

**Acts 16:6-10 (NIV)**

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.

## 44-16-01-Empowered for Guidance

Trinity, Holy Spirit, guidance, evangelism, God’s will  
Acts 16:6-14

The right direction is always the one in which God leads.

**INTRODUCTION:**

–Today’s **text** shows the entire Trinitarian Godhead (*Holy Spirit, Son & Father*, an uncommon order) involved in the work of *divine guidance*.

– **In the OT**, God guided various spiritual leaders, often revealing His words directly to prophets; **In the NT** God empowers all His people with divine guidance. [**Peter quotes from Joel 2:28-29** in his sermon in **Acts 2:17-18**, ‘In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.’]

–[**Dr. William Sheldon**, in *Psychology and the Promethean Will*, writes: “Continued observations ... lead almost inevitably to the conclusion that deeper and more fundamental than sexuality, deeper than the craving for social power, deeper even than the desire for possessions, there is a still more generalized and more universal craving in the human make-up. It is the craving for knowledge of the right direction—for orientation.... Every system of philosophy, whether called religious or not, is at bottom a human attempt to satisfy the craving to be pointed in the right direction.” (Without *divine revelation*, life loses meaning; without *divine direction* we get lost; **HOM.idea**. But often God’s Spirit begins with...

**I. The Obstruction of Our Own Plans**

- A. If God keeps us from *the good*, He must be planning *a better*– **v.6**, *kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word*” [**Our zeal for the Gospel** can drive people away with, unless it’s *in sync* with God’s *planning and timing*.]
- B. **Paul and his ministry team** *saw* those in great need and *wanted* to reach out to them, BUT– **v.7**, *the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to* [**Leanne Payne**, with her *message and ministry for healing people of misogyny*, was prevented by God from entering Asian lands.... *Not the right time yet?*]
- C. When God obstructs our plans, it’s not time to quit, but time to get guidance– **v.8**, *So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas*. (Paul had an appointment there with a dream that would give him *direction*.)

**TRANS:** If we fail to get it right with *divine direction*, it’s not time to stop seeking it. [**Students** aren’t expelled for failing tests. Their teachers keep guiding them.] The Holy Spirit is our Teacher, and He is committed to...

## II. The Opening up of God's Will to Us

- A. v.9, *During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."* (The Holy Spirit speaks to us in various ways: dreams, visions, persistent thoughts, mental pictures, a Bible passage [Many of my poems come to me this way: a word, a name, a picture, but some have come from visions and dreams.]
- B. Guidance doesn't cancel our intelligence– v.10b, *"concluding that God had called us"* (Common sense might say, *"What a weird dream! It must have been something I ate."*) But divine guidance must be part of Christian logic: *"Maybe this is God giving us direction."*)
- C. Paul's response was immediate– v.10a, *we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia ("But what if my impression isn't right?" Better to be wrong about a direction than wrong in not following a right one.)*

TRANS: Sometimes I'm slow to respond to impressions that I think are from God. That's a problem. His guidance may cover just a small window of time, and we don't know when that window will close. [An evangelist, who felt led to share the Gospel with a waitress, left the restaurant without doing so. Afterwards, conviction about his failure made him return, only to find that she had committed suicide.] **The right direction is always the one in which God leads**, but it may offer a narrow window of opportunity. If we feel the conviction of the Holy Spirit about doing something...

## III. Our Obligation is Simply to Follow Directions

- A. What did God guide Paul's team to do?– v.10, *we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.* (God had a message; Paul's team were the messengers. God hasn't stopped empowering His children as messengers.)
- B. Spirit-empowered guidance leads to Spirit-empowered ministry. [the rest of the story: Acts 16:13-15a, 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. One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message... [and] she and the members of her household were baptized....]
- C. Does God still guide His people? [Yes—a modern example: A young man in a Bible study on *obeying the voice of the Lord*, wondered, *"Does God still speak to people?"* He and some friends discussed this question afterwards. Some told stories of being led by God in different ways. It was late when he left for home. But, as he sat in his car, he prayed, *"God, if you still speak to people,*

*speak to me. I'll do my best to listen and obey."* // On his way down his town's main street, he had a strange impression: **buy a gallon of milk**. He asked aloud, *"God, is that you?"* At getting no reply, he continued driving. But again came the thought: **buy a gallon of milk**. *"Okay, God, in case it is you, I'll buy the milk,"* he prayed, thinking it might be just a test of obedience. He could always use the milk anyway. So, he stopped, bought the milk, and again started home. // As he passed 7<sup>th</sup> Street, he felt an urging: **turn down that street**. This is crazy, he thought and drove on. But the urging came back, so he turned around and went down 7<sup>th</sup> Street. // After driving several blocks, he suddenly felt he should stop, and did so. This was not the best-looking neighborhood—semi-residential with lots of small businesses, all closed. Again, he sensed something: **go give the milk to the people in the house across the street**. // The house looked dark. He prayed, *"Lord, this is insane. Those people are asleep. If I wake them up, they'll get mad and I'll look stupid."* But again, he felt he should **go take them the milk**. // Finally, he left the car, and walked across the street, praying, *"Okay God, if this is You, I'll go give them the milk. If I look crazy, OK. But if they don't answer right away, I'm out of here."* // When he rang the bell, a man's voice yelled out, *"Who is it? What do you want?"* Before he could get away, the door opened. There stood a man in his jeans and t-shirt. He didn't look too happy about seeing a stranger on his doorstep. // *"What is it?"* // The young man thrust out the gallon of milk, *"Here, I brought this to you."* // The man took the milk and rushed down a hallway speaking loudly in Spanish. Soon, a woman came down the hall carrying the milk toward the kitchen. The man was following her holding a crying baby. The man, with tears streaming down his face, explained, *"We ran out of money this month and had no milk for our baby. I was just asking God to show me how to get some milk."* // His wife in the kitchen yelled out, *"I ask him to send an Angel with some...Are you an Angel?"* The young man decided to put all the money he had on him into the man's hand. He went back to his car with tears in his own eyes, knowing that God still answers prayer, and that He still speaks to His people.]

## CONCLUSION:

–**The right direction is always the one in which God leads**. He led Paul's ministry team, He led this young man, and He can lead us. One simple way He can guide us is by laying people on our hearts. In our minds, we may hear their *names*, or see their *faces*, or recall a *memory* about them. The important thing is to follow what God wants us to do with that guidance, (it might be a *prayer*, a *visit*, a *gift*, a *message*), and then, to leave the rest with Him. It's that simple. OR, it's not so simple, if we have to overcome our *doubts about God wanting to speak to us*. But that's what this passage and the whole Bible shows: *He really does speak to us personally, even as we speak personally to Him in prayer.*