

I'm curious how many of you are looking for some divine direction in your life, maybe some guidance about what's coming up. Maybe some of you, maybe I'm the only one, but maybe some of you are feeling that desire, that need to have some guidance from God about what's coming up in your life or what decisions to make. We're in part three of a four part series called divine direction. As a pastor, the most common question that I get most often asked is some form of the question that says, how do I know what God wants for my life? Divine Direction, seeking it, asking for it, and part of the reason that we're seeking divine direction, I think is today. It seems as if people can be a not great decision makers. We've talked about a few reasons that making decisions can be difficult over the past several weeks and one of the reasons that making decisions can be difficult is because there are so many options.

It seems like today there are more options than even not so long ago and far too many options to make a decision. Another reason that making decisions can be difficult is because we have this illusion of perfection that that seems to be compounded by social media where you see pictures of other people's lives or read stories about what's going on for them and you think, well, that person has it all put together that their life is perfect and and biolife wha wha. It's not that this illusion of some other people's perfect life and because of this illusion of perfection at times when we don't want to make an imperfect decision. If I choose this well, that means I'm going to miss what might be perfect coming up instead and we make no decision at all.

Yeah,

I think another reason, but perhaps that a challenge for some people growing up today to make decisions is because we make a lot of decisions for other people that this is particularly a challenge of perhaps for children or for youth or young adults who grown up where, where much of their decisions have been made for them. You're going to sign up for this. You're going here, you're doing this program. You're doing that activity and and some people call that being over programmed, maybe you know what that's like or struggle with it in your own life or in the life of your grandchildren, and so sometimes I think we have people that struggle with being indecisive because they haven't really practiced that decision making that muscle.

I struggle with this at times with our own children. What are decisions that it makes sense for our kids to make on their own and what decisions are. That's just the way it's going to be in this household. I want to provide the right amount of autonomy and also the right amount of freedom, the right amount of guidance, but not too much and it can be a struggle to know how authoritative or how not authoritative it can be as a parent, even in this struggle, right? It's hard for me to make a decision about what's the right amount of guidance. I imagine something like this happens for you as well. There's also a, what some people would call Fomo, the fear of missing out f o, m o for those that may not be familiar with that term. I'm afraid if I take this opportunity, I'm going to miss out on everything else and because I'm afraid of missing out on everything else over here, I can't make a decision to do what's right in front of me. And so instead we make no decision and and oftentimes are we don't make decisions. Is, is far more troublesome than one where we just make a commitment and I to go ahead in that direction. This is how the problem of indecision and so many people these days.

So how do we become more decisive? And perhaps more importantly than that, how do we make decisions, uh, that God might have in mind for us? How do we find God's divine direction?

Our focus for today is trusting God's process. Trust the process. We're going to take a closer look at Paul's story from acts chapter [inaudible] to see what we can learn for our own lives today. And let me

give you a little bit of context for this passage of scripture from Paul is talking about a significant decision that he had to make Paul loved where he was in the town of Ephesus. He loved it. These people were his people. This place was his place. He felt at home there he could have spent the rest of his life doing what he was doing there in Ephesus. He was very, very happy by all accounts.

Then he felt prompted by God leave where he was and to go somewhere else. He called the elders of the church in and explain to them God is moving me on, and he had a very emotional farewell with them. He loved where he was, but God was calling him to go somewhere else. Listen again to what Paul says, as recorded in acts 20. Now compelled by the spirit. I'm going to Jerusalem. I don't know what will happen to me there. What I do know is that the Holy Spirit testifies to me from city to city that prisons and troubles await me, but nothing, not even my life is more important than completing my mission. This is nothing other than the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus to testify about the good news of God's grace

and then these verses we're going to take a look and break them apart and find four steps in God's process. You'll find them over and over again perhaps in your life as you're seeking to be a follower of Jesus and to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit for steps, trust the process, and the first step is this. The first step in the process is the guidance of the Holy Spirit, or as Paul writes it, being compelled by the spirit. Now what does that mean exactly as 20, 22 now compelled by the spirit, I'm going to Jerusalem. Paul says, I love it where I am calling me to go somewhere else compelled by the spirit. I'm going to.

Now the Greek word that's translated as compelled, I'm really means it means to bind or to wrap. It's like your hands were wrapped with a cloth or a rope and you're being pulled in a certain direction or perhaps something around your waist. It's pulling you and in an area where you, God is calling you to go, you're being drawn, you're, you're being pulled, you're being tugged in that direction. And then maybe you don't really know what this is like. It's, it can be a little bit hard to think about that when we think about our life circumstances perhaps, but. Well, let me give you an example from my own life that, that gives you some idea of that pull, that, that tug, um, that maybe we can learn something for that. When we consider being compelled by the spirit of God, it's a little bit like when you're going to put better food in your body.

A, that's a journey that I seem to constantly beyond eat a little bit healthier and, and, uh, be a healthier as a result of that. And it sometimes I do really great, make good decisions about food and I'm able to, to stick to, you know, whatever meal plan. Oh, I have in mind for us and, but there are times, there are certain seasons where this is a struggle and maybe this is a struggle for you to, if it comes around every year, it's girl scout cookie time, you know, I buy boxes of cookies because I think I want to support the scouts, right? It's for a good cause. They're, they're earnest and they want to sell your cookies and there's lots of good things as a result of the girl scout program. But, but then you've got all these cookies and they don't come like at the grocery store where you go back every week, you know, you can get a little bit more, a little bit less.

No, no. They come all at once, right. That you've got this big stack of cookies and so I try to put them away in the cabinet and then. But you know that they're there. Right. And so every time I'm walking into the kitchen, I'm going to go onto something else. And there's those thin mints just drawing me for the cabinet. And I say, OK, I'm going to resist that, draw that pull, that tug to the thin mints, and I go about my business and I'm doing my thing. And then those myths, what will begin and I don't know, I think, OK, I've got a, I've got to somehow resist this thin mint power that's just drawing me to them. And so I

think, well maybe if I put them in the freezer, this is going to solve my problem because in the freezer there, they're insulated and they're down there with the, you know, the other frozen thing.

So anything that's not going to be, that's going to help, that makes it worse. It makes it worse because some years ago I discovered that the admins are actually much better when they're frozen. Then when they're, uh, you know, when they're just room temperature. And so then I'm being drawn to the freezer and then I just think, well, I'm going to eat one cookie. I'm just going to have the one. So I get them out of the freezer. I just eat one cookie. And then I've got the sleeve of cookies there in my hand. I think, well, I'll just have a few cookies and then I try to go somewhere else, but I think, well, I've already opened the sleeve, so might as well finish this, this set here, and then the next day and a coal was looking and their cabinets and she says, where the girl scout cookies and just crumbs on my desk, and I said, oh, I don't know. How have we picked those up? Get maybe they haven't brought them by, and so what I'm not suggesting is that the holy spirit compels me to eat cookies. That's not my suggestion, but I tell that story to give you an idea about sometimes you're compelled, you're drawn, your tug to do a certain thing, and the Holy Spirit can do this in our life.

You can be compelled or drawn or tug in a certain direction and when you're seeking to follow Jesus, be on the lookout and watch for those moments when you might be being compelled or drawn by the spirit. Sometimes it's a really, really big decision that changes the direction of your life and sometimes it's. It's just a small thing that that may seem insignificant and it turns out to have a tremendous impact.

This spring, a John Lane's daughter called, uh, the office to share that he had entered hospice care and she wanted to let me know what was going on. She said, I don't expect you to start by. Was in the early afternoon. I thought, I've got that pretty busy day plan. I've got to pick up the kids and I've got things to do in front of me here. I'll just stop by tomorrow morning and then I get this tug of the Holy Spirit that says you need to go. And I say, no, he's on the other side of Wichita. It's a long drive. I really don't have time for this. And the Holy Spirit tugs at me and says, do you need to go? And so I go and I have the chance to visit with him and his daughter. And then the next day she called back and said that he died during the night. And I'm so glad that I was able to follow that tug, that pull, the Holy Spirit in that moment. But I don't always do that.

Yeah.

I don't always listen to the tug of the Holy Spirit. I think there are times when I miss it altogether, might be trying to point me in a direction or or lead me into a certain conversation and sometimes I miss it and what's worse than that at times, sometimes I don't miss it and I decided to do something else anyway, and those, especially all the times when I'm trying to have happen, less and less of my life, but, but it takes practice to listen for the prompting of the Holy Spirit and then to be able to follow after them. It's a journey. What about you? Are there times when you think perhaps that God may have been pulling you or touching you or prompting you? Maybe pick up the phone instead of sending the text message maybe to stop by instead of call, maybe to say something or maybe to keep quiet.

Yeah.

Watch out for those moments when you are compelled by the spirit. Well experienced them in big ways and it's seemingly insignificant ways and yet each one, each time you feel that God's spirit prompts you. It's always something. It's important. Paul says, now held by the spirit. I'm going to Jerusalem. Trust

God's process. The first step in God's process is paying attention to when the spirit is pulling you or tugging you, the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

OK?

The second step is what I'm going to call certain uncertainty, certain uncertainty. Verse 22 now compelled by the spirit. I'm going to Jerusalem. I don't know what will happen to me there. I know that I'm called to go, Paul says, but I don't know any of the details, and in fact I have no idea what's going to happen when I get to Jerusalem. So often what we want in life is to know the details, but God more often than not, in fact, most of the times it doesn't give us the details at all. Take the words from the psalmist in chapter one, 19. Your word is all before my feet and a light for my journey. I love this image of God, word of God being a lamp before our feet and a light for our journey. Imagine being in the Flint Hills at night and if you're on foot so you have a trail and there's a. you've got a flashlight or maybe you have a lantern or a lamp and that flashlight is only able to go so far down the trail. What it doesn't do is show you what's a half a mile or a mile down the road. You have no idea what's up there,

but what it does do is it shows the path in front of you. The very next step or maybe the next few steps and you know what? That's the most important part because something down the trail may or may not be there, but you may or may not even get there, but if you don't want to twist an ankle, if you want to stay on your feet and keep moving in the direction, you've got to pay attention to what's right in front of you. Or if you're driving and you're going around the curve. The headlights only goes so far. It doesn't sound like you're driving down main or central and there's street lights and you could see a long ways down the road. You can only see so far and yet that's the most important part because that's what will keep you safe. I parked right in front of you. It's where you need to go next. It's the very next step. Your word is a lamp and before my feet and a light for my journey, it's not a spotlight into the future.

It's clarity and guidance, perhaps only about what is immediately next. A light to our path. If you're anything like me, you want God to show you all the way I say, God, I want to see steps four, five, and six, and what God says, I want to know what I say is I want the plan for my life. I want to know what the details are and what God responds is I'm not going to show you step. I've been six until you've taken one, that two and three. I'm going to show you the next step, the next step. Certain uncertainty, certain uncertainty. Yeah. No matter where we are, there are some things that are certain. God is always with you. God will never leave you or forsake you. God will guide you step by step. Remember last week, the verse that we looked at from the psalms, [inaudible] advise you. God will guide you. God will watch over you. All I know is that I'm being compelled by the spirit. I have no idea what's ahead. Certain uncertainty,

OK?

The third part of God's process, what I'll call predictable resistance market down on your calendar, the forces of darkness will resist what God leads you to do. Here's what Paul says now, compelled by the spirit, I'm going to Jerusalem. I don't know what will happen to me. There was that the Holy Spirit testifies to me from city to city. That prisons and troubles await me. Sounds like a pretty good Gig, doesn't it? What you want to go along with the Apostle Paul prisons and troubles and not just one city or a few. Every city,

every city.

If you serve Jesus, sometimes it will be very, very difficult. We have to understand that being ready to face opposition is part of being ready to be used by God.

Yeah.

Being ready to face opposition is part of being ready to be used by God. One of the challenges that people face is that whenever things started to get tough sometimes with a question, was this really what God has in mind for me? If I'm having a tough time, God must not begin on this. Have you ever thought that?

OK,

when do you think the forces of darkness are most active, most active? When you're doing things that are exactly what God has in mind for you, when you are doing things that glorify God, that in incredible ways, that resistance is not necessarily a sign that you're outside of God's will.

OK,

resistance may be that you're exactly what God is calling you to do.

Yeah.

Just because things aren't going right doesn't necessarily mean that you're out of God's will. Whenever you're being attacked. Pay attention may be an indication that you're doing exactly what it is that God has called you to do. Trust the process,

OK

pension to when you're compelled by the spirit. I know that there are certain uncertainty and that there is predictable resistance. It's not always going to be easy or Christian law doesn't promise an easy life.

Yeah,

but the promise is that God will walk with us.

OK,

and the final step in this process is what I'm going on. Uncommon confidence, uncommon. Confidence. The Verse Twenty Four again, Paul writes, but nothing, not even pleading my mission. This is nothing other than the ministry.

Bye.

If God's grace Paul says, even though are there are going to be bad at difficult times, even though I'm going to face prison and troubles even though I don't know the details, there is nothing even my life that is more important than to speak about the good news of God's grace. Now that is uncommon. Confidence.

Yeah,

something that I aspire for, that that I would desire in my life, that I would be that confident about the mission that God has for me, that I might be able to say there is nothing that's more important than this. Nothing more important than this. Paul didn't know all the details yet, what he did have was a mission from God, a mission to a plan to share the good news of God's grace. He was certain about this and he had uncommon confidence that this is what God had called him to do. He followed Jesus not knowing what the future might hold, but instead one day at a time at the step that was right in front of them, the only step that was lighted on the path, uncommon confidence. We might have that too. This offer to Paul is not something that God stopped doing a long time ago. God still offers us that opportunity. The good news is that God walks with us every step of the way,

OK,

even when we don't know what the future will hold, even don't know what the details are. You don't have to worry so much about the future. Instead, we can be concerned with being obedient

today

to follow God and the very next step, so trust the process. Pay attention to when you are compelled by the spirit will be a certain uncertainty, predictable resistance, and you can find uncommon confidence in Jesus Christ. Will you pray with me? Oh God, we want to know the details for the future, but we know that we don't always get them.

OK,

so we asked that instead, you help us to trust the process, to seek to follow you in the very next step and the very next step.

OK,

and the one after that. Yes. And help us to pay attention.

Yeah. Yeah.