitchen for 20,000.

I don't know who they are fooling, right? I mean, this, yeah, for the appliances, and it's, but see, if I'm in the flesh, I'm thinking like the flesh. So if I go into, ah, look at, 150,000 on our house, we could do this, we could do this, and there's no peace there, right? But I don't care, I'm just gonna do it, and then I see a Taco Bell commercial, and I run to Taco Bell, and I eat way too much, and then as I'm going there and watching, look at the Lexus commercial, zero down? Zero down? No, I don't read the fine print where it's \$999 a month, right? But you're, see, you're led of the flesh, and you think it's of God, that's not of God. So you have to be pulled away from the leading of the flesh and begin to seek Him, and that's why, I don't have a problem with those prayers.

Ask what you will, and it'll be answered. Seek, and you will find. Knock, the door will be opened.

If you just, if you pray, if you have faith, there's a mustard seed, anything you ask. Be like, that doesn't make sense. Right, because you're wanting the wrong things.

But when the flesh is no longer leading, and you're just led of the spirit, you'll take the used truck that has five years, is five years old, because God is leading you. You don't need the newer this, and always that, and so that's, I mean, by led of the spirit versus led of the flesh. So I believe there are closed doors in my

life that I've kept contending for.

Kept contending for, and will do so until God directs me otherwise. We often make impulsive, fleshly decisions. That's why we get in trouble.

And there's a video I sent out, I don't know how many of you have watched it. Go to your bulletin, I'm gonna be sending this out more. There's an excerpt from a video, it's called Forks Over Knives.

My fasting series was Fasting Over Forks, right? A play on that. Forks Over Knives, it's a documentary on physical health, and our body, and cancer, and heart disease, and eating the way God designed it, and different things. I would encourage you to watch it.

I'm on my second or third viewing of it. I just like to get all this in my spirit as far as taking care of this body he has given us. But they said something in here.

There's an excerpt. Toward the end, we are programmed to seek pleasure, to avoid pain, and to conserve energy. Their whole point was, that's why we're eating so much of the wrong things.

You know, instead of an apple, why not have a teaspoon of sugar that's more, you know, boom, gives me a lot more bang for the buck. But I thought of this spiritually. We are programmed to seek pleasure, to avoid pain, and to conserve energy.

So when it comes to God opening a door, nope, if it's not pleasurable, if it's gonna cause a little pain, it's gonna take a little bit of energy, I don't wanna go through it. But often, God will do things that where there is, you have to expend some energy. It's called laziness when you don't.

You have to fight the flesh. You have to do God's will. It's not always about pleasure.

Now, I believe that God gives us times of pleasure. Entertainment that's relaxing, going on vacation, enjoying your grandkids or your children. There's pleasure things there.

But when we pursue these things, be careful that it might not be the right open door. Now here's what happens in the waiting time. Sometimes God will shut a door.

It's during this waiting time that our motives are sifted. Do you know what a sifter is? Some of you are older. It would sift the wheat and the chaff would fall, the good stuff would be held together, and they would talk throughout the Old Testament, well, God sifts you.

I sift you. Peter, Satan is wanting to sift you like wheat, to challenge you, to make you fall. And while we're waiting, it really sifts our motives.

Because if you're praying and seeking God, your motives will be brought to the surface. Because you can't pray to a holy God every single day, set a time to do that and play games. The reason most people don't pray is because they are playing games.

And they can't spend that time with God because it exposes the facade. The facade is exposed in the prayer closet. It's very hard to fool God.

You can't. That's why we avoid prayer. That's why I believe many people avoid prayer, they avoid Bible study, and they avoid church, is they are going to do things their way, and they're not concerned with what

God has to say about it.

Also, waiting clears our thinking, it refocuses our direction. My whole point in sharing this waiting time is this. Don't immediately assume that a closed door is a closed door forever.

If it's a good thing, it could be a closed door for a season in God's timing also, and as you pray, and as you wait, and as you contend. So here we go. God redirects Paul as he sought Him.

So Paul was seeking God, God redirected him, and a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, come over to Macedonia and help us. So begs the question, let's talk about the elephant in the room.

Does God still direct us through dreams and visions? Hmm, wow, that's a prickly one, isn't it? Well, you know how I do it, right? Two sides. God's in every dream and every vision and every, oh, God, you spoke to me like... Like God speaks to him every single day. There's dreams and visions and angels dancing on the rooftop.

I mean, it's just, but these people are often very, they're not doing good financially, their credit score's really low, they don't have a lot of friendships, they're just off, off and never, never land. It's just all dreams and visions and flowery stuff. That's where the saying, I think, comes from, you can be so heavenly-minded that you're no earthly good.

Now sometimes that's not true, because it's the heavily-minded people that are very good on the earth and getting a lot done. But this side is just dreams, and it's like they get a dream or vision every week. And it's like God's directing them not through His Word, but through visions and dreams.

And then there's this other side that says, no, all that is gone today. God would never do that anymore. We have His Word, and that's enough.

Well, I've given this example before, and I won't bore you with it, but I think it's a good one. I mentioned, I don't even know when, a couple months ago, that I used to have dreams when I was younger, maybe 15, 16 years ago, preaching to like groups of people and just waking up like, oh, I don't know what that means. I don't know, what does that mean? I mean, wow, that's like, I'm not called to do that.

But He was planting seeds, so when it was time, He called me to pastor and to speak, the vision or the dreams only confirmed things that I was called to do. The Bible didn't say in John 1, Shane, you're gonna be a preacher or a pastor. Oh, okay, there you go, now I know.

Now, I'm not minimizing this either, because I think people need to live in this. You get the heart of God, the counsel of God. You know if your decisions are marked with truth.

You know if it's a foundation. So we live by this. So as I'm living my life and pursuing what God's called me to do, this is leading me, but those things come in and they are supplemental.

They confirm certain things. I mean, if you're having, you know, if I wake up and have a vivid dream of my whole family falling off Godey Pass, I might take another out to church that day. You know, just God can use those things very vivid, very vivid, I mean, there's books out, I remember an atheist who, who was it that had the dream of a, it was a very vivid dream.

Oh, Jim Cimbala, Brooklyn Tabernacle. He was, there's another video I'd love for you guys to watch too. He was praying one time for his daughter Chrissy went south for two and a half years, like in New York, not a good place to go south.

Prodigal son in New York, prodigal daughter, not a good place. And she had a vision living, and when she was living in the state of, who knows what, I don't want to throw him a blank, but not in a good spot. And the church was praying for her on Tuesday night, just praying and praying and praying.

And she had a vision that night. It was something like, don't quote me exactly, but she could see she was getting ready to fall into the abyss of hell. And God pulled her back and said, I'm not done with you yet.

And she went home on the floor. She couldn't get even off the floor. She was praying and asking her dad and mom to forgive her, and God redirected her entire life.

Now would that have not happened without that? I don't know. See, that's why prayer, folks, is so important. That's why, that's how, you don't have to preach to your family members.

You pray them into heaven. God will bring visions or dreams. The Muslims that are coming to faith in Christ, because they're seeing visions of who Jesus is.

You can't discount all of that. And so that's what happened here. Paul had this vision, this dream, of this person saying, come to Macedonia and help us.

Now as you wake up, though, Paul woke up, take the gospel to Macedonia, good thing. Open doors, there's probably travel arrangements, good thing. Everybody had peace in the area.

The other apostles, it's a good thing. See how God works in that area of confirming his will, confirming his nature. Before they made this decision, it all aligned with his word.

It was consistent with the character of God. The dream wasn't, I had a dream to go to the local saloon and get tanked. Was that of God? Maybe he wants me to witness there after a six pack.

You know, see, that doesn't line up. It doesn't line up. It has to line up with his character and with his nature.

I knew a pastor, he's moved now, so it's okay, but he would tell me, go to Claim Jumper and have these big, you know, whatever they call them, yards, big drinks of ale beer. And he says, well, I'm ministering to the waitress. I said, no, I think you're getting a little tipsy.

I said, you're not ministering. She's like, here you go, I bet, mm-hmm, uh-huh. And but we make these excuses, right? And we come up with certain things.

You didn't like that example, I can tell. Probably a lot of you do that. But I told him a 24-ounce ale beer, 8% alcohol, that's equivalent to four beers.

You're feeling pretty good. That's a little bit, might be over the moderation thing the Bible talks about there. And being a pastor, sitting in that environment, it was just interesting.

God's will is to help others. It rarely has to do with comfort, pleasure, and avoiding pain, the things I just talked about. Because isn't this how we do it? Okay, is it comfortable? Does it bring me some pleasure?

And it's not painful, then I'll do it.

But try, that's why many of you are not going to the hospital homes. Ooh, pin drop. That's why.

I'll be driving right by one. I'm like, Lord, I'm like, oh, goodness. Oh, that's not comfortable, I'm on an agenda, it's gonna be painful, it's gonna be hard.

And we have a choice, do we obey? Or do we continue on the course that we want to go on? So see how important this is. When it comes to God's will, it's not always. Now, here's the wonderful thing.

When you're doing God's will, there's tremendous peace and joy that follows. But sometimes it's not initial. It's like, I just can't wait to get to that hospital home.

I'm just over-bubbling. Some people are, maybe. Sometimes I'm in that way.

But most of the time, that comes after. The discipline is first, and the joy and the peace follow. So God's will is to help others.

It rarely has to do with comfort, pleasure, and avoiding pain. This is why I often tell those who move, or want to move, or leave a job, just to get away from here, to be careful in their assumptions. I mean, I've wanted to quit a dozen times at different jobs.

When I was back in construction, the guy I was working for, wow, Adolf Hitler. And he was just a driver, and just, you know, and I'd go home and say, I'm done, I'm quitting. I'm not going to do this.

I'm not going to submit to this guy. I mean, this is difficult. But don't leave under those circumstances.

And I knew every time, don't leave. So finally, when I did leave, it was great. It was on good terms.

But we can be, so be careful when people say, I need to get out of this valley. I hate it here. So God's saying, oh, wonderful, then go.

I'll bless those plans. God might be saying, no, I want you here. I want you here.

So be careful. If we make assumptions on how we feel, and what doesn't cause pain, and what doesn't hurt in the least amount of energy, and we just got to get out of here. We got to do things that the flesh is screaming, and we're answering that call.

Our first impulse should not be to run from trouble, but to seek God. Our first impulse should not be to run from trouble, but to seek God. And sometimes we complain, I guess.

You know, like, oh, I got to leave here. We don't like it here. I've got, I know people who just planted a church in Hollywood.

And they live down there off of that whole area there in Hollywood. Or another friend of mine, African American, who planted a church right in the heart of Los Angeles, close to Twin Towers, Los Angeles, in Men's County Jail and Women's County Jail. And they're like right there.

That's where they're living, in a two-bedroom apartment. And we're gonna sit here and go, hmm. Hmm.

We got oak trees. You got million-dollar homes over here somewhere. And you got this wonderful, but yet we'll still complain.

So all I'm saying is be careful. Be careful, because that's often the enemy doing things to discourage, and to get you to take maybe a different course. But sometimes, here's a disclaimer, but sometimes God will use trouble, challenges, and being discontent to move us on.

I've told this story years ago, I think, but when I left 24-Hour Fitness, God had to force me out. I'm like, this is comfortable. This is really good money.

But he had to bring discontent, trouble, and just, almost like this, go! Right, because if it wasn't, if he didn't do that, I wasn't going anywhere. I would just stay there and been comfortable. But so he brought discontent.

My boss was a psychopath, honestly. And the vice president at that time of our company, and just this, this, and all these things, and then I just had to go. He just had to do that.

So he can do that. If you're filled with the Spirit, you'll know if it's God. If you're filled with the flesh, life will be very chaotic.

You won't know what's going on if you're not filled. You won't know what decision is from God. So here's the way to determine that.

If something is difficult, and God is wanting to move you on, you have tremendous and sustaining peace about it. You are Spirit-ruled. In the multitude of counsel, there is safety.

You're seeking counsel because you're Spirit-ruled. You're not leaving out of anger and frustration. You are Spirit-ruled.

You're not running from your problems, but walking towards God's will. You're Spirit-ruled. If you don't know what to do, don't do anything.

And sometimes, God will use trouble and challenges that put us right in His will to get us to our breaking point, or to reach others at their breaking point. See, sometimes we've got this impression that God's will is like sitting in the Garden of Eden. That's His will.

I'm just gonna sit in the Garden of Eden, and His will is going to be clear running waters and fly fishing all day, and no problems at home, no marital spats, kids are wonderful little angels. I'm in God's will. But often, God's will, He will put you in difficult things to minister to people in difficult situations.

Here's an example. Paul and Silas, I guess, on their way to Macedonia, or at Macedonia, they were imprisoned in God's will. Wouldn't you say, we're in prison, we're out of God's will? No, not in this case.

Verse 16, now it happened, as we went to prayer, a certain slave girl possessed with the spirit of divination met us, who brought her master's much profit by fortune-telling. For some reason, I put this in here this morning. I don't know if it's for you or second service, but if you've dabbled in this before, there may be an open door, the wrong open door, for the enemy.

And many people say, well, yeah, but I've dabbled in it. Oh, oh, that's okay then. Like I've dabbled with heroin.

I mean, oh, oh, that's okay. I mean, this dabbling, we think, it's opening a door to divination, to fortune-telling, the Ouija boards, the looking at tarot cards, and people have told me, well, why don't you go in and read your future, just to see what they say? I say, if I ever go into their building, I'm gonna tell them their future. I'm not even, why even play it? Well, let's see what the horoscopes say.

I don't, why? Why? Because once you start to do that, you're opening the door. Because there's a difference between, you know, going into a fortune-teller's office, or a bill, or whatever they are, I don't even know what they are. There's houses now that say, come in and read your fortune, and there's different going, hey, let me tell you your fortune.

If you don't repent and believe in the only God, then going in saying, I wonder what she has to say. Wonder what, I mean, just playing around here, right? I know it's not really real, but see, you're opening yourself up to that, with all these different things. So if that's you, I would encourage you to go to the prayer room and be prayed for, to bring this to the surface.

Verse 17, this girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, these men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation. This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, these men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation. Are people clear about who you are, or confused about what you stand for? This is amazing.

The more I read the book of Acts, when Paul, when any of the disciples went into a town, they knew who they were. Servants of the Most High God. They knew who these people were.

Now, many times, Christians walk around, they don't even know if we're Christians. I don't know. We don't know what they say.

We don't know, because we wanna be just like the world, but we'll come and enjoy church. But we don't want people to think I'm weird and have a fish on my car. You know, or this, and nobody knows what we stand for anymore.

In verse 18, and this she did for many days, but Paul, greatly annoyed. See, I call this godly annoyance. Have you ever been annoyed? Sometimes it can be good.

Okay, I've had enough of that. Devil, you've ran this house long enough. Or you know what, you've done this, I'm annoyed, now I'm so annoyed to take action.

So he was greatly annoyed, a good thing in this case. He turned and he said to the Spirit, see, he didn't rebuke her, he rebuked the Spirit within her. He said, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.

And he came out that very hour. But when her master saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities. When you confront darkness, there is a price to pay, there is warfare.

Let me sound the alarm this morning. When you confront darkness, the devil doesn't just go, oh good, okay, you got me. He often says, okay, you wanna play that game? You wanna play that game? I'm coming at you.

And you're confronting the darkness. The devil doesn't like that. So be prepared.

Have that armor on. Verse 25, but at midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God and the prisoners were listening to them. Listen to what they were doing.

They were praising, not complaining. And I think, would I have been doing that at midnight in that jail? I would have been, that little girl filled with divination. Boy, wait till I get out of here.

I'll just let that spirit back in her then. You know, and you have this, but they were praising and not complaining. They were being thankful.

They weren't being disgruntled. These are sure signs that you are being led by God. When you're praising, not complaining, when you're being thankful, not disgruntled, there's a very high chance you are being led of God.

So here's how it normally works. Somebody's going to make a decision about something. I wanna, whatever, sell my car, sell my house, take a different job, move from here, whatever it is.

If they're always disgruntled, always negative, always putting everything down, they're not filled with the spirit of God. The flesh is leading them. So be thankful and not complaining.

They weren't running and banging on the prison door. Let us out of here. Let us out of here.

They're saying, God, how can You use us here? How can You use me here? And then verse 26. Suddenly, there was a great earthquake so that the foundation of the prison was shaken. And immediately, all the doors were opened, everyone's chains were loosed, and the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposed the prisoners had fled.

He drew his sword and was about to kill himself. Now we read this and go, wait, why? What's wrong with this guy? Well, as soon as they found out that the prisoner was gone, he would be killed. That's how they made sure you watched a prisoner.

Is if that prisoner was gone, your life was taken. Now, rewind your thinking back a little bit. When all these Roman guards were watching the tomb of Jesus, and it's history, that they went back and they reported that the body was stolen, the body was taken.

They should have been killed. This isn't some fairy tale. This is history.

He was about to kill himself, but Paul called out with a loud voice saying, do yourself no harm for we are all here. Now, that's a spirit-filled man because most Christians say, yep, let's just sit back in the corner, let him do that, and then we'll get out of here. We'll grab the key, right? I mean, let him do it.

But he was concerned about that other man. That's his heart was for this other man. That's why he was actually in prison.

God sovereignly put him there and you, and I have to wonder, does God sovereignly put you in a difficult situation so you can reach that person in a difficult situation? But I wanna run into the person on my street when it's not hot out, when I'm going to get the mail, oh, by the way, your car's broke. Did you know? You know, we want everything just so convenient, but sometimes God puts us in that difficult position to minister to those in those positions. On that note, some of you, maybe not this service, 11th service for sure, are having a hard time with your past.

A lot of regret from your past. Whether it's drugs, alcohol, whatever it is, broken marriage. But God will use that in you to have you help others.

Because you can't lead somebody through something you've never been through. Isn't it interesting that Moses was led into the wilderness for 40 years before he could lead the children of Israel through the wilderness? I mean, you look at where God, He will use somebody to lead somebody. That's why we need to not be so critical of even Christian pastors.

Because, oh, that person's too intellectual. Well, that's who they're reaching. And then you've got me, voice crying in the wilderness.

Oh, he's just all, ugh. It's all about addiction. It's all about the prodigal son.

It's all about repentance. Yeah, that's who I'm reaching. So get rid of the critical spirit and start embracing what God has called you to do.

He's all given us different giftings and different things. And people, you know, well, that pastor's all about love and all about love and all about love. Yeah, he came from an abused family.

His dad sexually abused him. His sister's a homosexual. And he's got a heart of compassion and love.

And that's how he reaches people. That's his, God's called him to go into those things and do that. But he's given me the heart of Jeremiah.

His word is in my burning fire. I mean, you're either gonna love this or hate this. You're gonna, that church I hate or that church I love.

There's no money in the middle usually because that's what he's called me to do. To get that guy and just wake him up. Or that, wow, did he just call me out? He just called me out.

I'm not coming back there again. And then you're stuck with that all week. And then you feel something drawing you back.

God uses our past so people can relate. The ministry of reconciliation. Go to the people in their pain.

Go to the people in their pain. That's what Paul did. He didn't do it by choice, but God put him there.

Verse 29, then he called for a light, ran in, fell down, trembling before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out and said, sirs, what must I do to be saved? Now, they were obviously preaching to these guards or singing hymns. The guards knew there was something different.

He didn't ask him, what are you guys here for? He knew. He just said, what must I do to be saved? And Paul said, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved and your entire household. Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all that were in the house.

And he took them the same hour of the night, washed their stripes, and immediately, he and all his family were baptized. Now, when he had brought them into the house, he set food before them and rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household. So it's almost like he brings Paul out of the prison, feeds him, gets him cleaned up, and gets him back in prison so he doesn't get in trouble.

This whole thing took place that evening. Don't worry, I'm coming to an end real quick here. Baptism was a priority.

I don't wanna miss this. They believed and they were baptized. What we do today is we believe and we'll get to it next year.

So if you need to be baptized, whether you were a kid and you didn't know what you were doing or an infant, it was through a different type of denomination or something, be baptized. Make that step of commitment and get signed up for August baptism because it is a priority. But let me just focus on this as the closing point.

What must I do? What must I do to be saved? And I just ran into a person this week, but I'm Baptist. But I'm Catholic. But I'm a good person.

I'm religious. I've always known God. I was raised in a Christian home.

None of that matters. None of that matters. You should never say anything like that.

If somebody asked you, you should say, I am a blood-bought child of Jesus Christ because He paid the price for me. That's why I'm going to heaven. You think the Pope's going to stand by you? You think the denominational headquarters will give you a letter of endorsement? But that's what we say when we don't have a right relationship with God.

Who in their right mind is going to say, why go to Shane's church? Why go to Westside Christian Fellowship? Don't say Shane's church. Just say Shane pastors the church that God planted. But why go to this church? And I've ran into people.

They'll say that. And it drives me crazy. Well, Shane, I've known God all my life.

Even as a baby, I could sense His presence. Oh, well, what does that mean? Exactly what I said. They're spiritual.

And that's how we avoid the conviction. And I talk to people about Jesus. I know, I'm a good person.

That's what you're resting on. But see, he pointed him to the only way. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

See, belief is abandonment. I'm abandoning myself to all other gods, all other religions. I'm abandoning myself to my sin.

I'm abandoning myself to my way of doing things. I'm getting rid of me and I'm embracing what God has for me. I'm believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.

But I thought of this this morning. Is anyone asking you, what must I do to be saved? Is anybody ever asking you, what must I do to be saved? If not, it's because they don't see the difference. You're not praising God in the difficulties.

You're complaining. You're not pointing others to Him. You're concerned about your own direction.

See, people see the difference in us. Then they ask for the hope. Hey, you're losing your house.

How do you go through that with such joy? You've just been diagnosed with cancer. How are you doing? You've just lost your family. How are you doing? How are you working in that environment and not losing your mind? You're so, how? How? Now, here's the overarching benefit of believing in Jesus as Lord and Savior.

And if you've never done that, I would encourage you. Don't keep playing church, right? We come, we think, we sit in a pew, we heard Shane, we're good. We're not, you're not good.

You have to repent and believe. But here's the overarching benefit. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, you and your whole household.

Now, this doesn't mean a parent gets saved and everybody's automatically covered, the kids are good, they don't ever have to worry about it ever again. He's saying now, he's saying the power of influence. And Paul also probably spoke prophetically.

He saw that when the father led, the family followed. And I don't know, I don't have the statistics handy, but it is way up there. When the father leads, the family follows.

It's like when a father becomes a Christian, it's like amazing percentage of people becoming Christians in the whole family. The mother, when we lead by example. And these are some hard-hitting questions, but I'm not apologizing.

I'm just going to say them. Could it be that your kids are not following the Lord because you're not? Could it be that they have no passion for the things of God because you don't? Could it be that you are passing down the same sins and the same demonic strongholds that you struggle with because you don't want to deal with them? Could it be that the reason your family isn't saved is because you are not saved? I mean, I think on messages like this, that prayer room should be full this morning. Because we have to lead by example.

I don't even know if I've said this here since we've been here. But I used to say something once a year from Josh McDowell. I just thought of it this morning.

You know who Josh McDowell is? He wrote a lot of books. He said the number one question he gets from young adults, teenagers, young adults, is how can we live for Christ when we don't want the Christ that our parents have? Now, if that doesn't hit you like a ton of bricks, that's the number one question on the minds of our children throughout America. But Josh, how can I live for Christ? I don't want the Christ that my parents have.

They've got the wild turkey in the pantry. They've got the wrong things on TV. They're treating their spouse.

They're yelling, they're cursing. There's nothing of Christ in them. And that's a question I think we need to look at.

Now, there are seasons where the kids will look at you and say, because we're not perfect, and we apologize, we ask for forgiveness. I'm not talking about perfection. But I'm talking about our kids seeing us, or your grandkids seeing in you the Christ you want them to have.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/9UGse1XV30s.mp4>

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