

# Spirit-Led Detours

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[0:00] Good morning, everyone. Before we get into the word, Tiff, could you pull up that slide for Faith Comes to Be Hearing again?! Just a brief plug for that. Yeah, that's a ministry that I know and love.

I've been connected with a while and I just wanted to share with you guys. As we're going through Acts and talking about scattering, that call to go make disciples of all nations, including people from every tribe, nation, and tongue, every people group.

So Faith Comes to Be Hearing, a ministry that is really well connected with doing that. They're going and bringing the word of God to new languages, translating it to languages that don't have a Bible at all, and bringing the word to places where people have never heard the word Jesus at all, where they have never met a Christian in their life.

So, yeah, I just want to share that with you guys. That's two Thursdays from now on the 20th if you want to learn more. And catch that fire for the Great Commission. This would be a great way to do that. But, yeah, with that, today we're talking about the Holy Spirit and to be led by the Holy Spirit. And actually, when I was preparing for this to preach today, I found myself thinking, actually, that I wish I could preach this five or ten years later.

[1:15] Because I was reflecting and I was thinking, I don't really have that many experiences about being led by the Spirit in this way. I was actually talking to someone this morning, a new visitor, and he said, I introduced myself, and he said, you're really young.

And I found myself thinking that, thinking about being led by the Holy Spirit. Because I think of missionaries like Jackie Pollinger. Do you guys know Jackie Pollinger?

Who are very clearly Spirit-led, working gifts of the Holy Spirit. So she came from the UK. She felt God call her to go. And so she got on a boat.

Didn't know where God was calling her to go. But just everywhere that the boat stopped, she would pray, God, is this where you want me to get off? Is this where you want me to go? Until finally the boat stopped at Hong Kong, and she felt the Spirit telling her, this is it.

And she ended up serving in the Kowloon Wall City, where there's lots of drug addicts, gangsters, triads, all that type of stuff. And saw the Spirit work in so many ways.

[2:23] Prayed for drug addicts, and they were healed. Prayed for people. They started speaking in tongues. They came to faith. So I think of missionaries like her, who are very clearly Spirit-led.

I also think of guys like Hudson Taylor, a very prominent missionary to China. Where he was praying for someone one day, a poor family, and he was praying for them, God to provide for them. And he felt the Spirit tell him, hey, you have one coin left in your pocket. Why are you praying for them? Just give it to them. But that was the last coin he had. That was the last bit of money he had to buy dinner the next day.

But he decided to obey the Spirit. Gave them that money. And the next day, he got an unmarked letter in the mail. Nothing written on it.

Blank piece of paper. And in it was a coin. Four times as much as he gave away. So I think of coincidences like that, miracles like that, where the Spirit is clearly moving. And I was just thinking, hey, I don't really have all too many experiences like that to share.

[3:29] And we see in Acts 16, the Spirit leading in miraculous ways. As we're going to read today, as Paul goes on a second missionary journey, that the Spirit directly talks to them, tells them, don't go here, don't go to Asia, don't go to Bithynia, go to Macedonia.

And I want God to guide my life like that. But I've never, that's not happened to me. I've not seen God speak to me in a vision. But then as we read Acts 16, we also see other ways in which the Spirit leads.

In giving faith, opening Lydia's heart to receive the gospel. And also, as Paul and Silas are in prison, the Spirit gives them supernatural joy so that they can rejoice while in prison. And so, reading this, Acts 16 is a chapter, Paul goes on his missionary journey, and we see how he is completely led by the Spirit. As we read this, I want us also to share in the joy that they have. And maybe some of you here are thinking, I want to be led by the Spirit. I don't know how. I'm hoping as we read this chapter, we can share in that joy. The joy in every circumstance. [4:39] Joy in seeing people saved. For us to be a Spirit-led church. To want to be led by the Spirit. To want to rely on Him. And to do nothing apart from Him. So that's my goal as we read Acts chapter 16 today.

And with that, let's stand as we read from the Word of God. I'm going to invite Christine up to read for us. Thank you, Christine. We stand out of just a small act of reverence for the Word of God. Acts 16.

Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium.

Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the disciples and elders who were in Jerusalem.

So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily. And they went through the regions of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak up the Word in Asia.

[5:51] And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Brythynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. So the passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas, and a vision appeared of Paul in the night.

A man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, come over to Macedonia and help us. And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

So setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, and a Roman colony.

We remained in this city some days, and on the Sabbath day, we went outside the gate into the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the woman who had come together.

One who had heard us was a woman named Lydia from the city of Theatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said to Paul, and after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, if you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.

[7:04] And she prevailed upon us. As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination, and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and us, crying out, These men are servants of the Most High God, who are proclaimed to you the way of salvation.

And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And it came out of that very hour.

And when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas, and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. And when they have brought them to the magistrates, they said, These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city.

They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice. The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods.

And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

[8:10] About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the

prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened.

When the jailers woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.

And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear, he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.

And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds, and he baptized at once, and he and all his family.

Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced, along with his entire household, that he had believed in God. But when it was that day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, Let those men go.

[9:16] And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, The magistrates have sent to let you go. Therefore, come out now and go in peace. But Paul said to them, They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison.

And do they now throw us out secretly? No. Let them come themselves and take us out. The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens.

So they came and apologized to them, and they took them out and asked them to leave the city. So they went out of the prison and visited Lydia. And when they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them and departed.

This is the word of the Lord. Thank you. Please take a seat. And as we read, there's a lot going on in this passage today.

Paul's on his second missionary journey. But that journey to Philippi and beyond was anything but a straight line. It was a journey filled with detours. But we see from the start that this whole journey is entirely spirit-led.

[10:23] Now, I say Paul. It's Paul's second missionary journey. But it's not just Paul on this trip. There's others with him. Paul is traveling with a guy named Silas. We saw that at the end of chapter 15. And in this chapter, verse 3, Paul also meets a young man named Timothy.

Paul takes Timothy under his wings and drags him along on this trip. And Timothy actually ends up being one of Paul's most trusted co-laborers. And this is the Timothy that Paul wrote 1 and 2 Timothy to and was with Paul as he wrote other letters.

Also, verse 10, we see that Luke, the one who's writing the book of Acts, is also traveling with Paul. Because throughout Acts so far, Luke has been writing in the third person that they did this and that.

They went here. They went there. But starting in verse 10, there's a shift. Luke shifts to the first person. We went on to Macedonia. We went here. We went there. So this is probably how Luke got his material for Acts, traveling around with Paul and others.

And also for the gospel of Luke. Okay? So Paul and associates, he has a team going with him, preaching in his second missionary journey. And they're sharing the good news of Jesus.

[11:36] And so we read in verse 5, the churches as a result of that were strengthened in the faith and they increased in numbers daily. They're preaching the gospel here. They're preaching the gospel there. And they have an idea.

Let's go further. Let's go preach the gospel in Asia. Let's go to Asia. But we read in verse 6, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.

Now that's weird, right? When you woke up this morning, got ready for church, I don't think you were expecting to come and hear God tell somebody, don't preach the gospel. It's a good thing to preach the gospel.

It's good to preach in a new place, in Asia. And yet the Spirit told them, no, don't go to Asia. But they weren't fazed. They heard the Spirit, obeyed him, and followed his lead.

They said, okay, if not Asia, we'll go elsewhere. And so they passed through Phrygia and Galatia onto Mycenae. And then in verse 7, they attempted to go to a place called Bithynia.

[12:37] And now just to clarify all these places, when we think of Asia, we're often thinking here in Hong Kong or Japan, China, Thailand. But here, Asia is likely just referring to the province of Asia, which is on the west coast of modern-day Turkey.

So not Hong Kong, but he was just going to the west coast of Turkey. And they couldn't go west. The Spirit told them no. So instead, they headed north in the direction of Bithynia, which is northern Turkey.

And so take two. Not Asia. They're heading to Bithynia. And again, verse 7 says, the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. I don't know about you, but in my flesh, I don't like to be told no.

I don't like when doors close on me. Even literally, when I'm rushing into the MTR, and I see the doors close, that's already enough to get me upset. But much more than that, when it's higher stakes, when we've got plans for school, career, relationships, and doors close, that is an interruption to our plans.

But we see for Paul and company that as they're led by the Spirit, they're not phased when their plans change. They don't complain. They don't grumble about it. As they obey the Spirit, those no's, they don't come as detours and interruptions to their plans, but they're simply ways in which the Spirit guides them.

[13:58] The Spirit said no to Asia, that's okay. We'll go on to Phrygia, Galatia, Mycenae. When the Spirit doesn't allow us into Bithynia, that's okay too. And they go onwards to Troas.

They're surrendered to where the Spirit leads them. They don't hold on to their plans too tightly.

They have good plans, but they don't hold on to them. They follow as the Spirit leads.

And in this case, for Paul, the Holy Spirit gave them specific directions and specific instructions on what to do. The Spirit can lead us in other ways with more general instructions, which we'll see later with Lydia's case.

But in, for Paul, the Spirit's direction was very specific. Don't go to Asia or Bithynia. And the text doesn't tell us how the Spirit communicated to them.

But sometimes, you know, the Spirit can lead us through our circumstances. If you're asking, what's God's plan for my life? Sometimes God answers by opening doors or closing doors.

[15:00] If you're accepted into that university or turned down from that job, God can lead you through His providence. Sometimes the Spirit can speak to us directly. Some people hear the Spirit speaking audibly or the Spirit stirring up a thought in our minds.

For example, we read before in Acts chapter 8, verse 29, the Spirit said to Philip, go over and join this chariot. That was a clear instruction that Philip heard and obeyed.

Philip went and joined the exact chariot the Spirit led him to. And sometimes, the Spirit speaks to us like that. In verse 9, we see yet another way. The Spirit directed Paul through a vision in the night. A man in Macedonia was standing there urging him and saying, come over to Macedonia and help us. And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately, we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

So after the Spirit told them no twice, we finally see why. The Spirit wanted them to go to a specific place, to go to Macedonia first. And he made it clear to them through a vision.

[16:09] That's one way in which the Spirit can lead us. And so Paul obeyed, and in verse 12, they set sail onwards to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony.

He follows the Spirit's guidance and they go to that city of Philippi. And there, Paul did what he normally does as he goes into any new city. In verse 13, on the Sabbath, they went to the synagogue, or in this case, the closest thing they could find to a synagogue in Philippi.

They went to a place of prayer, sat down, and they spoke to the woman who had come together.

Verse 13. Now when Luke wrote that they spoke to the women, I don't think they were just talking about the weather.

Obviously, Paul, they were preaching to them the good news of Jesus Christ, to the woman sitting there. And in verse 14, one who heard us was a woman named Lydia from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods.

This is a woman who was quite likely well off. She was also a worshiper of God, meaning that she was a God-fearing Gentile. And notice this. Notice how the spirit works. Verse 14.

[17:15] It says, the Lord opened Lydia's heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. See, Paul preached the gospel. Paul was the one who spoke. Several women heard.

But the decisive change in Lydia is that the Lord opened her heart. The spirit opened Lydia's heart to receive the gospel, and so she believed. And that is another way in which the spirit leads us. He leads us to faith in Christ. Sometimes the spirit gives us specific instructions, like go to Macedonia. But another crucial way in which the spirit leads us is by opening our hearts so that we can see the beauty of Christ.

We can't believe in Jesus without the spirit. The faith we have is a gift from God through the spirit. Because it's the spirit who led Paul himself to go and preach the gospel.

The spirit led Paul uses people to preach the gospel. Words are required. Romans 10 says, faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ. The spirit led Paul to preach the gospel to Lydia.

[18:20] And also, it was the spirit who opened Lydia's heart to receive the good news so that the words that were spoken wouldn't just stay in her head but sink into her heart and she would believe in Christ. And so when we scatter, when we are led by the spirit to preach the gospel, we can have that comfort and confidence in sharing, knowing that the outcome isn't just up to us.

It doesn't depend on our clever arguments or how persuasive we are. The same spirit who leads us to speak is the one who also works in those who listen and gives faith.

And so if we follow the spirit's lead but no one cares, that's okay. If the spirit turned Paul away from Asia and Bithynia, that's okay. We just need to obey and trust God for the fruit.

The spirit gives faith. That's what we learned from Lydia. The spirit leads by opening hearts. But as we keep reading, we see that as the spirit leads, there will also be opposition.

Paul and company, they stay with Lydia a while in Philippi but one day in verse 16, they meet a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune telling.

[19:29] There was an evil spirit in this girl harassing her. Yet also, there was one advantage to that evil spirit that the owners were exploiting. The spirit gave that girl the ability to do fortune telling and that made her owners a lot of money and they liked that.

They liked that there was this evil spirit in her because that would give them lots of money. But also, the girl followed them around, followed Paul and them around crying out. These men are servants of the Most High God who proclaimed to you the way of salvation.

She did this for a few days and then in verse 18, Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.

I love that it says that Paul was annoyed. Like, have you been so annoyed at someone you wanted to do an exorcism? That's what happened to Paul. He was so annoyed with them, he decided to cast out that spirit. So Paul commands that spirit to leave.

And we read in verse 18, the evil spirit came out that very hour. Now I think the ESV translation of that very hour is a bit misleading.

[20:34] It's a bit too weak. A better translation is at that moment or that very instant. The point is that at the name of Jesus, the evil spirit left her instantly. And that is a work of the Holy Spirit too.

1 Corinthians 12 tells us that healing and gifts of miracles, the signs and wonders, those are works of the spirit, gifts of the spirit. The spirit has power to set captives free.

And so the girl is healed but not everybody liked that. Her owners don't like the work of the spirit. They would rather have her be oppressed by an evil spirit rather than to see the power of the Holy Spirit.

They were mad because that girl was set free. She couldn't do her fortune telling anymore. They couldn't exploit her anymore for income. They're mad about it. And so they drag Paul and Silas before the authorities.

Her owners make up accusations about Paul and Silas in verse 21 saying, they advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice. And that's pretty rich.

[21:36] They don't care about the Roman customs. They don't care at all. They just care about their money. But yet the crowd buys it and they attack Paul and Silas brutally.

Their clothes are ripped off. That's what it says. They're beaten with rods. I imagine them on the ground just covering their faces while surrounded by mob that's beating them with sticks with baseball bats. Blood streaming down their face.

And after that they're left for dead. They have their feet bound in socks. They're dragged and thrown into jail bleeding all over. And wow. I can't imagine how much that would have hurt.

How defenseless, how weak they would have felt. And the injustice of it all. All that came as they were following the spirit, preaching the gospel, doing what God commanded.

And then they're thrown into jail. They're beaten brutally. We learn from this that when the spirit leads us it's not always comfortable. Don't let anyone fool you that God promises a nice easy life.

[22:40] If we want to follow Christ, if we want to be spirit led, let's count the cost. Because sometimes the spirit leads us to suffer. Jesus wasn't spared the cross and he said, he told his followers, if they persecuted me they will also persecute you.

They will also persecute you. No servant is greater than his master. So if we follow the spirit's lead, it will cost us. But what happens next is remarkable.

Verse 25, it's the middle of the night and Paul, but still Paul and Silas are wide awake. They're in jail. They're bleeding all over the floors. But yet, they're praying and singing hymns to God.

They're not doing this in private. They're praying, singing so loudly that all the prisoners were listening to them. All the prisoners could hear them praise God in prison. And remember, they're still bruised.

They're still bleeding. They're probably beaten so hard that their jaws, it hurts to move. Their jaws are swollen. It hurts to sing. And yet, they still decide to do it. They're in so much pain yet rejoicing.

[23:48] And in verse 26, as they pray and sing, it says, suddenly there was a great earthquake so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. All the doors opened and everyone was set loose.

And now, that's clearly a miracle, right? That God shook the earth as they were praying and singing. God shook the earth and the prisoners were set free. That's a miracle, that earthquake. That's a supernatural display of God's power.

But let's stop to think. What is the greater miracle? What is the greater display of the glory of God? For God to shake the earth, send an earthquake? Or for God to raise up for himself, Paul and Silas, who are bleeding all over the floors, who in their pain, in the injustice of it all, they want nothing more than to pray and sing in worship of God.

I think we can all agree that's not normal. Their reaction isn't normal. It's easy to be happy and praise God when life's good.

But no sane person gets beaten to a pulp And then sings about it. No one does that. That's not natural. That is a work of God. That's a work of the Spirit.

[25:04] Paul and Silas, in prison, have spirit-led joy. To be so captivated and in love with God that nothing, not even a pool of blood on the prison floor, can steal a single word of praise from our lips.

That's the power of God. To save from the heart, not just to know in our heads, but to save in our hearts. Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. Neither tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword.

That knowing all these things we are more than conquerors through Christ who loved us. That is the display of the power of God. Do you want a joy like that? A joy that's not only fair weather joy, but that shines even in the darkest places.

Even in the greatest pain. To have that joy, that is the power of God. Even more than the strongest earthquake. The earth shook and in verse 27, the jailer is freaking out thinking, the prisoners are gone.

I'm done. They're going to kill me. They're going to kill me because I let all these prisoners escape.

In verse 28, Paul cried out with a loud voice, do not harm yourself for we are all here.

[26:19] Don't harm yourself. We're all here. And this is what Jesus means when he said, love your enemies. The jailer, that's the guy keeping Paul in prison.

Paul cared for him. The enemy, the persecutor, the one who was keeping him in prison. And the jailer trembled with fear, fell to the ground before Paul and Silas and asked in verse 30, sirs, what must I do to be saved?

That's the same question we discussed last week as the Jerusalem council decided on circumcision. What does it mean to be Christian? What must I do to be saved? And once again, the answer is that we're saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

Verse 31, they say, believe in the Lord Jesus. How are you saved? Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household. That's it. All you do is believe. That's the gospel.

The bad news is that we are all sinners and like the jailer, we should all fall to the ground and tremble with fear. But the good news is that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and rose from the dead so that all who believe in him may be saved and have life to the full.

[27:29] Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved. They preached this good news to the jailer and his whole household. And once again, the spirit granted faith, opened their hearts.

The jailer and his whole family believed and they were baptized immediately. And I love the picture in verse 34 of the power of the gospel, the radical reconciliation brought by the gospel.

We see in verse 34, the jailer, Paul and Silas, it's the middle of the night. They sit together and they eat together. The jailer prepares, gives a meal for Paul and Silas.

They were once persecutors, once enemies, but now they're friends eating together, sharing the same table. And more than friends, that through the blood of Jesus, they're now family. They're now family.

The gospel reconciles and unites us together in one spirit. And so it's only fitting once again in verse 34, the jailer rejoices. There's spirit-led joy again.

[28:35] He rejoices that he had come to know Christ and not just him, but his whole household, his whole household was saved. The joy that Paul and Silas had is now shared with the jailer and his household by the spirit.

And we read on after that, Paul and Silas, they're set free. And in verse 39, they're kicked out of Philippi, they leave, and they continue on in the missionary journey.

So in this chapter, we see the start of the Philippian church. This is the start of the church in Philippi as Lydia and the jailer's family turn to Christ.

And again, once again, this is an entirely spirit-led journey. I hope we saw that reading this chapter. How the spirit of God was moving throughout this whole chapter, throughout this whole journey.

From the spirit directing them, spirit-led detours, the spirit giving them specific instruction, not Asia, not Bithynia, but onto Macedonia. We also saw spirit-led faith as the spirit opened Lydia and the jailer's heart to receive the gospel.

[29:40] And we saw Paul and Silas endure that spirit-led suffering. But even in the pain, they had spirit-led joy. They overflowed with that and that was shared with the jailer and his family.

That's how we see the spirit of God lead and move in Acts 16. And that sounds amazing, doesn't it? It sounds so clear. A vision, earthquake, obvious no's and obvious yes's.

And it's easy to read this and think ourselves, hey, that's great for the apostle Paul. That's great that the spirit worked in the apostle Paul. But my life doesn't feel like that right now.

I'm not getting visions. I'm not hearing audible instructions on where to go. How do I know if I'm being led by the spirit or I'm just making bad decisions if bad things are just happening in my life? These detours. And if you felt that way, then you're not alone. As I was sharing earlier, in fact, I gotta be honest with you guys, the last few weeks when I was mulling over this passage, I had a bit of a tough time preparing to preach this today.

[30:45] Because as I was looking over the text, I kept thinking, hey, I don't really know what to say. I don't know what God wants me to share from this passage. But then I sat down at my desk and I thought, okay, I gotta preach on Sunday.

That has to get done. So I'm just gonna lock in, write something out. I'm just gonna, I'm just gonna focus, write something out. And so I wrote a short draft. But as I was writing, I knew that wasn't it. Right? That wasn't the right direction. So I scrapped it, tried again, start writing again, wrote another bit. Again, I knew what I was writing. That wasn't me. I can't say this with conviction. There's no power in this message.

I can't preach this. And I was frustrated because I wasn't getting anywhere. I'd already wasted a day or two of work. And at that point in the week, that's normally when I'd be done preparing. But this time, I was staring at a blank page.

I had nothing. And that's when I felt the Spirit speak to me. It wasn't audibly with words like Paul. It wasn't, it wasn't in a vision. But I knew in my heart, God was saying to me, hey, you can't preach without my Spirit.

[31:52] You can be, you can only talk about being Spirit-led as you are led by the Spirit. And he reminded me of what we were reading in John 15 this week, that I am the vine, you are the branches.

Abide in me and I in you. Apart from me, you can do nothing. You can do absolutely nothing. And that scripture, God didn't just, he didn't just remind me in my head, but truly felt in my heart, Jesus say, apart from me, you can do nothing.

Nothing. And he said to me, if you are to preach about being Spirit-led, you have to be Spirit-led. Repent of your pride, your self-reliance, thinking you can do it on your own.

Repent from distractions, things consuming your attention that keep you from abiding in me and rejoicing in me. And then I realized as I was, that I, in this process, was experiencing this passage, these Spirit-led detours.

Right? I had my planned sermon outlined, go to this and that place, but God said no. He was telling me, hey, I'm gonna let you sit and experience these detours, sit in frustration until you learn to abide in me, rely on me, surrender control to me, and truly say from the heart, I never want to do anything except with the Spirit.

[33:11] Only then will my Spirit lead you to preach my word. That process isn't fun. It's nothing as bad as Paul and Silas being beaten up and thrown into jail.

But I had to wrestle with God with much prayer. It wasn't easy. But in the end, there was joy in it because in that wrestle, I could experience with even more closeness and intimacy, God, He spoke to me when I had nothing to say.

And like me, I know there's others here in this room who want to be led by the Spirit. but you're frustrated or lost because you don't feel Him lead. You know we are to be led by the Spirit, but maybe you don't feel Him leading you in your life.

Some of us here are experiencing our own detours in life, not happy about how career is going or relationships, school. In those setbacks, you want to rejoice in God.

You want to trust Him. But the situation is overwhelming. It's painful. You want to have joy, but you find it so hard to. Some of us are here because you're searching for answers, that there's more to life than this.

[34:30] And you want to know Jesus. You wish you believed in Him, but you don't. The gospel just hasn't fully clicked in your heart, but you want it to, and you wish it would. I want to encourage us with Jesus' promises.

He says, ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened to you. Jesus said, if you then who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him this good gift?

We heard last week that we're made right with God by grace through Jesus' death on the cross. Yet we see in the Bible, we're saved by grace alone, but we see in the Bible so many commands for us to follow Him, to do things.

Here as a church, we talk so often about scattering and the Great Commission, that command, go and make disciples of all nations. That's a command Jesus gives us. Or 1 Peter 1, be holy for I am holy.

That's a command. Matthew 16, if anyone wants to follow me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. That's a command. So how is it that we're saved by grace but still have to do all these things?

[35:44] The answer is that Jesus didn't just die to forgive us of our sins. He doesn't say you're saved by grace alone. Now you're left all on your own to follow me and obey my commands. You're in that prison.

I'm going to lead you into that prison and leave you there on your own. That's not what Jesus says. When Jesus tells us, go and make disciples, it comes with that promise. And I will be with you to the end of the age.

When he commands us, you shall be holy for I am holy. He says, I will finish the good work that I began in you. When he says, take up your cross, follow me.

He also promises that we will be born again through the Holy Spirit, that he sent us a helper to guide us in all the truth and lead us in paths of righteousness for his namesake.

Jesus didn't just die to forgive us from our sins, but to cleanse us fully from our sins to make us holy like him. He doesn't just demand us to follow him. He leads us to follow him.

[36:45] When Jesus says, follow me, that's a call to be spirit-led. To follow Jesus is to be spirit-led. We can't follow Jesus without being led by the spirit and the spirit never leads us anywhere aside from to Jesus.

In every way the spirit leads us, the end result is deeper, more intimate, all satisfying faith and joy in Christ. Is that something that we want? Is it something you want to experience more of Christ?

I hope that is as followers of Christ. Then how do we take hold of that promise? How do we allow ourselves to make ourselves available for the spirit to lead us?

What are some practical ways? First, let's surrender to the spirit. Surrender to his lead. We saw how sometimes the spirit changes our plans.

We might want to go to Asia. We might want to go to Bithynia. But sometimes the spirit says no. The spirit is leading us. But the truth is that maybe we don't want to follow.

[37:52] We aren't willing to follow where he leads. We want to go our own way. Examine your heart. Is there anything you're holding back? Anywhere you're not willing to go?

You say, I'm willing to follow you, Jesus, except over there. Is there an area of our life we need to surrender? We surrender and let's also pray.

Remember Jesus' promise again. The Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him. And this promise isn't just one time when we believe in Jesus. We all receive the Holy Spirit.

We have that gift when we believe in Christ. But we're also commanded in Ephesians 5 to be constantly and continually filled with the spirit. In Galatians 5, to walk by the spirit.

That's an ongoing thing, to be filled with the spirit constantly. And so we can pray and ask for God for the spirit to fill us and to lead us. Pray.

[38:49] And let's also listen. If we want to be spirit-led, are we tuning our ears to listen when he leads? Romans 8, verse 5 says, those who live according to the spirit set their minds on the things of the spirit.

They set their minds on the things of the spirit. One reason why we might not hear the voice of God is that we're busy setting our minds, filling our minds with other voices. So recently in my morning commute on the MTR, I was thinking, do I really need to scroll on my phone?

No, not really. But do I do it? Yeah. Jumping from real to YouTube short, that fills my mind. It makes my mind too full to hear with other voices.

There's no space to hear God speak. So the past few weeks, I've been trying to just keep my phone in my pocket. No music. Make room. To pray and hear from God.

And sometimes I still get that itch, but I've been finding that time fruitful. So maybe give it a shot too. I've also been trying to block off time in the day, 15 minutes, 10 minutes, to sit still, quiet, pray, and listen.

[40:04] Ask God, is there anywhere you're leading me? Are you speaking to me? And we're in different stages of life with different schedules. So what you, what your practices may look different, but the question remains, are we making room to hear God speak?

If we want to be led by the spirit, are we listening to him speak? Let's listen and let's also discern. We need to discern whether what we're hearing is a spirit speaking or some other voice.

1 John 4 says, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God. we read earlier. Paul was the one in verse 9 who saw the vision of the Macedonian man.

He was the one who saw that dream. But in verse 10, we read, when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia. This was a group effort.

They, as a group, concluded that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. Paul saw the vision, but they all discerned together in community that this was, in fact, God speaking to them.

[41:08] That's where God was leading them. So, you're not the only one with the Holy Spirit. We all share the same spirit so we can discern in community. We also discern with scripture.

The spirit often speaks to me through scripture. For example, I shared this week, John 15, apart from me, you can do nothing. The spirit guides us in all the truth as we read his word.

All scripture is God breathed, inspired by the Holy Spirit. And God won't contradict himself. So, we test what we hear against the scriptures. And lastly, the Bible says that the Holy Spirit points us to Jesus.

In every way the spirit is leading, it'll lead to greater joy in Christ. John 15, 27 says, the spirit of truth will bear witness about Jesus. The spirit always leads us to him.

And as followers of Christ, do we want that? Don't we want that? To have more of Christ? To know him and enjoy him? So, let's be a spirit-led, let's be a spirit-led people.

[42:10] If you are a follower of Christ, you have the same Holy Spirit that Paul had. All who are led by the spirit are sons of God. The same spirit who said no to Asia, who gave Paul a vision for Macedonia, who opened Lydia's heart, who allowed Paul and Silas to sing a song in jail.

That same spirit is leading us. Will we follow? Will we surrender our plans and trust him when the doors swing open or closed? Maybe for you, for some of us here, the first step is admitting that you're lost.

That like the jailer, your first spirit-led step is to fall on your knees and ask, what must I do to be saved? The same answer, it's the same answer today as it was then.

Believe in the Lord Jesus. That's where the spirit's lead always begins. And for the rest of us, let's go from here looking to the one who is our joy, looking to Jesus. Let's be a people who want one thing above all else, to be led by the spirit in pursuit of Christ.

Let's be a spirit-led people. I'm going to invite the worship team up and we'll respond in song.

Before that, I think it'd be nice, as I'm talking about, as we see, making room for the spirit to lead us, to spend just a few minutes, let's spend a few minutes in quiet, in prayer.

[43:38] If you want the spirit to lead, again, we can ask him. Spirit, fill me. Speak. I want to listen. I want to hear you. I want to be led by you.

I want to do nothing apart from you because I can. Let's ask him and listen. Also reflect. Is there any way I need to surrender?

Is there any part of my life I need to surrender to the spirit's lead? Let's spend a few minutes in quiet reflection. God, thank you that you go before us.

I've set my God always before me because he is my right hand. I will not be shaken. Thank you that we have your presence with us through the spirit.

And we want more of you. We want more of you. So we ask you, we seek you, and we trust your promise that we will find that you give good gifts to those who ask you.

[45:02] that you, when we come to you, you'll fill us our thirst with living water. You'll satisfy our hunger with the bread of life.

Spirit, lead us. We want to be bold people, a people with serious joy in every circumstance.

in plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who gives me strength.

We want to be a people like that. We want to be a city on a hill shining bright.

So lead us, lead our church by your spirit. Pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.